
TxDOT's five goals: reduce congestion • enhance safety • expand economic opportunity
• improve air quality • preserve the value of transportation assets.

TTC-35 No Action Alternative Announcement Frequently Asked Questions

Is the Trans-Texas Corridor dead? As far as TxDOT is concerned, yes. While the Trans-Texas Corridor still exists in state law, TxDOT and the Texas Transportation Commission have taken several steps to shift away from the Trans-Texas Corridor concept.

In May 2008, the Texas Transportation Commission accepted a minute order outlining guiding principles for toll projects and the Trans-Texas Corridor. These principles included affirming that all highway facilities will continue to be completely owned by the state and remain public property, that the Commission must approve initial toll rates and toll rate changes, that existing highway lanes will not be eligible for tolling and that the department must consider the use of existing right of way when possible in environmental studies.

In January 2009, TxDOT laid the Trans-Texas Corridor concept to rest with the publication of *Innovative Connectivity in Texas/Vision 2009*. Rather than developing a corridor as one large project, *Vision 2009* called for shorter segment projects, increased public involvement in early planning efforts and a final solution that revolves around local or regional needs.

The recommendation of no action on the TTC-35 Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) is the first time TxDOT has stepped away from the environmental documents contemplating the TTC concept, and effectively ends efforts to develop the TTC-35.

Why did TxDOT choose to do a two tier environmental process for TTC-35? The two tier environmental study process allowed TxDOT to focus on the bigger, corridor-wide project concept and scope before getting into the very specific details that must be considered in the second tier, where the highway's final alignment would have been determined.

What does "no action alternative" mean? "No action alternative" means, quite simply, that based on the results of their environmental studies, an entity has concluded that, subject to FHWA approval, it is best to take no action to develop or construct a particular project. In this case, TxDOT is recommending to FHWA that we take no action on a 1,200-foot wide, multimodal corridor parallel to I-35 and 600 miles long, between the Texas-Mexico and Texas-Oklahoma borders. This "No action" recommendation does not mean that future improvements to I-35 or constructing highways parallel to or intersecting I-35 will be prohibited. Instead, future efforts to address mobility needs along the I-35 Corridor will follow the principles set forth in the *Innovative Connectivity* document.

Isn't this what you announced in January with *Innovative Connectivity/Vision 2009*? The department's publication of *Innovative Connectivity/Vision 2009* defined a new vision for TxDOT's corridor development processes, but it did not alter any of the existing environmental documents. The decision to recommend the No Action Alternative for the TTC-35 FEIS is in response to the comments received from the public and information gathered during the environmental process. Future efforts to address mobility needs along the I-35 Corridor will follow the principles set forth in the *Innovative Connectivity* document.

Why did it take TxDOT so long to come to the no action recommendation? Environmental reviews, especially for a project of this magnitude can be very lengthy and time-consuming processes. TxDOT received thousands of citizen comments on TTC-35, each of which was carefully read and considered. After analyzing the comments received on TTC-35 and information gathered during the environmental process, TxDOT staff reviewed the available options, and weighed each against the public comments we received. In the end, a no action decision was the right answer for the future of the I-35 Corridor, and for the citizens and communities along it.

What steps remain in the environmental process? It will take another three to six months to complete the TTC-35 Tier One Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS). Once the No Action Alternative is approved by the FHWA, copies of the FEIS will be circulated throughout the study area for comment. After the required review period is completed and the comments are analyzed, the FHWA will issue a Record of Decision (ROD), which will officially conclude the environmental process for TTC-35.

What CDAs are impacted by a no action decision? Only the master development planning CDA executed between TxDOT and Cintra Zachry will be impacted by this no action decision. According to Section 4.4 and Exhibit N of the CDA (available online at http://www.keeptexasmoving.com/index.php/ttc_35_cda), a ROD reflecting no action terminates the CDA.

How much money did TxDOT spend on the TTC-35 environmental process? What will happen to the work? The dollars spent and data gathered during the tier one environmental process will continue to be useful into the future. Through August 31, 2009, TxDOT has spent approximately \$11,824,925.12 on the TTC-35 environmental review process. These funds were a sound investment. By formally completing this process with the federal government, the public comments and analyses conducted during the environmental process may be used in the new, citizen-driven planning effort to improve I-35 and other future project-specific planning efforts.

What will TxDOT do next to address congestion on I-35? In 2001, the Texas Transportation Commission made a commitment to expand I-35 to six untolled lanes from San Antonio to the "Y" in Hillsboro – that commitment still stands. TxDOT will "finish" I-35. We don't yet know exactly how we'll cobble together the needed funds, but they'll come from a variety of sources. TxDOT will also reopen the public involvement process. "Finishing" I-35 will not be enough to relieve the growing congestion experienced by users of the I-35 corridor, and we need help from the public to determine how to address that congestion. In addition, the I-35 Corridor Advisory Committee, building on their previous report, *A Citizens' Report on the Current and Future Needs of the I-35 Corridor* (available at www.keeptexasmoving.com), will recommend to the Commission at its October 2009 meeting their ideas for a better public involvement plan. The department will support their efforts as the Committee sees fit.

How much will these new public involvement efforts on I-35 cost? The objective of these efforts is to engage a cross section of the typical users on I-35. This will require the use of a variety of traditional and some new activities. The committee has not finalized a menu of public involvement options such as business interviews, table-top design and planning workshops, and interactive web mapping. A better estimate of the funding needed may be discussed at the October 29, 2009 Texas Transportation Commission meeting.

Will I-35 be tolled in the future? No existing lanes on IH-35 will be tolled. The I-35 Corridor Advisory Committee, with the help of the four I-35 Segment Committees, will work together to develop a Citizens' Plan for I-35, guided by citizen input and identified local needs. It is possible that some options they identify to provide for expanded capacity could include some tolled elements, but that decision will be based on the developed plan and an analysis of available revenue at that time. Regardless, according to the guiding principles adopted in May 2008, no existing lanes will be subject to tolling.

Who is the corridor advisory committee? What is their charge? In March 2008, 18 citizens were appointed members of the I-35 Corridor Advisory Committee by the Texas Transportation Commission. The Committee includes businessmen, teachers, engineers, landowners and local officials along the I-35 corridor. The purpose of the Committee is to study the impact of corridor-wide issues (including economic, political, societal, demographic population trends, and the use of existing/new/upgraded facilities) on the need for improvements along I-35, and to evaluate multi-modal solutions and financing options to address these needs. The Committee is also charged with making recommendations for corridor planning, development and public involvement processes to enhance the participation by affected communities, governmental entities and interested parties in providing input to TxDOT throughout these studies.

The Committee's report, issued in November 2008, looked at the current and future needs of I-35 and stated that the existing capacity on I-35 would not be sufficient to handle the future traffic demands. In addition, the report included recommendations on the corridor planning, development and public involvement processes.

The Corridor Advisory Committee will establish the citizens' vision and guiding principles for the I-35 corridor and the segment committees will focus on needed improvements in their area. Collaboratively, the Corridor Advisory Committee and the Segment committees will consolidate each regional plan into a comprehensive blueprint for the I-35 Corridor.

How will this impact the future of Loop 9 in North Texas? The No Action Alternative does eliminate Loop 9 – an outer loop planned for the Dallas-Fort Worth area - as a part of TTC-35, but that does not mean Loop 9 will not be built. A smaller project, focused solely on Loop 9, is currently going through environmental review, so it is possible that Loop 9 may be constructed independent of TTC-35. It is also possible that the Citizen's Plan for I-35 may include Loop 9. TxDOT's CDA authority for Loop 9 expires August 31, 2011.

How will this impact the future of SH 130? The ongoing construction of SH 130 segments five and six between Austin and Seguin will continue unaffected by the TTC-35 no action recommendation. This recommendation also does not prohibit the extension of SH 130 north or south of its current (and future) endpoints if needed in the future.

How does this announcement impact I-69? TxDOT's recommendation of the No Action Alternative for TTC-35 has no effect on the department's efforts to develop I-69 by focusing on improving existing infrastructure, as announced in 2008. This recommendation also will not impact the ongoing Tier One environmental process for I-69. The master planning CDA for I-69 conditionally awarded in 2008 is currently undergoing a statutorily required review by multiple state agencies.

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