

**FM 2920/Main Street
Town Hall
March 31, 2022
Community Q&A**

GENERAL PROJECT QUESTIONS

Q: Is this project already set in stone?

A: The FM 2920 reconstruction project was selected and approved for funding because of the project's improvements to safety and mobility in the corridor. Any change to the project, such as removal of the medians, would be considered a material change to the approved project. However, due to the community feedback, TXDOT and the City are exploring options to see if we can still facilitate the needed improvements using alternative designs or safety enhancements. No final decision related to the medians or the design of the project have been finalized.

Q: What is the timeline for this project? When will construction begin?

A: The FM 2920 reconstruction project is still in the preliminary design phase. Once we complete the preliminary design, we will move forward to the PS&E phase (plans, specifications, and estimates). Then, when the engineering design is completed, the project will be go out for bids. We do not anticipate the project being ready for construction until 2024.

Q: Do Tomball citizens actually have a say in whether this project happens?

A: Absolutely. We held the Town Hall meeting on March 31 to specifically get feedback from the community on the project. This project was also developed through various studies, such as the FM 2920 Access Management Study and the Downtown Tomball Livable Center Plan, which provided many opportunities for public input. We encourage residents, businesses, and all stakeholders to stay engaged in the process and provide feedback. We'll continue to post updates on the project webpage here, <https://tomballtx.gov/694/FM-2920Main-Street-Reconstruction-Projec>. The contact information for the project managers is also available on the project site.

Q: Will the City help businesses during construction?

A: Construction can be hard on businesses, and we fully understand the challenges that it creates for our community. The City of Tomball, Tomball Economic Development Corporation (TEDC), and the Greater Tomball Area Chamber of Commerce (GTACC) will explore opportunities to assist businesses during construction. One of the efforts we've already discussed includes making needed improvements to the alleyways in downtown Tomball. The alleyways can provide alternative access to businesses when Main Street is under construction. In addition, we will coordinate with businesses to minimize the impacts of the construction as much as possible.

Q: How long will it take to re-open FM 2920 after construction?

A: While we don't expect construction to begin until 2024, it may take about 18 months to complete the entire project. When we design the project, we'll work with TXDOT to coordinate construction activities and request that construction doesn't interfere with key events or festivals.

Q: How will the construction or the project impact parades?

A: We know how important the annual Holiday Parade, and other community parades, are to Tomball. We will work with TXDOT to have the roadway as open as possible for parades during construction. Once completed, we do not expect any impact to the parades based on the project's design.

Q: Will alley construction be finished before the FM 2920 construction begins so that people have a way to access shops during construction?

A: We are working to have construction of the alleyways completed prior to the start of construction on Main Street. This will provide alternative access to many businesses during construction and will help implement the Livable Centers Downtown Plan.

Q: Who is in charge of alleys? Are businesses looking at 4 years of construction?

A: The City of Tomball manages the alleyways north and south of Main Street. The City is responsible for all maintenance and reconstruction of the alleyways; however, the City is working with TEDC and Harris County to complete various components of the alleyway design and improvements. Reconstruction of each segment/block of the alleyways is anticipated to take 4 to 6 weeks, but the schedule will be dependent on weather and working around special events to limit impacts. We will coordinate the reconstruction and alleyway improvements with the business owners to ensure they have the information needed during construction. The amount of funding available to complete the projects will be a factor in how quickly the project can be completed.

Q: How much right-of-way (ROW) needs to be obtained for this project? Will any businesses or structures be acquired or damaged to ROW needs?

A: As with many projects, there is some ROW that will need to be acquired from property owners. However, we anticipate a very small amount (about 1 acre total), along the frontage of some properties and corner clips at intersections, will be needed. Based on the preliminary design, we do not anticipate the project to impact any structures. However, this will not be finalized until the design is further along.

Q: Where will traffic be diverted during construction? Will traffic be pushed onto residential streets?

A: Appropriate detours and alternative routes will be needed during certain phases of construction. However, the project will allow us to keep main lanes of FM 2920 partially open throughout construction, which will limit the traffic pushed onto other streets. Where detours or other routes are used, we'll coordinate with our public safety partners to make sure that traffic impacts are limited.

Q: Can the citizens get signatures to let citizens vote on this and not city council?

A: There is not a legal mechanism to petition to put this on the ballot for an election.

Q: What are the next steps for this project?

A: Since the project has been approved by TXDOT and funding has been awarded, the next step is for TXDOT and the City to enter into an advance funding agreement (AFA). AFAs are the official contracts that outline the scope of the project, assign responsibilities between the agencies, and determine which agency will pay for various project components. Following the execution of the AFAs, engineering design on the project can begin.

Q: What will the speed limit be once the project is completed?

A: The speed limit is currently 30 mph through this section of FM 2920 and we do not anticipate any changes following the reconstruction.

Q: Can the money for this project be used for public safety instead of the roadway construction?

A: This project is funded through federal and state gas tax dollars, which cannot be used for police or other public safety functions. Federal law requires the money be used for roadway improvements.

Q: What will happen when we have big events during construction?

A: We know how important special events are to Tomball and our goal is to limit the impacts to these events as much as possible during the reconstruction. We will work with TXDOT to have the roadway as open as possible for special events during construction. Once completed, we do not expect any impact to any special events based on the project's design.

Q: When was the grant to fund the project approved? Who wrote the grant? Can it be amended?

A: This project has a long history, starting back in 2007 when the Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC) initiated an Access Management Study for FM 2920, from US 290 to IH-45. During that study, it was determined that additional attention was needed in Tomball, which led to the Tomball Livable Centers Downtown Plan. Once both of those studies were adopted, the City of Tomball submitted the reconstruction of FM 2920 from Business 249 to Willow Street as part of the H-GAC call for projects in 2015 and was awarded \$28.1 million. At the time, the City also committed \$3 million to the project as the required local participation.

The approved reconstruction project included: relocation and replacement of utilities, removal of asphalt roadway and reconstruction as concrete roadway, and continuous sidewalks through the entire corridor; improvements to intersection and addition of elevated medians (the current proposal includes only a portion of the medians proposed in the Access Management Study) at intersection of Business 249 and FM 2920; addition of medians from Pine Street to railroad tracks to improve safety and pedestrian connectivity (as adopted in the Access Management Study); new mast arm traffic signals and black powder-coated vehicular and pedestrian light poles;

synchronization of traffic signals; and additional aesthetic improvements, such as improved lighting, landscaping, and pavers.

Based on the feedback received from the community, the City and TXDOT are exploring if there are alternatives to achieve the safety improvements in downtown Tomball or alternative designs that could be considered instead of medians. No decision has been made as to whether the medians will be required by TXDOT as part of the project.

Q: Can we make this area more of a destination?

A: Absolutely and that is our goal, to make downtown Tomball a thriving, pedestrian-oriented, live-work-play-shop space. Our hope is that by implementing the needed improvements, we can create an environment that maintains the “main street” feel, improves pedestrian access, provides aesthetic enhancements, and enhances vehicular safety and mobility.

Q: What is the outcome of the Town Hall and what can people expect after this?

A: The City will continue to discuss the project and will continue our discussion with TXDOT related to the medians. We appreciate the involvement and the willingness of the community to provide feedback and participate in these discussions. We encourage everyone to stay engaged and involved.

TURN LANES

Q: Do we need to have a turn lane on Pine Street?

A: Based on the Access Management Study and traffic data, a dedicated turn lane is needed at Pine Street.

TRAFFIC & CRASH DATA

Q: The traffic and crash data was from 2007 and lots has changed since then. Did you look at the more recent traffic/crash data?

A: Yes. This segment of roadway continues to have crashes above the statewide average. However, we are continuing to explore ways to improve safety and reduce crashes in this area.

Q: Does another study need to be done?

A: We have looked at the more recent crash data, and this segment continues to be above the statewide average in terms of the number of crashes. Our primary goal is to reduce crashes in this area and improve safety.

Q: What is going to be done about the intermediate school on Main Street?

A: We are looking at ways that through traffic continues to be impacted due to school traffic. As with any school, our primary goal is to ensure that students have a safe way to and from school. We'll continue to discuss needed improvements with TXDOT and TISD to see if there is a solution to relieve some of the school congestion.

Q: Why was the last traffic survey prior to the completion of Grand Parkway?

A: The traffic study in the Access Management Study was completed prior to the completion of Grand Parkway. However, we continue to work with TXDOT to review traffic and crash data from more recent years.

Q: What is the number of crashes at the Four Corners intersection?

A: We are coordinating with TXDOT to get updated crash data.

Q: Has there been an impact study done on streets that traffic will be pushed on?

A: No. As part of the reconstruction project, TXDOT will not study how other streets will be impacted.

Q: Why not redo traffic studies with new data now that Grand Parkway and Medical Complex Drive are completed?

A: We are coordinating with TXDOT to get updated crash data.

Q: How many accidents have there been at the intersections in downtown Tomball?

A: We are coordinating with TXDOT to get updated crash data.

Q: How will residential streets be able to handle the additional traffic that will be happen during reconstruction?

A: Appropriate detour signage and alternative route information will be considered as part of the design of the project. We understand that no matter what we do, local residents, GPS systems, and congestion may push traffic onto residential streets near the project. However, we will do our best to push out information regarding the appropriate detours and routes and make sure we respond to any public safety concerns from residents during the reconstruction. Don't hesitate to reach out to us anytime you have concerns about speeding or traffic in your neighborhood.

MEDIANS

Q: What is the purpose of the medians?

A: Based on the Access Management Study and Livable Centers Downtown Plan, the medians will increase safety by restricting vehicle movements to signalized intersections and reducing conflict points. And while we do not want to encourage jaywalking, medians also provide a pedestrian refuge if pedestrian choose to cross the road where there is not a cross walk.

Q: Are you encouraging jay walking?

A: No. Medians don't encourage jay walking, but they do provide a pedestrian refuge for anyone who chooses to cross where there is not a cross walk. Pedestrians should always choose to cross where there is appropriate signage, lighting, and warning for oncoming traffic.

Q: Why not continue turn lanes and put in HAWK beacons instead of medians?

A: The main goal of the medians is to reduce the conflict points for vehicles. HAWKs do not offer the same safety enhancement for vehicle movements, however, they can help reduce crashes and provide safety for pedestrians. An engineering study would need to be completed to find the most appropriate safety improvements for this section of roadway and we are continuing to look at alternative designs that could provide the safety improvements needed in this intersection.

Q: How many people are getting killed crossing the street in Tomball?

A: There have been zero fatalities since the data was collected.

Q: Are the medians a done deal or will you listen to the community that doesn't want them?

A: The medians were included on the preliminary design, which was based off the Access Management Study and Livable Centers Downtown Plan. However, we are listening to everyone's concerns and comments. We are continuing discussions with TXDOT to determine if the medians must be installed and to explore other design elements that may produce the same safety improvements. The design of the project has not yet been completed.

Q: Since the medians will funnel traffic down Pine and Walnut, will those streets have to be widened?

A: No. Those roads will not need to be widened as a result of this project.

Q: Why are there only signals at Pine and Cherry? How are those intersections designed?

A: As part of engineering design process, the operational design of the intersections and the operation of the traffic signals will be examined to achieve the needed safety and mobility goals.

Q: Is TXDOT is going to do reconstruction regardless of medians?

A: The project, as it stands today, includes the medians because that is how it was approved to be submitted for grant funding. The City continues to discuss alternatives with TXDOT.

Q: What other alternatives could be considered instead of medians?

A: The City and TXDOT are currently exploring alternative designs that may achieve the same safety and mobility goals. However, no final decision regarding the medians has been made, and ultimately, if the project moves forward, it must comply with TXDOT's standards.

Q: Who has the final decision on medians?

A: Ultimately, TXDOT has the final decision regarding any design and reconstruction project on state facilities, such as FM 2920. However, projects are completed through partnerships with local communities and this project is no exception. The City and TXDOT continue to work together to find a solution that meets the safety and mobility goals.

Q: Will adding medians back up traffic?

A: No, medians will not create additional traffic backups and could help relieve congestion that occurs due to vehicles turning where there isn't a turn lane or signal.

ALTERNATIVE DESIGN ELEMENT

Q: Can we have a crosswalk at Elm Street?

A: We continue to look specifically at Elm Street to determine if there is an improvement that would enhance pedestrian safety.

Q: Have we ever considered extending sidewalk and curb and gutter to restrict traffic so traffic turning onto Main Street can only turn right?

A: We would need to do a complete engineering review of this to determine if it would be possible. However, if this was implemented, it would likely require two one-way paired streets to facilitate the flow of traffic.

SIDEWALKS & PEDESTRIAN IMPROVEMENTS

Q: What are we going to do with the sidewalks?

A: Sidewalks will be widened and continued for the entire length of the project, including adding sidewalks where there are not currently sidewalks in place, on both the north and south side of the road. Sidewalks will also be ADA accessible.

Q: Why do sidewalks need to be wider?

A: Sidewalks will be approximately 14 to 16 feet wide only in downtown Tomball. This would allow for the heavier pedestrian activity in the area. In addition, it provides space for aesthetic enhancements and pedestrian amenities. Other sidewalks will be a minimum of 5 feet in width.

Q: Can we slow down traffic through Main Street?

A: This project aims to slow traffic down through design elements, such as medians and landscaping. We have to balance to needs of traffic to move effectively through Tomball while also providing the needed pedestrian and local amenities. The speed limit will not be reduced through this corridor since this road is classified as a major arterial.

Q: Is there a contingency to get patrons in place safely at Elm?

A: We are continuing to explore how to improve pedestrian safety at Elm Street.

Q: Will sidewalks be added on Cherry Street?

A: Yes, staff has recognized the need for connectivity and some sections of Cherry new sidewalks will be constructed as a component of the alley project and link the pedestrian realm

TREES

Q: Are you going to cut down the trees on Main Street?

A: Based on the current condition of the trees and the expected impacts of construction, we will need to remove the trees. However, the trees will be replaced by TXDOT as part of the project.

The new trees will be more appropriately spaced and sized, and proper construction techniques will be used to ensure the trees and their root systems are protected.

Q: Does the City own the trees?

A: No, the trees are located in the TXDOT right-of-way, which means the state owns the trees and is responsible for them.

Q: Who is in charge of planting trees? Who is going to take care of them once it happens?

A: TXDOT will plant the new trees and install the needed irrigation. Following a one-year maintenance period, the City will then assume maintenance for any trees and landscaping included as part of the project.

Q: What size tree will be replaced?

A: We expect that the trees will be 4-6 inch caliper trees, but we will seek to maximize the size of the tree according to the engineering design and funding requirements.

Q: What kind of tree will be planted?

A: The City and TXDOT will work together to identify appropriate species as part of the design process.