

## Sample Public Involvement Plan



## Public Involvement Plan

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### Toll 49 Segment 6 from SH 110 to US 271

North East Texas Regional Mobility Authority

**Date:** May 2025

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**County:** Smith County

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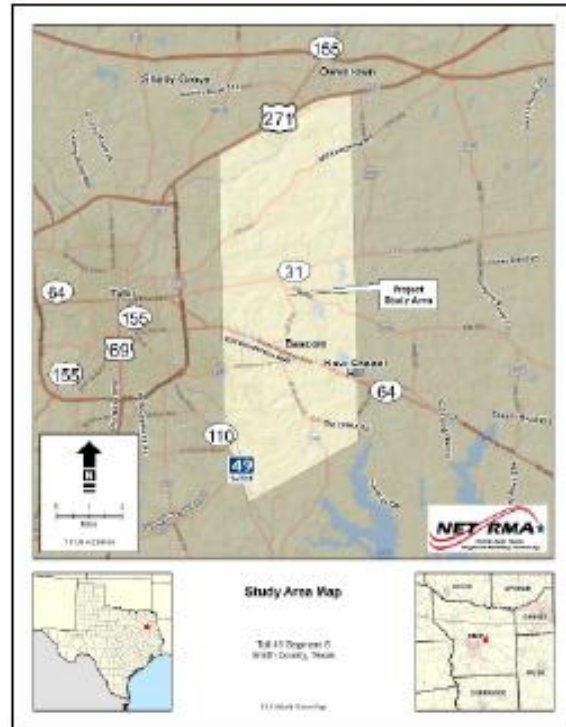
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## NET RMA Mission

The North East Texas Regional Mobility Authority (NET RMA) mission is to implement infrastructure solutions that will enhance the quality of life and the economic environment in our area.

## Project Description and Background

The proposed project would include the construction of a new toll road potentially implemented with an interim and ultimate phase. The interim phase could either be a two-lane controlled access highway or a two-lane with a passing lane-controlled access highway. The ultimate phase would consist of a four-lane divided controlled access highway. The project would require right-of-way acquisition and could be built in segments depending on the availability of funding.



## Project Goal

The goal of the proposed project is to relieve congestion on existing highways and shorten travel times within the study area.

*Proposed Project Study Area*

## Purpose of Public Involvement Plan

Public participation is a critical component of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process. The purpose of this Public Involvement Plan is to describe the public involvement approach the team will take to ensure:

- Proactive engagement with the public, stakeholders, and agencies throughout the process;
- Clear communication of the project goals, alternatives, and potential impacts of the improvements;
- Transparency of the decision-making process and encouragement of active participation;
- Implementation of public involvement strategies that best suit the community; and
- Development of a project design that best meets the needs of the public.

This Public Involvement Plan is subject to change based on the NET RMA scheduling and public needs. Components of the plan—including objectives, issues, stakeholders, strategies, methods, and timelines—will be updated as needed as the project development progresses.

## **Public Involvement Objectives**

The public involvement objectives described below have been developed to initiate early engagement with the public, stakeholders, and agencies; establish effective communication protocols; encourage meaningful participation and collaboration; and elicit feedback.

Key elements of effective public involvement include:

- Initiating early engagement of members of the public, stakeholders, and agencies by reaching out at the beginning of the environmental process;
- Building on existing relationships and lines of communication to ensure continuity and communication of a consistent message;
- Facilitating a collaborative environment to encourage feedback and participation;
- Directly addressing project concerns of the public, stakeholders, and agencies including displacements and relocations; changes in access and mobility; impacts to emergency service response times; bicycle and pedestrian accommodations; changes in mobility associated with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990; construction timeframe, cost, and letting; construction-phase impacts; and other issues;
- Providing adequate notice of public involvement opportunities using multiple methods of communication that are tailored to those anticipated to be affected by the proposed project or with a demonstrated interest in the proposed project;
- Ensuring that public involvement events are held in welcoming, ADA-compliant facilities that are familiar to the public and easy to access;
- Going beyond the standard method of notification of adjacent property owners to include important community facilities and organizations that serve persons with limited English proficiency (LEP) and other special accommodation needs; and
- Defining a detailed public involvement approach while maintaining flexibility throughout the process to allow for adjustments to better suit the public, more effectively communicate information, and gather input.

## **Current Issues to Address**

The need for, purpose of, and objectives of the proposed project have been developed in a collaborative manner to allow for public input on the problems the project should be designed to address.

Currently, traveling along the current roadway network between State Highway (SH) 110 and United States Highway (US) 271 east of Tyler can be a challenge. Data suggests that the current roadway network is inadequate to meet current and future traffic volumes resulting in increasing congestion, inadequate Levels of Service (LOS), and longer travel times.

The project team has identified the following goals that could be addressed by the proposed project:

- Improve LOS on existing roadways
- Shorten travel times



The project team identified potential consequences of not addressing these problems including:

- Poor LOS and longer travel times
- Cost of delays:
  - Quality of life issues
  - Frustration of motorists
  - Lack of mobility options

## **Stakeholders**

In late 2018 to early 2019, the NET RMA conducted a Feasibility Study for Toll 49 Segment 6 with the goal to be community driven. The NET RMA established a Stakeholder Working Group to guide the study and provide locally focused input. Stakeholder working group members included elected officials, city and county representatives, and representatives from other stakeholder groups. The goals and objectives, study area, evaluation criteria, and preliminary route options were developed with input from and the concurrence of the stakeholder working group.

It is the intent of the NET RMA to reconnect with those stakeholders that were involved in the Feasibility Study and additionally those with a demonstrated interest in the proposed project including school districts, community residents and businesses, partnering agencies, LEP populations, and other individuals or groups who may be impacted by and/or interested in the proposed project. A database of project stakeholders will be maintained throughout the project.

## **Tactics, Tools, Roles & Responsibilities**

This section provides an active list of communication tools that will be used throughout the project development phase. The overall strategy includes two public scoping meetings, an agency scoping meeting, a public meeting, and a public hearing as required by NEPA. A proposed timeline of public involvement events is included in this Public Involvement Plan. All public meeting activities will follow the TxDOT Public Involvement Toolkit guidance and be in compliance with the Texas Administrative Code requirements for public involvement. A full implementation timeline is included in the next section of this plan.

### ***In-Person Public Involvement and Comment Methods***

Scoping meetings are a requirement of the NEPA process, involving the public and federal, State, and local agencies that have an interest in or regulatory jurisdiction over the project. Scoping meetings will be conducted to identify important issues for consideration during development of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), among other objectives.

***Public Scoping Meetings***—A virtual public scoping meeting with two in-person options are scheduled to be conducted in Tyler and Longview on May 6 and May 8, 2025, respectively. The Tyler meeting will be held at the Tyler Rose Garden Center, 420 Rose Park Dr., Tyler, TX 76207; and the Longview meeting will be held at the Longview Exhibit Center, 1123 Jaycee Dr., Longview, TX 75604. Both in-person public meeting venues are of adequate capacity with parking and are ADA accessible. Security will also be provided. The virtual public meeting will be available online from May 6 to May 23, 2025. Comments will be accepted at in-person meeting locations as well as via mail, email,

voicemail, or directly online. Materials to be developed will include:

- NET RMA project web page ([www.netrma.org/projects/segement-6](http://www.netrma.org/projects/segement-6))
- Social media posts
- Press release
- Newspaper display ads
- Meeting notice/flyer available online, mailed, and/or emailed to adjacent property owners, stakeholders, elected officials, community facilities, and interested parties
- Postcards
- Comment cards
- Sign-in sheets
- Exhibit boards and displays
- Preliminary route maps
- Project fact sheet for the public
- Nametags
- Wayfinding signs
- PowerPoint public scoping meeting presentation
- LEP materials:
  - Meeting notice/flyer with Spanish language instructions to obtain information in Spanish
  - Spanish-speaking translator present at in-person public scoping meetings
- Internal materials:
  - Frequently asked questions (FAQ) document for meeting staff
  - Facility layout plan(s)
  - Wayfinding plan(s)

Following the public scoping meeting, documentation will be provided per TxDOT guidelines.

***Agency Scoping Meeting***—The agency scoping meeting is planned to be conducted virtually in Spring/Summer 2025. Following the agency scoping meeting, documentation will be provided per TxDOT guidelines.

***Public Meeting***—A virtual public meeting with an in-person option will provide a status on the development of the project and an opportunity for the public to give input on their comments and concerns for the proposed project. The in-person public meeting venue will provide adequate capacity and parking and be ADA accessible. Security will also be provided. The virtual public meeting will be posted per the date and time indicated in the notice and will remain online for the entire 15-calendar day comment period or longer. Comments will be accepted at the in-person meeting location as well as via mail, email, voicemail, or directly online. Materials to be developed will include:

- NET RMA project web page
- Social media posts
- Press release
- Newspaper display ads

- Meeting notice/flyer available online, mailed, and/or emailed to adjacent property owners, stakeholders, elected officials, community facilities, and interested parties
- Postcards
- Comment cards
- Sign-in sheets
- Exhibit boards and displays
- Reasonable Alternative maps
- Project fact sheet for the public
- Nametags
- Wayfinding signs
- PowerPoint public meeting presentation
- LEP materials:
  - Meeting notice/flyer with Spanish language instructions to obtain additional information in Spanish
  - Spanish-speaking translator present at in-person public meeting
- Internal materials:
  - Frequently asked questions (FAQ) document for meeting staff
  - Facility layout plan
  - Wayfinding plan

Following the public meeting, documentation will be provided per TxDOT guidelines.

**Public Hearing**—A virtual public hearing with in-person option is tentatively scheduled to occur in Spring 2028. During the in-person public hearing, a formal presentation will be given, followed by a comment period for those who wish to provide their comments verbally. The public hearing will provide a time for the public and stakeholders to review the proposed improvements and environmental documents and provide comments and feedback. The public hearing venue will provide adequate capacity and parking and be ADA accessible. Security will also be provided. The virtual public hearing will be posted per the date and time indicated in the notice and will remain online for the entire 15-calendar day comment period or longer. Comments will be accepted at the in-person hearing location as well as via mail, email, voicemail, or directly online. Materials to be developed will include:

- NET RMA project web page
- Social media posts
- Press release
- Newspaper display ads
- Hearing notice/flyer available online, mailed, and/or emailed to adjacent property owners, stakeholders, elected officials, community facilities, and interested parties
- Comment cards
- Sign-in sheets
- Exhibit boards and displays
- Preferred Alternative maps
- Project fact sheet for the public



- Nametags
- Wayfinding signs
- PowerPoint public hearing presentation
- Media packets
- LEP materials:
  - Hearing notice/flyer with Spanish language instructions to obtain information in Spanish
  - Spanish-speaking translator present at in-person public hearing
- Internal materials:
  - Frequently asked questions (FAQ) document for hearing staff
  - Facility layout plan
  - Wayfinding plan

As verbal comments will be accepted at the in-person option for the public hearing, a court reporter will be present to transcribe the hearing and verbal comments. Following the public hearing, documentation will be prepared per TxDOT guidelines.

### ***Information and Notification Methods***

***Mailout Notices***—Notices will be mailed to adjacent property owners, elected officials, interested parties, and stakeholders. Important community facilities and organizations will also receive a notice and will be contacted to offer additional copies of the notice (in English and/or Spanish as applicable) to distribute to members of the public. Additionally, postcards will be utilized to target residents of adjacent or nearby neighborhoods.

***Social Media Content***—The NET RMA will utilize social media platforms (e.g., Facebook and X) and media activities, such as press releases and media advisories, to appropriately distribute public information and advertise public input opportunities.

***Newspaper Advertisements***—Notifications will be published in the newspapers 15 days prior to each public involvement event. Affidavits of publication and/or tear sheets will be obtained from each newspaper as proof of publication.

***Media Relations***—The project team will provide project information to the local media. A press release will be created to promote coverage of the meetings. Materials will also be gathered for the media, as needed. Notices and/or display advertisements for all public involvement events will be placed in local newspapers. Media kits will be available at the in-person public hearing.

***Changeable Message Signs***—The NET RMA may elect to utilize changeable message signs for display of project information and the date and location of upcoming meetings.

***Comment Processing***—Comments received during the comment period will be entered into a comment database. A comment-response matrix will be developed for the public meetings and public hearing. The matrix will follow the guidelines and templates set forth in TxDOT's Public



Involvement Toolkit and will be included in the documentation for each public involvement event, which in turn will be posted to the project web page.

### ***Specific Areas of Environmental Concern***

***Limited English Proficiency***—Individuals who have a limited proficiency in reading, writing, or understanding the English language are considered to have limited English proficiency (LEP). Executive Order 13166 “Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency” requires agencies to examine the services they provide; identify the need for services to LEP persons; and develop and implement a system to provide those services so that LEP persons can have meaningful access to them.

To improve access for LEP populations, the following measures will be taken, if needed or as required:

- Meeting notice/flyers and comment forms will include Spanish language instructions to obtain additional information in Spanish
- Spanish translators will be present at the in-person public meetings and hearing
- Translation services will be available upon request
- Additional locations or organizations will be identified for outreach and to post or disseminate public meeting details (e.g., churches, community centers, community service facilities)

### ***Timeline***

The following timeline presents a preliminary public involvement schedule, intended to support the overall project design and delivery process. It is assumed that environmental clearance will be achieved by Summer 2029, and all dates have been derived from this goal. A proposed timeline follows:

Task	Responsible Party	Assisting Party	Deadline
Develop public involvement plan	Consultants	NET RMA	Ongoing
Public Scoping Meetings	Consultants	NET RMA	May 2025
Prepare public scoping meeting documentation	Consultants	Consultants	30 days following meeting
Agency Scoping Meeting	Consultants	Consultants	Spring/Summer 2025
Prepare agency scoping meeting documentation	Consultants	Consultants	30 days following meeting
Public Meeting	Consultants	NET RMA	mid-2026
Prepare public meeting documentation including comment and response matrix	Consultants	Consultants	30 days following meeting
Public hearing	Consultants	NET RMA	mid-2028
Prepare public hearing summary and analysis including comment and response matrix	Consultants	Consultants	30 days following hearing

*Note: This proposed timeline is subject to change.*

## **Evaluation**

Public involvement efforts will be tracked to ensure effective and efficient communication. If the public involvement methods are determined to be insufficient or ineffective, the methods will be modified to the extent necessary. The following components of the public involvement process will be evaluated:

- Number of public meetings and hearings conducted
- Number of registered attendees at each public involvement event versus number of notices distributed
- Number of informational materials distributed
- Number of public comments received per public involvement event
- Evaluation of how public comments were used in the decision-making process
- Number of public recommendations used throughout project development

## **Notes**

### *Media Request Protocol*

The media will seek information from multiple sources. These will potentially include project team members, neighborhoods, businesses, or other stakeholders within the project area. Media requests for information internal to the project team will be directed to Mitzi Ellison, President of Nancy Ledbetter Associates (NLA), at (512) 761-2711.

### *Approval Process for Communication Products*

Any communication product (e.g., notice, fact sheet) created by a consultant must go through a multi-level QA/QC review prior to the approval process.

## **Project Team**

### *Primary Project Contacts*

John Goodwin, P.E.  
Lochner, Senior Project Manager  
(903) 581-7844  
jgoodwin@hwlochner.com

Deanne Simmons, P.E.  
North East Texas Regional Mobility Authority, Director of Engineering  
(903) 630-9100  
deanne.simmons@netrma.org

Mitzi Ellison  
NLA, President  
(512) 761-2711  
mitzi@nancyledbetter.com

Jason Buntz  
Hicks & Company, NEPA Task Lead  
(512) 478-0858  
jbuntz@hicksenv.com

Jenise Scherff  
Hicks & Company, Senior NEPA Specialist  
(512) 478-0858  
jscherff@hicksenv.com

Nellie Bennett  
TxDOT Environmental Affairs Division, Project Manager  
(512) 416-3001  
Nellie.Bennett@txdot.gov  
Note: For NEPA Review Purposes Only

*Reminder: This public involvement plan is a living document that is subject to change, based on public needs. The plan may be updated at any time to add or remove objectives, stakeholders, strategies, or methods as needed to adapt to new and changing circumstances as project development progresses.*