

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is the purpose of the Dripping Springs Southwest Connection Study?

The purpose of the study is to identify a route that will extend RM 150 from the intersection of RM 12 at RM 150 and connect to US 290 west of Dripping Springs. The objective is to develop a conceptual plan and preliminary engineering analysis (also known as a pre-schematic plan, or 20% engineering plan) to identify a feasible route for the new connection. This type of study not only helps to identify a feasible route for new connections, but also helps to further define the scopes of work that will be needed to perform required environmental and schematic design studies and, ultimately, full design studies. Detailed analyses of traffic, right-of-way needs, and environmental resources are typically performed at the environmental and schematic phases.

This study is being conducted to:

- Identify a route for a new roadway facility that will be preserved over time, and that considers current and future development in and around the area as growth and development continues and as travel patterns continue to evolve.
- Plan proactively and thoughtfully to get ahead of development, which will bring more people and vehicles to and through the area, resulting in greater demand for roadway capacity and a need for other transportation options. If nothing is done to plan for these increases until they are realized, retrofitted solutions will have to be made around developments, making the solutions more time-consuming, expensive, and impactful to owners of developed and undeveloped land.
- Keep travel safe and efficient.
- Consider alternative travel options and mitigate congestion on US 290 and on smaller local roads in and around Dripping Springs.
- Identify opportunities to preserve environmental qualities including water quality in creeks and streams by managing runoff from the road.

Identifying ample right-of-way early on gives the County flexibility and space to design the best drainage solution for the road, rather than being constrained by future development to a narrow right-of-way and limited options to treat stormwater.

How was the need for the Dripping Springs Southwest Connection Study identified?

Several previous plans and studies identified the need for additional roadway capacity south and west of Dripping Springs:

[The Hays County Transportation Plan](#), adopted in 2013, identified the need for connections from the intersection at RM 12 and RM 150 to the south and connect to US 290 at Roger Hanks Parkway. Additionally, the plan identified the need to realign the intersection at RM 12 and RM 150 to provide the connection for an extension of RM 150 to the west.

[The RM 150 West Character Plan](#), completed in 2017, identified needed improvements at the intersection of RM 12 and RM 150 and indicated a preference by the public for a roundabout rather than a traditional four-way signalized intersection.

[The Hays County Transportation Plan](#), updated in 2021, identified a needed connection from the intersection at RM 12 and RM 150 to extend west, and connect to US 290 west of Dripping Springs near Holder Lane.

[The City of Dripping Springs Transportation Master Plan](#), adopted in 2014 and 2018, identified a possible new roadway, which would create a connection at Holder Lane and 290.

The Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO) is responsible for coordinating regional transportation planning and the distribution of state and federal transportation funding for our six-county region in Central Texas, which includes Hays County. CAMPO projects future population and employment growth in the central Texas region and utilizes the data to update its travel demand model, which estimates future travel demand in the region.

This information is used by counties and cities in the region for their own plans and concept studies, such as the Dripping Springs Southwest Connection Study. The outputs of the regional travel demand model, included in the [2040 and 2045 Regional Transportation Plans](#), were used to identify changes in travel demand and the resulting needs for the development of the plans noted above. It is important to note that the review of the travel demand model date for the plans and studies noted above is not the sole determinant of need.

Importance of Planning Ahead:

Regional planning with an understanding of the local context is extremely important for a fast-growing region because it recognizes that cities and counties are impacted by growth, employment, and transportation changes outside of their own jurisdictions. As one of the fastest-growing metropolitan areas in the country, the Central Texas region benefits from regional planning because it reduces the impacts of needed transportation infrastructure by beginning the planning for it sooner rather than later and because it can better position itself to obtain state and federal funding used for the most needed transportation and mobility projects. It also helps ensure thoughtful planning for growth, improve safety; provide a thoughtful network of transportation and mobility options in the region, and improve the quality of life.

What are the growth projections for this area?

The CAMPO 2045 Regional Transportation Plan, adopted in 2020, estimated a 267% increase in the number of residents and a 221% increase in employment for Hays County by 2045, the second highest in the region. For more information, please visit campotexas.org or view the 2045 Plan [online](#).

Who is conducting this study and what does it include?

The Hays County Commissioners Court and the Hays County Transportation Department contracted a consultant team led by K Friese + Associates (KFA) in late 2019 to conduct the Dripping Springs Southwest Connection Study. The study will identify a feasible footprint for a future roadway from the intersection of RM 12 and RM 150 southwest of Dripping Springs to US 290. The study includes coordinating with property owners and other local stakeholders and providing preliminary engineering for the future roadway. The study is funded by the County's Transportation Department.

What is included and not included in the scope of this initial 20% study?

The objective of this study is to perform a preliminary analysis of the area to identify a feasible route for the new connection. For this study, the technical team reviewed readily available data to conduct what is commonly referred to as a desktop analysis. The team also consulted with property owners and community members to identify environmental and other features that should be considered as part of this study.

The roadway footprint (alignment) identified by this study will be used by the County to advance the project through the next phases of development once funding is identified. These phases would be the schematic and environmental study phase (which will include specific studies such as a traffic study and additional community outreach and input); the final design, and then ultimately construction.

Is TxDOT also planning to improve US 290?

As a federal highway, US 290 is managed and maintained by the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT). TxDOT is currently conducting studies to improve US 290, and it is anticipated that US 290 will be a limited access highway in the future. As a complement to this work, the County is planning for local connections that will help provide increased mobility options as the region continues to grow. In addition, the City of Dripping Springs has developed a transportation plan that, as it is implemented will provide more local connections specific to its needs.

Why has the route changed and why was the Holder Lane connection removed?

The evaluation of initially proposed routes, meetings with property owners and the community, and information about the area and physical features, resulted in modification and refinement of the potential route and connections to existing roadways.

The Holder Lane connection was dropped from consideration because:

- It would require crossing the floodplain at one of its largest extents.
- There are a large number of properties and several structures along the existing road that could be directly impacted.
- There were other options identified by the technical team that would impact the floodplain less, directly impact fewer structures, and directly impact fewer properties.
- When the connection to US 290 via Holder Lane was first considered, improvements to Martin Road were imminent, which changed where a connection to US 290 should be considered.

Can Fitzhugh Road be used instead of a new road?

It is anticipated that Fitzhugh Road will be expanded at some point in the future as an additional source of capacity to serve local and through traffic to the north of US 290, in addition to the Southwest Connection providing additional capacity south of US 290. Possible future improvements to Fitzhugh as well as improvements to other roadways in the area are considered a complementing effort rather than efforts to replace one another.

Can Prochnow Road be used?

Prochnow Road was considered but because of its meandering nature, sharp curves, limited right-of-way, and the number of structures that would potentially be directly impacted it was not included for further evaluation. This also holds true for most of Creek Road.

How much right-of-way will be needed and what will the road look like?

The road is planned to be a four-lane divided roadway (two lanes in each direction with a median in the middle). This study considers a 200-foot-wide right-of-way to provide four travel lanes, facilities for bicyclists and pedestrians; drainage improvements; potential elevation changes between the two directions, and landscaping elements. The details of how these elements will look within the right-of-way will be determined when the project moves into the environmental analysis and schematic design following this study.

How will Onion Creek and water quality be protected?

As this study moves into the next phases of design, the details as to how run-off will be captured, treated, and conveyed will be developed and shared with the community.

Water quality is important to the County and opportunities to preserve water quality in creeks and streams can be identified. The drainage design for the road will consider improvements to handle stormwater runoff in general.

What will be done to preserve dark skies?

The County will design and plan in accordance with dark sky requirements and has been coordinating with the Driftwood Historical Conservation Society for additional opportunities to preserve dark skies.

What will be done to reduce noise impacts?

Reducing noise and environmental impacts is important to Hays County. More detailed studies are conducted later in the process in the environmental and schematic design phase.

Is there funding to conduct environmental and engineering studies?

The County has not yet identified funding for the schematic design and environmental phase of work. Sources of funding could potentially include county, state, and/or federal sources. These studies are required for the project to move forward.

When bisecting a property or changing an entrance, how would you provide access to the property?

The County is required to provide access to all properties, including those that may be bisected, or, if access is not available, to provide compensation. Further, the County and technical team realize how important access is to all affected property owners, considering both their own access and livestock/ranching needs. These details and issues are addressed in subsequent design phases and negotiated in the right-of-way acquisition process.

What will it cost to build this road considering the topography and large floodplains?

A cost estimate has not been developed. The preliminary engineering completed during this study will produce a rough estimated cost to construct the roadway. A more precise total cost estimate would be determined during the schematic and environmental phase and refined during the final design phase.

When does the County make the final decision to construct the road?

This study is currently only funded through the conceptual plan and preliminary engineering phase. When considering when to move forward into future phases, the County will analyze transportation needs (based on safety and mobility), priorities (which projects need to move forward first), and available funding (County funds and opportunities for state and federal funds). The final decision would be made after additional studies are conducted, including a schematic design process with a formal traffic study and a formal environmental study. This would be the final step in determining whether to construct the road or not.

Will the community be voting on using our tax dollars for this project?

Hays County could potentially choose to move forward with a future bond to fund this project and other transportation priorities, in which case a county-wide vote would occur.

What is the timeline for the study and what are the next steps?

The team will continue to meet with property owners and stakeholders to gather information. There will also be additional meetings with the Citizen Advisory Panel to review progress and share updates.

In early 2022, there will be a second Public Meeting and Open Comment Period where additional information will be shared, and community members will have the opportunity to provide input. This study will be complete in 2022. No other funding or timeline for additional work has been identified.

Funding for additional environmental studies, schematic design, and construction has not been identified. Generally, once funded, the schematic, environmental and full design phases could take anywhere from 3 to 7+ years. The right of way negotiation process occurs after schematic design. However, once this study is complete, if property owners want to consider early right-of-way negotiations, they can coordinate with the County.

Dripping Springs Southwest Connection Study

Conducted by Hays County

PROCESS & TIMELINE

2013 - 2021 | Identifying the Need for the Dripping Springs Southwest Connection

The need for additional roadway capacity south and west of Dripping Springs has been identified in the following plans and studies:

- 2013 and 2021 Hays County Transportation Plans
- 2017 RM 150 West Character Plan
- 2014, 2018 and 2021 City of Dripping Springs Transportation Master Plan

2019 - 2022 | Dripping Springs Southwest Connection Study

● Late 2019

- Hays County contracted K Friese + Associates as lead consultants for the study

● 2020

- Collected and evaluated data; developed draft route concepts
- Citizens Advisory Panel (CAP) members identified

● 2021

- January - March | 3 CAP meetings
- March 22 - April 9 | Virtual Open Comment Period #1
- Reviewed public input and revised route
- June | CAP Meeting
- 36 meetings with property owners and stakeholders to share updated route and receive input
- December | CAP Meeting

● 2022

- Coordinate additional meetings with property owners and stakeholders
- Review public input and revise route
- Spring | Open House and Open Comment Period #2
- Revise and finalize route
- Present study to Commissioners Court

2023 - 2033 | Next Steps

The funding and timeline planning for a roadway typically adheres to the following process:

- Identify funding for environmental studies and schematic design
- Select team to conduct environmental studies and schematic design
- Conduct public involvement, traffic studies, evaluations, and coordination with property owners
- Conduct right-of-way negotiations and acquisition
- Finalize detailed design (also known as Plans Specifications & Estimates, or PS&E)
- Identify funding for construction: potential sources include TxDOT, state or federal funds administered by CAMPO, and local County funds (potentially a bond)
- Establish construction timeline

Throughout this process, the need for additional roadway capacity is continually evaluated as the County reviews changes in growth, County priorities, and available funds. The anticipated timeline is shared for general information. Next steps will be further defined as the study moves forward and funding is identified.