

APPENDIX D
ARCHEOLOGICAL COORDINATION



125 EAST 11TH STREET, AUSTIN, TEXAS 78701-2483 | 512.463.8588 | WWW.TXDOT.GOV

February 2, 2017

RECEIVED

FEB 16 2017

Section 106/Antiquities Code of Texas: Coordination, Review and Comments (Permit #7458)
Intensive Survey Draft Report: North Houston Highway Improvement Project
Houston District; Harris County (CSJ: **0912-00-146**)

Ms. Patricia A. Mercado-Allinger
Division Director/State Archeologist
Archeology Division
Texas Historical Commission
PO Box 12276
Austin, TX 78711-2276

Dear Ms. Mercado-Allinger:

The proposed project will be undertaken with Federal funding. In accordance with Section 106 (and the First Amended Programmatic Agreement among the Texas Department of Transportation [TxDOT], the Texas State Historical Preservation Officer [TSHPO], the Federal Highway Administration [FHWA], and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation) and the Antiquities Code of Texas (and the Memorandum of Understanding between the Texas Historical Commission [THC] and TxDOT), this letter initiates consultation for the proposed undertaking.

The Houston District of the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) proposes to widen and improve Interstate 45 between Beltway 8 and I-610; the I-45 corridor between I-610 and to I-10; and the Downtown Loop at I-45 and US 59/I-69 at I-10 (CSJ: 0912-00-146). The proposed project is composed of three segments: Segment 1: the I-45 corridor between Beltway 8 and I-610; Segment 2: the I-45 corridor between I-610 and I-10; and Segment 3: focused on I-45 and US 59/I-69 between I-10 and their interchange south of downtown Houston. The proposed highway improvement project involves the acquisition of new ROW. The total acreage that would be impacted by the proposed project is 614.7 acres. The typical construction ROW would be 130 meters (426.5 feet) wide; however, the actual ROW dimensions vary greatly between segments and alternatives. The area of potential effect (APE) is defined as the proposed project length, the existing and proposed ROW width, and the depth of construction impacts (as much as 100 feet for grade separations).

Raba Kistner Environmental, Inc. (RKEI) archeologists, under contract to AECOM and on behalf of TxDOT, conducted an intensive survey of the above proposed project during December 2015 and January 2016. Archival review determined that there were several recorded archeological properties within and adjacent to the proposed project APE, particularly in the downtown area. Low probability areas and moderate probability areas, the bulk of the 614.7 acre APE did not warrant intensive survey due to soil, landform, and disturbance issues. The High Probability Areas within the APE were assessed via pedestrian survey and 42 shovel-tests, across 23 parcels measuring a combined 2.25 acres of identified high probability areas. RKEI intended to follow up with backhoe trenching in selected portions of the area. However, following TxDOT's identification of contaminated soils within the area, and subsequent to a discussion between the Principal Investigator and TxDOT Archeologist, Dr. Jason Barrett, RKEI staff was advised to avoid deep reconnaissance excavations in these areas. No archeological materials were encountered within the APE only modern trash and extensively disturbed soils. Based on this, RKEI archeologists recommended that no further archeological investigations were needed at this time. RKEI archeologist further recommended that due to the unknown extent of the contaminated soils, two areas of High Probability located within the Frost Town and Freedmen's Town historic sites could not be adequately investigated. They recommend that portions of these sites that fall within the project APE be investigated in the future, provided that conditions are safe for archeological investigations. No additional archeological investigations are recommended in other High Probability portions of the APE that could be accessed during the pedestrian survey. However, a number of High Probability Areas could not be accessed due to lack of ROE permissions. Similarly a small amount of

OUR VALUES: *People • Accountability • Trust • Honesty*

OUR MISSION: *Through collaboration and leadership, we deliver a safe, reliable, and integrated transportation system that enables the movement of people and goods.*

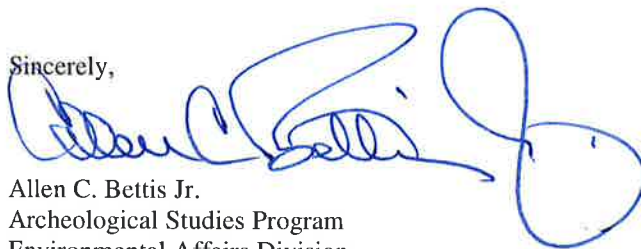
An Equal Opportunity Employer

Moderate Probability Areas needing mechanical trenching were denied ROE. It is recommended that these areas be subject to intensive survey, when ROE is obtained or upon acquisition of the properties by the State. TxDOT archeologists agree with these recommendations. TxDOT requests permission to defer the remainder of the survey until that time that access is acquired and allowing the National Environmental Policy Act process, and property acquisition, to continue. Once access has been acquired, TxDOT would be obligated to complete the intensive survey. No construction may commence in the unsurveyed portion of the APE until the archeological inventory and coordination with your office is completed.

Please find attached for your review and comments the draft survey report from Horizon, *Report for Archeological Survey, North Houston Highway Improvement Project*. If you have no objections to the recommendations made or any comments on this draft report and find it acceptable, please sign below to indicate your concurrence and stamp the cover to indicate acceptance.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter. If you have any questions or further need of assistance, please contact Allen Bettis of the TxDOT Archeological Studies Program at (512) 416-2747.

Sincerely,


Allen C. Bettis Jr.
Archeological Studies Program
Environmental Affairs Division

Attachment

cc w/o attachments:

Steve Tomka, RKEI – Austin
Kelly Lark, Houston District Office
ACB ECOS


Concurrence:
for Mark S. Wolfe, State Historic Preservation Officer

2-21-17
Date:

The environmental review, consultation, and other actions required by applicable Federal environmental laws for this project are being, or have been, carried-out by TxDOT pursuant to 23 U.S.C. 327 and a Memorandum of Understanding dated December 16, 2014, and executed by FHWA and TxDOT.

OUR VALUES: People • Accountability • Trust • Honesty

OUR MISSION: Through collaboration and leadership, we deliver a safe, reliable, and integrated transportation system that enables the movement of people and goods.

An Equal Opportunity Employer