

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the West Parkway Project?

The Union Pacific Railroad, which currently runs from the border near the Brownsville & Matamoros (B&M) bridge through Brownsville for about 8 miles, is planned to be re-located to a new location to the west of Brownsville. The existing tracks would be abandoned which opens the 100-foot right-of-way (ROW) for other uses. This ROW provides the ideal location for the construction of a planned four-lane divided roadway without having to displace a substantial number of homes and businesses. The roadway is planned to be designed with the surrounding communities in mind including the construction of bridges at key intersections to reduce impacts to east/west movements, possible shared use with pedestrians and bikes, and aesthetic treatments and/or landscaping.

2. Why is this project needed?

Brownsville is the second-fastest-growing city in Texas and the 24th-fastest-growing city in the country. Taking into consideration data for the Rio Grande Valley and Matamoros/Reynosa, there is currently an estimated population of more than three and one-half million people living in the region. That number is projected to double by the year 2040. A growing community creates more drivers, and more drivers create more congestion on our roads. The project will address the inadequate north/south transportation routes in the western portion of Brownsville and the increasing congestion on surrounding roadways. Brownsville has a unique opportunity to build a roadway that addresses north/south traffic issues by using the soon to be abandoned Union Pacific Rail corridor with minimal displacement of homes and businesses.

3. Did the project team consider other corridors or other locations?

Yes, other corridors and other locations were considered as part of the process. However, after the preliminary analysis, it was decided that the railroad right-of-way was the most feasible, most viable, and best corridor for this project.

4. What is Cameron County Regional Mobility Authority (CCRMA)'s involvement in the West Parkway project?

The Cameron County RMA was created in 2004 to provide local control for transportation projects and to manage the development of transportation infrastructure to address identified needs. Its mission is to make significant contributions to the region's quality of life by providing effective, accelerated mobility improvements that will encourage economic development and job creation in South Texas from borders to beaches. The abandoned rail corridor provides an excellent opportunity to meet the aspects of the CCRMA mission. The agency can address inadequate north/south transportation routes in Brownsville, as well as address the needs of a growing population and provide the opportunity for economic development and job creation for families along the route. Additional business development often accompanies the development of new roads or the improvement of existing ones. This new development not only could provide jobs for families, but could also generate additional tax revenue to help fund schools, hospitals and other needed infrastructure.

5. Will the West Parkway have bicycle lanes?

Bicycle lanes, shared bicycle/pedestrian paths, and sidewalks are being studied as possible parts of this project. If this is important to you, please let the public involvement team know of your interest and your suggestions.

6. How will the community move back and forth across the road?

The West Parkway project would include bridges over major intersections, allowing local automobile and pedestrian traffic to travel freely from one side of the corridor to the other. At the intersections, the proposed facility could include bicycle lanes, shared bicycle/pedestrian paths, and sidewalks. Please let the public involvement team know what you would like to see as part of this project.

7. Will there be truck traffic on the West Parkway?

Currently, local regulations require that international truck traffic utilize the Veteran's International Bridge and prohibits it on the B & M Bridge, which connects to this project. For this reason, truck traffic on the proposed facility is expected to be minimal and limited to those trucks making local deliveries to your community, Brownsville, and the surrounding area.

8. Will the road create additional noise?

Part of the CCRMA's ongoing study will look at noise impacts to the area. If it is determined that adjacent properties would be impacted by noise from the highway, noise abatement options would be identified and considered. If you have a preference in regard to specific noise abatement ideas (if it turns out to be needed), please share your feedback with the public involvement team.

9. Will the West Parkway have steel walls?

No. More than likely, any necessary walls would be brick, stone or concrete, and in many instances, they could be imprinted with special designs. If you have a suggestion, please let the public involvement team know of your interest.

10. How can the Project improve safety in this area?

With the construction of the West Parkway, the CCRMA will be required to maintain the ROW, including collection of trash, upkeep of grass and other landscaping features, and repair of facilities. Law enforcement vehicles will have direct access to the corridor. Overpasses at intersections with local roadways will be well lit to improve visibility for vehicles and pedestrians.

11. Is passenger rail an alternative for this corridor?

No regional plan for passenger rail on either side of the Rio Grande River exists at this time. Mexico is working to address traffic issues by establishing more vehicle lanes on the B & M Bridge rather than a transit alternative. Unless a regional transit plan is developed and implemented, a passenger rail line in this corridor does not appear to be feasible.

12. Will you need additional property to build this project?

Yes, it is likely this project will need additional property at the north and south ends as well as at locations where access to the local streets are proposed. There are several design options being studied that require varying amounts of additional property. Every effort is being made to minimize the number of relocations.

13. Will this be a toll road?

It's currently being considered as a toll road. Toll-supported revenue bonds are the best option to fund the West Parkway project. The federal government has not increased the gas tax since 1993, and Texas has not seen a state gas tax increase since 1991. Currently, the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) spends as much each year on highway maintenance as it collects in gas tax revenue. As more roads are built, a greater share of available funding goes to maintenance, leaving less money to build new transportation facilities. It is CCRMA's desire to not use General Obligation Bonds for this project because that would result in increased property taxes. We have used tolls in the community for decades, such as the international bridge crossings we use to shop, attend school, visit family and dine. Toll revenue can also fund special amenities such as bike paths and walking trails, which could not be funded in other ways. The only people that pay the toll are those that choose to use the road. All toll revenues generated in Cameron County will be used for projects that benefit Cameron County.

14. Will the project be studied for impacts to the community and the environment?

An Environmental Assessment is currently being conducted. The Environmental Assessment evaluates the potential environmental consequences associated with the project and reasonable alternatives. As part of the study, the following areas will be reviewed:

- socioeconomic impacts, including community demographics, residential relocations, business displacements and changes in growth patterns/planned development;
- land use, including school locations, utilities, potential noise impacts and neighborhood impacts;
- cultural resources, including properties eligible for the National Register of Historic Places;
- environmental impacts, including floodplains, threatened endangered species habitat; and
- engineering analyses, including safety, utility impacts, regional growth and traffic patterns.

Through the environmental study process, a preferred alternative would be identified. A determination of whether significant impacts are associated with the project will be made based on the findings in the study. If a determination of no significant impact is made by the Federal Highway Administration, right-of-way acquisition, if needed, would begin and project design would be finalized.

15. How can I provide feedback to CCRMA regarding the West Parkway study?

You can contact the HNTB project team at (956) 554-7508 or you can send an e-mail to WestParkway@hntb.com.

Rancho Viejo

Proposed West Parkway Location Map

1732

511

Project Ends

3248

281

3248

77

83

802

802

281

48

Central Blvd

Boca Chica Blvd

Matamoros-Mexico

Brownsville

Brownsville/South Padre Island International Airport

Project Begins

B&M International Bridge

Palm Blvd

Legend

- ▬▬▬▬ Proposed West Parkway
- ▬ Proposed Av. Las Americas
- +—+ Railroad
- Streets
- Major Roads

N



0 0.5 1 2 3 4 Miles

Av. Las Americas