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Executive Summary

The Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) examines the social, economic, and environmental impacts for expansion of the IH 10 West Katy Freeway from Taylor Street in Houston's central business district (CBD) to FM 1489.

The IH 10 Katy Freeway from Taylor Street to FM 1489 consists of approximately 38 miles of multi-lane limited access freeway with 2- and 3-lane discontinuous frontage roads. There are some 36 interchanges along the length of the corridor, two of which are classified as full freeway-to-freeway interchanges (IH 610 West Loop Interchange, and Beltway 8 Interchange). The section of the Katy Freeway between Taylor Street and IH 610 is characterized as having 10 general purpose mainlanes (five in each direction) with discontinuous frontage roads (i.e., frontage roads are not provided throughout the length of this portion of the freeway corridor). Six general-purpose main lanes (three in each direction) are provided from IH 610 to Brookshire. From the Brookshire City Limits to FM 1489, IH 10 has four mainlanes (two in each direction) with two-lane discontinuous frontage roads.

A set of problems and needs for the corridor was identified based on the Major Investment Study (MIS) analysis of the existing traffic congestion within the corridor, projected population and employment

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growth trends, and extensive dialogue with concerned citizens. Public input included discussions with state, local, and regional agencies involved in transportation and comprehensive planning in the Houston region, as well as input solicited from local citizens.

West Houston has traditionally been one of the fastest growing sectors of the Metropolitan Region, both in terms of populations and employment growth. In the future, population growth is projected to result in a corridor population increase of 42 percent (1990 to 2020). However, some portions of the corridor are projected to grow by as much as 130 percent for the same time period. For the same period, employment growth is projected to be equally as strong within the corridor, with average growth in employment in excess of 44 percent (Source: H-GAC population and employment forecasts). These growth projections point to major increases in travel demand along the IH 10 Katy Freeway Corridor.

The recommendation from the MIS was the Alternative V-2 [Major Managed Lanes (ML)/Special Use Lane (SUL) – Moderate Single Occupancy Vehicle (SOV)] as the Locally Preferred Alternative based on the incremental evaluation process of the MIS. Following the recommendation of the MIS Steering Committee, Alternative V-2 was presented to the public as the Draft Locally Preferred Alternative at a series of public open houses and meetings July 8, 9, and 10, 1997.

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Alternative V-2 provides two ML in both directions between IH 610 and SH 6 and the addition of one through SOV general purpose lane in each direction between IH 610 and Katy with auxiliary lanes to provide lane balance at major interchanges (i.e., IH 610, Beltway 8, SH 6, Grand Parkway). The alternative would bring the existing freeway up to current TxDOT and FHWA design standards and provide continuous frontage roads throughout most of the corridor.

Alternative V-2 preserves maximum flexibility for future modification of the ML in the center of the freeway to meet future needs within the corridor. Furthermore, this Alternative was seen as the alternative best able to meet all the goals and objectives of the study as compared to the No-Build and other Alternatives.



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Once the preferred modal alternative was selected, it was necessary to examine alternative alignments for the improvements within the corridor. A variety of alignments were studied in order to select an alternative that implements the preferred modal alternative with the least environmental, social and economic impacts. To that end three different alignment alternatives were developed and analyzed for impacts. The No-Build Alternative and the Transportation System Management/Transportation Demand Management (TSM/TDM) Alternative were also evaluated. The description and analysis of the alignment alternatives follows.

The “All North Alternative” would acquire all needed additional ROW north of the current IH 10 corridor. Where additional ROW is not needed, the alignment would remain within the current ROW limits.

The “All South Alternative” would acquire all needed additional ROW south of the current IH 10 corridor. Where additional ROW is not needed, the alignment would remain within the current ROW limits.

The “Combined Alternative” was developed in the early stages of the project development in order to determine the width of ROW required along the project corridor. The alignment was oriented to take advantage of Old Katy Road and the recently acquired railroad ROW. The amount of additional ROW required, north or south of the corridor at any one location was determined by adhering to applicable design



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standards as well as causing minimal impacts to adjacent landowners.

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The evaluation of the three alignment alternatives and the 'No-Build and TSM/TDM alternatives was based on economic, social, and environmental impacts. The impacts were evaluated by criteria that were applicable to that category of impacts.

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Several factors played a major role in the selection of the locally preferred alignment alternative. One major factor in the decision making process was the location of cemeteries along the proposed route. The All North Alternative would displace approximately 3300 gravesites. The All South Alternative would also impact gravesites. Although fewer gravesites would be impacted (259 vs. 3300), any avoidable impacts to gravesites are unacceptable. In addition, the All South Alternative would cause more than twice as many commercial displacements as the Combined Alternative.

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The results from the noise analysis do not provide as clear a distinction between alternatives as the displacement analysis. The Combined Alternative does cause more residential noise impacts, but the number of impacts is only marginally higher than the next highest alternative. The All South Alternative does impact considerably fewer households than the other alignment alternative, but it has far more

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commercial displacements than the other alignment alternatives. Preliminary calculations indicated that noise barriers would be feasible and reasonable for several residential areas adjacent to each of the alternatives.

After considering the impacts of the three alignment alternatives, the more centrally located Combined Alternative was selected as the Preferred Alignment Alternative. This alternative would avoid impacts to all gravesites located adjacent to the existing ROW. It would also have far fewer commercial displacements than the All South Alternative.

The proposed action for the construction of the IH 10 roadway would consist of two SULs in both directions between IH 610 and SH 6. The proposed action would also include the addition of one through, general purpose (SOV) lane in each direction between IH 610 and the City of Katy and auxiliary lanes to provide lane balance at major interchanges (i.e., IH 610, Beltway 8, SH 6 and Grand Parkway). The proposed roadway would follow the existing IH 10 Katy Freeway alignment encompassing the existing parallel Union Pacific Rail Road (now owned by TxDOT) and the Old Katy Road right-of-way (ROW).

In addition, the proposed action would bring the existing freeway up to current TxDOT and FHWA design standards and provide continuous frontage roads throughout most of the corridor. It would also provide

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for pedestrian and bicycle improvements associated with the included roadway improvements. This alternative would preserve maximum flexibility for future modification of the SULs in the center of the freeway to meet future needs within the corridor, including conversion to a fixed guideway facility, automated highway, or other future transit alternative. This alternative would provide for a major increase in the ML/SUL capacity while also providing a modest increase in the SOV capacity between IH 610 and FM 1489.

The SULs would provide a high level of performance for all vehicle types such as HOVs, SOVs, trucks, or express-long distance travelers. It is likely that HOVs would use the facility without restrictions but that the other vehicles would be regulated by imposing a user fee.

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For discussion purposes of the FEIS document, the IH 10 corridor has been divided into five segments as follows:

- Segment 1 – Taylor Street to IH 610
- Segment 2 – IH 610 to Beltway 8
- Segment 3 – Beltway 8 to SH 6 (Addicks Road)
- Segment 4 – SH 6 (Addicks Road) to the City of Katy
- Segment 5 – the City of Katy to FM 1489

Land use for the IH 10 Katy Freeway Corridor project reflects two geographically distinct land use patterns. High-density commercial, industrial development is intermixed with residential development in Segments 1-3 [between IH 45 and SH 6 (Addicks Road)]. These three segments are located within the City of Houston and the Memorial Villages. The City of Houston does not have an approved zoning ordinance, however, the Memorial Villages do. Therefore, the mixed land use is characteristic of the Houston metropolitan area.

Segments 4 & 5 [between SH 6 (Addicks Road) and FM 1489] are comprised of sparsely developed, low-density residential and agricultural uses with the exception of moderately dense development at the City of Katy's Pin Oak interchange. Associated low-density commercial development is typically clustered near major interchanges.

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By definition, a majority of the Katy Freeway Corridor is classified as urban. The exception to this urban classification is Segment 5 which has undeveloped, primarily agricultural lands. There is sufficient right-of-way along Segment 5 to support the preferred alternative without extending beyond land dedicated for transportation purposes.

The soils in the vicinity of the proposed action consist of seven soil associations within the Harris, Ft. Bend, and Waller counties. These are the Lake Charles-Bernard Association, Clodine-Addicks-Gessner Association, Katy-Aris Association, Aldine-Ozan Association, Katy-Waller-Edna Association, Katy Association, and the Brazoria-Norwood Association. Generally, these seven groups consist of nearly level, poorly drained, loamy to clayey soils.

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The 1990 census identified approximately 283,300 people living in the census tracks located immediately adjacent to the IH 10 Katy Freeway. Based on the census data, the limited amount of ROW required and the minimal impacts anticipated from the proposed action, no major impacts to minority and/or low-income populations are anticipated.



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The proposed action would result in some displacement of residences and businesses. The Preferred Alignment Alternative would result in the displacement of approximately 871 businesses, 72 single-family units, 122 units in multi-family housing facilities, and two non-profit organization facilities. The number of displacements for the other alternative alignments vary from the Preferred Alignment Alternative. A number of utilities are also expected to require relocation and/or realignment for compatibility with the proposed action facility.

One historic cemetery is present in Segment 3 of the proposed expansion of IH 10. This cemetery contains from two to four graves, one with a tombstone with the name Oscar Abstein. Two other areas, also located in Segment 3, may represent other small historic cemeteries. All are within the ROW of the proposed expansion. In consultation with the Texas Historical Commission, it has been determined that none of the cemeteries meet the criteria of eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places. However, in compliance with the Texas Health and Safety Code (711.004), a plan to move the cemeteries to another nearby cemetery in consultation with descendants and the county court prior to construction has been reviewed and approved by the Texas Historical Commission.

Harris county and the surrounding seven counties (including Waller and Fort Bend Counties) are in non-attainment of the ozone air quality standard. The State of Texas in coordination with the Houston



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area has developed and submitted a State Implementation Plan (SIP) to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) demonstrating the area will attain the ozone standard by 2007. The current Houston Galveston Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) conforms to the transportation budget within the SIP. The MIS preferred alternative is, as required by EPA conformity regulations, part of the conforming 2022 MTP.

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Preliminary calculations have indicated that the proposed action would result in traffic noise impacts to residences, and several feasible and reasonable noise barriers have been proposed.

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As stated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, it is likely that a Corps permit would be required for this project based on their jurisdiction under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. It was further stated that there appear to be several waters of the U.S. and possible wetlands that may be impacted by the proposed expansion. IH 10 currently crosses Bessie's Creek, Brookshire Creek, Willow Fork of Buffalo Bayou, Snake Creek, Cane Island Branch, Mason Creek, Langham Creek, Spring Branch Creek, Briar Branch Creek, and White Oak Bayou. Any placement of fill in these water bodies or any other isolated waters or wetlands may require a Corps permit. Before a proper determination can be made about permitting requirements, TxDOT would need to perform a detailed wetland delineation within the potential areas of impact as specified by the preferred alternative design.

There are twelve potential wetland areas identified for the IH 10 Katy Freeway corridor project. The potential wetland areas were typically identified along the creeks and bayous within the vicinity of the proposed action. TxDOT is aware that a detailed evaluation of these areas would be necessary to determine the need of an U.S. Army Corps of Engineers 404 permit.

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Historically, most of the proposed action area west of Houston has been cleared of its native vegetation and converted either to agricultural (livestock range or cultivated fields) or urbanized development (residential or commercial). The proposed action area west of Houston is experiencing rapid growth. Rangeland grazing and increasing human encroachment have created a trend toward monocultures with few large tracts dedicated for natural habitat. Areas not planted with crops generally are dominated by herbaceous grasses and ferns. Repeated mechanical manipulation and grazing has eliminated much of the original vegetative cover, so these areas no longer represent native conditions.

Wildlife in the vicinity of the project area may include those common species normally found in urban and rural areas near the coast. Any disturbance beyond the normal conditions of the project area would be expected to be limited to the immediate vicinity of construction and, therefore, should have little effect on wildlife resources.

Existing vegetation located along the vicinity of the project area consists of fragmented woodland areas, such as hardwood trees and shrubs. Any disturbance beyond normal conditions within the vicinity of the project area would be expected to have little effect on the existing vegetation.

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The proposed alternatives (North and Combined) could impact some undeveloped city land in the City of Spring Valley and Spring Valley Park. As a result, a Section 4(f) Statement was prepared since the preferred alternative would impact the above-mentioned public facilities.

The proposed action would not impact wildlife refuges; however, it would impact publicly owned parklands that serve as recreational areas. Approximately 0.421 acre would be taken from an undeveloped park and another 0.672 acre would be taken from a developed park, both of which are located in the City of Spring Valley. TxDOT would compensate the City of Spring Valley with the purchase of land of comparable or greater value for their use as parkland. Therefore, as required, a Section 4(f) Statement was prepared due to the proposed impacts of these parklands. The project would not impact any other areas of unique scenic beauty or other lands of national, state, or local importance.

It is not anticipated that the proposed corridor improvements would have any substantial adverse impacts (direct) to any sensitive biological resources including Federal and/or State listed endangered or threatened flora or fauna species. This is because none of these species specifically occur in the habitat directly impacted by the proposed action.

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Field surveys of the area and available records do not indicate the existence of any of the endangered and/or threatened species nor suitable habitat for them within the project vicinity.



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An on-site archeological survey, which meets or exceeds the Archeological Survey Standards of Texas as developed by the Texas Historical Commission in consultation with the Council of Texas Archeologist, was performed along the preferred corridor. No sites were identified within the project APE that meet the criteria of eligibility for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or that warrant designation as State Archeological Landmarks.

A review of the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) revealed 92 properties greater than 50 years of age within the Area of Potential Effects. All 92 properties are located in Segment 1, from IH-45 to IH-610. Of the 92 potentially eligible properties identified, two were identified as previously listed on the NRHP and four additional structures were determined eligible for the NRHP through consultation with the Texas Historic Commission (SHPO). There will be no taking of property from any of the six listed or eligible structures as a result of this proposed project. Coordination between TxDOT and SHPO resulted in a determination of no adverse effect for the six properties. Therefore, none of the six structures will require a 4(f) statement.

A regulatory data review and coordination with the EPA and TNRCC identified approximately 143 permitted and nonregulated hazardous waste sites within 300 feet of the study area. Of these locations, 54 are registered storage tank sites. Of the 54 petroleum storage tank

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sites, 38 have been recorded as leaking underground storage tanks. Four NFRAP sites, two ERNS sites, and three VCP sites were identified within the study area. One site within the old railroad ROW is being mitigated at this time.



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During the construction phase of the proposed action, there is a possibility that noise levels would be greater than normal in the areas adjacent to the ROW due to operations normally associated with road construction. Construction is normally limited to daylight hours when occasional loud noises are more tolerable. Extended disruption of normal activities is not considered likely due to the relatively short-term exposure periods imposed on any one receptor. Every reasonable effort would be made to minimize construction noise.

Construction may temporarily degrade air quality through dust and exhaust gases associated with construction equipment. Measures to control dust would be considered and incorporated into the final design and construction specifications.

The contractor would take appropriate measures to prevent, minimize, and control the spill of hazardous material in the construction staging area. The use of construction equipment within sensitive areas would be minimized or eliminated entirely. All temporary construction materials used for this project would be removed as soon as work schedules permit.

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In summary, the proposed action would provide substantial long-term benefits to both the traveling public and the communities in and along the IH 10 corridor through improved traffic and transit service. The improved mobility for the IH 10 corridor would accommodate the extensive growth anticipated to occur in the area. The environmental impact statement indicates that, although there are long-term, potentially adverse social, economic, and environmental impacts from the proposed action, the beneficial impacts outweigh the negative impacts.