



SH 45
GAP STUDY

OPEN HOUSE

Dec. 7, 2023 | 4:30 - 7:30 p.m.
Sunfield Station Event Center



Comment Period: Dec. 7 – Dec. 22, 2023

Submit Comments

- At the open house
- Email: info@sh45gap.com
- Mail: PO Box 5459, Austin, TX 78763
- Online: sh45gap.com
- Text/Voicemail: 512-400-6107

Welcome and thank you for your interest in the SH 45 Gap Study. The purpose of this second open house is to share information about the study, share the ideas and suggestions received through the first open house, and to share the route concepts developed from those suggestions. And, most importantly, to receive your feedback and input.

Comments may be shared at the open house meeting, through the online comment card, interactive map, by email, mail, text, or voicemail. To be included in the official summary of this meeting, comments must be received by December 22, 2023.

HISTORY

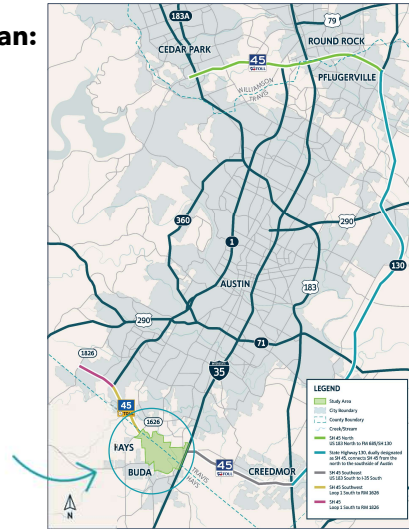
1986 Austin Metropolitan Transportation Plan:

Envisioned SH 45 as the Austin Outer Parkway, a loop encircling the City of Austin

Completed Sections:

- SH 45 - Loop 1 South to RM 1826
- SH 45 North - US 183 North to FM 685/SH 130
- SH 45 Southeast - US 183 South to I-35 South
- SH 45 Southwest - Loop 1 South to RM 1626
- State Highway 130, dually designated as SH 45, connects SH 45 from the north to the south side of Austin

Leaving the "Gap" between I-35 South and RM 1626



SH 45 was originally envisioned as a loop, called the Austin Outer Parkway, encircling the City of Austin. The Austin Outer Parkway concept was included in the [Austin Metropolitan Transportation Plan](#), adopted in 1986.

As shown on this map, major portions of SH 45 have been constructed. The original concepts for the westernmost segments of SH 45 are no longer planned, which leaves the "Gap" between I-35 and RM 1626.



HISTORY

Gap Study and Project included in:

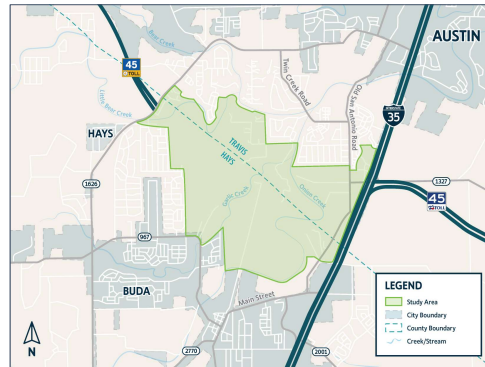
- Hays County 2021 Transportation Plan
- City of Buda 2020 Buda Moves! Transportation Mobility Master Plan

Gap Study included in:

- CAMPO 2045 Regional Transportation Plan
 - "Design of environmental and preliminary engineering for new freeway" from FM 1626 to I-35.¹

SH 45 Gap Study

Hays County, in partnership with the City of Buda, is exploring the feasibility of the Gap Project before the area is substantially developed.



¹ Page 133 in the CAMPO 2045 Regional Transportation Plan

The need for the Gap Project has been identified in both the Hays County and City of Buda transportation plans. Additionally, CAMPO identified the need for this Gap Study in the 2045 Regional Transportation Plan.

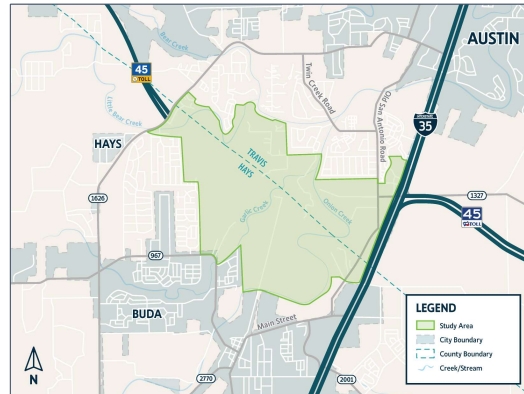
Hays County, in partnership with the City of Buda, is exploring the feasibility of the Gap Project before the area is substantially developed.

PURPOSE OF GAP STUDY

- Explore the feasibility of constructing SH 45 between I-35 and RM 1626
- Facilitate coordination between property owners, local partners, regional stakeholders, and the surrounding community in planning for transportation needs

PURPOSE OF POTENTIAL GAP PROJECT

- Enhance regional mobility
- Facilitate system connectivity



The purpose of the Study is to examine the feasibility of building the segment of SH 45 between I-35 and RM 1626.

This study will look into factors such as engineering challenges, environmental impacts, and cost considerations. Additionally, the study aims to bring together property owners, local partners, regional stakeholders, and the community to plan for transportation needs and ensure that everyone's input is considered. This collaboration is important to develop a transportation solution that works well for the area and considers the interests and concerns of all involved.

The purpose of the potential Gap Project is to enhance regional mobility and facilitate system connectivity.



STUDY GOALS

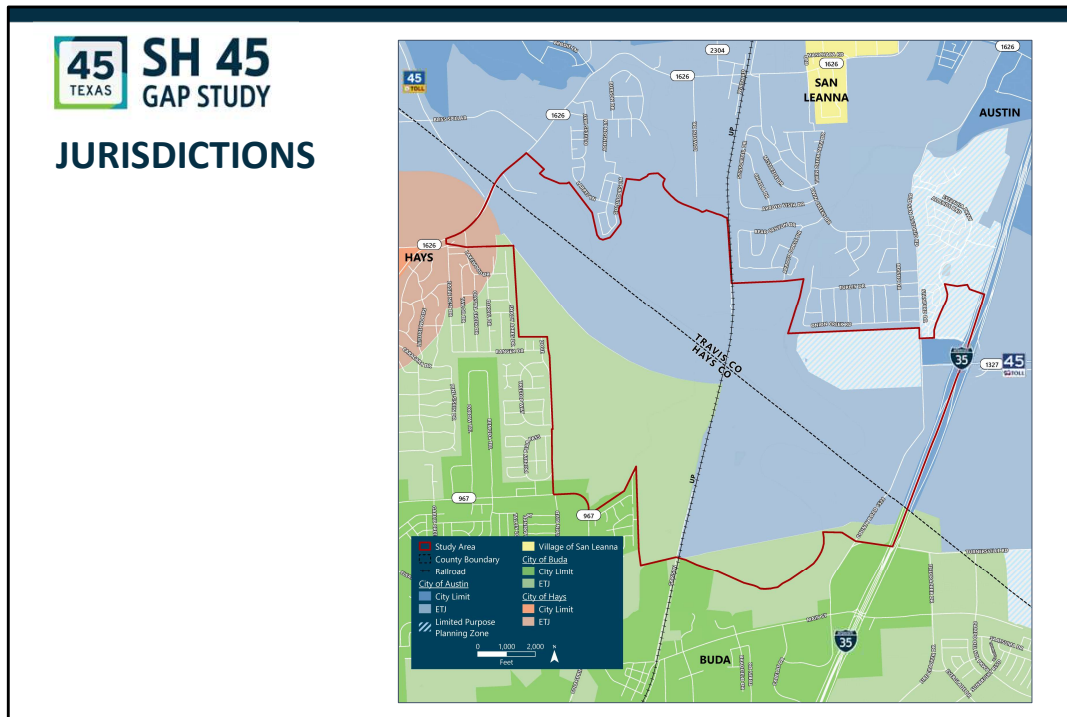
- Conduct the study in a proactive and transparent manner
- Engage and gather input from a broad range of stakeholders, property owners, and local and regional leaders
- Identify conceptual route option(s) for additional and more detailed studies
- Minimize impacts to existing and planned development
- Identify strategies for environmental protection and associated best practices

OPEN HOUSE #2 GOALS

- Gather comments on the study, and feedback on the route concepts and roadway configurations

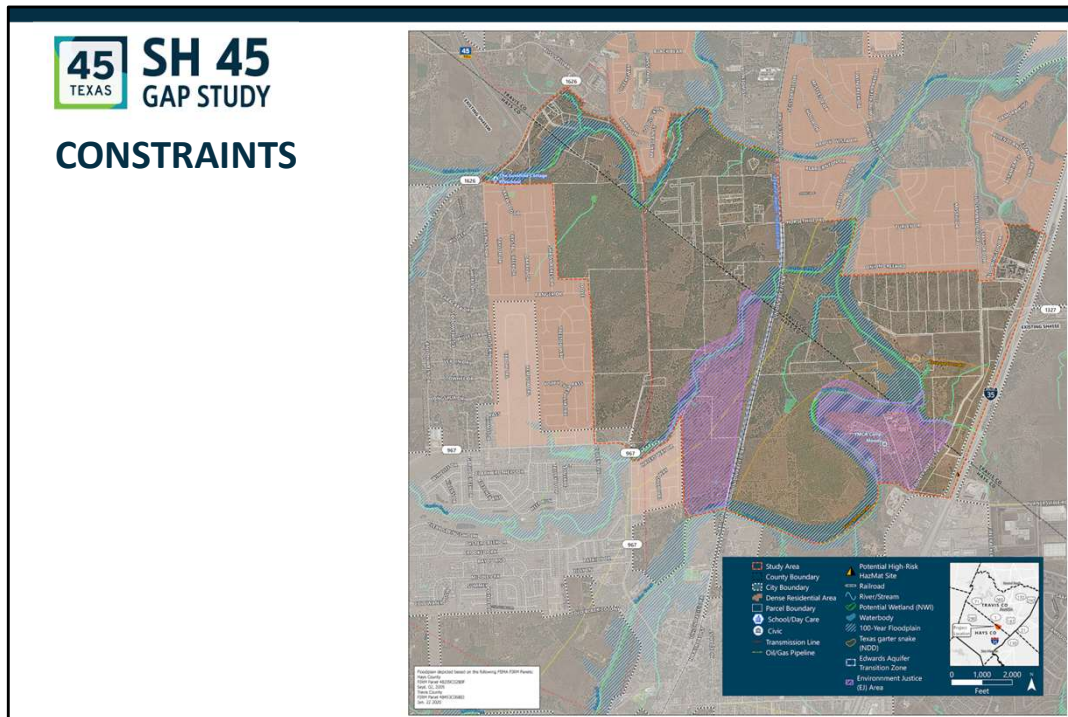
The goals of this Study are to do things in a proactive and clear way, collect input from a wide range of people including community members, property owners, and local leaders, identify conceptual route options to study in more detail, and work to minimize impacts on current and future development. We also want to identify strategies to protect the environment and follow the best practices for doing so.

The goals for this second open house are to gather comments on the study and feedback on the preliminary route concepts and roadway configurations.



This map identifies the boundaries of Travis County and Hays County, as well as the specific cities within and surrounding the study area.

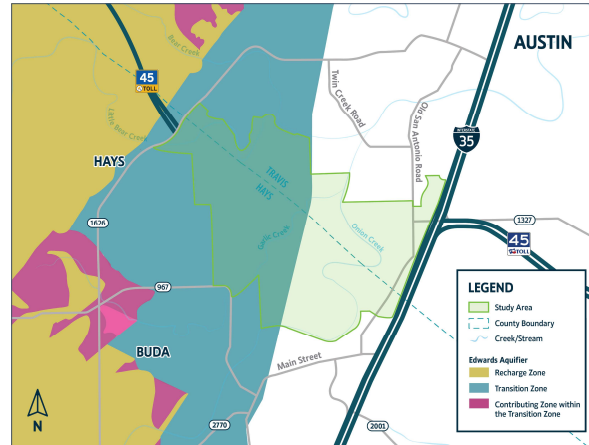
As shown here, in addition to the two counties, portions of the study area fall within the jurisdictions of the Cities of Austin and Buda. The SH 45 Gap Study will include coordination with these entities.



The constraints map displays specific environmental and land use features in and around the study area. The development of this map is an important part of the process as it helps to identify factors or conditions that may affect where the roadway could be located and better understand the potential effects of doing so.

EDWARDS AQUIFER

- A portion of the study area is located in the Edwards Aquifer Transition Zone
- This study includes the identification of potential best practices for environmental protection



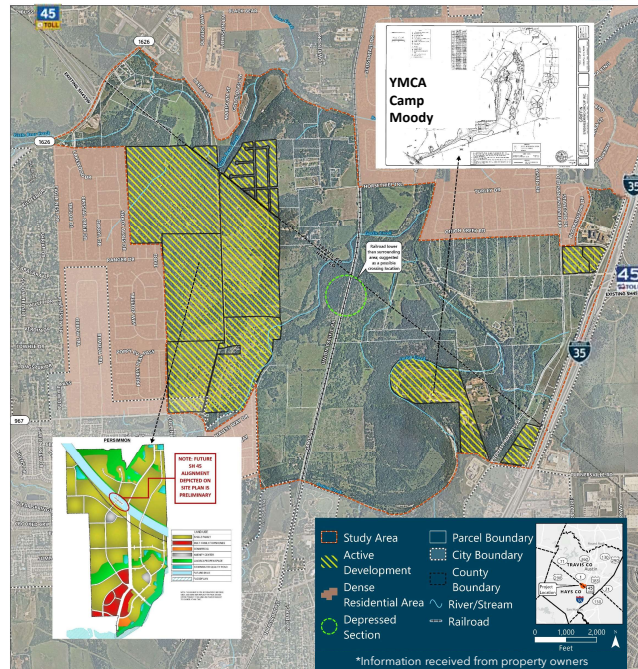
The Edwards Aquifer is an important source of groundwater for Central Texas. Development over the aquifer is regulated by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality. The aquifer is made up of three primary zones: contributing zone, recharge zone and transition zone. The contributing and recharge zones are considered to be the most environmentally sensitive. As shown here, the study area is wholly outside the limits of contributing and recharge zones. A portion of the study area is located within the transition zone.

If the SH 45 Gap Project is constructed in the future, water quality protection would be a priority and the design would incorporate water quality protection measures.

PROPERTY OWNER OUTREACH

What We Learned

- Development is occurring -
Approx. 893 acres are
actively being developed
- Additional development
is anticipated
- Access to/from SH 45 is
desired by landowners



In early 2023, the study team met with several property owners in the study area. This map shows information provided by those property owners.

The yellow hatched areas on the map identify properties which, according to the owners, are now being actively developed. These areas of future development encompass more than 800 acres (roughly 27% of the study area). Several property owners also noted a location where the roadway could potentially cross over the Union Pacific rail line. This information will be part of what is considered as the study moves forward.

45
TEXAS

SH 45

GAP STUDY



OPEN HOUSE #1 – JUNE 15, 2023



615

Virtual Open House
Unique Views



66

Open House
Attendees



252

Total Comments
Collected

WHAT WE HEARD

- Details about the Study Area
 - Suggestions for potential alignments and areas to avoid
- Concerns and opposition for the Gap Project
 - Concerns that it would impact the Edwards Aquifer and environment
 - Concerns that it would add more traffic to MoPac and other area roadways
- Support for the Gap Project
- Suggestions related to access, ramps, and frontage roads

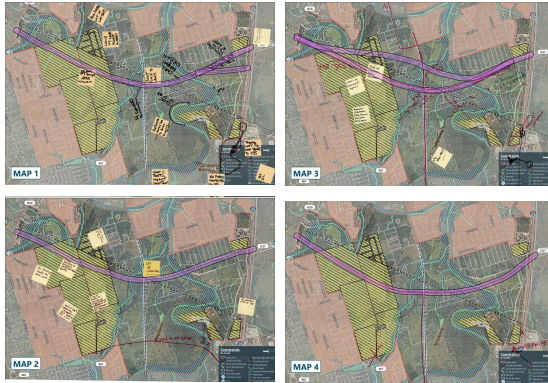


The first public open house was held on June 15, 2023 and there were over 60 attendees. In addition, a virtual open house was available online and it received 615 unique views during the open comment period. In total, 252 comments were received. Common themes from the comments include:

- Suggestions for potential alignments and areas to avoid
- Opposition to the Gap Project due to environmental concerns (particularly the Edwards Aquifer)
- Concern the project would increase traffic on MoPac and other area roadways
- Support for the Gap Project
- Suggestions related to access, ramps, and frontage roads

For more information, please review the meeting report available on the project website.

OPEN HOUSE #1 – JUNE 15, 2023 ROUTE SUGGESTIONS



Route suggestions submitted from the public at the in-person meeting



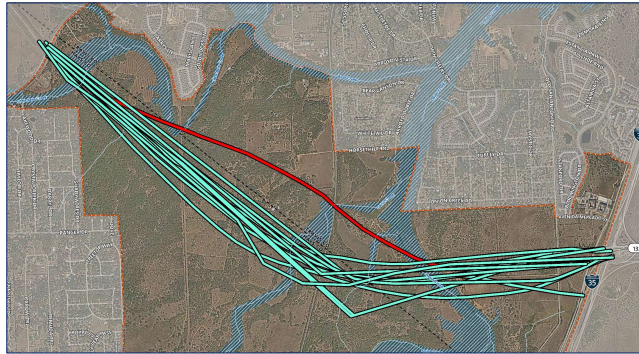
Route suggestions submitted by visitors online

At the first open house we asked for comments, ideas, and possible route suggestions. The four maps on the left show public input received at the in-person meeting with route suggestions highlighted in purple. The map on the right shows suggestions received through the virtual open house online map.

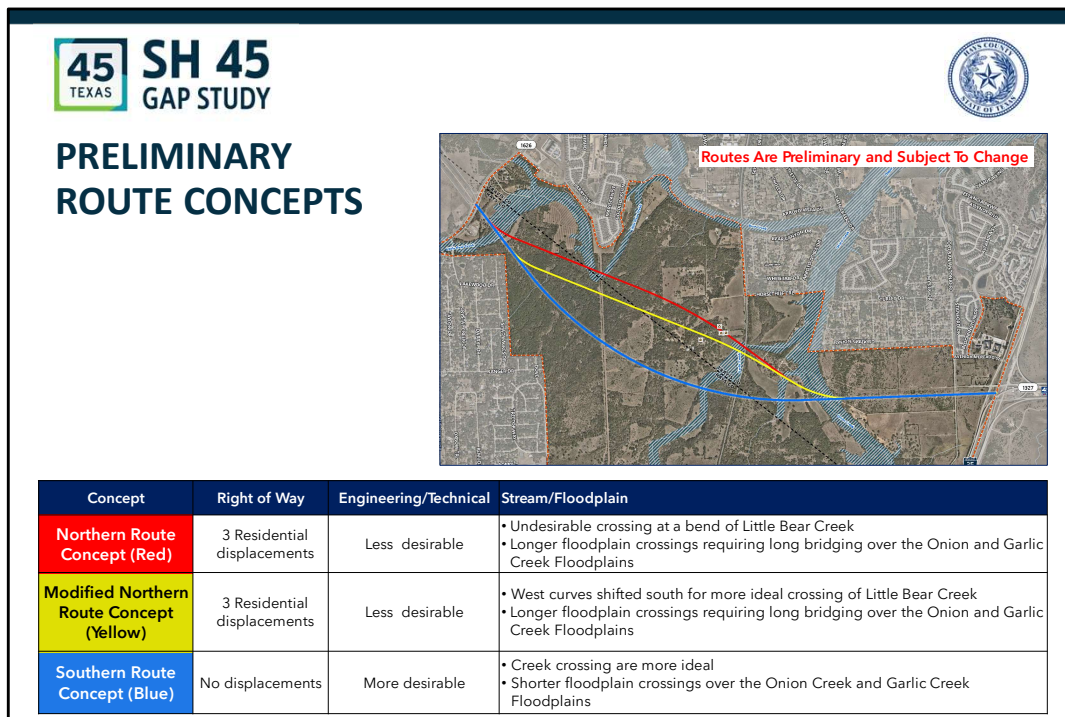
OPEN HOUSE #1 – JUNE 15, 2023 ROUTE SUGGESTIONS

Compilation of All Route Suggestions Submitted by the Public

- All but one route submitted, the northern most route, reflect the same basic concept with slight variations



This map represents the compilation of all route suggestions – those made in-person at the June 15 open house and those made on-line. As you can see, with the exception of the northernmost route (shown in red), all of the routes represent slight variations of the same basic concept. The next step was to apply engineering criteria to the route suggestions.



Shown here, in red, is the northern route concept after applicable engineering criteria was applied. This alignment would result in three residential displacements. Geometrically, it is less technically desirable. It crosses Little Bear Creek directly over a bend in the creek and would require long bridges over the floodplains of Onion and Garlic Creeks.

In an effort to minimize the impacts of the northern route concept, the Study Team developed a modified northern concept – shown here in yellow. With the modified north concept, the west end curves are shifted south to avoid the route crossing directly over the bend of Little Bear Creek; however, it still requires long bridges over the floodplains of Onion and Garlic Creeks. The modified north concept results in the same number of residential displacements as the north option.

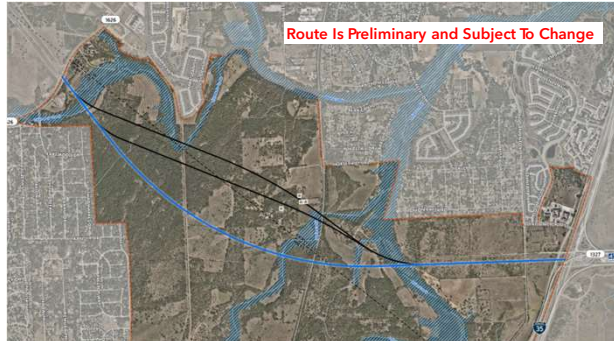
The southern option, shown in blue, is representative of all other route suggestions received from the public. Geometrically, the southern concept is more technically desirable than the northern concepts. Creek crossing locations are more desirable and there would be zero residential or commercial displacements.

PRELIMINARY ROUTE CONCEPTS

Southern Concept - Recommended Preliminary Alignment for Further Study

- Fewer impacts
 - No displacements
 - Shorter floodplain crossings
- More technically desirable alignment

Northern Concepts - Eliminated From Further Study

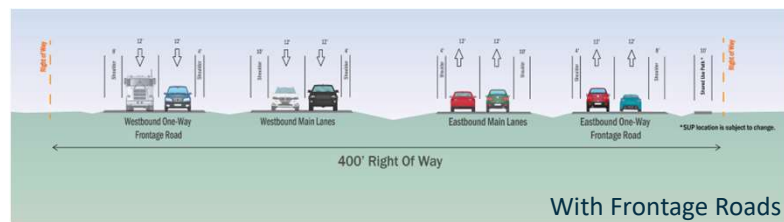
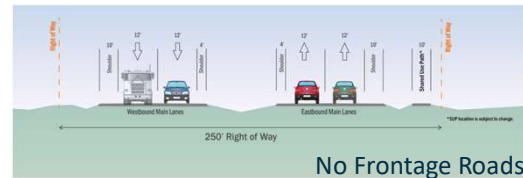


For the reasons mentioned previously (no residential displacements, more desirable geometry, and stream and floodplain considerations), and since all other route suggestions (with the exception of the one northern route suggestion) reflected a southern route, the southern concept is the recommended “Preliminary Alignment”. The northern concepts, shown here in black, were eliminated from further consideration.

It is important to understand that the Preliminary Alignment is not final. It is subject to change and refinement through the course of the feasibility study and, assuming the project advances beyond the current feasibility study, during future phases of project development.

POTENTIAL ROADWAY CONFIGURATIONS

- Frontage roads may be included along all or part of the route



Illustrations Not to Scale

Consistent with existing State Highway 45 west of RM 1626 and east of I-35, it is assumed that the Gap Project would be controlled access. Here you see anticipated cross sections of the facility one that does not include frontage roads and one that includes frontage roads. It is possible that, if constructed, the facility would be a combination of the two – with frontage roads provided where necessary to provide access to adjacent properties and where desired for consistency with local planning. Also notable is the shared-use path that would run parallel to the roadway within the right of way. Consistent with the shared use path along existing SH 45 Southwest, this “trail” would accommodate bicycles and pedestrians.

To accommodate these cross sections, two right of way “footprints” have been developed. The roadway without frontage roads would typically require 250 feet of right of way and with frontage roads the roadway would typically require 400 feet of right of way.

Alignments Are Preliminary and Subject To Change

PRELIMINARY ALIGNMENT ASSESSMENT

- The study team is beginning to look at impacts of the preliminary alignment
- Two right of way scenarios were assessed (250' and 400')
- The anticipated impacts in the table below may be adjusted as the preliminary alignment is refined



	Length (miles)	ROW Required (acres)	Parcels Impacted	Parcels Bisected	Displacements	Residences/Community Facilities within 250' of ROW	Length within EJ area (miles)	River, stream, or creek crossings	Acres in 100-year floodplain	Acres in NWI wetlands
400' ROW Width	3.6	190.4	20	7	0	1	0.12	5	14.6	1.58
250' ROW Width	3.6	145.7	20	7	0	0	0.12	5	10.5	1.07

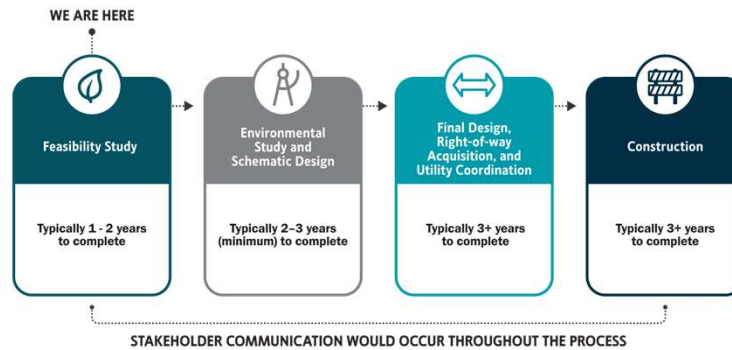
Impacts are not anticipated to community facilities (such as schools, hospitals and emergency services), dedicated parkland, cemeteries, historic properties*, oil/gas wells, or known hazardous materials sites. *For purposes of this evaluation, properties that are listed on or known to be eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places are considered historic.

This table shows the anticipated impacts resulting from the two right of way scenarios (with and without frontage roads) for the Preliminary Alignment. As indicated here, the Preliminary Alignment would result in zero residential or commercial displacements. Additionally, no impacts are anticipated to community facilities such as schools, hospitals and emergency services, dedicated parkland, cemeteries, historic properties*, oil/gas wells, or known hazardous materials sites.

* For purposes of this evaluation, properties that are listed on or known to be eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places are considered historic.

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

This study is the first step of many in project development and is a pre-National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) planning-level study. Only the feasibility study has been funded. Advancement from phase to phase is contingent upon funding.



It typically takes many years to develop a project such as the SH 45 Gap Project and funding is required for each phase of the process. To date, only the feasibility study funding has been allocated to the SH 45 Gap project.

If through the feasibility study it is determined that the project should be developed further and necessary funding is secured, the next step would be to complete the schematic design and conduct a comprehensive environmental review. The environmental review process, anticipated to take a minimum of 2-3 years to complete, would include detailed investigations of potential impacts resulting from the Gap Project. It would also include additional opportunities for interested stakeholders to engage in the planning process and provide input/feedback.

It should be noted that construction cannot be authorized until detailed environmental investigations are complete, and an environmental document is prepared.



ACTIVITIES TO DATE

2022 - 2023

- Hays County approved funding for this feasibility study, Fall 2022
- Collected and evaluated constraints and traffic data
- Identified preliminary study area
- Held meetings with property owners and stakeholders
- Study Open House Meeting #1, June 15, 2023
- Study Open House Meeting #2, Dec. 7, 2023

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

2024

- Analyze feedback from Open House #2
- Continue meeting with stakeholders and property owners
- Complete traffic study including traffic modeling, origin/destination study, and operational analysis
 - Includes assessment of potential impacts on local roads and MoPac
- Refine the evaluation and preliminary alignment
- Hold Open House #3 - Present results of the traffic study, route concept, and potential access points
 - Tentatively planned for summer 2024

The SH 45 Gap Study was approved for funding by Hays County in fall of 2022. The study team has collected and evaluated constraints and traffic data, identified the preliminary study area, initiated coordination with study area property owners and local stakeholders, hosted the first open house on June 15, 2023 and is now hosting the second open house meeting.

Looking ahead to 2024, all feedback from the community meeting will be evaluated, additional property owner and stakeholder meetings will be held. The traffic studies and operational analysis will be completed, and the Preliminary Alignment will be refined.

A third open house, anticipated for summer 2024, will be held to present the results of the traffic study, route concept, and potential access points.

Information will continue to be available on the website and shared through email updates. Thank you for your participation and we look forward to hearing from you.