Balch Springs
Hickory Tree Road Corridor Planning Study
Business & Property Owner Stakeholder Meeting
6/30/21
About NCTCOG

North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG)
Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Dallas-Fort Worth region

Regional Transportation Council (RTC)
Transportation Actions
Funding of “Projects and Programs”
Effectiveness and Equity

www.nctcog.org
Meeting Purpose

• The City of Balch Springs is pursuing reconstruction of Hickory Tree Road from Elam Road to Bruton Road to better accommodate bicycle/pedestrian access, traffic, and economic development.

• NCTCOG is conducting a planning study of the corridor to identify high-level concepts and recommendations for the development of the roadway design.

• This meeting is part of the public process for obtaining feedback on the proposed concepts and recommendations to ensure the project will achieve community goals.

• The purpose of tonight’s meeting is to obtain focused feedback from business owners/tenants and property owners along the study corridor.
Project Background
Project Background

• May 2020: City submitted funding proposal to NCTCOG
• June 2020: RTC approved corridor planning study by NCTCOG staff to develop context-sensitive corridor plan facilitating economic growth
  • Elam Road to Bruton Road
• April 2021: RTC approved COVID Round 4 funding award for Phase 1 Hickory Tree Road construction: Elam Road to Lake June
  $13.5M Total: $8.2M Federal / $5.3M Local (County) / 260K Regional Transportation Development Credits
  Anticipated FY 22-25: Engineering, Right of Way, Utilities, & Construction
• Funding partners include NCTCOG, County, TxDOT, and City of Balch Springs
Planning Project Goals

• Develop Context-Sensitive Design recommendations for the corridor
  • Design that is meant to fit the environments of the area surrounding it and meet the needs of the community
• Enhance bicycle/pedestrian experience along the study corridor
  • Increase safety for bicyclists and pedestrians
  • Increase comfort
• Connect key amenities and services along the study corridor
  • Schools, Parks, Municipal Buildings, Commercial Areas
• Facilitate economic opportunity along the study corridor
Planning Project Limits

Project Limits: Hickory Tree Road, from Bruton Rd to Elam Road

Corridor length: 2.03 miles
Data Collection / Existing Conditions
Online Survey

• Live from February 2021 onward (expected close date is September 2021)

• Hosted on Balch Springs’ website

• Questions about travel modes on study corridor, safety concerns, and future visions for the corridor
Preliminary Survey Results: “What is your vision for the corridor study area in the future? Select all that apply.” (132 Responses)

- A place that offers a range of amenities and shopping for its residents: 34 responses
- A place that retains its rural-suburban feel: 27 responses
- A place where residents can safely walk and bicycle to destinations on the corridor: 107 responses
- A place where traffic can pass through quickly and easily: 65 responses
- Other: 8 responses
Preliminary Survey Results: “Rate the difficulty of exiting driveways on the study corridor.” (130 Responses)

- **I almost always have difficulty exiting driveways (3+ times a week)**: 31
- **I often have difficulty exiting driveways (multiple times a week)**: 32
- **I sometimes have difficulty exiting driveways (weekly)**: 35
- **I rarely have difficulty exiting driveways (1-2 times a month)**: 9
- **I never have difficulty exiting driveways**: 14
- **I do not drive on the study corridor**: 8

Majority of people have issues at least weekly (98/130)
Preliminary Survey Results: “If you have difficulty exiting driveways on the study corridor, what type of driveways do you most often have difficulty exiting? Select all that apply.” (127 Responses)
Preliminary Survey Results: “How often do you experience delays due to traffic congestion while driving on the study corridor?” (129 Responses)

- I almost always experience delays (3+ times a week): 29
- I often experience delays (multiple times a week): 39
- I sometimes experience delays (weekly): 34
- I rarely experience delays (1-2 times a month): 20
- I never experience delays: 4
- I do not drive on the study corridor: 3

Majority of people have issues weekly (102/129)
Preliminary Survey Results: “Are there driver behaviors that you think are a problem along the study corridor? Select all that apply.” (120 Responses)

- Yielding to pedestrians in crosswalks: 69
- Speeding: 86
- Leaving safe distances between other road users when passing: 61
- Traffic sign compliance: 57
- Yielding to all road users when entering and exiting driveways: 52
- Yielding to bicyclists: 47
- Other: 6
- I do not think there are any problems: 9
Current Conditions - Crash Maps

Legend
- Elementary Schools
- Major Arterials
- STAR Transit Stops

Bike-Pedestrian Crashes
- Non-Incapacitating or Possible Injury

Auto Crashes
- Suspected Serious Injury
- Non-Incapacitating or Possible Injury
- No Injury

Crash data from 2015-2019
Source: NCTCOG Safety Team
Intersection Crash Maps

Legend
- Elementary Schools
- Major Arterials
- STAR Transit Stops
- Traffic Signal

Bike-Pedestrian Crashes
- Non-Incapacitating or Possible Injury

Auto Crashes
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Crash data from 2015-2019
Source: NCTCOG Safety Team
Walk Audit With City of Balch Springs: 12/3/20

• Findings:
  • Pedestrian desire is evident in areas sidewalks do not exist
  • Many challenges for less mobile pedestrians to walk safely outside of travel lanes
    • Drainage ditches, pavement cracking, water lines, trash cans, mailboxes, litter and debris along the road
  • Crosswalks and road paint very faded
  • Drivers speeding observed; few gave space to pass pedestrians safely
School Site Visit: McWhorter Elementary
5/4/21

Observations:

• Students in grades K-2 with no older siblings are picked up in front driveway along Hickory Tree Road

• Back-up from driveway queueing overflow on Hickory Tree Road peaked 3:04-3:10 (3:05 dismissal)

• Additional back-up on Hickory Tree Road was caused by cars attempting to turn onto McWhorter Dr for back driveway pickup

• Students walking southbound on Hickory Tree walk in small grassy area along roadway to avoid drainage ditch
McWhorter Elementary: Congestion Mapping
School Site Visit: Floyd Elementary 5/6/21

• Back ups on Hickory Tree Rd caused by crossing guard stoppages to let children cross
  • Crossing Locations: Terry Dr & Southern driveway near Canfa Dr
  • Most students crossed at the southern driveway to walk down Canfa Dr to the townhomes on Quail.
• Walkers walked along the southern driveway and to the sidewalk to exit the school
• Cars waiting to turn from the driveway backed up to the school building.
Floyd Elementary: Congestion Mapping
Major Considerations
Utilities

Many areas with above and below ground utilities may need to be moved.

Examples include:
- Fiber optic
- Utility poles
- Drainage ditches
- Gas lines
Access Management

• Access Management: Techniques to increase roadway capacity, manage congestion, and reduce crashes with entrances and exits to the roadway

• Numerous residential, some commercial and municipal driveways along entire corridor
Access Management – Driveways

• 121 Driveways on corridor
  • 66 Single Family, 21 Commercial

• 98/130 survey respondents reported difficulty exiting driveways at least once a week
  • 31/130: Almost Always (3+ times/week)
  • 32/130: Often (multiple times/week)
  • 35/130: Sometimes (weekly)

• Commercial driveways were the most challenging (76/127), followed by residential (48/127)
Key Considerations – Pass-Through Traffic

Hickory Tree is used for cut-through traffic by people avoiding the Elam Road/635 interchange.

Drivers use Hickory Tree road to access 635 to the north or south of Elam Rd

Drivers use Hickory Tree road to avoid a five-way intersection/signal at Bruton/Peachtree
Preliminary Recommendations
**NCTCOG’s Cross-Section Recommendation:**

Three-lane roadway with center turn lane and pedestrian refuge islands at key crossing locations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major Considerations:</th>
<th>Why:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Access to homes/businesses</td>
<td>• Improve access to businesses / residences</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Congestion management</td>
<td>• Improve congestion</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Queuing for pick up/drop-off at schools</td>
<td>• Room for bicyclists and pedestrians to travel safely</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Bicycle/pedestrian safety and improvements</td>
<td>• Improve safety for bicycle/pedestrian</td>
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<td>• Pedestrian crossing treatments</td>
<td>• Future traffic volumes</td>
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NCTCOG Recommendation vs Current Cross-Section:

**Recommended:**
3-Lane Cross-Section with Added Ped Refuges: 
70’ ROW

**Current Cross-Section:**
2-Lanes with no Bike/Ped Amenities: 
60’ ROW
Center Turn Lane

• Allows for left and right driveway exits
• Vehicles waiting to turn left no longer cause back-ups
• Maximizes access to businesses
• Majority of people have issues at least weekly exiting driveways (98/130)
Crossing Safety Concepts: Pedestrian Refuge Island

• Increases safety for pedestrians crossing a multi-lane road

• Allows pedestrians to focus on one direction of traffic at a time

• Priority Placement Locations
  • Schools
  • Luedeke Park
  • Other high-traffic crosswalks, as needed

• Design and aesthetics for Pedestrian Refuge Islands will be part of discussion for the City-led engineering project

Photo Courtesy of Dan Burden
North Texas Examples: Pedestrian Refuge Island in a Three-Lane Roadway

Spurwood Dr, Carrollton TX

NW Summercrest Blvd, Burleson TX

Imagery Provided by Google
Pedestrian Refuge Island Preliminary Placement Recommendations
Bike/Pedestrian Infrastructure Concepts

• Sidewalks and Shared-use Paths
  • Sidewalks: 5-6’, meant for pedestrians
  • Shared-use Path: >10’, shared by bikes and pedestrians

• Community concern over current roadway’s unsafe walking spaces
  • Student safety walking to and from school a high concern in survey responses

• 107/132 initial respondents to the Community Survey want safe walking and biking infrastructure on Hickory Tree Road
Pedestrian Safety Concept: Sidewalk Driveway Treatments

• Sidewalks are continued over driveways to alert drivers to the shared space
• Continuous walking path for pedestrians reduces interruptions in flat pavement
• Benefits pedestrians with limited mobility, wheelchair users, and pedestrians with strollers
Crossing Safety Concepts

• Improve visibility of crosswalks in all weather and lighting conditions

• Concepts for all mid-block crosswalks:
  • High Visibility Crosswalk Paint
  • Crosswalk Warning Signs
  • Vehicle Stop Lines
  • Additional Lighting

Photo Courtesy of Dan Sundstrom
Crossing Safety Concepts: Pedestrian Hybrid Beacon

- Beacon activates to temporarily halt traffic to allow pedestrians to safely cross
- Once pedestrian crosses, road returns to normal conditions
- Possible locations include:
  - Schools
  - Parks
  - Any other areas with safety concerns
Crossing Safety Concepts: Curb Radius Tightening

• Shortens crosswalk distance
  • Benefits slower pedestrians
• Reduces time spent in the roadway
• Slows right turn vehicle speeds and increases visibility of crosswalk and pedestrians
• Possible Locations
  • Hickory Tree Rd & Lake June Rd
  • Hickory Tree Rd & Bruton Rd
  • Hickory Tree Rd & Elam Rd
  • Hickory Tree Rd & Quail Dr
Next Steps:

- **Stakeholder Meetings:** 6/29 and 6/30
- **Project Design:** FY 22
- **ROW Acquisition:** FY 23
- **Utilities:** FY 24
- **Construction:** FY 25
- **Public Feedback** (Online Public Engagement Opportunity): Expected: August-September 2021
- **Complete Planning Study** Reviews & Revisions: Expected November 2021
- **ROW Acquisition Meetings with property owners after final roadway design complete**
- **Construction & Utilities** Construction schedule and traffic access discussion to come
Questions and Feedback
Discussion Questions - Businesses

• How would you describe the corridor today generally? What concerns do you have, if any?

• What problems currently exist with accessing your business from the study corridor?

• How do people usually travel to your business? Do you or any of your employees walk or bike to work on the corridor?

• What on the roadway would most benefit economic development/your business?

• How would you describe the corridor in terms of traffic and safety?

• What concerns do you have with the present-day corridor?

• What would you like to see for this corridor in the future?

• Do you have any concerns about the roadway improvement concepts presented today?
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