

J TIM RAINEY, D.D.S

606 Osage

Refugio, Texas 78377

(361) 526-4695 or (888) 733-8446 Toll Free

E-mail jtimrainey@tiads.com

www.jtimrainey@jtimrainey.com

A Position Paper on the I-69 Corridor Proposal

“One definition of insanity is to keep on doing the same thing
expecting different results.”

This is a first in a series of articles concerning the Trans-Texas I-69 Corridor project. For more information, an interested citizen can access www.keeptexasmoving.com.

After exploring the various resources presented on this project, including attending the presentations and hearings, one of the underlying and unspoken themes of this proposal is the implied “just trust us” coming from our local TXDot officials. Here are some of the issues that must be addressed before making the decision to trust our local TXDot officials to make life altering decisions for us, the citizens of Refugio County and other property owners within the Mission River Basin.

First, the background: TXDot is involved with the planning and promotion of the Federal I-69 corridor project. The planners of I-69 are in turn trusting TXDot to provide them with accurate and correct information so there will be no surprises. Unfortunately, TXDot’s history is one of ignoring obvious problems and poor planning, resulting in disastrous consequences. For the planners of I-69 I am sure there are many skeletons in TXDot’s closet that the officials of TXDot would prefer to stay in the closet.

The Mission River Basin is a fragile and unique river system that is a completely understudied ecological system. It in part encompasses the winter range of the endangered Whooping Crane. It is the smallest river basin in the Northern Hemisphere of the Americas, and the second shortest river in this hemisphere. Having a sandy bottom, these unusual clear water streams on the Texas gulf coast predisposes these tributaries of the Mission River system to the strong possibility of having unique, undiscovered species. Where is this mentioned in the I-69 “Environmental Impact Statement”, and where is the proposal to expedite the studies of species of the Mission River basin? The proposal doesn’t exist in a credible form and it is not funded.

This is the “costal bend”, the area of North-to-South Texas coast where the “Bend” occurs in the coastal plains, formed in part by the prevailing Southeast winds. Because of the confluence of the Southeast winds meeting the Western winds coming across Northern Mexico from the Pacific Ocean, these winds collide over this unique river basin creating a high annual rainfall, and also tend to produce a 12” rain annually somewhere in the basin. These are flat, costal plains that magnify the impact of flooding caused by these deluges, a problem that is easily avoided by moving the corridor Westerly to a less hostile environment.

The Native Americans, prior to settlement by Europeans, found this area of Texas extremely supportive of their hunting and gathering lifestyle. This area contained the highest concentration of Native Americans in North America. There are many archeological sites that have not yet been properly excavated nor explored, sites that will be obliterated. I believe there are archeological artifacts that have been intentionally ignored by TXDot in the past, and the past is a good predictor of the future. TXDot cannot be entrusted to properly investigate and preserve these artifacts.

TXDot has a demonstrable history of failing to respond to the public's needs, failure to protect the public's interest, and creating massive problems for the public that could and should have been predictable as well as avoidable through good planning. Examples:

When TXDot was holding the hearings prior to rebuilding highway 77 through Refugio, I met with representatives of TXDot and asked that the topography maps of Refugio that had been intentionally altered in the 1930's be corrected. I warned TXDot that if they refused to correct these maps, there would eventually be expensive consequences to their lack of action. TXDot chose to ignore this important information and went ahead with their poorly planned project.

The first consequence of poor planning was that TXDot closed US 77 through Refugio to two lanes and inexcusably left the five traffic lights in Refugio operating. This predictably created a massive traffic jam stretching to the San Antonio river bridge at 185/77, with people literally stranded in their cars for hours without access to food, drink, and most importantly, restrooms. TXDot then failed to react for hours to this predictable problem caused by their lack of planning. If there is another massive traffic confluence on Refugio, TXDot still does not have a contingency plan to meet the needs of the public. The solution is very simple. Where is that plan?

Second consequence was that failure to live up to the promise to "get back to you" on the topography issue, also left TXDot holding the bag again due to poor planning. We chose to tell TXDot about the WPA 1930's concrete highway under US 77 contingent on the correction of the topography maps of Refugio. The lack of planning for this old concrete highway that was under the roadway caused delays in construction and hundreds of thousands of dollars in unplanned costs, as documented in the archives of the Refugio County Press. If TXDot had held up their end of the bargain, which they had no intention of doing, we may have told them about the hidden concrete highway they had failed to plan around.

The current proposed path of I-69 to the west of Refugio would further compound the drainage problems in Refugio. Has TXDot revealed to the I-69 planners the vital information that the topography maps of Refugio are hopelessly incorrect and that this information has been ignored by TXDot in the past? Is there any plan to correct the topography maps before placing the massive I-69 corridor in an improperly mapped area?

TXDot has had several obviously dangerous intersections that they refused to properly mark to protect the public. Example: Intersection of 188/136: after years and years of

multiple, dangerous, and life threatening crashes, TXDot continued to defend their irresponsible decision to NOT make this a four-way stop. After having been forced to mark this intersection as a four-way stop, the crashes virtually stopped.

When the 35 bypass was extended around Rockport, TXDot again refused to put up four-way stops on 188/35 until the threat of a losing lawsuit loomed after fatalities occurred. Only then would TXDot correct their obvious error of judgment that was needlessly causing injury to the very public they were entrusted to serve and protect.

There are more than 100 pipelines transversing Refugio County, most from South to North. Moving the I-69 corridor from the straight line from Laredo to north of Victoria to the Mission River Basin, the I-69 project through Refugio County as proposed would transverse a significant number of these pipelines. The transversing of each of these individual pipelines that also run basically parallel to the proposed route of I-69 is extremely expensive, with estimates in the range of one million dollars each on the average. Where is this mentioned in the initial proposals or is it just one more example of poor planning? This economic nightmare can be lessened by taking a straight line approach for the I-69 corridor from Laredo to North of Victoria.

“Environmental Impact Statement.” Go take a little drive and see for yourself an example of poor planning. Start at the Dairy Queen in Woodsboro on 77, and drive north to Victoria, take the 77 bypass, and go north on either 59 through Victoria towards Edna or 77 towards Hallettsville. Take note of the great job the railroad and TXDot have done together of spreading the non-native species of hedge rose all along this corridor, with absolutely no plan to correct this man made environmental disaster. The I-69 project will go through some of the pasture lands that are most infested by this non-native species. I-69 will do the same thing as the railroads, acting as a corridor to spread this pest throughout coastal South Texas and eventually down to Mexico and throughout South America. Where is the containment of hedge rose reflected in the “Environmental Impact Statement” and how many millions of dollars have been pledged to eradicate this invasive non-native species that grows extremely well in the wet Texas coastal plains, or does this just serve as another example of poor planning by TXDot?

Last time I checked, the shortest distance between two points is a straight line. In order to have the largest negative impact on the environment and the most people, it is necessary for TXDot to plan a sweeping right turn out of Laredo just to get close to Corpus Christi, as in the current I-69 corridor proposal. You then must transverse some of the most ecologically and environmentally sensitive land in Texas, then make another sweeping left turn to the North of Victoria, extending the distance of this most expensive corridor ever proposed as much as insanely possible.

Including Corpus Christi in the I-69 plan could be done by simply widening I-37 to the intersection with I-69, with I-69 transversing as straight a line as possible from Laredo to North of Victoria.

The elected officials of Beeville have passed resolutions requesting I-69 to pass to the West of Beeville (the “Straight Line”), a request that is being conveniently ignored by the I-69 planners, while every other elected group is opposing the current proposed pathway. This corridor West of Beeville would also transverse the much less densely populated and less environmentally sensitive land that is less prone to flooding, and presents a better underlying base to support a roadbed than the marshy areas of the Texas Coastal Plains, radically reducing the expense of this corridor and the ecological impact, obvious advantages that have been dismissed by the officials in charge of I-69 planning.

If the people of Corpus Christi think that they will be unaffected by TXDot’s poor lack of planning, consider the current intolerable situation on South Padre Island drive. Create as big a traffic jam as possible in peak seasons by NOT reversing the up and down ramps. Continue to dump traffic off into the immediate vicinity of an intersection. Spend the money on something else that was not a problem, the intersection of SPID and Cross Town Freeway. Another example of poor planning by TXDot?

Then refuse to standardize the turn arounds under South Padre Island Drive. Leave the turn around under SPID at Airline so that the unsuspecting drivers who are used to turning into a protected lane are thrown into oncoming traffic. I have never made this turn around without being amazed by the continued presence of shattered glass from recent collisions. I don’t remember traffic jams or serial accidents at the confluence of SPID and Cross Town, but I do remember multiple accidents at SPID and Airline. Why is there not a priority to correct this travesty? Just another example of poor planning?

If this corridor is to be built, build it in a logical manner with the least expense, least impact on the environment, and least impact on the population. As proposed, the current I-69 corridor has the greatest negative impact at the greatest expense. I think this current proposal is one of the best examples I have ever seen of poor planning and lack of good judgment.

TXDot is asking us to “just trust their judgment and planning?” I think not. The definition of insanity is to continue to do the same thing and expect different results. The I-69 corridor as proposed through the Mission River Basin is unacceptable.

J TIM RAINEY, D.D.S

606 Osage

Refugio, Texas 78377

(361) 526-4695 or (888) 733-8446 Toll Free

E-mail jtimrainey@tiads.com

www.jtimrainey.com