



**Talking Points for Commenting on the proposed SH 45 SW toll road draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS)**

**Public hearing on Draft EIS:** Tuesday, July 29<sup>th</sup>, 5 til 8 p.m., Bowie High School Cafeteria, 4103 West Slaughter Lane, Ausitn, 78749 (presentations first: comment period starts about 6:30)

**Written Comments accepted through August 15, 2014; may be submitted thru the website at <http://www.sh45sw.com/contact/> or go through KeepMopacLocal.org**

**What is the draft EIS?** The draft EIS purports to evaluate the environmental impacts of and potential alternatives to the proposed first piece of SH 45 SW, from the south end of Mopac east and south to FM 1626. The 3.6 mile route runs near the Travis/Hays county board and crosses over the Barton Springs Edwards Aquifer recharge zone. The second 3 mile piece of the proposed SH 45 SW would extend from FM 1626 to Interstate 35, thereby connecting South Mopac to Interstate 35.

The entire draft EIS is posted at the SH45SW.com website. With appendices, the document clocks in at 1020 pages. Despite its length, the document wholly fails to provide an honest evaluation of the likely effects of the proposed project on Mopac traffic, traffic on other area roadways, water quality, and noise, air, light, and visual pollution.

TxDOT rules require an EIS on major projects; an opportunity for public comment on the draft EIS; and a final EIS published, with responses to the public comments received.

**\*\*Please file your personal comments on SH 45 SW at <http://www.sh45sw.com/contact/> no later than August 13, 2014. Here are potential comments you might include:**

**\*The draft EIS fails to analyze the whole (and real) project.**

TxDOT is currently moving to build 45SW at the same time it is proposing to build freeway main lanes and bridges at the Mopac/Slaughter and Mopac/LaCrosse intersections and to expand South Mopac from Slaughter Lane all the way up and across Lady Bird Lake to Cesar Chavez with up to three additional lanes in each direction. This is the real project: an expanded and tolled Mopac/45SW loop that, if built, would convert Mopac from a local commuter highway to an alternative Interstate 35, fulling integrated into the interregional and interstate freeway system. An honest environmental analysis must look at this whole project – rather than chopping it up into four separate pieces as TxDOT is currently doing.

**Tell TxDOT to study the whole “project,” not just the pieces.** This study would focus on whether Mopac should keep Mopac for local commuters or convert it to I-35 West. **(over)**

**\*The draft EIS is premature and fails to actually study the impacts.**

The draft admits that critical studies on caves, sinkholes, and other aquifer recharge features in the right of way are not completed. As a result, the actual alignment and controls for managing storm runoff pollution during construction and post-construction have yet to be designed. The DEIS admits that a “cumulative impacts” study and study of historic and archeological sites along the planned route have yet to be completed. As a result, the DEIS fails to actually “analyze” the impacts and evaluate the alternatives, because the necessary studies have not been completed.

**Tell TxDOT to withdraw the DEIS and republish when the required studies are completed. Otherwise, the EIS and public comment process is a charade and violates TxDOT rules.**

**\*The draft EIS ignores noise, air, light and visual pollution effects on Mopac corridor neighborhoods, public lands, and the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center.**

By pretending the project stops at the southern tip of Mopac and at FM 1626, the draft EIS ignores the noise, air, light, and visual pollution that will result from the 15,000 to 40,000 more cars and trucks dumped on to south Mopac and the necessary expansion and construction on Mopac from 45SW all the way north to Cesar Chavez. The DEIS fails to examine the noise and visual intrusion on Wildflower Center gardens from the increased car and truck traffic and the construction of elevated connector bridges at the 45SW/Mopac, Lacrosse/Mopac, and Slaughter/Mopac intersections. Elevations of these connecting bridges and the lights for them are not disclosed, so it is impossible for either TxDOT analysis or independent analysis. The 45SW route and Mopac to the north passes through watershed preserve lands and parks that will be harmed by the construction of a major toll road across Texas’ most vulnerable drinking water aquifer.

**Tell TxDOT to study the harm to Mopac corridor neighbors, the Wildflower Center, and public parks and preserves resulting from air, noise, light, and visual pollution from the proposed 45SW toll road and necessary Mopac expansion.**

**\*The draft EIS fails to consider better, more affordable and sustainable alternatives.**

TxDOT’s analysis shows that building 45SW increases Mopac congestion. Much better ways to improve north-south commuting between Hays County and Austin include: upgrades to I-35, Manchaca, and Brodie; new bus service that currently does not exist; and subsidizing of telecommuting, carpooling, ridesharing, and other steps that reduce single-occupancy commuting. Spending \$100 million to divert more traffic to Mopac makes no sense at all.

**Tell TxDOT to invest in these “shared solutions” that are more effective and do not pave over the Barton Springs Edwards Aquifer recharge zone.**