HAIRY MAN ROAD / BRUSHY CREEK ROAD SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS

FACT SHEET

Updated November 2020

County Commissioner: Commissioner Terry Cook, Precinct 1
Project Roadway: Hairy Man Road / Brushy Creek Road
Project Limits: From Brushy Bend Drive to Sam Bass Road

SAFETY CONCERNS

Between 2010 and 2019, there were 137 crashes including three fatalities (2012, 2014, 2019). This area of the road averages 14 crashes per year. It also services two entrances to two area parks, which attract young people and families. Community members reached out to former Precinct 1 Commissioner, Lisa Birkman, and asked for this section of the roadway to be evaluated for potential safety improvements. She asked for a study of the road to address the community's concerns.

PROJECT DETAILS AND DESIGN

This project was a part of the 2013 Williamson County Road Bond Program. The purpose of the proposed Hairy Man Road / Brushy Creek Road Safety Improvements project is to improve safety along the rural roadway, now in an urban environment, and provide safer access to park facilities. Project limits include the Hairy Man Road / Brushy Creek Road roadway between Brushy Bend Drive and Sam Bass Road, a distance of approximately 2.2 miles. This project included a traffic study and preliminary evaluation of possible safety improvements along the corridor.

After evaluating multiple approaches and following extensive community feedback, the County settled on a design, which:

- Adds two-foot shoulders to the roadway
- Adds six inches to each lane width to provide 11.5-foot lanes throughout most of the corridor. This is six inches less than the typical lane width of 12 feet which will reduce the impact to adjacent trees
- Adds rumble striping along the centerline and along the edge of the roadway
- Adds left turn lanes into Olson Meadows Park and Creekside Park
- Improves park entrance driveways

PUBLIC INPUT PROCESS

During the study, the public had multiple opportunities to provide feedback. Notifications for the initial open house included a variable messaging sign, a press release, invitations to the neighborhood associations, a post on the roadbond.wilco.org website, and a Facebook post.

An open house was held on December 15, 2014 at Brushy Creek Community Center (16318 Great Oaks Dr, Round Rock, TX 78681) with 95 attendees and 43 comments recorded with nearly 70% wanting improvements. Through public input and engineering analysis, the project team determined potential safety improvements. Two subsequent open houses, in conjunction with the Great Oaks Drive Bridge at Brushy Creek project, were held in 2016.

Following the open houses, the project team adjusted the alignment in order to preserve as many trees as possible, and the proposed lane width was narrowed from 12 feet, the typical lane width, to 11.5 feet. The project team selected a two-foot wide shoulder in order to balance the need for safety with the need to preserve trees. Despite the diminutive width, studies show that a two-foot shoulder would minimize crashes by 20% on

a road like Hairy Man Road that averages 2,000 vehicles per day. These changes reduced the number of impacted trees by nearly 59%.

The project team regularly updated the Fern Bluff and Brushy Creek MUD Boards throughout the project, and gave presentations regarding the project at the annual Brushy Creek MUD Town Hall in 2017, 2018, and 2019.

In December 2019, at the request of Commissioner Cook, the project team began working with the Save the Trees on Hairy Man Road steering committee. Over the last seven months, the two groups met four times in-person or virtually to discuss the safety improvements project and further discuss ways to minimize the impacts to trees.

A Hairy Man Road corridor walk was also conducted. The project team and the steering committee walked the entire corridor, frequently stopping and examining the trees that were proposed to be impacted by the safety improvements. This walk helped the group collaborate on design changes that could potentially be made, and gave the steering committee an opportunity to voice their concerns about specific trees and areas along the corridor. Following this corridor walk, the steering committee reviewed four possible design options. Each option showed not only the number of impacted trees but also identified which trees were specifically impacted.

The steering committee chose the option that shifted the pavement one foot south and modified drainage elements in order to minimize impacts to trees significant to the corridor's canopy area. This option was able to reduce the number of impacted trees by 25%, bringing the number down from over 100 trees to 77 impacted trees. The collaboration and discussions between the project team and the community, including the feedback received during the open houses, resulted in an overall reduction of impacted trees by 69%.

During the discussion about the canopy area on Hairy Man Road, there were three trees that were of particular interest to the steering committee. The project team further reduced the lane width in this area to 11 feet. That design change allowed for one tree to be saved, one to be potentially saved during construction, and one to not be saved. As the project team was completing the final design of the safety improvements, a tree which currently leans over the road, that the project team originally thought could be saved would now be impacted. It will need to be removed to meet vertical clearance safety standards. These standards dictate that there cannot be any overhead structure, in this case a tree limb, within 14 feet above the road. Constructing the safety improvements will cause the leaning tree to be only 9.5 feet above the road, making it a safety hazard for commercial trucks and emergency services vehicles. After these final changes, the count of trees saved remained the same. A total of 173 trees were saved from the original design.

PROJECT FUNDING & TIMELINE

The study, design, and construction are funded with voter approved road bonds from the Williamson County 2013 Road Bond Program. The estimated cost to construct this project is $4.25 million. Over $2 million have been spent to date to study and design the project.

The original project design was completed in summer 2019; however, with the design changes prompted by additional community input and engineer analysis, the design was revised and finalized in fall 2020. Construction is expected to begin early 2021 with an anticipated completion date of late 2021.

MORE INFORMATION

For more information about this project, please visit www.wilco.org/roadprojects. Questions or comments may be directed by email or phone to **roads@wilco.org** with "Hairy Man Road / Brushy Creek Road" in the subject line or contact the roads phone line at 512-943-1195.