

# CIRCULAR

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Spring 2000

An Insight to Improving LBJ Freeway During the Planning Phase

## CHAMPION'S CORNER

BY: KATHY INGLE

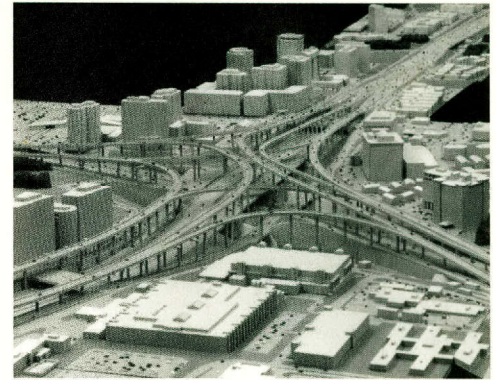
A recent newspaper headline was no surprise to those of us who live and drive on Dallas roads – the region is growing at a phenomenal rate...over 19% in the last decade. But LBJ is still the unimproved LBJ of a decade ago, except for the addition of interim HOV lanes. While sitting in traffic on LBJ, I become frustrated not only with my pace but, on a larger scale, impatient with the time required to move forward the planned reconstruction of LBJ. While I know intellectually for a project of this size each public action or decision represents hundreds to thousands of behind-the-scenes manhours, emotionally, I simply want it done. In short, like almost every other Dallasite, I want LBJ "fixed" now! However, despite lack of visible change, there is progress being made – decisions have been reached and plans are inching toward finalization. Since our last update, this progress includes:

(1) Hundreds of hours of analyses devoted to the comparison of mined tunnels vs. cut-and-cover tunnels for the managed lanes between Midway and Preston Road, where the right-of-way is constrained and traffic count highest. Issues considered include safety, constructibility, construction cost, ADA requirements, operation and maintenance costs, ventilation, early implementation, transition to main lanes and many others. Representatives from across the TxDOT District, along with the LBJ project team, have been focused on this section. We now can say with some certainty there will be twin-mined tunnels, with the exact length to be determined by further study. Mined-tunnel sections as opposed to only cut-and-cover will significantly reduce the amount of surface disruption during construction.

(2) Alternative designs – possibly acceptable compromises – have recently been proposed for the Hillcrest to Park Central area, as well as the

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### INTERCHANGE VIEW SOUTHWEST



DNT-LBJ ramping. These were aired at recent public meetings and will continue to be scrutinized for flaws in order to move forward with design in these sensitive areas. If you have not seen these options, contact the LBJ Project Office.

(3) On the east side, progress has been made with issues of access and advanced implementation of frontage road construction. Both the City of Garland and Dallas County have committed funds for frontage road construction in the vicinity of Northwest Highway. Earlier implementation of the frontage roads seems possible and is a definite goal.

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### TIMING FOR PROJECT IMPROVEMENTS

Projects	YEAR													
	97	98	99	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10
Interchange														
Immediate Action														
LBJ Corridor														
Planning <sup>1</sup>														
Design <sup>2</sup>														
Construction <sup>3</sup>														

1. Products include Design Schematics, EA's, Engineering Summary Report
2. Products include Construction Plans, Specifications & Estimates (PS&E)
3. Final Product is an Improved LBJ

#### PLANNING TARGET DATES

Mesquite Section.....Spring of 2000  
 East Section.....Summer of 2000  
 West Section.....Fall of 2000

Note: a goal to have LBJ construction started in 2002 has been established

## LBJ BRIEFS

The Royal Lane extension project from Skillman to Audelia has been completed.

The Mesquite section schematic and environmental assessment is being finalized for submission to Austin for Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) approval.

The I-635/U.S. 75 Interchange, initially planned for construction in two phases due to funding constraints, is going to be constructed as one project, the largest TxDOT project ever at over \$210 million. TxDOT has focused its efforts on expediting this project and is securing the funding necessary to begin construction in 2001. Combining the interchange into one project will help reduce construction time to a goal of 6-1 1/2 years.

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# LBJ BRIEFS

**T**xDOT has submitted a sketch plan for including the Dallas region into FHWA's Value Pricing Pilot Program. The LBJ Freeway HOT lanes project is one of several within the regional plan.

**T**he existing LBJ interim HOV lanes continue to perform well. Continued driver care and attention is needed to help minimize incidents.

**D**ART's light rail extension work for the North Central and Garland lines is making good progress.

**T**he northbound frontage road right-turn lane at Oates has been completed.

# TUNNEL STUDY UPDATE

The project team worked very hard this past summer and fall to study the type and extent of tunneling needed for the LBJ managed lanes in the west section. As proposed, a portion of the managed lanes would be constructed in one of the longest and widest tunnels in the nation. The geological conditions present in this area permit this to occur. These same geological conditions permitted cost-effective tunnel solutions for connecting Keller Springs Tunnel and for providing a path for DART's light rail system out of downtown and up the North Central corridor.

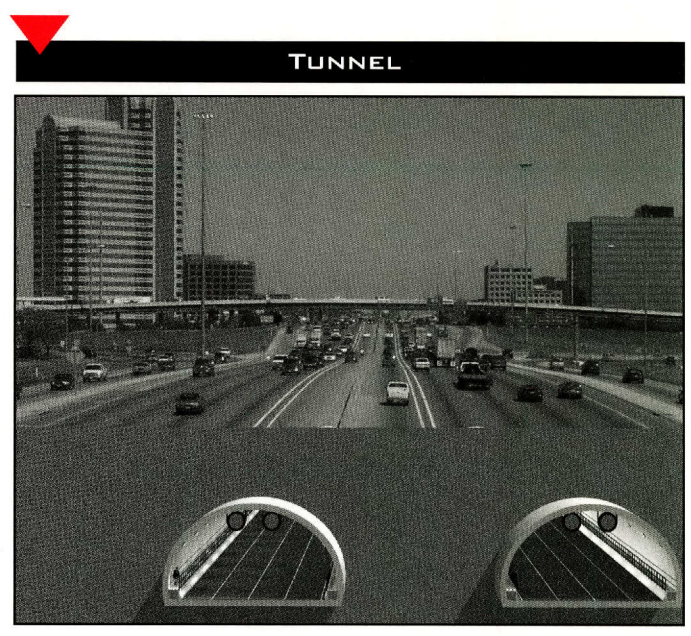
The study is trying to balance the impacts to traffic during construction with costs, safety issues and implementation options.

There is a cost premium to constructing mined tunnels. However, the reduction in traffic impacts due to construction, earlier completion time, minimization of

advance right-of-way and utility relocation needs can offset this premium without compromising safety. For those reasons, TxDOT is likely to recommend mined tunnels.

When LBJ Freeway was constructed in the late 60's, it was at the forefront of freeway development. The freeway was surrounded by wide-open spaces, and the conventional wisdom at the time was that LBJ would

provide sufficient capacity for North Dallas motorists for years to come. Many people even argued it was a waste to build such a wide road and we would never need that much capacity. Now, as the demand far exceeds the capacity and LBJ moves into the next millennium, we may be forging a new path where using tunnels to bypass existing traffic congestion will become the norm.



# ANSWERS

**QUESTION:** Will funding for the Woodall Rodgers extension delay LBJ improvements?

**ANSWER:** No. The Woodall extension will provide important access for west and south Dallas. The funding provides for the extension of a standard-design bridge across the Trinity River. Additional funding for architectural enhancements is still needed.

**QUESTION:** Has any recent funding been directed toward LBJ Freeway?

**ANSWER:** Yes. Full funding for the Central Interchange is a significant investment. Funding for auxiliary lanes, east section frontage roads and interchange improvements is included in the most recent funding approvals.

**QUESTION:** Are you proposing to change the number of ramps accessing LBJ Freeway?

**ANSWER:** Yes. Currently, the west side will have nine fewer access points, and the east side will have three additional points of access to the freeway.

**QUESTION:** Will the addition of a noise wall be helpful?

**ANSWER:** Yes. A properly analyzed and planned noise wall will provide a detectable (5-decibel) reduction in future noise. Homes directly behind a noise wall receive the highest noise reduction.

## WHAT IS A MANAGED LANE?

Good question. Most of us are familiar with High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes and toll roads. When you combine the two, what do you get? Is it an HOV lane or a toll road? You may get a different answer depending on whom you ask. For our purpose, it is something new. During the planning of LBJ, it has been referred to as a HOT (High Occupancy/Toll) lane, but this term does not fit the mold of conventional naming. In the future, a name will be developed that becomes generally accepted, but for now we need to understand what it is and how it will improve transportation in the region.

The focus for managed lanes is to provide a predictable travel path for those traveling through the region. To this end, it may be possible to develop a system of managed lanes. The managed lanes will offer a predictable trip, meaning no congestion for those who carpool, ride bus transit or

vanpool, ride a motorcycle or, if driving alone, are willing to pay a toll.

In a corridor like LBJ, where the demand to use the roadway is far greater than the space available on the roadway, a separate managed-lane facility will relieve pressure on the main lanes and parallel arterial streets. The result will be improvement of traffic flow for everyone travelling in or near the corridor. Limiting access locations is one aspect of the managed-lane facility that permits operation in a predictable fashion. Access locations should be strategically located to serve major movements and, in the interest of encouraging transit use, should interface with transit centers located in the corridor.

Regional transportation officials are intrigued with bringing these lanes to reality. There are many issues yet to be resolved concerning eligibility requirements, pricing structure, funding participation, legislative assistance, enforcement mechanisms and operational technologies. And let us not forget, we still need to find a good name.

If you have any questions regarding the use of managed lanes in the LBJ corridor or elsewhere in the region, contact the LBJ Project Office.



## WHEN AND WHERE ?

Although it is hard to comprehend when and where a project this size might start, the project team and transportation partners are focusing efforts on areas most likely for earlier implementation. Last December, the Texas Transportation Commission, in partnership with the NCTCOG, provided construction funding for three projects to help in the short term.

**Auxiliary lanes** in up to seven locations along the corridor have been targeted for improvement. These lanes will provide relief areas for traffic between existing entrance and exit ramps. Expect these projects to be in place within four to six years.

1. Eastbound Entrance from Montfort
2. Westbound Entrance from Skillman
3. Eastbound Entrance from Plano Road
4. Eastbound Entrance from Northwest Highway
5. Eastbound Entrance from Ferguson/Centerville
6. Westbound Entrance from LaPrada
7. Westbound Entrance from Ferguson/Centerville

**The Churchill Way Bridge** Project over Central Expressway will connect the southbound frontage road to the northbound frontage road and will provide relief to local traffic during the second half of the interchange project.

**Frontage roads** on the East Side between Northwest Highway and LaPrada have been partially funded by the City of Garland and the County, helping to accelerate overall long-term implementation.



### HOV Or Toll - Managed Lanes - Value Pricing

	Mainlanes Mixed Flow	HOT - Lanes HOV & SOV	Mainlanes Mixed Flow
① Morning Peak	Free	HOV - Free SOV - \$\$\$	Free
② Midday Off-Peak	Free	HOV - Free SOV - \$\$	Free
③ Evening Peak	Free	HOV - Free SOV - \$\$\$	Free
④ Late Night Off-Peak	Free	HOV - Free SOV - \$	Free

HOV - High Occupancy Vehicle  
SOV - Single Occupant Vehicle

## EAST/WEST SECTION KEY ISSUES

Specific key issues being addressed for the east and west sections are listed below. Arriving at decisions on these issues will allow the group to complete the planning phase and move toward implementation (design, funding and construction).

### East Section:

- Improvements in the McCree Road area.
- Continued study in the Shiloh Road and Garland Road areas to provide a continuous frontage road.

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### PUBLIC MEETING



## MEETING OVERVIEWS

- ◆ North Dallas Chamber of Commerce (NDCC) LBJ Task Force meets the 2nd Tuesday of every other month at NDCC at 7:30 a.m. to discuss project issues. Everyone is welcome to attend. Please check the Dallas District Hotline for meeting confirmation.
- ◆ Both the July and August East and West PAC Public Meetings were well attended, as were the recent PAC meetings in December. Key areas of concern continue to be noise walls, overall project timing and incident management. See separate story in this newsletter concerning specific East and West issues.
- ◆ Project briefings and presentations have been held with Farmers Branch, TxDOT Planning Conference 1999, Transportation Summit 1999, Transportation Crossroads and various other community and neighborhood groups. Each of these meetings was helpful to the study team.
- ◆ If you would like to have a project update for your group or organization, please call the LBJ Project Office. Presentations can be made during the day or evening hours.

### CHAMPION'S CORNER CONT.

While these three areas are significant, the team is continuing the design work necessary for submittal on all sections. Moving past these critical decisions will enable us to finalize the schematics and begin submitting them to TxDOT and the FHWA for review, hopefully, by end of the second quarter 2000. Earlier local consensus means earlier agency approval. Earlier approval means earlier construction. Earlier construction means stepping into the funding queue earlier. The team goal is to obtain permission to move into final design in late 2000 and, consistent with prior schedules, be under construction in 2002.

As my grandmother was fond of saying, "we have a long row to hoe" in order to achieve these timelines. Every member of the team, at every level, must be dedicated to that end and work in close partnership with you, the public, for resolution of outstanding issues. This begins at the top – TxDOT Transportation Commissioner David Laney has begun meeting regularly with District Engineer Jay Nelson and County Judge Lee Jackson to discuss and evaluate progress on LBJ. In addition, we will solicit the involvement of public officials at city, county, state and federal levels.

In summary, progress is being made. The absence of construction equipment on LBJ does not mean

inactivity. Resolution of and consensus on the few remaining problem areas, along with continuing to exercise patience in our daily LBJ commute, are now our biggest hurdles.



### EAST/WEST SECTION KEY CONT.

- Adjacent right-of-way and access issues to facilitate early frontage road projects.

West Section:

- Complete tunnel study – see separate story in this issue.
- Elimination of the westbound exit ramp to Hillcrest from LBJ Freeway.
- Frontage road profiles and access to Park Central from adjacent property developments.
- Alignment and connection options for the southbound DNT to westbound LBJ ramp movement.
- I-35E Interchange access issues.

If any of these issues interests you or to view in-progress work efforts, please call the LBJ Project Office at (972)437-0101. Your input is important in helping us arrive at solutions.



For updates on the LBJ Corridor Study, HOV lanes and meeting schedules, call the

**Dallas District Hotline**  
(214) 374-4100  
Options 6 and 8



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### IMPROVING LBJ FREEWAY FOR THE FUTURE!

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