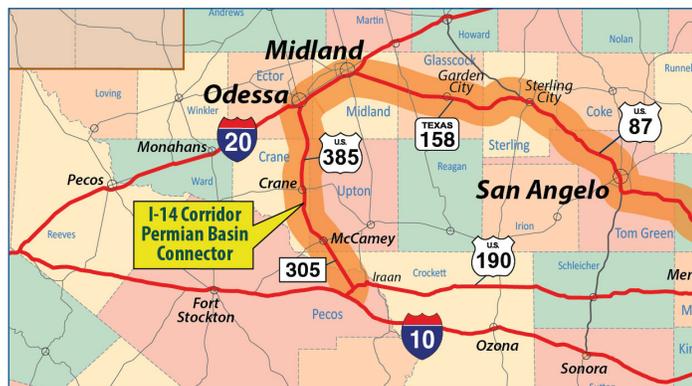


March 12, 2020

WASHINGTON – Despite continued bipartisan support for increased investment in infrastructure, legislative progress has been slow due to election year partisanship and a lack of new funding sources. Nevertheless, pressure is on Congress to take some action before the current highway bill, the FAST Act, expires at the end of September. Passage will require significant new revenue and members will be reluctant to pass new taxes or fees in the run up to the election.

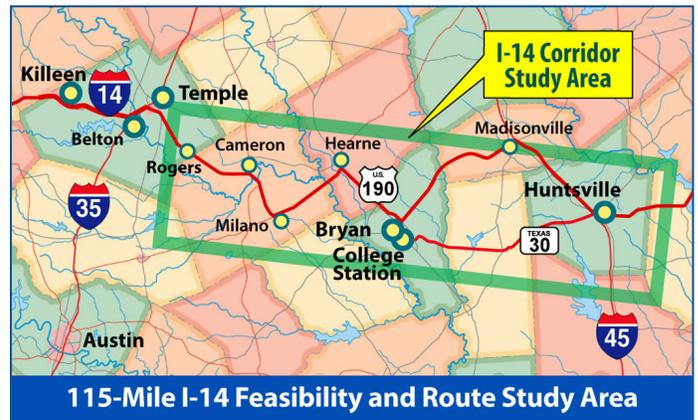
The best chance for passing the I-14 Expansion Bill, **H.R. 2220**, is as a component of the FAST Act renewal or possibly as part of a larger infrastructure bill being discussed in the House.

Larry Meyers reports that while the House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee has released a framework of general concepts for the reauthorization legislation, there are no specifics, and again, no funding source has been identified. The House Ways & Means Committee chairman has been holding talks with the Trump Administration but the committee does not intend to move forward with a funding proposal without a firm agreement from the President. The Senate Environment & Public Works Committee passed its version of the highway reauthorization bill in August, however additional committees with jurisdiction must act on transit and safety issues as well as financing.



CONAWAY ADDING CONNECTOR – The busy Permian Basin region will be better served in the future with an I-14 Corridor connector between Odessa and Interstate 10. **U.S. Rep. Mike Conaway** has proposed an addition to our I-14 designation expansion bill that would add a north-south connector to the Central Texas Corridor following US 385 and SH 305. Bill sponsor **Rep. Brian Babin** has confirmed he will accept the connector addition running through the heart of the Permian Shale Play.

MULTI-YEAR I-14 ROUTE SELECTION EFFORT - Coalition efforts to urge action on the I-14 development process took a big step forward in late February when TxDOT began the process of hiring an engineering consulting team that will help with the eventual selection of a preferred route for I-14 through Central Texas. The winning team is expected to be under contract by Fall and initial public engagement should start in early 2021.



The RFP says a successful project will include engaging the public and key stakeholders, enhancing east-west connectivity, improving safety, and relieving congestion while minimizing environmental impact. The process will include extensive stakeholder and public involvement over several years.

A study completed in 2018 recommended that I-14 run on I-35 from its current terminus in Belton to US 190 in Temple and then follow the path of US 190 to near the town of Rogers in eastern Bell County.

The Bryan District will oversee the upcoming feasibility and route studies which will follow an integrated approach considering environmental, community and economic issues. The study area starts at Rogers and extends east to a point east of Huntsville in Walker County. The new route is not expected to follow much of the zig-zag path of the current US 190 across this 115-mile corridor. Several alternate routes will be identified for analysis.

LEESVILLE MEETING POSTPONED – In light of public health concerns, the meeting scheduled March 20 in Leesville, LA, has been postponed to a later date. The Coalition called the meeting of Texas and Louisiana stakeholders to discuss ongoing planning for replacement of the Sabine River Bridge at Burr's Ferry. The bridge, which will eventually be part of the I-14 system, must be replaced soon because of age and river migration.

CONTRACTS – Recent contracts let by TxDOT on the I-14 Corridor include: Widen 5 miles of I-14 to six lanes at Harker Heights - \$44.7 million; 7.6-mile project to widen and add lanes to US 190 in Bell County from south of Heidenheimer to the Milam County Line - \$77.8 million; upgrades to US 83 north of Junction - \$12.2 million; 21 miles of roadway upgrades on US 87 east of San Angelo - \$13.6 million; and widen SH 123 for 10 miles south Seguin - \$24.6 million.

TXDOT COMMISSION – Stephen Floyd, Tom Green County Judge, appeared before the Texas Transportation Commission in December urging progress on I-14 projects and stressing city and county support for the I-14 San Angelo relief route. Getting in front of decisionmakers helps bring attention to I-14. (There will be a route study public meeting March 24 in San Angelo).

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