

# HAIRY MAN ROAD / BRUSHY CREEK ROAD SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS

## PROJECT BACKGROUND

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.

This project, funded by the 2013 Williamson County Road Bond Program, included a traffic study and preliminary evaluation of possible safety improvements along the rural roadway, now in an urban environment.

During the preliminary evaluation phase, the public had the opportunity to provide feedback about the proposed safety improvements at three separate open houses between 2014 and 2016. Following the open houses, the project team adjusted the alignment in order to preserve trees, 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. These changes reduced the number of impacted trees by nearly 59%, from 250 impacted trees to 102.

## WORKING TOGETHER

At the request of Commissioner Cook, the project team began working with the Save the Trees on Hairy Man Road steering committee in December 2019. 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. Before and after photos of each of the options were also provided.

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, 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.

Below this summary are before and after photos that show the difference between the trees impacted by the original design and the impacts by the updated design.

#### **NEXT STEPS**

The County will move forward with completing the redesign of the safety improvements and expects to begin construction Fall 2020. During construction, the County will work with the contractor to ensure the remaining trees are protected.

The County will provide regular project updates with the steering committee and will continue to work with the community on making projects better.



**ORIGINAL DESIGN**



**SHIFT 1'-0" SOUTH (MODIFIED)**













## VERTICAL CLEARANCE

The graphic below shows how Tree #4682 will be a hazard once the safety improvements are constructed and the pavement is shifted to the south.

