Texas Department of Transportation

**For Immediate Release**
**For additional information,**
**Please contact:**
**Frances Garza (361) 808-2231**
**Amy Rodriguez (956) 702-6102**

**February 2008**

# TxDOT Holding Five Meetings to Collect Public Input on Proposed Upgrades to US 77

The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) invites the public to attend one or more of five opportunities to comment and provide input on proposed upgrades of US 77 to a controlled access facility that meets interstate standards. The meetings have been scheduled as part of TxDOT's effort to gain public input on issues related to proposed improvements and to provide an opportunity for public comment. Meetings will be held:

- March 3rd in Raymondville at L.E. Franks Tourist Center – 501 South 7th Street;
- March 4th in Kingsville at Rodeway Inn – 3430 US 77 South;
- March 5th in Riviera at Riviera ISD Cafeteria – 203 Seahawk Drive;
- March 10th in Driscoll at Driscoll ISD Cafeteria – 410 W. Avenue D; and
- March 11th in Sarita at Sarita Elementary School Cafeteria – 300 E. La Parra Avenue.

Each of the five meetings will follow the same format. There will be an Open House from 4:00 p.m. until 7:00 p.m. for viewing the exhibits. Project personnel will be available during the Open House and following the presentation to answer questions on the project, including questions regarding the right of way acquisition process and relocation assistance. A formal presentation will begin at 6:00 p.m. Citizens are encouraged to attend and provide input and comments on what they believe to be issues related to proposed improvements.

The project area extends from the interchange of US 77 and Interstate Highway (IH) 37 in Corpus Christi to the interchange of US 77 and US 83 in Harlingen, with proposed improvements between Robstown and Combes. The project area is approximately 127 miles long. Parts of the project area have recently been improved to interstate standards, such as from IH 37 to State Highway (SH) 44 near Robstown and from Harlingen to Combes. Thus, the proposed construction area is approximately 109.5 miles long within or near US 77 in Nueces, Kleberg, Kenedy, and Willacy Counties. Among the alternatives being considered are alternate routes (relief routes) for the areas of Driscoll and Riviera that would avoid potential community impacts, including residential and commercial displacements. These possible relief routes would likely be tolled and require additional right of way. A limited amount of right of way may be required in certain other areas. The Corpus Christi and Pharr TxDOT Districts have been upgrading US 77 to interstate standards for a number of years as resources and funds became available.

Although this project is early in the planning process, TxDOT is evaluating the proposed project because of the need to improve mobility and safety for traffic traveling on US 77 and for

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communities along this highway. The proposed project area crosses through 12 communities and urbanized areas, including Corpus Christi, Robstown, Driscoll, Bishop, Kingsville, Ricardo, Riviera, Sarita, Raymondville, Lyford, Sebastian, and Harlingen. In those areas where the facility has not been upgraded to freeway standards, there is no separation of local traffic and high-speed through traffic at intersection crossings. The lack of overpasses for local traffic crossing the highway and the lack of frontage roads for traffic entering or leaving US 77 increase the risk of serious accidents and compromise traffic flow on this route.

A recent study indicates that traffic within the project area is expected to grow by approximately 75 percent between 2004 and 2024. Population growth is one of the factors associated with this projected traffic growth. According to the Texas Water Development Board, population in the Coastal Bend area is expected to grow by 28 percent by the year 2020 and by 58 percent by the year 2050. Population in the Rio Grande Valley area is expected to grow by 60 percent by the year 2020 and by 170 percent by the year 2050. At the present time, the Rio Grande Valley area contains the largest population in the United States that is not served by an interstate highway.

Another factor affecting projected traffic growth is trade. Truck traffic already represents 20 to 25 percent of the traffic on US 77 within the proposed project area. The Ports of Brownsville and Corpus Christi have announced plans to increase their capacity, and there are planned infrastructure improvements in Mexico that will result in increased truck traffic on US 77. As traffic increases, the need to separate high-speed through traffic from crossing movements and turning movements becomes increasingly important to ensure traffic flow and safety.

All interested citizens are invited to attend one or more of these public meetings to view the exhibits and offer comments to the project team and TxDOT. Spanish-speaking staff will be available during the Open House. Persons requesting simultaneous Spanish translation during the presentation or other special communication or accommodation needs are encouraged to contact 1-800-490-9933 or 361-884-2626 by February 27, 2008. TxDOT will make every reasonable effort to accommodate these needs. Please submit your written comments by March 24, 2008, to US 77 Highway Upgrade, P.O. Box 3706, Corpus Christi, Texas, 78463-3706.

Additional information on the project will be available on the websites of the Corpus Christi, Brownsville, and Harlingen-San Benito Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs): www.corpuschristi-mpo.org, http://planning.cob.us/mpo/index.asp, and www.myharlingen.us/new_mpo.htm.

**Información en español**

El Departamento de Transporte de Texas (TxDOT) invita al público a asistir a la primera serie de reuniones públicas sobre la propuesta de convertir la carretera 77 (US 77) a una instalación de acceso controlado que satisface los estándares interestatales. El área del proyecto extiende desde la intersección de la carretera 77 y la carretera interestatal 37 (IH 37) en Corpus Christi hasta la intersección de la carretera 77 y la carretera 83 en Harlingen, con mejoras propuestas entre Robstown y Combes. Entre las alternativas que son consideradas están incluidas rutas alternativas (carreteras de descongestión) que evitarían impactos potenciales de la comunidad,

incluyendo desplazamientos residenciales y comerciales, para las áreas de Driscoll y Riviera. Estas carreteras de descongestión posibles serían carreteras de cuota y requerirían más derecho de paso. Una cantidad limitada de derecho de paso podría ser requerida en ciertas otras áreas. El propósito del proyecto propuesto es mejorar la movilidad y la seguridad de tráfico viajando en la carretera 77 y para las comunidades a lo largo de esta carretera.

Personal que habla español estará disponible durante la Exhibición Abierta. Personas que requieren traducción simultánea de inglés al español durante la presentación u otros servicios especiales de comunicación o servicios auxiliares, favor de comunicarse al 1-800-490-9933 o 361-884-2626 antes del 27 de febrero de 2008. TxDOT hará cada esfuerzo razonable para acomodar estos servicios. Comentarios por escrito referente a las mejoras propuestas deberían ser dirigidos a US 77 Highway Upgrade, P.O. Box 3706, Corpus Christi, Texas, 78463-3706. La fecha plazo para recibir comentarios es el 24 de marzo de 2008.

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