

Plan Approved Connecting Loop 49 To Other Major Thoroughfares

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The board overseeing development of Loop 49 has approved a plan it hopes will speed construction.

In a meeting Monday, North East Texas Regional Mobility Authority approved developing an approximately 9.5-mile stretch of the toll road that will link Texas Highway 31 to Interstate 20 using the design-build process.

With design-build, the contractor assumes responsibility for the project through both the design and construction phases. Highway projects more traditionally use a design-bid-build process in which the agency contracts separately for design and construction services.

NET RMA will now draft a Design-Build Comprehensive Development Agreement and related technical documents and loan applications, the board announced in a news release.

The design-build option will allow construction to begin before the design is complete, the announcement said.

"In addition to a faster construction time, the design - build process also transfers the project risk from the RMA to the contractor," NET RMA Chairman Jeff Austin III said in a prepared statement. "Our team has done a great job in laying out all of our options, and we want to choose the process that will use our money most efficiently while getting the project on the ground quickly."

The board also announced it approved work on the 3.4-mile extension of Loop 571 in Rusk County. The work will include right-of-way procurement; environmental surveys, reports and permits; and engineering coordination and management.

Texas Department of Transportation is providing project design and utility services for the project.