

20091217APD021

Hwy. 290 projects and construction

Hwy. 290 projects and construction

[Share](#) |

By Kimberly Stauffer Tuesday, 15 December 2009

HOUSTON — The Texas Transportation Commission allocated \$314.6 million in Proposition 12 funds to advance the IH 610 interchange, phase one of the Texas Department of Transportation's Hwy. 290 corridor renovation.

The funding requires TxDOT to let the project to bid by May 2011, speeding up the previous timeline that did not expect project bidding to begin until 2012. The money will advance planning, design and right-of-way acquisition and fund part of the interchange construction, including the reconstruction and widening of both IH 610 north and Hwy. 290 and the construction of a direct connector from Hwy. 290 eastbound to I-10.

The intersection is ranked as the 13th most congested roadway segment in Texas as three major thoroughfares intersect: I-10, Hwy. 290 and IH 610. Mike Zientek, senior public involvement representative for the Hwy. 290 program, said the funding, while valuable, is only a drop in the billion-dollar project cost.

"The interchange is just everything," Zientek said. "It's the spine. Without the interchange, nothing really works well."

Voters approved Prop. 12 in 2007, allocating \$5 billion as general obligation funds for transportation projects. Earlier this year, the state Legislature authorized TxDOT to contract out \$2 billion of the funding for non-tolled highway projects, Zientek said. In partnership with the Houston-Galveston Area Council, TxDOT identified the IH 610 interchange as a viable candidate for the money and submitted it to the TTC for consideration.

Zientek said the funding also covers extending IH 610 westbound frontage road to extend past Northwest Mall to the main couple of the allotment is the go-ahead for the first of two planned direct connectors between I-10 and Hwy. 290.

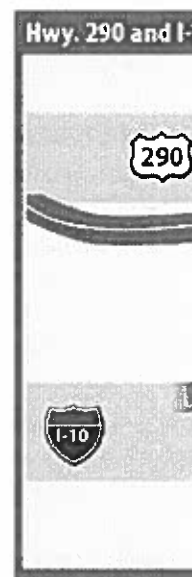
"The main benefit you'll see is traffic on inbound Hwy. 290. What backs it up in the morning is the people who are stuck on 610," Zientek said. "The big reason for the backup is so many of those cars must get on 610."

The direct connector will allow drivers to exit Hwy. 290 and avoid IH 610 entirely to reach I-10, decongesting the westbound lanes.

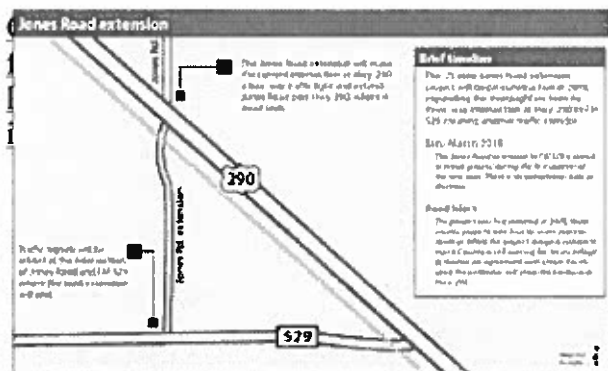
"Traffic wants to do different things. We need to build structures to take drivers different places [in the area]," Zientek said. "We want to build that piece of concrete, but we don't all want to do the same thing."

"This will only build parts of the interchange. We still have the other connector and parts of [IH 610 west]," he said. "We received this funding, but we still need more. There's still more to do."

The Hwy. 290 program will renovate the northwest corridor, expanding the existing highway to five lanes and redeveloping the Hempstead Tollway, a Managed Lanes thoroughfare running parallel to Hwy. 290. A proposed commuter rail and freight line connecting the Cy-Fair community to the Northwest Transit Center on Old Katy Road, the



Road extension



While TxDOT prepares the Hwy. 290 corridor project for its 2011 bid date, Harris County Precinct 4 will begin to extend Jones Road under Hwy. 290 to FM 529. The road extension will provide alternate access to the high Houston Tollway.

The four-lane road will minimize existing traffic on North Eldridge and West roads and distribute it by giving more of a primary corridor between the two main roads capable of providing a connection under Hwy. 290, said Pamela Rocchi, Harris County Precinct 4.

The new \$4.8 million section includes a storm sewer system and drainage mitigation. Rocchi said the existing Jones Road, which already has a stoplight system, will be modified to accommodate a four-way intersection and the FM 529 intersection signalized.

The project is slated to break ground in the first quarter of 2010, but Rocchi said its timeline hinges on Jersey Village jurisdiction. While Harris County funds the engineering design and construction, Jersey Village, in a joint partnership with Harris County, managed the engineering contracts and a necessary agreement with Union Pacific to cross the freight train tracks railroad must design a train crossing for the new section of Jones Road, Rocchi said.

“It is Harris County’s goal to request authorization to put to bid the improvements in the first quarter of 2010, but it is contingent on the ability to finalize the railroad agreement,” Rocchi said. “The project design is essentially complete.”

The project was first initiated in 2005 and design efforts commenced. Most county projects take about four to six months to complete. “Aware of TxDOT’s Hwy. 290 corridor program, Rocchi said while Jones Road will be in place first, the county is working with various entities to ensure any new installations work with the larger renovation plans, including the proposed extension alongside the existing UP freight rail.

The county is still acquiring several permits, but Rocchi said they plan to begin actual construction by the beginning of 2010. The project is estimated to take approximately 12 months to complete.

Find more news about [Northwest Houston Transportation](#)