

# Toll 49, Segment 6 Feasibility Study

## Frequently Asked Questions



NOVEMBER 8, 2019

### **What is the history of the feasibility study?**

At a December 2018 Public Workshop, more than 50 route suggestions were created by members of the public. Using these routes and the evaluation criteria, the study team identified six routes to study further. At a June 2019 Public Workshop, the study team presented the six proposed route options to be evaluated, which we call Purple, Yellow, Teal, Pink, Blue, and Orange.

Extensive public input on each route has been received by the study team. Several routes or adjustments to routes were suggested by the public, while others were adjusted due to engineering and environmental considerations. Each potential route option was measured against a comprehensive set of evaluation criteria.

### **How were the routes evaluated?**

Each potential route option was measured against a comprehensive set of evaluation criteria which included potential impacts to private property, environmental features, water resources, public input, traffic data, and construction cost – among many other criteria.

These criteria were developed in collaboration with a stakeholder working group which included participants from the city of Tyler, Smith County, local school districts, TxDOT, and emergency services. The criteria were also presented at both public workshops for comment and review.

### **What were the results of the feasibility study?**

As a result of the data-driven evaluation process, the following three routes will move forward into the next phase of evaluation: the Purple Route, an Adjusted Yellow Route, and an Adjusted Teal Route. These three routes had the three highest scores in the evaluation compared to all other routes evaluated.

### **Why were the Yellow and Teal routes adjusted?**

The original Yellow and Teal routes each had one location adjustment to avoid roadway intersections that were not deemed reasonable to construct. The Teal route was also adjusted to avoid the Texas Parks and Wildlife Nature Center.

### **Why isn't the "green" route in the top three?**

Several routes or adjustments to routes were suggested by members of the public, including one that is called the green route by others. The study team evaluated the green route the same way the six proposed route options were analyzed against a comprehensive set of evaluation criteria. In the feasibility study report, it is called the "public" route. The detailed technical analysis showed that this route did not measure up to the top three routes and it will not move forward into further consideration.

### **Why aren't the eastern routes (Pink, Blue, and Orange) in the top three?**

The eastern routes that we identified and studied did not rank as well as the western routes. Pink had the second highest number of potential residential relocations of all routes evaluated. Pink, Blue, and Orange had higher estimated construction costs and lower estimated traffic demand compared with the western routes. The eastern routes had considerably lower scores in the evaluation regarding public preference. In addition, the Blue and Orange routes were disqualified due to the discovery of a cemetery and major radio towers on the routes. We reviewed an adjustment of the Blue route to avoid those constraints to see if it would score higher, but it still did not score high enough for further consideration.

### **When is the next public meeting held by the study team?**

The study team will host the next public meeting in Spring 2020 to kick off the Environmental Impact Statement.

### **Is the study team taking public input into consideration?**

Yes. Public involvement is a critical component to the NET RMA's efforts to identify the best possible route option, and the study team welcomes all comments from the community as we move forward through this process.

### **Will changes and adjustments to routes continue to occur moving forward?**

Route options are subject to change. The three route options moving forward for evaluation in the Environmental Impact Statement are not final. The proposed route options are subject to change as we move forward through the study process. There is much the study team has still to identify, review, and analyze as part of the process.

### **What are the next steps?**

After the feasibility study is complete, the NET RMA will move into an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), in which the three routes and a no build (or "do nothing") alternative will be further reviewed and thoroughly evaluated. An EIS is the most robust and rigorous study there is for transportation projects and follows the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA). Based on the study data and public input, one route option will be recommended as the build alternative. A final decision on what could potentially be built is anticipated in 2022.

Elements of the EIS study include: socioeconomic resources; water resources; ecological resources; vegetation, wildlife, and threatened and endangered species; hazardous materials; and traffic noise, among others. Similar to the feasibility study phase, the evaluation of impacts to private property will be an important consideration in the EIS.

### **When will we know which of the three routes is recommended to move forward?**

We anticipate identifying the recommended route, or build alternative, in 2021. It will likely be a variation of the three route options from the feasibility study.

### **Who makes the final decision?**

At the end of the Environmental Impact Statement process, one route option will be recommended as what is called the build alternative. As assigned by the Federal Highway Administration, the Texas Department of Transportation's Environmental Affairs Division will review the Final Environmental Impact Statement and make the decision if the build alternative or the no build ('do nothing') alternative moves forward. We anticipate this decision occurring in 2022.

If the build alternative is approved, then the NET RMA Board of Directors will vote if the agency will or will not move the project into the next phases (final design, right of way acquisition, utility adjustment, and construction).

### **What would the project consist of?**

The proposed project would consist of the design and construction of an interim two-lane (one lane in each direction) roadway with intermittent passing lanes. The ultimate design includes four lanes (two in each direction) with either a grassy median or a concrete barrier.

### **How can I learn more and get involved?**

For more information and to contact the study team, visit [www.netrma.org/projects/segment-6](http://www.netrma.org/projects/segment-6) or call the hotline at 903-594-4831.

We plan to have at least two public meetings and one public hearing during the Environmental Impact Statement process. In the meantime, please ask questions, sign up for updates, request a one-on-one meeting, or request a presentation for your organization, business, or neighborhood. We are happy to take questions and comments throughout this process.