

The 4-1-1 on 281

THE LATEST ON THE US 281 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

APRIL 2010

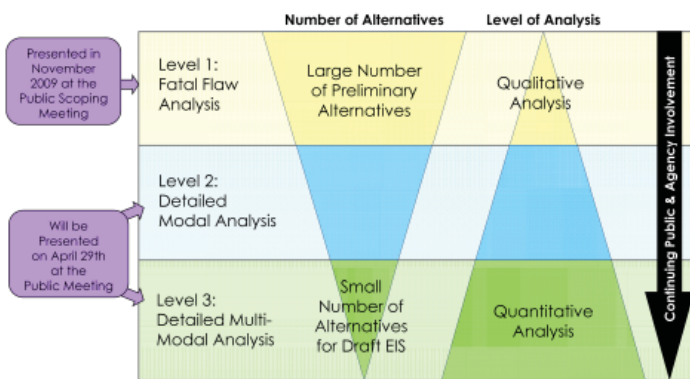


The US 281 EIS Team has been Crunching the Numbers...

The November 2009 public scoping meeting focused on the preliminary alternatives for transportation improvements and the results from Level 1 of the Alternatives Evaluation Process.

Below is a flowchart representing the alternatives evaluation process for transportation improvements within the US 281 corridor that the US 281 EIS Team has been working through since the last public scoping meeting in November.

Alternatives Evaluation Process



In Level 1, alternatives were evaluated for fatal flaws, such as not being compatible with regional plans, an unproven technology or major adverse impacts.

Since November 2009, the US 281 EIS team has developed alternatives and more qualitative/quantitative assessments in Level 2 and Level 3 of the alternatives evaluation process:

In Level 2, individual transportation modes (such as transit) were evaluated. Here are a few evaluation measures or questions that were used in this process:

- 1) Is this option capable of satisfying future travel demand?
- 2) Is this option safe?
- 3) Does this option reduce travel time?
- 4) Is it possible and practical to build this option from an engineering standpoint?
- 5) Is this option able to connect with a transportation mode planned or currently used in San Antonio?

In Level 3, the individual transportation modes were combined into packages (such as an expressway with frontage roads and main lanes). These packages were evaluated using the Level 2 measures (listed above) and additional measures or questions including:

- 1) If this option was built, what would be the average vehicle speeds in 2035?
- 2) How much right-of-way would this option need?
- 3) Would any homes or businesses be displaced if this option were chosen?
- 4) What would this option cost to build?
- 5) Are there any environmental impacts?

Please join us on April 29, 2010 to discuss the Level 2 and Level 3 results of the alternatives evaluation process and the recommendations for Reasonable Alternatives that will be carried forward in the Draft EIS for detailed analysis.

As we move forward with the EIS process, your comments will continue to help shape the future of the US 281 corridor!

US 281 EIS Team Looks at “Managed Lane” Concept

Both toll and non-toll alternatives for improving US 281 will be evaluated in the Draft EIS, but there is a third type of facility – known as “managed lanes” – that is also being considered. While the managed lane concept includes charging a price to single-occupant vehicles, it also seeks to encourage high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) travel and public transportation use. Travelers who choose to carpool or take public transportation could use these lanes free of charge. Increasing HOV and transit use in the corridor would yield environmental benefits, such as lower amounts of air pollution. These types of facilities – also known as “high-occupancy toll” (HOT) lanes or “congestion pricing” facilities – are currently used on many highways throughout the United States including the Katy Tollway in Houston, TX.

Managed lane facilities have the potential to provide a variety of benefits to both motorists and transit users. While no strategy can be expected to eliminate congestion, managed lanes could provide an im-

portant transportation management tool to ease congestion for all commuters.

No decision has been made yet regarding managed lanes, but if such a facility were to be implemented for US 281, operational policies would need to be determined. Should discounts or free fares be provided to carpools, vanpools, transit or other types of vehicles?

How would pricing be determined? Who is charged during non-peak or non-rush hour periods? Consensus on these and many other policy choices would be essential in order for the public to embrace and support the concept of managed lanes.



Katy Tollway, Houston TX

US 281 EIS Peer Technical Review Committee

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the US 281 EIS Joint Lead Agencies (Texas Department of Transportation and the Alamo RMA) have created a Peer Technical Review Committee to provide expert oversight and scrutiny at key coordination points throughout the EIS process including:

- Development of the Need and Purpose to improve the US 281 corridor
- Identification of the range of improvement options for the US 281 corridor
- Collaboration on overall methods
- Completion of the Draft EIS
- Identification and refinement of the Preferred Alternative
- Completion of the Final EIS

The Committee, which is chaired by the FHWA as the responsible federal agency, had its first meeting in November 2009 and will continue to work

cooperatively throughout the project to provide input on data and methodologies for the EIS process. Members of the Peer Technical Review Committee include:

- Federal Highway Administration
- Alamo Regional Mobility Authority
- Texas Department of Transportation
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Texas Parks and Wildlife Department
- Texas Commission on Environmental Quality
- Edwards Aquifer Authority
- Bexar County
- San Antonio – Bexar County Metropolitan Planning Organization
- VIA Metropolitan Transit
- San Antonio Water System
- City of San Antonio

Karst & Bird Surveys Underway

You may have seen people walking around along US 281 in bright green vests or received a letter requesting permission for right-of-entry in the mail. We have started the biological surveys for the EIS, specifically the karst surveys and the bird surveys.

The karst surveys involve experienced technicians and biologists looking for karst features. Karst is a word used to describe an area where water has dissolved part of the limestone bedrock, creating pathways in the rock (fissures, cracks, sinkholes, caves, etc.). These pathways connect the ground surface to the Edwards aquifer that San Antonio relies upon for its water supply. As a result, the water that flows through these pathways can contain contaminants that are not filtered out before reaching the aquifer.



Biologist Descending Into Cave-Sized Karst Feature

Later this year you may see technicians and biologists digging and crawling into these features. They are trying to determine the sensitivity of these features by looking for endangered species called karst invertebrates. Invertebrates are animals without internal skeletons or backbones similar to beetles or grasshoppers. Although, they are small and seldom seen, spending most of their lives underground, these invertebrates are biologically and ecologically unique.



Golden-Cheeked Warbler

The bird survey involves experienced biologists looking and listening for the golden-cheeked warbler. This bird nests only in central Texas in mixed ash-juniper and oak woodlands, ravines and canyons. They spend the winter in Mexico and Central America then come to Texas in March to nest and raise their young. The golden-cheeked warbler is the only species that nests exclusively in Texas.

Para recibir este boletín en Español por favor llame 210.495.5256.

WAYS TO GET INVOLVED

Public Meeting #3:

Recommended Reasonable Alternatives

Join us at the Public Meeting to:

- Discuss the alternatives evaluation process for proposed transportation improvements
- Discuss the recommended reasonable alternatives that could be carried forward for detailed analysis in the Draft EIS
- Ask questions and submit comments!

Thursday, April 29, 2010
5:30 PM – 9:00 PM

Open House: 5:30 PM – 7:00 PM
Presentation: 7:00 PM – 7:30 PM
Small Group Work Sessions: 7:30 PM

Summit Christian Center
2575 Marshall Road
San Antonio, TX 78259

If you attended the November 2009 Public Scoping Meeting, you may remember the small group sessions. We received positive feedback in November 2009 and are planning to have a similar format in April 2010. If you are interested in participating in detailed discussions, having the opportunity to ask questions and hear what your neighbors think about alternative transportation solutions, please join us for the small group work sessions after the presentation.

If you would like to attend the meeting and have special communication or accommodation needs, please contact the Alamo RMA at 210.495.5256 by Thursday, April 22, 2010.

If you are unable to attend this meeting and would like your comment included in the record, submit your written comments to the Alamo RMA by May 10, 2010.

Please email comments to:
US281EIS@AlamoRMA.org

Or mail to:

US 281 Environmental Impact Statement
Alamo Regional Mobility Authority
1222 N Main Avenue, Suite 1000
San Antonio, Texas 78212

UPCOMING EVENTS

The following events are tentatively scheduled during the course of the EIS process:

- **June 2011**
Public Hearing; Draft EIS
- **September 2011**
Public Meeting; Identification of the Preferred Alternative

*The time between the public meeting on April 29, 2010 and the public hearing is needed to allow the EIS team to complete detailed analyses of impacts of the reasonable alternatives and prepare the Draft EIS. Although there will not be a public meeting during this time, the Community Advisory Committee and Peer Technical Review Committee will hold meetings; presentations will be given at Home Owners Association meetings and other community organization meetings; and www.411on281.com/US281EIS will continue to be updated to keep everyone informed and engaged during this part of the EIS process.

This species was listed as endangered in 1990 as a result of long-term habitat loss, as mature woodlands were cleared for development or to grow crops or hay. It is important to know if any of these endangered species would be affected by the improvements being considered for US 281. The results of these biological surveys will help us avoid threats to endangered species and ensure our drinking water remains safe and clean.

The comments received at the second Public Scoping Meeting held in November 2009 are being compiled into the official EIS record and once finalized, this record will be available for you to review.

Bannwolf Library at Reagan High School
19000 Ronald Reagan Dr.
San Antonio, TX 78258

Frank M. Tejada Middle School
2909 E. Evans Rd.
San Antonio, TX 78259

Alamo Regional Mobility Authority
1222 N. Main Ave., Ste 1000
San Antonio, TX 78212

Brook Hollow Library
530 Heimer Rd.
San Antonio, TX 78232

San Antonio Central Library
600 Soledad St.
San Antonio, TX 78205

Printed copies are also available for viewing at:

Almost 200 comments were received during the comment period for the first US 281 EIS Public Scoping Meeting held in August 2009. The comments and responses have been placed into the official EIS record and compiled into a meeting report. Please take the opportunity to read what your friends and neighbors think about the Need and Purpose for improvements along the US 281 corridor and the range of improvement options. This document is now available for download on www.411on281.com/US281EIS.

Comments, Comments, Comments

Get the 4-1-1 on 281



Stay Informed and Get Involved!

Thank you to everyone who has already participated by submitting a comment, visiting the web site or attending the first public scoping meetings. Please continue to stay involved and ask your neighbors and friends to participate too! Your comments and participation continue to be vital to the success of the EIS process.

Remember, there are different ways to provide comments:

- Attend the Public Meeting on April 29, 2010
- Visit the web site at www.411on281.com/US281EIS
- Follow the US 281 EIS on Facebook and Twitter
- Email the US 281 EIS mailbox at US281EIS@AlamoRMA.org
- Fax comments to (210) 495-5403
- Mail comments to the Alamo RMA (see address below)

*Although social media (Twitter, Facebook, and blogs) are available for and intended to encourage public dialogue about the US 281 EIS process, they are provided for outreach and informational purposes only. To ensure your comment is included in the official EIS record, only submit comments in the ways listed above.

Contact Us:

Alamo Regional Mobility Authority
1222 N Main Ave, Suite 1000
San Antonio, Texas 78212
(210) 495-5256

www.AlamorMA.org
www.411on281.com/US281EIS
US281EIS@AlamoRMA.org

Alamo Regional Mobility Authority | 1222 N Main Ave, Suite 1000 | San Antonio, Texas 78212 | 210.495.5256



Dear Friends and Neighbors,

I want to start by thanking you for taking the time to get involved with the US 281 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Whether you attended the last two public scoping meetings, submitted comments, or visited the EIS web site, your participation is vital to the success of this process. Many of you may be wondering...Why is the alternatives evaluation process for transportation improvements so important? The process of finding and evaluating different ways of meeting the Need and Purpose for transportation improvements is the heart of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process. The Alamo Regional Mobility Authority (RMA), Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) will objectively evaluate all Reasonable Alternatives in the Draft EIS and describe the reasons why the other options were eliminated from detailed study. Reasonable Alternatives are those options that meet the Need and Purpose for improvements and are practical and feasible from a technical and economic standpoint.

Public Meeting #3 will be held on Thursday, April 29, 2010 to discuss the results of the alternatives evaluation process and the recommendations for Reasonable Alternatives that would be carried forward in the Draft EIS for detailed analysis.

In this newsletter you'll read about the alternatives evaluation process, "managed lanes", karst surveys, bird surveys and the Peer Technical Review Committee. To learn more and participate in the EIS process, please join us on April 29, 2010 at the public meeting and/or visit www.411on281.com/US281EIS. We look forward to seeing you there!

Sincerely,

Dr. William E. Thornton
Chairman
Alamo Regional Mobility Authority

