

# **CAMERON COUNTY REGIONAL MOBILITY AUTHORITY**

## **2016 PROJECT STATUS REPORT**

It is our privilege to present to you the Cameron County Regional Mobility Authority (CCRMA) Project Summary Report for the 2016 calendar year. The CCRMA is planning a complete system of transportation infrastructure that will support economic development and increase safety for the benefit of Cameron County and the Rio Grande Valley region. Our projects will integrate regional planning, multi-modal options and modern technology to develop a world-class transportation system.

### **SPI 2<sup>nd</sup> Access Project**

This is the most critical safety Project in Texas. South Padre Island has been recognized as the cleanest beach in Texas. As a result, South Padre Island needs a dependable, safe exit facility during Hurricane Season. With the current Queen Isabella Memorial Causeway it is estimated that it could take most of the day to exit the Island to high ground during Hurricane Season.

This Project consists of three major components: the mainland roadway, the Laguna Madre crossing bridge and the island roadway. The route under consideration includes a mainland roadway consisting of a four-lane road, crossing across Laguna Madre with about 8 miles of tolled lanes. The total length of the SPI 2<sup>nd</sup> Access Project is approximately 17.6 miles.

This Project continues in the environmental phase in accordance with the National Environment Policy Act (NEPA). The SPI 2<sup>nd</sup> Access has been identified as the most environmentally complex Project in the Country requiring a very stringent and lengthy process. In 2016 the CCRMA did advance the following critical environmental processes:

- Management and coordination with weekly teleconferences that included the Pharr District, TxDOT Environmental Division, General Engineering Consultant
- Executive Committee meeting coordination (FHWA, ENV, District, and CCRMA)
- Final Environment Impact Statement – U.S. Coast Guard 50% Review Complete
- Biological Assessment/Terrestrial – 95% Complete
- Initiation of Sea Grass Pilot Study – 1 year Pilot Study kicked off August 2016
- SPI Dune Delineation aerial and LIDAR data plan – 90% complete
- Re-evaluation of overall mitigation plan and alternatives

Preliminary engineering and project finance activities also made significant progress this past year.

- Preliminary Schematic design – 100% complete
- LIDAR survey and Aerial imaging – preliminary 100% complete
- Preliminary Right of Way Mapping – 100% complete
- Preliminary Utility identification and location mapping – 100% complete

- Subsurface Geotechnical Investigation and Report – 100% complete
- Preliminary Drainage and Hydrology Report updated – 100% complete
- Draft financial planning – 75% complete
- T&R and Project Feasibility reports – 75% complete
- Draft Procurement Timelines developed – 100% complete
- Industry review and one-on-one meetings – 100% complete
- Value Engineering (VE) Study and final recommendations– 100% complete

In March of 2016 the CCRMA began outreach efforts with industry by holding an Industry Review Meeting on South Padre Island. The meeting was a success with nearly 200 attendees from all areas of industry interested in the development of the Project. The purpose of the meeting was to provide a status update of the Project and welcome feedback from developers on the future procurement and development of the Project. The CCRMA later hosted 11 one-on-one confidential meetings with developers to discuss in further detail and gather feedback as to development, delivery, funding, and procurement of the Project. One of the goals of the CCRMA is to increase project feasibility by driving down potential costs (initial and life cycle costs) and reducing the scope of environmental impacts. The CCRMA determined a Value Engineering Study would be of the most cost efficient means to accomplish this. Through several meetings with TxDOT administration and Transportation Commissioners the CCRMA was able to have TxDOT sponsor the cost of the study and provide technical experts from other districts to participate. The VE Study took place the first week of October 2016 at South Padre Island. In December 2016 the CCRMA was able to finalize the VE recommendations to be pursued and developed which can result in more than \$300 million dollars in cost savings including a possible 80% reduction in impacts to sea grass and required mitigation. This is very significant advance for this Project and will require some project scope and design changes, but overall we feel the value alone makes any potential delay worth it. (See Exhibit 1 for proposed project map)

### **SH 32 (East Loop)**

The East Loop Corridor serves the Port of Brownville, which exports and imports over 6.3 million metric tons of steel petroleum, machinery, ores and other international trade exports to our Mexico partners. Existing truck route passes through 6 school zones. The East Loop Corridor will eliminate these school-crossing conflicts and improve safety for our children.

Eliminating 17 stops and 6 school zone crossings will significantly improve air quality in the East Loop Corridor. Creating the East Loop Corridor for trucks from Mexico/Veterans International Bridge at Los Tomates to the Port of Brownsville will reduce congestion on I-69E/SH 48 as well as reduce the time of travel on all roadways in the Corridor.

Progress on the environmental phase continued steady as we had been coordinating the various phases and stakeholders of the Environmental Assessment. This phase did arrive at a significant change in 2016 called upon by TxDOT Environmental Division where now all parts of the Project were to be combined into one Environmental Assessment document. This Project at the instruction of both TxDOT and FHWA had been approached in two different segments for the Environmental Assessments since the CCRMA began developing it. This new change required by TxDOT Environmental Division not only requires the combining of the two documents but includes the

addition of a new portion connecting SH 4 to the Port of Brownsville. This change would require additional scope and work that would ultimately increase the cost. The CCRMA was able to secure federal funding to continue the development of the Environmental Assessment however this will require re-procurement of engineering services to qualify. The CCRMA will be issuing the new procurement early 2017 and assess the new target completion date. Other activities included an application for a Fast Lane Grant for construction dollars for this Project and request for additional funding from TxDOT to replace pass through agreement funds. (See Exhibit 2 for proposed project map)

### **Outer Parkway**

The Outer Parkway would provide a new east-west travel route in northeastern Cameron County. It would extend from I-69E to FM 106 in the vicinity of FM 1847. Currently proposed, the Outer Parkway would be a controlled access and tolled facility. Although construction may be phased, the ultimate facility would consist of two lanes in each direction, separated by a wide center median reserved for future transportation use.

The major activity accomplished for this Project in 2016 was the negotiation of the scope for environmental services to begin on this Project. The Project kickoff meeting was held on January 4, 2017 and project scope and Environmental Assessment and FONSI completion is expected between 18-24 months. (See Exhibit 3 for proposed project map)

### **FM 1925 Project**

This is a Joint Project in which CCRMA, HCRMA, and TxDOT have agreed to develop the Environmental Document and preliminary engineering together. The CCRMA and HCRMA will be jointly developing the Environmental Document of the Project with TxDOT providing project management and related engineering services. A needs assessment for this Project was completed by TxDOT in March 2015 resulting with it being a desirable project initiating as a Super 2 Highway by the year 2020 with future expansion to a four lane freeway by 2035. Traffic demand will ultimately dictate future expansion. (See Exhibit 4 for proposed project map)

### **Spur 54 Project**

The Spur 54 Project is located in Harlingen and will ultimately provide improved traffic flow and connectivity between I-69E and I-2. The Project is approximately 1.07 miles in length and will provide two additional 12-foot travel lanes with sidewalks for pedestrian access within existing right of way. In August 2016 the CCRMA was given notice to proceed on the development of the required environmental document for the Project. Completion of document is expected in mid-2017. When completed Spur 54 will be a six-lane corridor with pedestrian and bicycle access. (See Exhibit 5 for proposed project map)

## **SH 550 Gap I & II Projects**

The SH 550 is a controlled access facility that connects SH 48 and the Port of Brownsville to I-69E. The ultimate configuration of the Project consists of five segments. Three segments have been completed with the most recent, the Direct Connector opened in July 2015. The next segment to be constructed is the 550 GAP I Project. In November 2016, TxDOT and the CCRMA executed a Financial Assistance Agreement whereby TxDOT will provide \$6M in the form of a grant for the construction of the Project. The final bid package has been submitted to TxDOT for review with an anticipated advertisement date in January 2017. This project will help improve the safety and mobility in the area by allowing heavy commercial and high-speed traffic to utilize the SH 550 bypassing a local public school, power plant, and Border Patrol facility. In addition to these benefits in November 2015 the Federal Highway Administration confirmed that the Direct Connector segment was completed to Interstate standards and gave approval for it to be added to the Interstate System with the conditional approval of the numbering as I-169. The Gap I Project would further extend that interstate corridor. The Project required redesign and re-evaluation of environmental documents before the construction could be initiated. (See Exhibit 6a – SH 550 Gap I Project location map)

The Gap II Project will be the final segment to be completed with an approximate length of 3 miles. The estimated cost to complete this Project is \$15 million and is partially funded as of now. The CCRMA anticipates having all resources in place to begin construction in 2018. (See Exhibit 6b – SH 550 Gap II Project location map)

The CCRMA has also prepared and bid out maintenance work on SH 550 to address slope erosion, install concrete barrier, and roadway improvements. CCRMA has received a recommendation from GEC on awarding the bid and plans to do so in early 2017.

## **West Railroad Relocation Project**

The West Railroad Relocation Project (West Rail) for Brownsville, Cameron County, Texas and Matamoros, Tamaulipas, Mexico was constructed as an alternative to constructing a series of grade separations along the existing Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) route in the residential and downtown areas of Brownsville and along the Kansas City Southern Mexico (KCSM) route in Matamoros, Mexico.

This Project was opened for train traffic in August 2015 which marked a historical event with the first new international rail bridge to cross the border between Texas and Mexico in over a century. The Project still requires some final pending items to close out. The CCRMA and the County were able to secure additional CBI funding in order to pay the pending items. (See Exhibit 7 West Rail Relocation Project Photo)

## **Olmito Switchyard and Repair In Place (RIP) Facility**

The RIP is complete and fully operational. Currently working with TxDOT in closing out the Project. Project expected to be closed out in early 2017. Project cost was \$3.6 million. (See Exhibit 8 Olmito Switchyard and RIP Project Photo)

## **U.S. 77 Interstate I-69 Conversion**

This is a multi-agency project that the CCRMA is participating in that will ultimately provide improved mobility residents and business located in the Rio Grande Valley. The improvements will help promote economic development, improved travel times, and safer travel along the corridor. (See Exhibit 9 for Project Map)

Below are some of the major projects remaining for the conversion:

### **U.S. 77 Project (Robstown) - Upgrade to interstate standards in Nueces County from FM 0892 to CR 30.**

- Currently Under Construction
- Work Began: 01/04/2016
- Orig. Contract Price: \$38,721,708.43
- Orig. Bid Days: 527
- Currently in Phase 2
- Piling & MSE walls for future NB Mainlanes ongoing for future FM 2826 Overpass
- Building NB Mainlanes & Frontage Road, installing Flex Base

### **U.S. 77 Project (Bishop) - Upgrade to interstate standards in Nueces and Kleberg County from FM 1898 to FM 3354.**

- Currently Under Construction
- Substantial Completion expected in February. Work schedule has been negatively impacted by weather.

### **U.S. 77 Projects (Under Development) - Upgrade to interstate standards in Kleberg County from Kingsville south to Riviera.**

#### ***0102-04-099: From FM 1356 to CR 2130 (Kingsville Relief Route)***

- Includes overpass at FM 1717
- Environmental documentation complete
- ROW map complete and approved

## **U.S. 77 Interstate I-69 Conversion - Continued**

- ROW acquisition underway with approximately 20 parcels expected to be acquired by January 2019
- PS&E scheduled to be assigned to consultant for preparation
- Current letting date is January 2020
- No construction funding

#### ***0102-04-097: From CR 2130 to 1.5 mi. North of SH 285***

- Environmental documentation complete
- ROW map nearly complete with all survey field work done
- PS&E not under development
- Current letting date is February 2021
- No construction funding

***0102-04-098 & 0327-01-030: Riviera Relief Route***

- Environmental documentation complete
- ROW map in development
- PS&E not under development
- Current letting date is September 2023
- No construction funding

**Transportation Reinvestment Zones (TRZ)**

In 2015 Cameron County in partnership with CCRMA created a Countywide Transportation Reinvestment Zone. The creation of the zone included more than fifty eligible projects that the county identified to receive funding for development from the zone. The zone is in the early stages and will take time to ramp up its funding. The CCRMA and the County have been working on finalization of the first year total funding and is expected a distribution mid-2017. A preliminary status of projects is being worked on so development and planning can begin.

**Toll Operations**

In September 2014, the CCRMA began the process to develop and ultimately acquire the necessary software to provide video and aviation tolling also known as the back office solution locally in Cameron County. The purpose of the development is to support the SH 550 toll operations and any other tolling operations in the Rio Grande Valley and create local jobs in the community. The CCRMA has created agreements with local International Bridge owners and upcoming toll roads to develop interoperability and support services. Interoperability in the Rio Grande Valley will help create business efficiencies and improve mobility using technology.

The deployment team consisted of CCRMA as Project Manager, Fagan Consulting as Technical Experts and TollPlus, Inc. as Vendor/Developer. The team was able to deploy system a total of 7 months ahead of schedule for a realized savings of over \$375,000. The new back office solution TPS/CCRMA went live on December 12, 2016.

# APPENDIX

Exhibit 1 – SPI 2<sup>nd</sup> Access Proposed Project map



Exhibit 2 – SH 32 East Loop Project Proposed Project Map

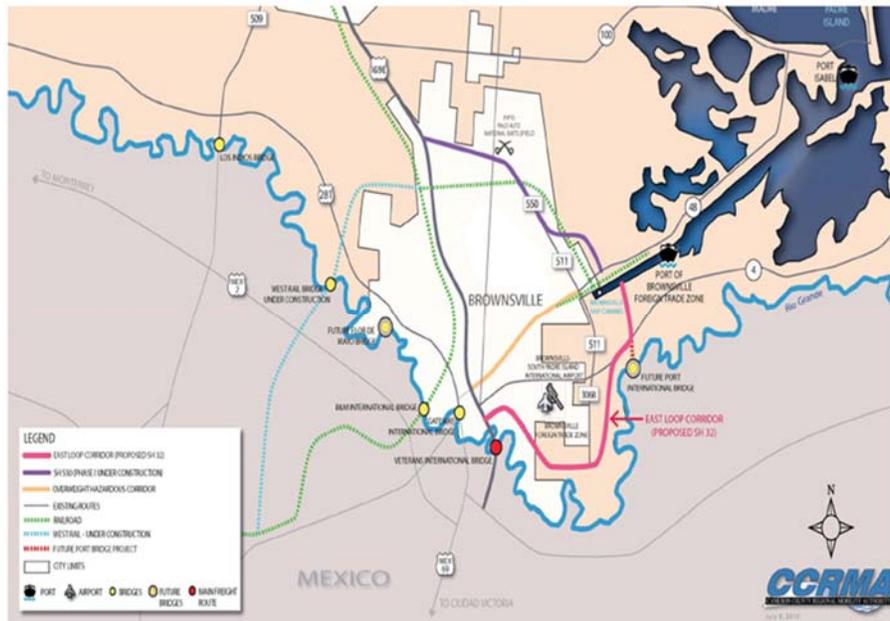


Exhibit 3 – Outer Parkway Proposed Project Corridor Map

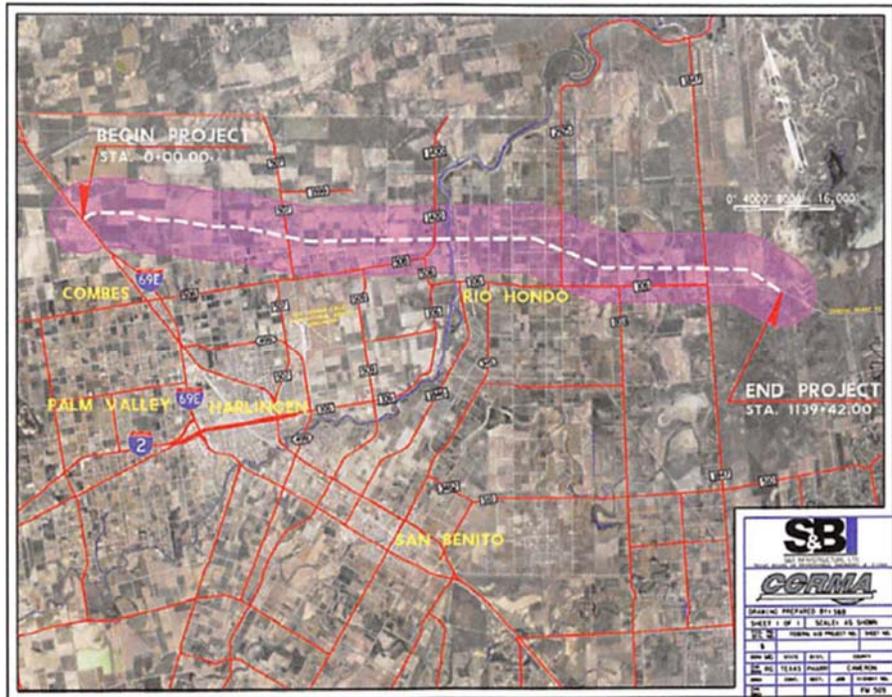


Exhibit 4 – FM 1925 Proposed Project Map

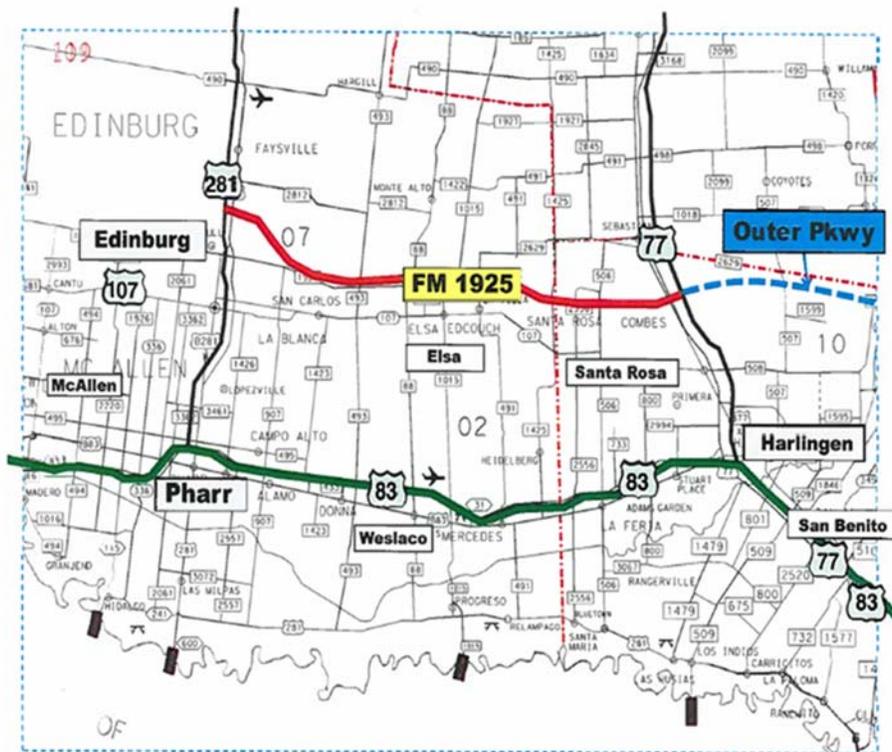


Exhibit 5 – Spur 54 Proposed Project Map



Exhibit 6a – SH 550 Gap I Project

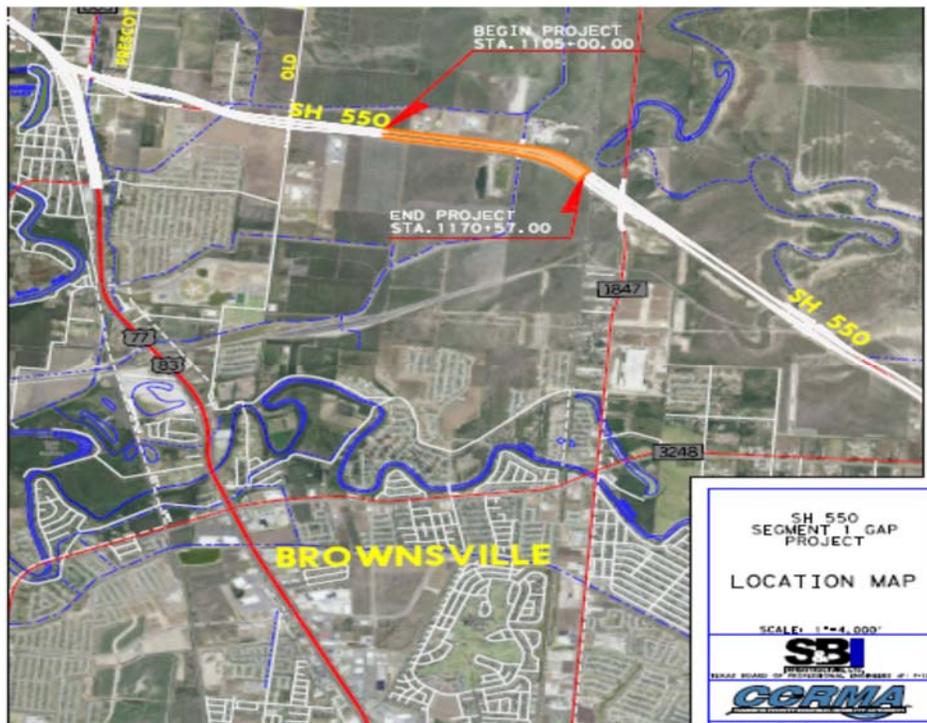


Exhibit 6b – SH 550 Gap II Project



Exhibit 7 – West Relocation Project



Exhibit 8 – Olmito Switchyard and RIP Facility



