

Interstate 69 – Driven by Texans

Segment One Committee Report and Recommendations



Driven by Texans

Interstate 69 (I-69) is a proposed 1,600-mile national highway connecting Michigan, Indiana, Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi, Arkansas, Louisiana and Texas. In Texas, the route for I-69 begins on US 84 in Joaquin and on US 59 in Texarkana and extends to Laredo and the Rio Grande Valley. The highway is designated by Congress as a High Priority Corridor and a Future Interstate Highway. As shown in **Figure 1**, the Texas portion of I-69 represents nearly half of the overall length of the national interstate as it extends from Northeast and East Texas through Houston to the Texas-Mexico border. I-69 is complete through Michigan. Mississippi and Indiana have completed new segments of I-69 with additional segments currently under construction in Indiana. Kentucky and Tennessee have designated portions of existing highways as I-69. The first segment of I-69 Texas was designated on the existing US 77 in South Texas and did not require any additional right-of-way or funding for construction. Continued project development and planning is underway in all of the states along the national I-69 route.

Substantial progress has been made on I-69 Texas, with over 200 miles of highway built to standards that are at or close to those required of an interstate. In other sections, much of the proposed I-69 Texas is currently a four-lane highway that would require the addition of interchanges and frontage roads, in some areas, to meet interstate quality.

I-69 Texas is important to the connectivity of the state because it provides access to inland ports, sea ports along the gulf coast and connects major east-west interstates in Texas. I-69 crosses I-10, I-20 and I-30, improving connectivity and providing convenient access to national east-west routes from Texas' ports and cities. I-69 also connects with I-37 and I-45 allowing for access to additional national north-south routes from I-69 Texas. I-49, currently in the development stages in southwest Arkansas, will provide an additional connection for national mobility as I-69 and I-49 parallel in Texarkana, Texas and Arkansas respectively. In addition to the critical connections to interstates, I-69 will also provide access to the Texas trunk system. The Texas trunk system is vital to rural Texas in moving agriculture, goods, and for travel throughout our state. I-69 will provide an essential linkage with rural Texas and allow for more efficient movement between communities along the I-69 Texas system and national highway routes.



As part of the legislation that identified Congressionally Designated High Priority Corridors 18 and 20, proposed I-69 sections that meet interstate standards and connect to an existing interstate can be added to the Interstate Highway System. In the fall of 2011, the Federal Highway Administration approved adding a 6.2 mile section of US 77 that connects to I-37 near Corpus Christi as the first official portion of I-69 in Texas.

With continued growth in Texas, I-69 has become more important than ever to the state's transportation system and in keeping Texans moving. The U.S. Congress also recognized its significance and designated I-69 as a High Priority Corridor in the 1990's.

A Citizens Plan for I-69

In 2008, the Texas Transportation Commission created the I-69 Advisory and Segment Committees to assist the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) in the planning process for I-69. These committees worked to provide a locally focused, citizen plan for developing I-69. Membership of these committees is comprised of volunteer citizen planners from communities along the I-69 system. This unique process of citizens leading a planning effort of a large-scale interstate project is the first of its kind and allowed for a grassroots approach where citizens at a local level, rather than TxDOT, decided on needs, improvement and projects. This report specifically describes the work and recommendations of the Segment One Committee.

Advisory Committee

The Texas Transportation Commission created the advisory committee for I-69 through Minute Order 111294 on March 27, 2008; membership of the advisory committee includes citizens throughout the I-69 system in Texas. This committee was created for the purpose of facilitating and achieving consensus among affected communities and interested parties on desired transportation improvements along the proposed I-69 route in Texas.

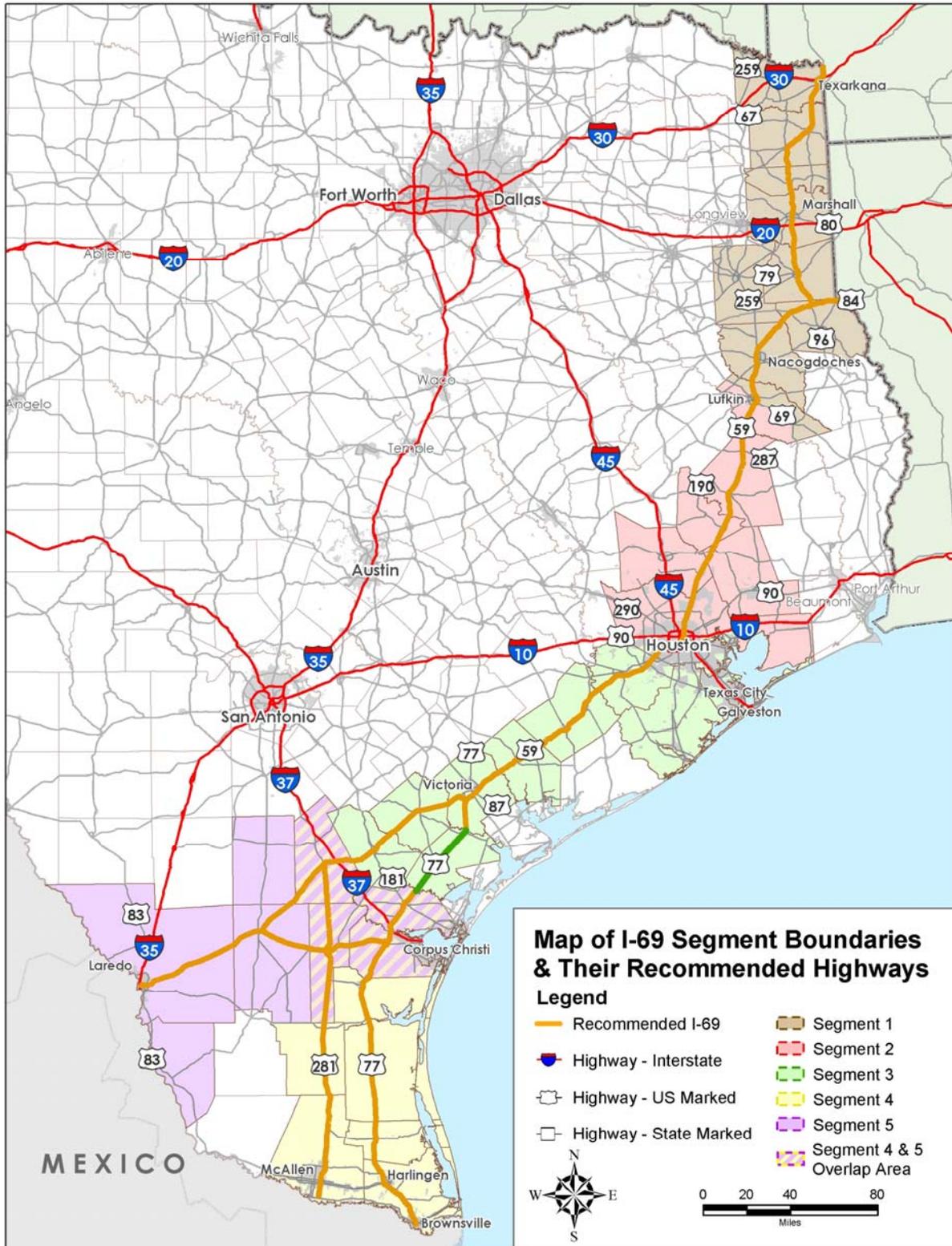
Segment Committees

The Texas Transportation Commission created five segment committees for I-69 through Minute Order 111527 on September 25, 2008. The segment committees were created for the purpose of providing locally focused input and recommendations on developing I-69 in their communities. The segment committees are composed of members representing cities, counties, metropolitan planning organizations, ports, chambers of commerce, economic development organizations, and the Texas Farm Bureau along the proposed route for I-69. The segment committees have studied environmental planning features, considered traffic volumes and crash rates, examined engineering and cost considerations and obtained input from their communities as they prepared recommendations for the best route for I-69 in their area.

The proposed I-69 routes in Texas and the areas included in each of the five segment committees are shown in **Figure 2**.

- Segment One Committee encompasses portions of US 59 and US 84 in Northeast Texas and includes the counties of Angelina, Bowie, Cass, Harrison, Marion, Nacogdoches, Panola, Rusk, and Shelby.
- Segment Two Committee encompasses US 59 through East Texas and includes the counties of Angelina, Chambers, Fort Bend, Harris, Liberty, Montgomery, Polk, and San Jacinto.
- Segment Three Committee encompasses portions of US 59 and US 77 and includes the counties of Bee, Brazoria, Fort Bend, Galveston, Goliad, Harris, Jackson, Refugio, Victoria and Wharton.
- Segment Four Committee encompasses portions of US 59, US 77, US 281 and SH 44 and includes the counties of Brooks, Cameron, Hidalgo, Jim Wells, Kenedy, Kleberg, Live Oak, Nueces, San Patricio, and Willacy.
- Segment Five Committee encompasses portions of US 59, US 77, US 281 and SH 44 and includes the counties of Duval, Jim Wells, Live Oak, McMullen, Nueces, San Patricio, Webb, and Zapata.

Figure 2 – Map of I-69 Segment Boundaries and Recommended I-69 Highways



I-69 Segment One Committee

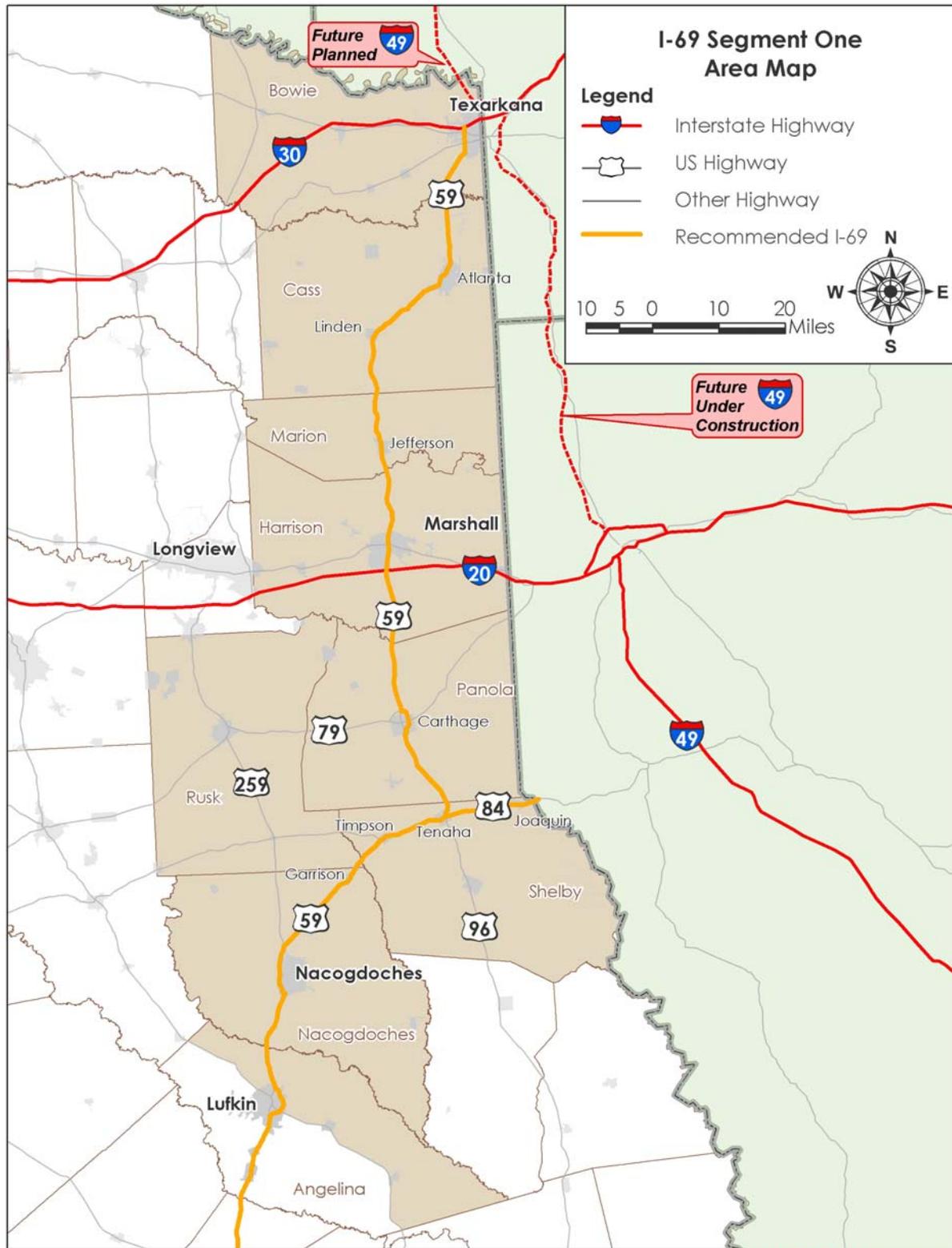
The area included in Segment One is shown in **Figure 3** and includes the counties of Angelina, Bowie, Cass, Harrison, Marion, Nacogdoches, Panola, Rusk, and Shelby. Segment One encompasses portions of the US 59 and US 84 routes in Northeast Texas. Members of the committee currently include those individuals listed in **Table 1**.

**Table 1 – Segment One Committee Members
(December 2011)**

Member	Appointing Entity
David Anderson	Panola County
Richard Anderson	Harrison County
Bob Barton	Rusk County
Rick Campbell	Shelby County
William Cork	Red River Redevelopment Authority
Joe English	Nacogdoches County
TBA	Cass County
James Greer	Marshall Chamber of Commerce
William Holley	City of Tenaha
Jerry Huffman	Angelina County
Jim Jeffers	City of Nacogdoches
Joe David Lee	City of Jefferson
Brad McCaleb	Texarkana MPO
Michael Meador	Texas Farm Bureau
Philip M. Medford	City of Lufkin
Robert Murray	Bowie County
Karen Owen	Longview MPO
Phil Parker	Marion County
Jerry Sparks*	City of Texarkana
Charles Thomas	City of Carthage
Charles Wilcox	City of Atlanta

* Committee Chair

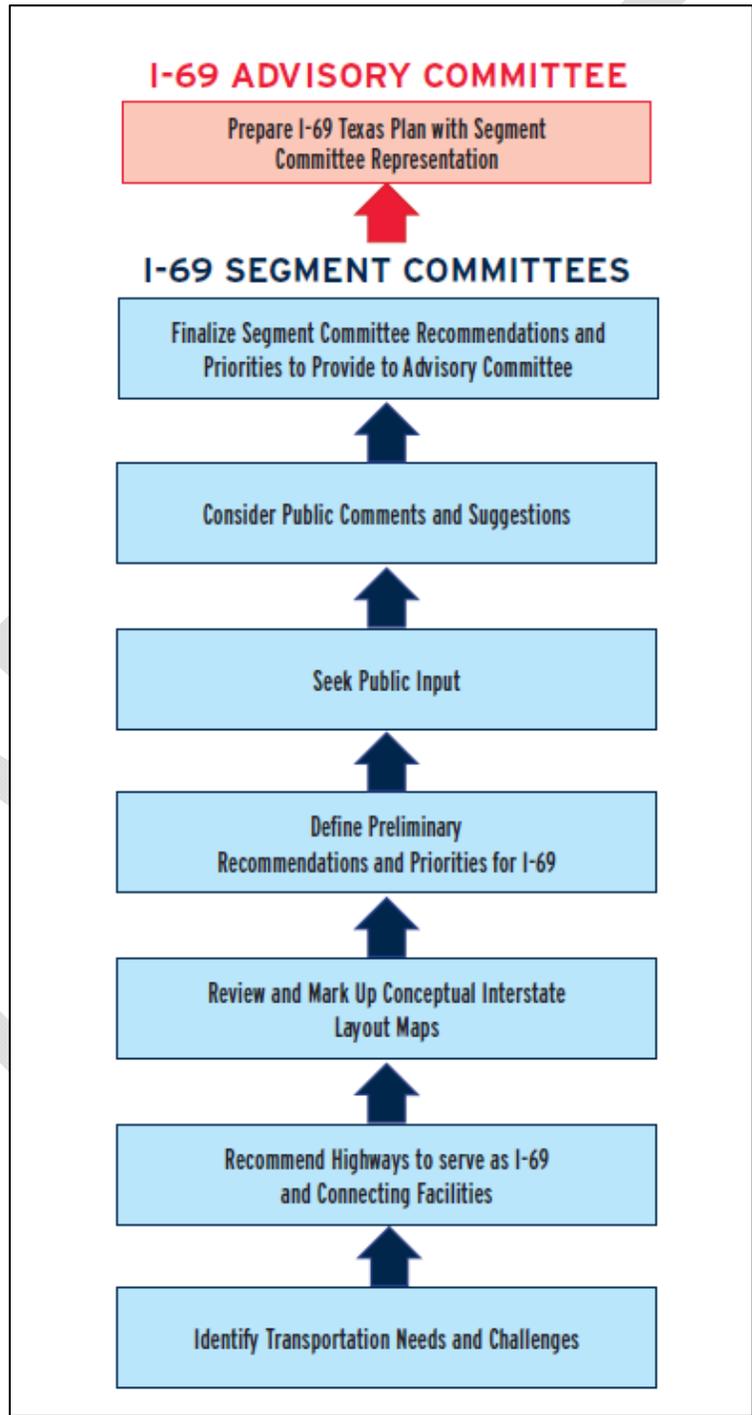
Figure 3 – I-69 Segment One Committee Area Map



WORKING DRAFT 11/23/2011

Since its formation, the committee has met regularly to discuss transportation, safety and economic development needs and concerns of their communities and provide recommendations related to developing I-69 in Northeast Texas. Using the decision-making process shown in **Figure 4**, the committees have undertaken a citizen-driven planning process to develop regional recommendations for the I-69 Advisory Committee. The committees enhanced citizen participation in this process by involving and communicating with affected communities and interested parties in their area. The recommendations for Segment One are outlined in this report.

Figure 4 – I-69 Segment Committee Process



Transportation Needs and Challenges

Members of the five I-69 Segment Committees identified a number of factors that support the need to develop I-69 in their communities. These needs include:

- **Serving Population and Traffic Growth** – Future population and traffic growth along the entire I-69 route will require the capacity of a four-lane interstate freeway. Statewide population growth from 2000 to 2010 was nearly 22%, with many of the fastest growing counties falling along the I-69 route in and near major population centers of Houston and the Rio Grande Valley. Population growth in Segment One was more moderate with an increase of just under 5.7% between 2000 and 2010. Nevertheless, several of the more populated counties, such as Harrison and Nacogdoches, saw population growth of just under 10 percent throughout the decade.
- **Providing Safer Travel** - Interstate highways are safer than two and four-lane roads. Along the I-69 route throughout Texas, fatal crashes on interstate quality freeways are less likely than on non-freeway type roads. I-69 would be a safer, interstate quality highway, possibly resulting in fewer fatal crashes each year.
- **Improving Emergency Evacuations** - The Texas Gulf Coast is routinely impacted by hurricanes that require residential evacuations and service by emergency personnel. The population of the Gulf Coast continues to grow and existing highways are inadequate during times of emergency evacuations. Additional capacity and interchanges at cross-roads are necessary in many areas to address critical evacuation needs.
- **Maintaining and Improving Economic Competitiveness** - High quality transportation is necessary for Texas and its communities to compete for new industry and jobs, with service to interstate highways being a top site selection factor for new industry. In addition, trade through Texas Gulf Coast ports and across the border requires convenient highway access to compete for industries and serve customers.

In addition to identifying these transportation needs and challenges, committee members also reviewed planning and environmental features maps for highways in their region. Segment committee members verified features in their communities and identified any additional features to be included and considered in future planning.

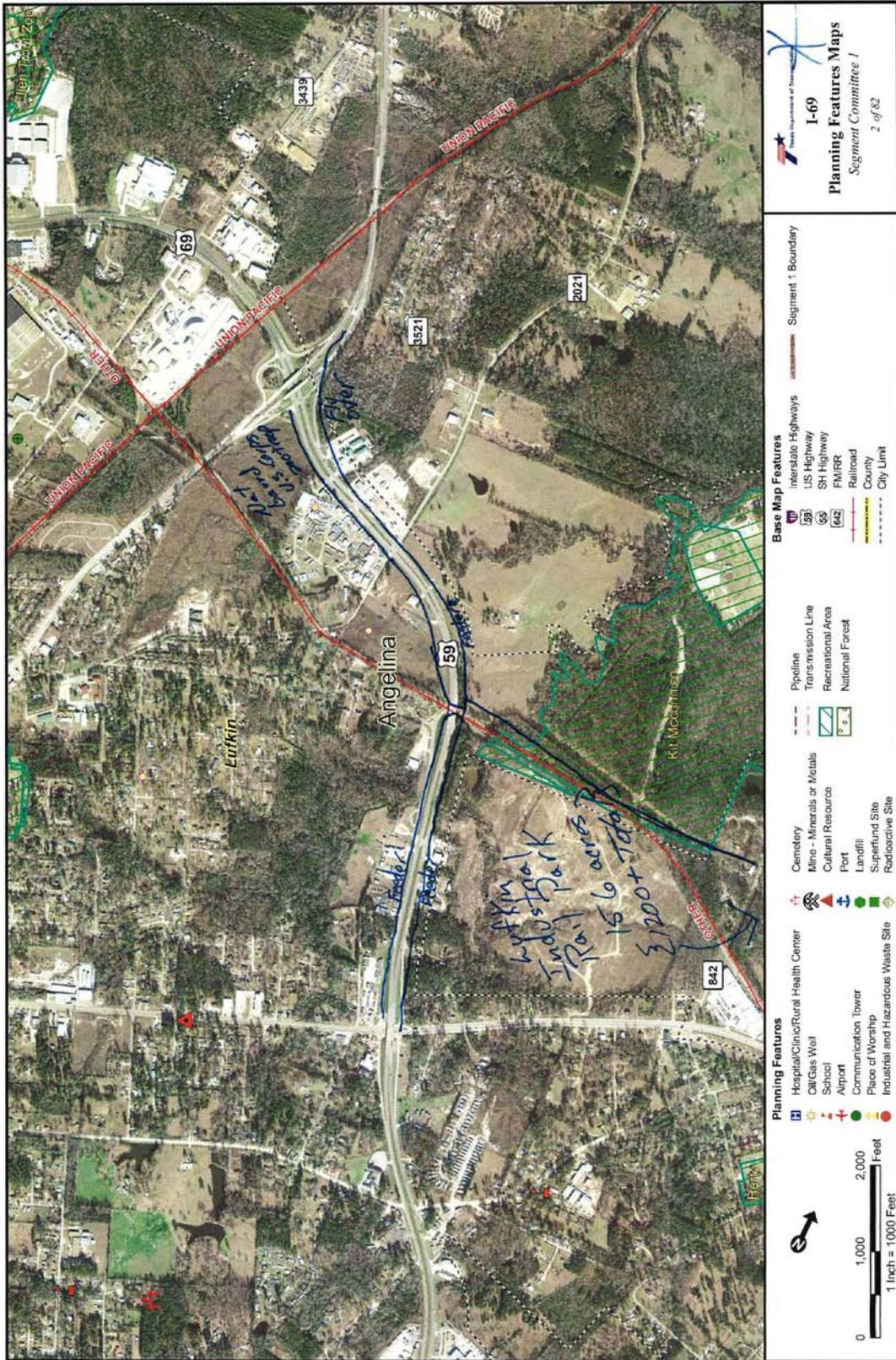
I-69 Planning Considerations

The committee members considered a number of issues as part of their work to provide planning recommendations and priorities for developing I-69 in Segment One. The committee identified and considered local planning and environmental features, examined potential routes to serve as I-69 and important connecting facilities and reviewed traffic and highway crash data along the routes under consideration.

Identification of Local Planning and Environmental Features

Committee members reviewed local planning and environmental features maps and provided local input to verify and identify additional features to consider as part of the committee's planning efforts. Committee members reviewed and marked up maps as they identified features they were aware of and should be considered in planning. Features identified on the maps included environmental resource information, community features like schools and cemeteries, along with other information regarding planned developments, new residential, commercial, mixed-use developments, redevelopments, zoning issues, major utilities, towers, well fields, mines, etc. An example of the local planning and environmental feature maps considered by the committee is provided in **Figure 5**. The features displayed on these initial maps did not represent a comprehensive inventory of all planning or environmental, but were an initial step in identifying and exploring the opportunities and limitations present along the routes under consideration for I-69 by Segment One members.

Figure 5 – Example Local Planning and Environmental Features Map



T:\GIS_Data_Sets\Segment1\06_Segment1_Mapbook_Txt17.mxd 1/8/2010

Recommended I-69 Routes and Connecting Facilities

The Segment One Committee recommended the following highway sections in the Segment One area to serve as I-69.

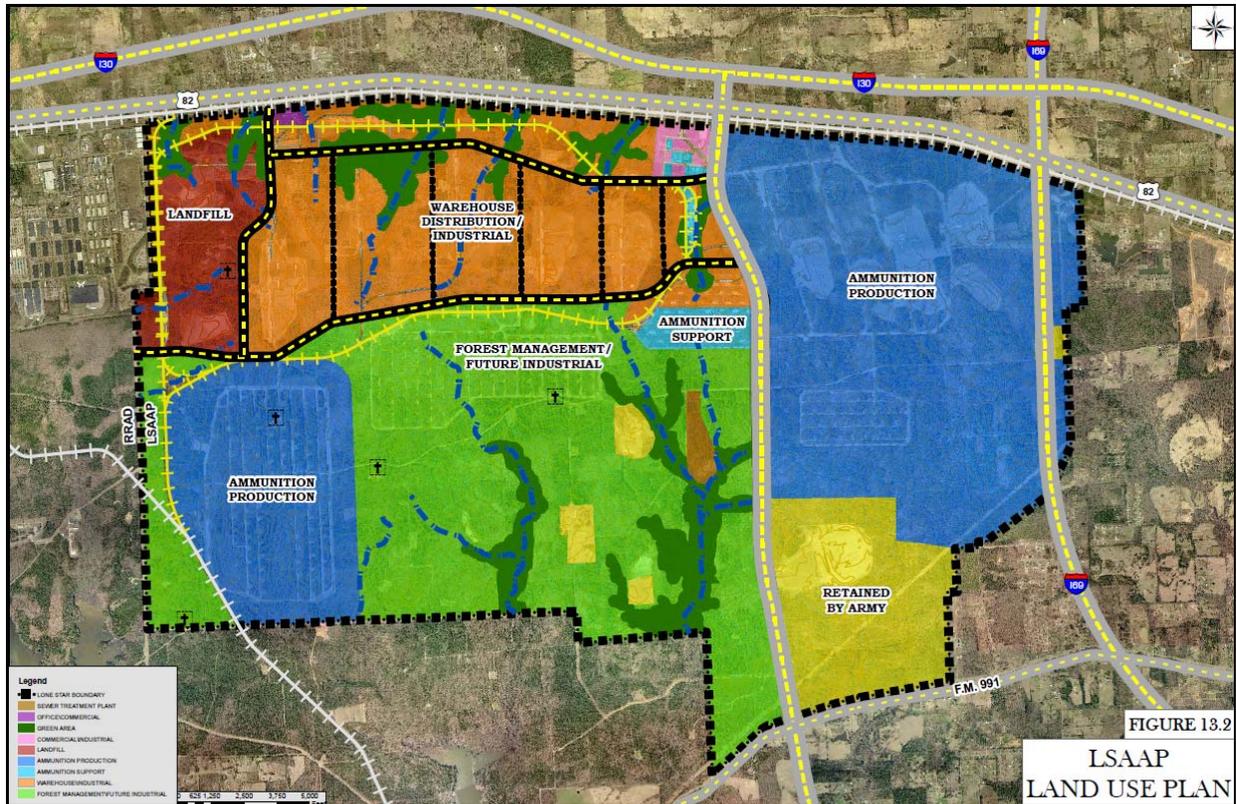
- US 59 from I-30 in Texarkana through Lufkin and continuing to Laredo
- US 84 from US 59 near Tenaha to the Texas/Louisiana border where it connects to the national I-69 route
- Future relief routes along US 59 and US 84 necessary to serve as I-69

The committee members emphasized that existing highways should be improved to interstate standards in a manner that keeps the improvements within the existing footprint and protects private property to the greatest extent possible.

The committee also identified recommended connecting transportation facilities and economic features that should be considered in the I-69 planning effort. The recommended I-69 highways and other important connecting transportation facilities identified by Segment One committee members are illustrated in **Figure 6** with a summary of facilities identified by the committee as follows:

- **I-69 in Louisiana and Arkansas** – As previously depicted in Figure 1, the national I-69 system extends south of Shreveport, Louisiana and connects with I-69 Texas near Joaquin along US 84. Committee members noted the importance of this connection to the national I-69 system and coordination with future planning efforts in the states of Arkansas and Louisiana.
- **I-49 in Louisiana and Arkansas** – The I-49 corridor is under development through northwestern Louisiana and southwestern Arkansas, eventually providing a connection from New Orleans to Kansas City and Winnipeg, Ontario. I-49 will be located just east of Texarkana, TX. The committee noted I-49 as an important future connecting facility for I-69 and identified a potential northwestern loop in the Texarkana area as a possible connection between the two future interstates.
- **Other Regional Highways** – In addition to the two future interstate segments noted above, committee members also recognized that the region is served by a number of other regional highways where future connections and interchanges with I-69 will be important planning objectives. In addition to I-20 and I-30, regional highway such as: US 96 connecting from Tenaha to the Beaumont area; SH 204 connecting Nacogdoches to I-20 and Dallas via US 259; the connection from Carthage to Tyler via US 79 and SH 64; and SH 294 connecting Nacogdoches to Austin via SH 21. The future extension of the Toll 49 loop serving the Tyler, Longview, Marshall area was identified by the committee as a possible opportunity for coordinated development with I-69 in the Marshall area.
- **Freight Rail, Potential High Speed Passenger Rail and Potential Use of Low Emission Transportation Technology** – Segment One committee members have noted that their region is served by a number of existing railroad corridors, including the Union Pacific, Kansas City Southern, and Texas Northern and Northeast Railroads. Member have also cited anticipated growth in freight traffic from the Texas Gulf Coast as well as anticipated future development of high speed passenger rail service and technological innovations with lower emission transportation modes that may further enhance transportation service opportunities. Potential high speed passenger rail corridors were identified by the committee along I-20, I-30 and potentially through East Texas to Houston. Planning for and potentially accommodating these existing and future transportation modes was identified as a priority consideration for further I-69 planning efforts by the committee.
- **TexAmericas Center/Redevelopment of the Lone Star Ammunition Center** – Planned as one of the largest rural business and industrial centers in the United States, the TexAmericas Center encompasses nearly 20,000 acres along I-30 just west of Texarkana. The center is the result of redevelopment efforts of the Lone Star Army Ammunition Plant and is adjacent to the Red River

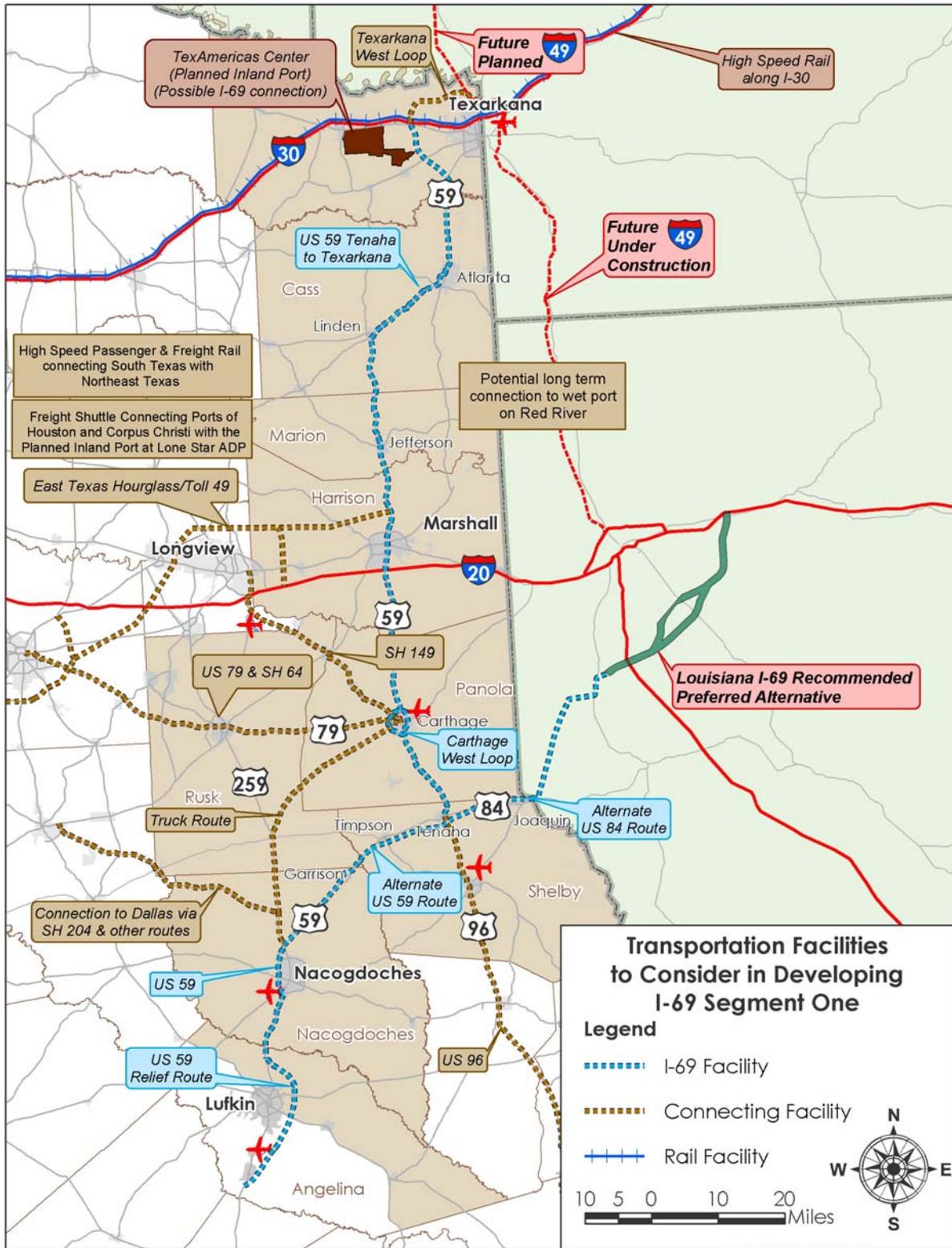
Army Depot. The committee noted that existing highway and rail connections to the center would be enhanced with the development of I-69. In its current land use plan, the TexAmericas Center has depicted a desired location for a future I-69 connection along its eastern boundary where it would intersect with I-30.



TexAmericas Center Land Use Plan

- **River Port Service along the Red River** – River port service along the Red River waterway in Louisiana was identified by committee members as an important intermodal planning consideration for the future I-69. Louisiana river ports exist along the Red River at the Port of Caddo-Bossier south of Shreveport and the Port of Red River Parish near US 84 and I-49.
- **Regional and Local Airports** – The committee members noted regional commercial airports and local general aviation airports as facilities to consider for future planning efforts. Key regional airports include Texarkana Regional Airport, Gregg County Regional Airport near Longview, East Texas Regional Airport near Tyler and Shreveport Regional Airport. General aviation airports were also identified by the committee, including those near Lufkin, Nacogdoches, Center, Carthage, Marshall and Atlanta.

Figure 6 – Transportation Facilities to Consider in Developing I-69



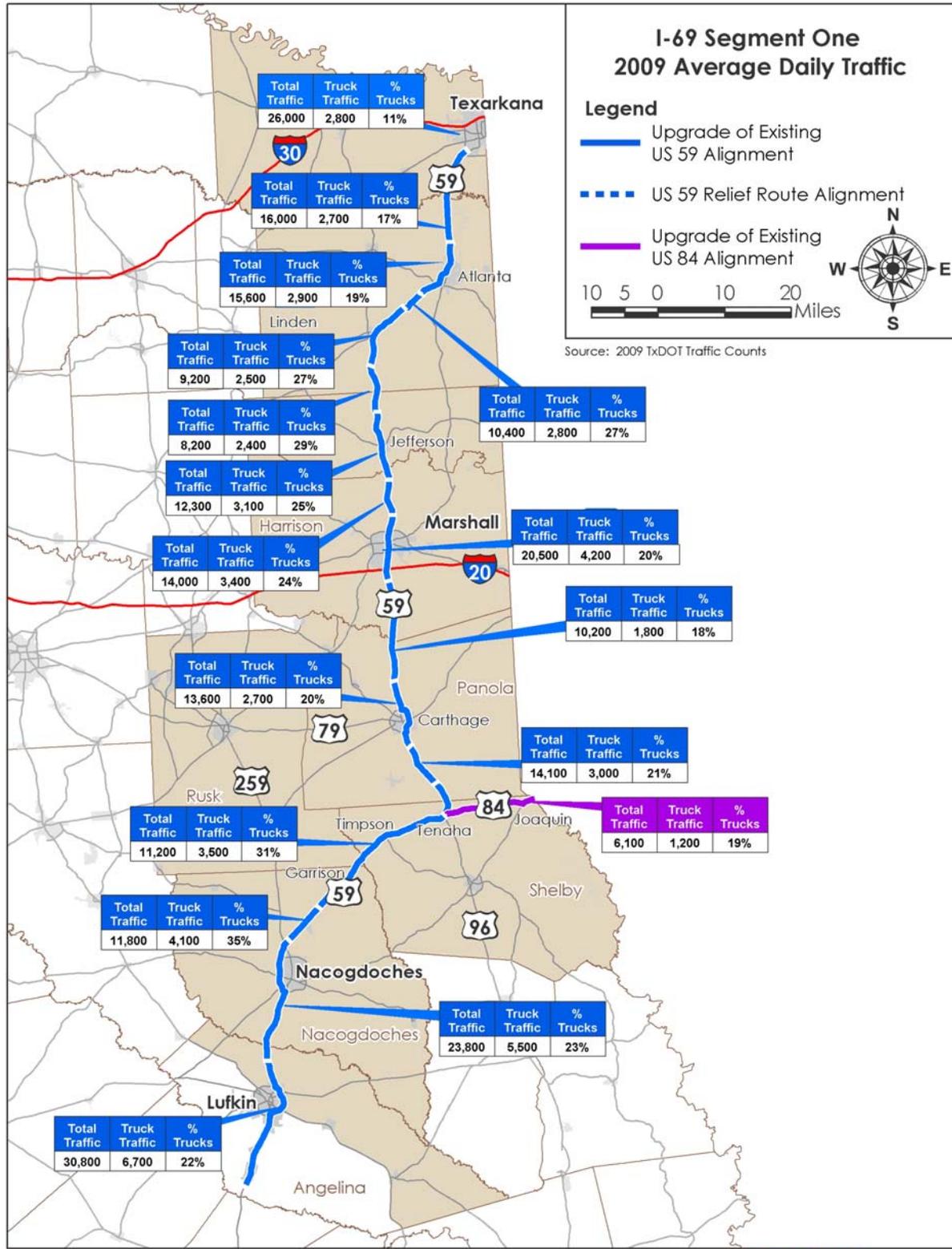
Current and Projected Traffic Data

The segment committees considered current and projected traffic information for highway routes within their area as they developed their recommendations for priorities for future project development. At the time of their study of current traffic data, 2009 was the most current information available (**Figure 7**).

Forecasted 2035 average daily traffic volumes are shown in **Figure 8** for both auto and truck volumes. Forecasted traffic volumes are weighted averages for sections along the highways. Along US 59, forecasted total traffic volumes were highest along relief routes of larger communities, with over 50,000 vehicles per day forecasted around Diboll/Lufkin and a range of between 33,000 to 38,000 vehicles per day forecasted for routes around Nacogdoches, Marshall and Texarkana. Rural sections of US 59 and relief routes of smaller communities were forecasted to carry less traffic, ranging 12,500 to 25,000 vehicles per day. Traffic volumes along US 59 generally decreased from south to north, but spot increases occurred near major highway junctions such as I-20, I-30, US 69 and US 84. I-69 Texas would connect to the national I-69 system along US 84, which is forecasted to have a 2035 average daily traffic volume of 8,700 vehicles per day between Tenaha and the Louisiana state line at Joaquin, Texas.

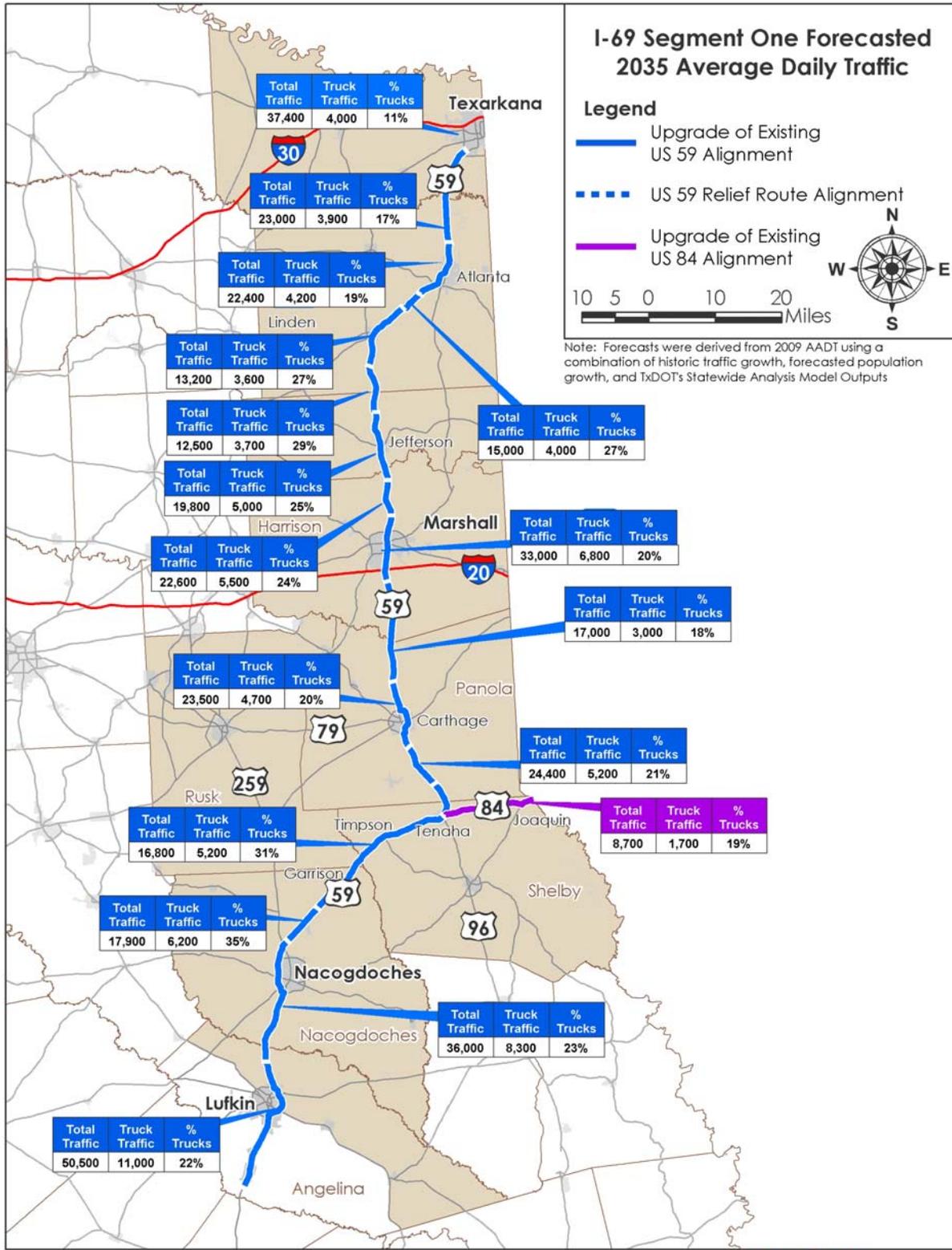
Forecasted truck traffic volumes along US 59 are highest in the vicinity of Diboll/Lufkin, with over 11,000 trucks per day. Relief routes for Nacogdoches, Marshall and Texarkana are forecasted to carry between 4,000 and 7,000 trucks per day. Truck traffic along rural sections of the I-69 system ranged from 3,000 to slightly over 6,000 trucks per day. Forecasted truck traffic along US 84 between Tenaha and Joaquin is 1,700 trucks per day.

Figure 7 – 2009 Average Daily Traffic



WORKING DRAFT 11/23/2011

Figure 8 – Forecasted 2035 Average Daily Traffic



WORKING DRAFT 11/23/2011

Crash Data and Information

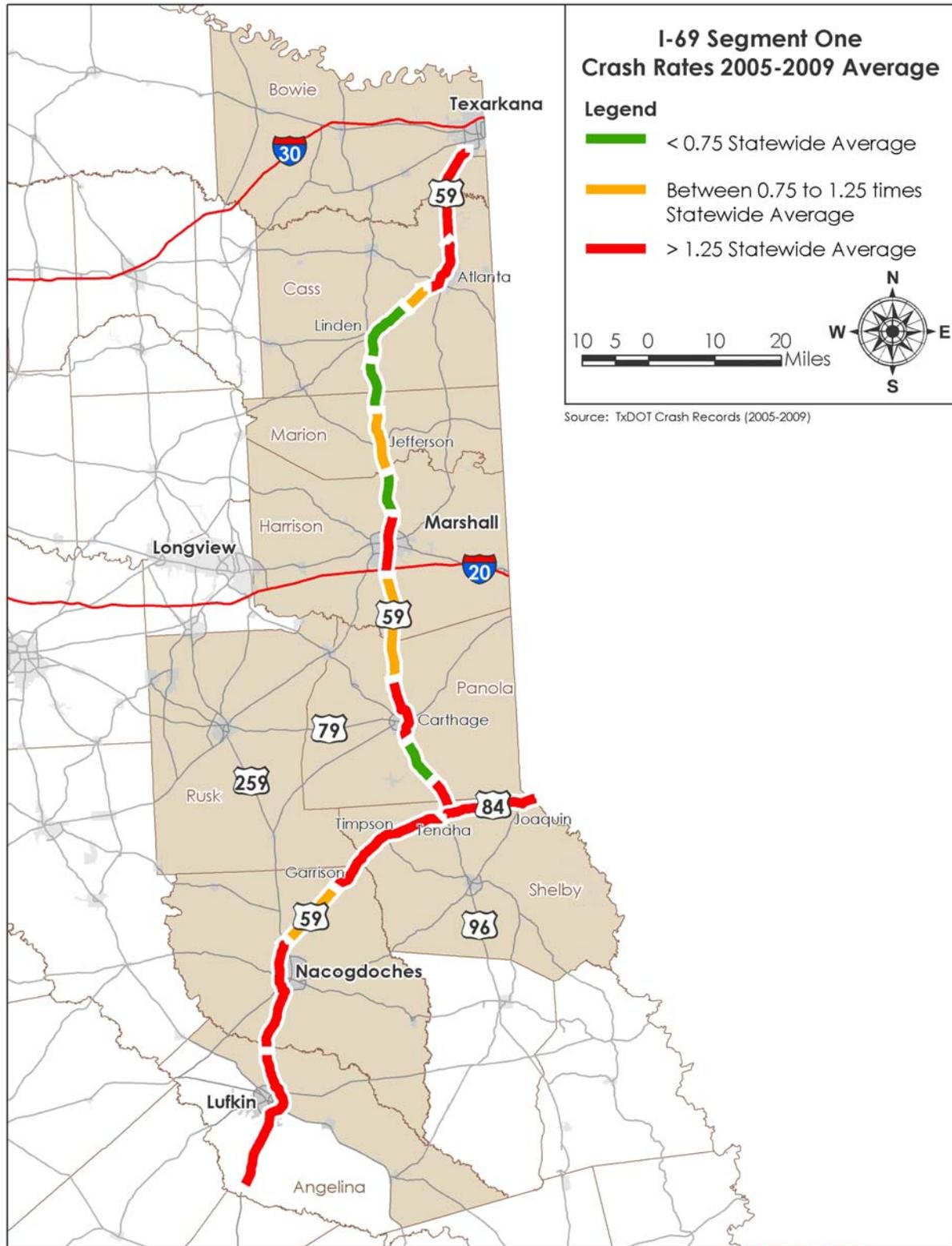
In considering their recommended sections, the committee also reviewed and considered crash data for highway sections in their region. At the time of their study on crash rates, 2005-2009 was the most current information available.

Committee members examined both total and fatal highway crashes and also crash rate information, which was compared with statewide rates for US highways in Texas. From 2005-2009, over 6,000 crashes were reported along US 59 and US 84, with 84 of those crashes being fatal. The highest number of crashes along US 59 occurred in the vicinity of Diboll/Lufkin, Nacogdoches and Marshall. The highest number of fatal crashes occurred in these same locations along US 59 and additional sections of US 59 between Timpson and Tenaha and between Atlanta and Texarkana.

Figure 9 provides 2005-2009 crash rate information for US 59 and US 84 that was considered by members of Segment One. Crash rates were highest in these same locations, exceeding the statewide average by at least 25 percent. Crash rates were also high along US 59 in the vicinity of Carthage, Queen City/Atlanta and along US 84 between Tenaha and Joaquin. The lowest accident rates occurred on sections of US 59 with lower traffic volumes and four-lane divided sections with wider grass medians.

DRAFT

Figure 9 – 2005-2009 Average Crash Rates on US 59 and US 84



WORKING DRAFT 11/23/2011

Development of Conceptual Interstate Layouts and Costs

Committee members have consistently agreed that providing an interstate-quality highway is necessary for addressing transportation needs in their communities. As part of the planning process, committee members studied the federal requirements for interstate highways. Once familiar with interstate requirements, members reviewed conceptual interstate layout maps for the recommended I-69 routes in their area and, using these conceptual maps, made recommendations for improvements to move towards the committee's goal of an interstate. Using the committee's recommended improvements, cost estimates were prepared so the committee had an idea of the funding needed for their initial recommended improvements. During this exercise, the committee was not financially constrained in their ideas and recommendations.

Interstate Highway Requirements

To achieve the goal of providing an interstate quality highway, existing roads would need to be improved to include the following:

- A divided road with at least two lanes in each direction
- Interchanges/overpasses at crossroads
- On and Off Ramps (Entrances and Exits)
- No crossovers
- Other safety designs

Conceptual Interstate Layout Maps

Based on the interstate highway requirements identified above, committee members reviewed conceptual interstate layout maps which demonstrated what improving the existing roadways into an interstate along the I-69 system may look like. It should be noted that:

- The conceptual interstate layouts (CIL) depicted interstate mainlanes, potential interchange locations, and approximate existing and potential right of way limits.
- New access roads were shown for planning purposes and were assumed to be continuous along the entire I-69 system to match current local access, except where the committee members indicated access roads were not needed.
- The CIL is not an interstate design and does not take into account vertical geometry, topography, drainage, and many other detailed design elements.
- The CIL was developed for planning purposes only and is a working draft that is subject to change.
- The CIL generally follows the centerline of the existing highway being considered for the upgrade within the segment committee limits. However, minor shifts were made to avoid railroads or to meet interstate design standards. Also, the committee members requested that relief routes be considered in certain locations.

During the process of developing the CIL, committee members provided input on:

- Locations where relief routes should be considered
- Need for access roads
- Rural/Urban typical section limits

- Interchange locations
- Locations where existing highways are potentially at interstate standard allowing I-69 to potentially connect to and utilize these highways

Conceptual Cost Estimates

A conceptual cost estimate was prepared to reflect the conceptual interstate layout (CIL) that was developed by the Segment One committee members. This conceptual cost estimate and the improvements recommended by the committee assume full reconstruction of the existing highways and do not use any of the existing pavement in use today. This was not a financially constrained exercise and because the timeline for developing I-69 Texas is not definitive, it could not be assumed that the pavement and other materials in use on today's highways would be acceptable for use in future I-69 development.

The conceptual cost estimate was developed statewide and for each of the five segments. The statewide facility includes both urban and rural roadway configurations with 849 miles of mainlanes and 771 miles of access roads. This exercise did not include about 85 miles in the Houston region because US 59 in this area is near interstate quality. This exercise also did not include about 100 miles of US 77 in South Texas because the environmental process had already begun on this portion of highway so committee members instead viewed schematics for potential projects along US 77.

For the entire length of the I-69 Texas system, 26 relief route locations were recommended. Interchange locations were also suggested by committees based on providing connection to existing farm-to-market roads, state highways, US highways and interstates. In all, 235 diamond-type interchanges and 11 direct connection-type interchanges were included in the cost estimate. Bridges for drainage crossings, railroad crossings, and overpasses (not associated with interchanges) were also included in this estimate and total 407, along the I-69 system.

Segment One's recommended improvements are included in the statewide estimates and include 195 miles of mainlanes and 194 miles of access roads. Segment One also recommended 11 relief routes, 66 diamond interchanges, 3 direct connection type interchanges and 99 bridges to accommodate drainage and railroad crossing and overpasses.

Statewide, the total improvements identified by the five I-69 Segment Committees totals \$16.4 billion to fully reconstruct roadways the committees designated to potentially serve as I-69 Texas. For Segment One, nearly \$4.6 billion in improvements were identified by the committee. Again, this was not a financially constrained exercise and the five committees identified anything and everything they may want to see in I-69 development such as continuous access roads for the entire I-69 system, and interchanges in currently undeveloped areas. Nevertheless, the exercise highlighted the significant needs and the importance of the committee's work to carefully examine specific issues along the highways, help set priorities and identify the most urgently needed projects.

Funding I-69 Development

I-69 will be developed as a series of local improvements to the existing highway facility; it will not be a project where an entire interstate is constructed all at once. Instead, as funds become available to, say, add an overpass or improve sections of the current road to a controlled access, freeway-type facility, those improvements will be done and added to the existing I-69 system in South Texas and the section currently under review for I-69 designation along US 59 in the Houston area.

As we all know, planning and ideas have to start at the local level with citizens and communities. While the timeline to complete a project may seem to be years in the future, planning needs to begin now so that when funding does become available the ground work has been laid and the local community has a

plan for improvements. The committee members considered the project development process typically followed for highways as shown in **Figure 10**. It's important to note that funding has to be made available before **each** step in this process. Using this timeline, a project would take 6-15 years to go from the planning stage to construction, assuming funding is available for each step. While the 15 years, shown in the graphic, to go from planning to construction may seem like a long time, the input citizens and the I-69 committees have given in the segment committee process sets priorities and lays the ground work for initiating potential local-level projects that will advance I-69 Texas.

Figure 10 - Project Development Process for Highways



*Funding must be identified and secured before each step of the process.

The recommendations of the advisory and segment committees are the beginning of the planning process. As the highway project development process is completed, more sections of I-69 can be added to the system. In September 2011, the Texas Transportation Commission approved Proposition 12 funding for projects that lie along the I-69 system consistent with the recommendations of the segment committees' to upgrade existing highways to begin incrementally developing the I-69 Texas system.

Public Outreach

After developing initial recommendations and priorities, the segment committees recognized a need for effective communication with the public to clearly convey the scope of the segment committees' responsibilities and activities and gather feedback and input from citizens prior to finalizing their recommendations and priorities.

Public Outreach Goals as Defined by I-69 Segment Committees

During segment committee meetings in January 2011, the committees discussed the need for public outreach and community feedback including their goals and objectives in hearing from citizens. The following goals were identified by the committees:

- Significantly increase the knowledge and understanding of the value of I-69 Texas, thereby increasing support among stakeholders in all segments of the project.
- Raise the comfort level of local stakeholders concerning the potential impacts of I-69 Texas in communities.
- Gain visible support among community leaders along the I-69 route, as measured by the number of key stakeholders who publicly support the project.

In March 2011, the committee further brainstormed specific public outreach activities, methods and materials they wished to use to reach citizens and gather feedback on the committee's initial ideas, recommendations and priorities captured in the conceptual map and other exercises.

The committee concluded that meetings and presentations with local civic and elected groups, rather than more formal open house-style meetings is the format they wished to use to engage with citizens. In April 2011, the committee finalized print materials, the I-69 website, Powerpoint presentations and other communications tools used during their public outreach activities.

Public Outreach Implementation by the Segment Committee

During the summer and early fall of 2011, the committee presenting their I-69 brochures and Powerpoint information to city councils, county commissioners courts, metropolitan planning organizations, Rotary and Lions clubs, chambers of commerce members and other groups. In all, the Segment One committee conducted 27 activities and reported reaching 2172 citizens through these presentations and various public involvement activities.

The committee used the summer months to speak with their communities about I-69 and reconvened in September 2011 to review citizens' comments and decide if additional public involvement was needed and on their next steps. Segment One decided they would like another month to present information to and hear from their communities. They agreed to meet again in November 2011 to review additional public feedback and begin their final recommendations to the I-69 Advisory Committee using the feedback they received from citizens.

In all, 431 citizen comments were received. The committee concluded that generally, citizens are in favor of I-69 and ready for it to progress and be developed. Some citizens are concerned that I-69 may be tolled and would prefer tolling not be an option for I-69 development. Citizens also had questions about when I-69 will be constructed, how it could affect their property, and how it will be funded.

Public Feedback Gathered by the Segment Committee

Citizens submitted comments to the Segment One Committee using an online comment form on the I-69 Driven by Texans website. Postage-paid comments cards were also available in Segment One brochures which were distributed by committee members and displayed at public places such as grocery stores, libraries, city halls and county court houses. Comments included support for I-69 for economic development, congestion and safety reasons, concerns on funding and right of way necessary to construct relief routes and questions on when specific route locations will be determined.

- *FABULOUS! Bring it on! As a realtor, I welcome any way to bring in new business to Texarkana. I support this fully. –Texarkana*

- *This will be a tremendous boost to our area. This will aid in our growth and allow better access for new businesses. The ability to connect I-30 to a North South route will be invaluable. – Texarkana*
- *There is without question the need for I-69 in Texas. The growth of our city, state and nation depend upon our transportation system. This proposed Interstate system is vital in connecting with the East/West Interstate corridors. – Texarkana*
- *With the change over at Red River and Lone Star Ammunition closing, Texarkana, Bowie & Cass Counties as well as Arkansas need the grow I-69 can provide. – Texarkana*
- *#1 reason – future growth of the NE Texas area; #2 reason – an infrastructure to help future generations continue to make Texas, Arkansas, Louisiana GROW & therefore help the economy of America! – Texarkana*
- *Please keep Texarkana in the planned route. It will be essential to the progress of our beautiful city. – Texarkana*
- *I-69 is badly needed to further develop East Texas from Mexico to Texarkana. It will help us take advantage of the economic activity as a result of the widening of the Panama Canal. – Nash*
- *Using existing highways where we can is an excellent idea, the least amount of money we have to spend the better. However, we DO need a relief route around Carthage. – Carthage*
- *I-69 is very important for our town, Carthage, Texas. Our economy in this stressed time can surely be enhanced with any assets to the economy. – Carthage*
- *We are beyond understanding the real reason for circumventing Existing Businesses here in our City. It makes very little sense to people in our county that homes, crops, cattle, timber, schools, and/or history of our state is being overlaid by concrete! Especially confounding is the fact that NO BUSINESS or ECONOMIC interests lay in the fertile and timber RICH western parts of Nacogdoches County! Why not add concrete barriers to the existing Hwy 59 as did Lufkin, and add one N bound lane and one S Bound lane? The cost and disrepair would be negligible to our Tax Payers and would still enable traffic, vacationers, businesses to have access! Also, consider taxes to residents for schools - NO LAND, NO MONEY! – Nacogdoches*
- *Need to declare route as soon as possible - Several possible business waiting to build - I think it should go around Tenaha and connect to US 84 to Joaquin and Logansport thus connecting with the other highways – Tenaha*

Committee Recommendations for I-69

The Segment One Committee drafted recommendations for I-69 development in their area, including improvements to the existing US 59 and US 84 to serve as I-69 and also include relief routes to serve as I-69 around some communities. In coming to these recommendations, the committee studied the mobility, safety and economic development needs of their communities that could be provided by I-69. In establishing their recommendations and setting priorities, the committee considered a number of factors, with the following being factors most frequently identified by members of the committee:

- Serves high traffic and truck volumes
- Serves expected traffic growth
- Addresses safety concerns
- Improves travel times
- Provides for multi-modal connections (air, sea, rail)
- Public input

The committee recommends using the existing footprint of US 59 and US 84 to the greatest extent possible for I-69 development. The committee also recognizes that in some areas, existing right of way is narrow and improving the existing highways to interstate quality may affect existing properties. To minimize impacts to communities and preserve properties, the committee recommends relief routes in some areas. Specific locations for these relief routes - north, south, east or west of town – have not been decided and construction of any relief route would go through an extensive environmental process and require public input and comment.

Based upon these factors and all of the issues considered by the segment committee, the following priorities are recommended:

Redesignation of Highways that Meet Interstate Standards

Segment One and the other segment committees have encouraged TxDOT to work with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to seek immediate interstate designation for any portions of the highways on the I-69 Texas system that currently meet interstate standards. Federal law currently allows for any highway identified by Congress as a future part of the I-69 system to be redesignated as an interstate as long as it is built to interstate standards and connects to the existing interstate system.

On December 5th, 2011, I-69 signs were erected along a 6.2 mile section of US 77 in the Robstown area between I-37 and SH 44. In the Houston area, the Fort Bend, Harris and Montgomery county section of US 59 is currently under review and is anticipated to be recommended for I-69 designation in 2012. Committee members have also encouraged TxDOT to work with FHWA to gain exceptions to some interstate standards required for portions of highways recommended for I-69 in South Texas, such as highway sections within ranch areas, where meeting all of these standards today may not be warranted but interstate designation is still needed.



Segment One Priority Sections

Recognizing that a substantial amount of work remains in completing I-69, the Segment One Committee established recommended priority sections for future planning and project development.

The five top priority sections and rationale considered by Segment One in prioritization are listed from north to south. The committee decided on five priorities and did not rank these priorities; each priority carries equal importance.

US 59 Relief Route at Texarkana – The committee prioritized a relief route for Texarkana extending from the Sulphur River Bridge to I-30 where it would serve the TexAmericas Center just west of Texarkana in the vicinity of New Boston. The Texarkana MPO endorsed this route through a resolution in 2011. This resolution endorsed a full relief route from US 59 to I-30, as recommended by the committee, as well as the portion north of I-30 that would connect with the planned I-49 corridor near the Texas/Arkansas state line.

US 59 Relief Route at Marshall – The committee prioritized a relief route for Marshall that would provide a new connection with I-20 and relieve the congested urban portion of US 59 that currently passes through the urban area. Committee members reported that regional leaders in Marshall have considered relief route alternatives to the east and west of the community, but a specific route has not

been recommended at this time.

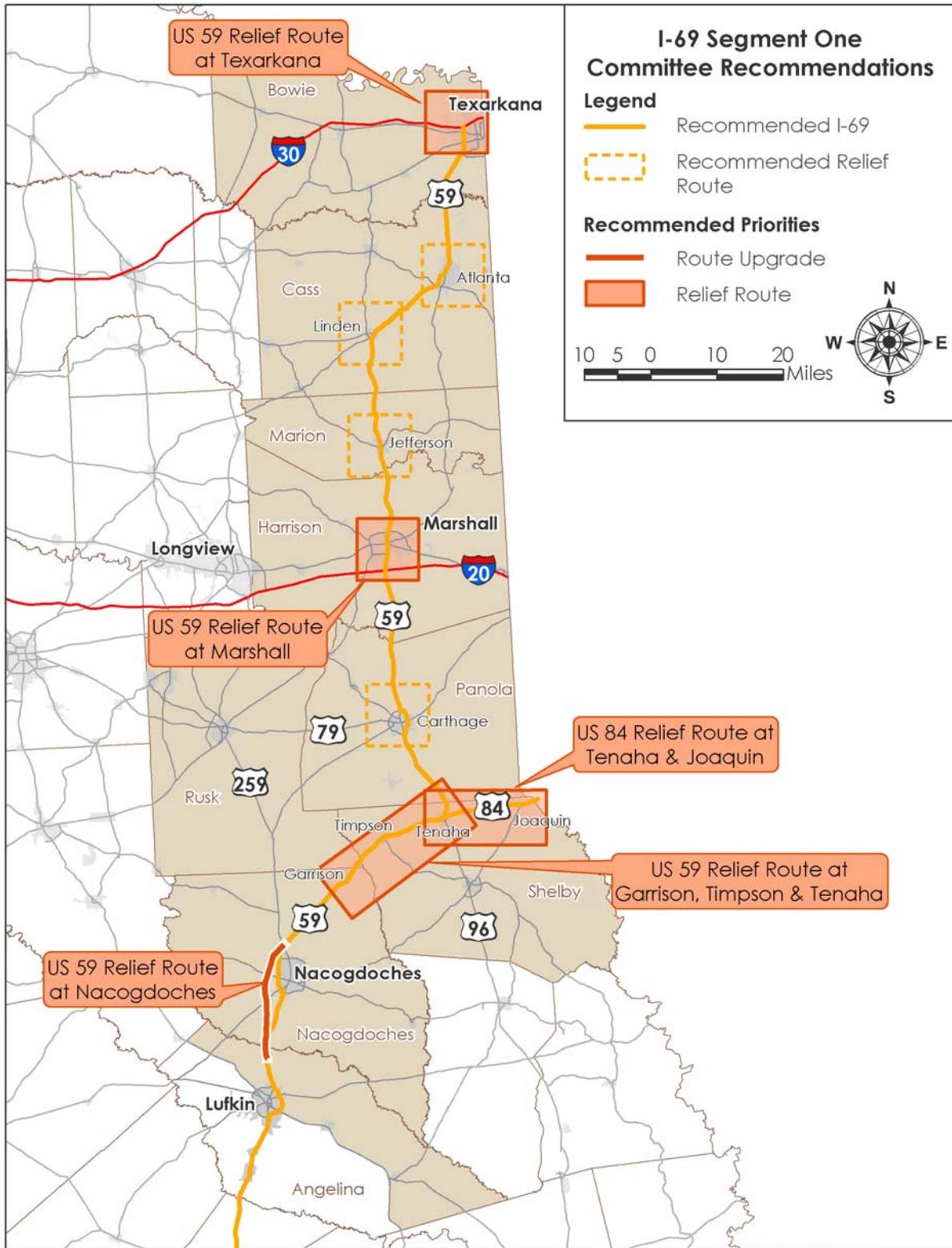
US 84 Relief Route from Tenaha to Joaquin – The committee recognized the connection to the national I-69 route as a priority and recommended the development of a relief route for US 84 to serve this connection. Committee members were updated by a representative of the Northwest Louisiana Council of Governments who advised the committee that in 2013, Louisiana would complete environmental/route location study for portions of I-69 between I-49 and El Dorado, Arkansas and the next phase would be for Texas and Louisiana to work to complete the environmental/route location study for the portion of I-69 between I-49 and the Texas/Louisiana border. Determining route location during the I-49, Texas/Louisiana border study would provide the eastern terminus for the US 84 relief route.

US 59 Relief Route for Garrison, Timpson and Tenaha – The committee recommended relief route options for the existing US 59 through Garrison, Timpson and Tenaha that would include both widening and upgrading the existing US 59 and also include new alignment options around communities where there is not enough right of way to expand the existing US 59. The committee members noted that US 59 passes through these communities and traffic on the highway frequently experiences congestion and crashes.

US 59 Relief Route for Nacogdoches – The committee recommended a new western relief route of Nacogdoches as a priority. A western relief route was previously environmentally studied by TxDOT; the committee's recommendation is to make use of this previously studied route. This route included a connection to a Lufkin/Diboll relief route to the south. Committee members acknowledged the previous recommendations for this route would need to be updated based on current environmental and planning features and added that upgrading and using the existing Loop 224/US 59 relief route in Nacogdoches would likely not be feasible due to limited right-of-way and the intensity of adjacent land uses.

The five recommended priority sections are illustrated in **Figure 11**.

Figure 11 – I-69 Segment One Recommendations and Priority Sections



WORKING DRAFT 11/23/2011

Initial Implementation Goals

The segment committee established a series of short-term implementation goals that could address immediate problem areas, begin the development of priority sections or provide interim improvements to high traffic areas. The initial implementation goals recommended by Segment One include continued efforts to construct currently funded projects, spot safety improvements and future environmental, route location and planning studies.

Construct Currently Funded Projects

The committee recognized that TxDOT has already begun the process of funding projects that will improve highways by enhancing safety and serving traffic along the designated routes for I-69. The committee endorsed efforts to complete the projects that are listed below along with construction funding committed by TxDOT:

- US 59 (Cass County), construct left turn lane at Emma Lena Way, let by 2013, \$338,940
- US 59 (Marion County), safety widening of pavement near SH 49, let by 2013, \$180,768
- US 59 (Nacogdoches County), access management improvements south of Loop 224, let September 2013, \$9,916,650
- US 59 (Angelina County), replace bridge at the UPSP RR, let May 2012, \$45,680,948
- US 59 (Angelina County), overpass at FM 2021, let May 2013, \$15,291,000

Future Spot Safety and Capacity Improvements

Throughout their region, committee members identified future spot safety and capacity improvements that would help alleviate interim concerns for traffic safety and mobility.

- Shoulder improvements on US 59 from Timpson to Tenaha – This section of highway is four-lane undivided with intermittent shoulders. Completing shoulders continuously along the route would potentially help reduce the accident rate.
- Direct connector on US 59 at the US 59 bypass on the south side of Nacogdoches – This would address congestion problems in the interim until a future I-69 relief route at Nacogdoches can be constructed.
- Spot safety improvements along US 59 in Garrison – Recommended improvements would address existing traffic congestion and safety concerns and include consideration for adding railroad crossing lights and arms for a switching track that crosses US 59.

Future Environmental Route Location and Planning Studies

- Initiation of environmental and route location studies for the five relief routes identified as priority sections was recommended by Segment One as implementation goals for the near term so communities can begin planning for the future location of I-69. Additionally, completion of these studies would allow for additional project development phases to begin on these priorities. The committee also requested that TxDOT initiate coordination with Louisiana on efforts needed to proceed with the connection of I-69 Texas to the I-69 national route.
- There are many areas between Houston and Texarkana which are nearing non-attainment. The committee recognizes that development of I-69 in Northeast Texas could help emissions by allowing for free-flow of traffic rather than traffic being impeded by stoplights and stop signs as is the current situation. Additionally, a low emission freight transportation system feasibility study could be implemented early because of the need to reduce truck emissions, with the understanding that right-of-way to operate a low emission system should be minimized. The

committee is aware that TxDOT is currently in the procurement stage of a potential low emission freight system that would use existing highway right-of-way. The committee recommends that future route location and planning efforts for I-69 in Northeast Texas give consideration for implementation of similar systems.

Conclusion and Next Steps

Since Congress passed legislation in 1991 allowing for the national I-69 system, Texans have been advocating and working for I-69. A small piece of this interstate in Texas has been established and the segment committee planning process has been vital in allowing for a grassroots, bottom-up planning approach for the remainder of I-69 Texas. Just as establishing the first 6.2 miles of I-69 in Texas took time, the I-69 Segment One Committee knows completing this interstate in Texas will be in the works for years to come.

Citizen input combined with local-level planning and a needs-based approach used during the segment committee process provides a solid foundation for future I-69 development. The ideas and recommendations of the five I-69 Segment Committees provide regional perspectives and plans for developing I-69 in Texas. Using the reports of the five segment committees, the I-69 Advisory Committee will compile a system-wide blueprint for the future of I-69 Texas.

DRAFT