

## **"Proposed seven lanes jammed with complaints"**

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by B. Lou Guckian

Drizzling rain didn't deter residents and business owners from attending a public hearing last week to voice opposition to the proposed expansion of Blanco Road to seven lanes.

More than two-thirds of some 30 people who spoke at the meeting, held at Churchill High School on Feb. 25 by the Texas Department of Transportation, were opposed to expansion to seven lanes, but in favor of widening to five. A few supported the seven-lane plan, while others commented on other improvements.

The proposal calls for expansion from four lanes to seven from West Avenue and Bitters, and from two lanes to five from Bitters to Loop 1604. Other improvements would include an underground storm drainage system, curbs, sidewalks and bicycle lanes.

"Seven lanes are just too much," said Vista Del Norte homeowner Jeff McNeff. "I'm for expansion. There are bottlenecks every morning where Blanco goes from five to two lanes, but I wish they would have come to us before this stage of planning."

McNeff is one of several residents who expressed concern over what they call "excessive expansion," saying that the Wurzbach Parkway will pull traffic off Blanco and eliminate the need for seven lanes. Vista Del Norte homeowners brought with them a petition signed by 300 residents, out of 375, who oppose seven lanes.

Some area residents say seven lanes are needed to handle high-volume traffic.

"I came through someone's neighborhood tonight to avoid the traffic on Blanco," said T.J. Smith. "You want to keep traffic off your quiet neighborhood streets."

Meanwhile, residents of Deerfield, Churchill Estates, Churchill Forest, Blanco Woods, River Bend, Blanco Bluffs and Vista Del Norte took their turn at the microphone to speak out in favor of improvements but against seven lanes.

"I have a 9-year-old and am scared to death of Blanco, it's dangerous whether its two, five or seven lanes," said Churchill Forest homeowner Ronnie King.

The hearing is at least the second public meeting held by TxDOT within recent months concerning the proposed Blanco widening. Written comments are being accepted through Friday. Send them to: Director of Transportation Planning and Development; Texas Department of Transportation; PO Box 29928; San Antonio, TX 78284.

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