



## **NEW BRAUNFELS OUTER LOOP TASK FORCE OPERATING GUIDELINES**

### **NAME OF ORGANIZATION**

The name of this organization is the New Braunfels Outer Loop Task Force.

### **MISSION/PURPOSE OF THE ORGANIZATION**

This organization was convened by the Texas Department of Transportation, San Antonio District, to review the planning process for the New Braunfels Outer Loop Study, which resulted in a recommended corridor for the New Braunfels Outer Loop.

The Task Force is made up of interested citizens of Comal and Guadalupe Counties, some of whom served on the Community Cork Group or the Technical Work Group of the New Braunfels Outer Loop Study.

### **SCOPE OF WORK OF THE ORGANIZATION**

The Task Force is being asked to:

- review the process used to identify the recommended corridor to assure technical accuracy,
- review the data used to evaluate options to assure that it was sufficient for this level of planning and to strengthen the data where necessary; and
- ensure that the screening and evaluation tools were applied consistently throughout all parts of the study area.
- Make recommendations on how best to resolve any issues identified with the process for inclusion in the Draft Study Report.

### **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

#### **Facilitator Roles & Responsibilities - Linda Ximenes**

- Operates as a neutral and objective third-party.
- Organizes and conducts task force meetings.
- Uses knowledge of group processes to formulate and deliver the needed structure for meeting interactions to be effective.
- Responsible for the process, not the content of task force discussions.
- Keeps discussions focused and encourages everyone to participate.
- Enforces ground rules set by task force members.
- Serves as both a timekeeper and a scribe for task force members.

### **Task Force Member Roles & Responsibilities**

- Attend and actively participate in task force meetings.
- Serve as a liaison to their constituencies. This includes reporting to them on activities of the Task Force and taking input and feedback from them to other task force members.
- Acknowledge that divergent viewpoints and opinions are to be expected and respected.
- Work towards consensus with fellow members of the task force when making recommendations.
- Participate in subcommittees when and if required.
- Provide input and feedback to technical staff to help them better understand community issues.
- Collaborate constructively with fellow task force members.
- Review reports, data, and other materials provided in order to fully understand the study process.
- Provide input and feedback regarding public participation activities and materials.

### **TxDOT Roles & Responsibilities**

- Actively listen to stakeholder comments and concerns.
- Provide the task force with the technical background information necessary to make informed decisions.
- Engage resource agency support as needed to discuss specific issues or concerns as requested by the task force.
- Provide guidance on how recommendations made by the task force will be addressed.
- Provides feedback to the task force on how their input will be utilized.

### **Consultant Team Roles & Responsibilities - RJ RIVERA Associates, Inc.\* and Kennedy Consulting, LTD.**

- Provide the task force with the technical background information necessary to make informed decisions.
- Develop displays and exhibits requested by the task force on specific issues or concerns.
- \*Provide logistical support for task force including maintenance of the study website/hotline, coordination of public notifications, meeting facilities/equipment, and meeting documentation in the form of minutes and audio recordings.

### **DECISION-MAKING OF THE TASK FORCE**

The Task Force members have agreed to use the Proposal-Based Decision-Making Process as outlined below. Consensus is reached when all concerns have been satisfied and everyone can support the proposal, and no one opposes with it.

The process is generally as follows:

- General discussion of a topic for consideration
- Ideas suggested
- Decision offered in the form of a proposal: "I propose..."
- General discussion of the proposal.
- Take the temperature – thumb up= I agree with the proposal; thumb sideways= I'm not sure, I have some concerns with this proposal; thumbs down= I disagree with the proposal.

- If everyone has his/her thumb up, there is consensus.
- If not everyone has a thumb up, the ones with their thumb sideways or thumb down are asked “What will bring you up?” They then say what it would take to get them to agree to the proposal. The discussion centers on finding out what it is about the proposal that is causing concerns (inquiry) and not saying how the proposal is good (advocacy). Concern should center around how the proposal does or does not affect the mission of the organization or violates one of its principals, not on an individual desire or factor.
- People can build on the proposal or make another proposal as the discussion proceeds.
- If consensus cannot be reached there are three closing options:
  - The concerned person(s) stand aside if the proposal obviously aligns with the greater good of the organization and its mission. The concern is noted for the record and future deliberations related to this proposal consider the concern in the deliberations.
  - The proposal can be sent to a committee composed of those with concerns and those who support the proposal. They will come back with another proposal that seems to satisfy the concerns.
  - Declare the proposal blocked.

## **PRINCIPLES FOR CONDUCTING TASK FORCE ACTIVITIES AND MEETINGS**

### *Attendance*

- There are no attendance rules.
- Task Force members may select an alternate if they so desire. They must indicate who that person will be by the next Task Force meeting.
- The alternate should attend all meetings in order to keep abreast of what is happening at the meetings.
- Alternates may be dismissed if they are not “up-to-speed” and delay the process due to lack of knowledge of the topic.
- There will be a make-up session for those who could not attend the first Task Force meeting on April 2, 2009. Alternates will be asked to attend that meeting to get them “up-to-speed.”
- There is no “revisiting” decisions from previous meetings.
- It is suggested that Task Force members who miss a meeting visit with other Task Force members to keep abreast of what has happened.

### *Meeting Notes*

- Meeting notes will be distributed to Task Force members 10 calendar days or less after each meeting.

### *Materials for the Meetings*

- Materials to be used at the meetings will be sent out to the Task Force members for their review one week prior to the meeting.

*Guidelines for Interaction<sup>1</sup>*

- Listen to understand.
- Direct your concerns to the issue, not the person.
- One person speaks at a time.
- If you have trouble hearing someone, ask him/her to speak up.
- Ask for clarification if you do not understand something.
- Turn cell phones off during the meeting.
- Be concise in your comments.
- Others as identified by the Task Force members.

**COMMUNICATION WITH CONSTITUENTS**

- It is understood that members of the Task Force represent different constituencies in the community.
- Task Force members are asked to maintain two-way communication with their constituents so they may have a good understanding of the Task Force's purpose, proceedings and outcome and bring forth concerns from constituents to the Task Force.

**PARTICIPATION OF OBSERVERS**

- Audience members will respect the proceedings of the Task Force and refrain from loud comments or other distractions.
- Fifteen minutes will be designated during each Task Force meeting for the public and other observers to make their comments.

**COMMUNICATION**

- The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) is the official spokesperson for the agency to the media.
- Any member of the Task Force may communicate with the media, but it is understood that they are speaking as individuals and not as the voice of the Task Force.
- Communication will be maintained as much as feasible via email. For those individuals who do not have email, the US Postal Service will be used.
- The Task Force Facilitator, Linda Ximenes, is authorized to make any corrections to misinformation in the media. The corrections should be factual and not reflect her opinions.

**OTHER GUIDELINES**

- Meetings may be audio and video recorded as long as they are not posted on YouTube. If possible, audio recordings should be posted as podcasts on the website.
- Security will not be provided at Task Force meetings unless there is a clear and present danger.
- Subcommittees may be formed as needed.

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<sup>1</sup> Items highlighted in yellow have not been approved by the Task Force and are offered as suggestions by the facilitator.