

SH 29 Frequently Asked Questions

Please find answers below to questions received at the SH 29 Study Open House held at Liberty Hill High School on August 4th. These were the most frequently asked questions after reviewing the feedback and are focused on the study in general. Other questions received were specific to property owners or isolated issues and are being answered on an individual basis.

Why does the County need to purchase right-of-way along SH 29?

Transportation issues are vital because of Williamson County's steady and continuous growth; we have been the second or third-fastest-growing county in the state for the last seven years. And, several of our cities have experienced phenomenal growth. Georgetown grew from a city of 28,000 in 2000 to more than 48,000 today. Hutto was home to 1,250 people in 2000, but more than 17,000 people call it home today.

Another example is the City of Cedar Park. It began planning for Hwy.183A in the early 1980s in preparation of projected growth in the area (in 1990, the City of Leander had a population of 3,398; today it has more than 30,000 people). Today, Hwy.183A carries more than 55,000 vehicles per day.

So, with this in mind and as we look toward the future, our County must plan in smart and prudent ways. Today, approximately 20,000 new residences have already been platted in the surrounding area; that translates into 50,000 to 60,000 more people who would use SH 29 in the next 20 years.

More is anticipated, and as people continue to move in, more traffic stoplights will be needed. Take for example, FM 1431 – because of rapid growth, 10 stoplights have been added in the last eight years.

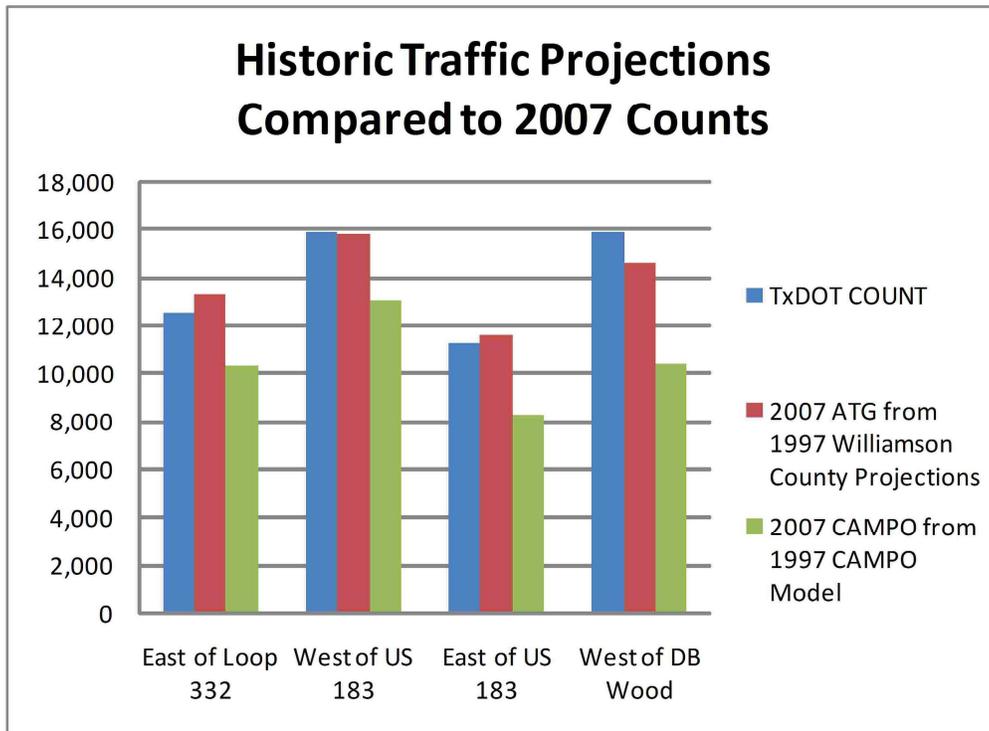
By working to preserve options today, we are able to focus on the purchase of land, rather than the purchase of land and buildings in an effort to reduce the cost to our taxpayers. Also, planning today will displace fewer businesses and residents as compared to waiting for years to make these decisions. We believe that by informing people today about where the road will go in the future – at least 15 years into the future – everyone can plan better.

This SH 29 expansion will NOT be built until it is needed; construction would take place only when overall traffic volumes significantly increase, resulting in traffic congestion at both peak and non-peak periods. SH 29, at the time of construction, would have both frontage roads for safety and express lanes with no stoplights or driveways. We estimate that the road would not be built for at least 15 years, depending on traffic counts and safety issues along the highway.

Who did the County's traffic projections for the SH 29 Study?

Alliance Transportation Group (ATG) was the traffic engineer hired by the County for the project; the firm has been projecting traffic counts throughout the country for the last 20 years. Attached is a chart that shows Williamson County's 10-year traffic projections for 1997 and the actual TxDOT traffic count for 2007.

As you can see by the chart, the projections are extremely accurate.



How will the decision be made to construct the State Highway 29 expansion?

The SH 29 expansion will NOT be built until it is needed; construction would take place only when overall traffic volumes significantly increase, resulting in traffic congestion at both peak and non-peak periods. We estimate that the road would not be built for at least 15 years, depending on traffic counts and safety issues along the highway.

Road construction projects for state highways, such as Highway 29, are submitted to the Capital Area Planning Metropolitan Organization (CAMPO) for consideration and approval of state and federal funding. In its decisions last fall, CAMPO evaluated each project using criteria including traffic counts, number of traffic signals, delays at signals, safety issues, security and emergency readiness, the project's role in a comprehensive transportation system and, of course, available funding for construction and maintenance. Once a road project receives approval from CAMPO, state and federal funds can be used to construct the expansion. When it comes time for construction, our community should work with TxDOT and CAMPO to find funding from state and federal sources, if possible.

How can you use 2006 Road Bond funds for the Highway 29 Study when it wasn't specifically listed in the precincts' priority projects? And, how can the County use those funds to acquire right-of-way for SH 29?

SH 29 Study

The Road Bond Program budget approved by voters in 2006 outlined several specific projects for each precinct; it also set aside funds for safety and mobility projects, environmental mitigation and state highway projects. In fact, \$10.0 million dollars was allocated to the state highway project category; the study is funded by this category.

Right-of-Way Acquisition

The County will talk with willing sellers along the selected alignment to begin purchasing property at fair-market value. These purchases would be funded through money specifically identified for State Highway or TxDOT projects in the 2006 Bond Program and would require approval by the Commissioners' Court. However, much of the funding for purchase of property would come from future road-bond programs, which would be voted on by the citizens of Williamson County.