



Accelerated completion of Texas Research Parkway approved

By John W. Gonzalez - Express-News

Web Posted: 07/15/2010 11:22 CDT

For now, it's still just a dotted line marked "proposed" on local maps, but within a few years, a long-contemplated addition to the Texas Research Parkway will become a reality in far West Bexar County.

County commissioners this week approved a financing agreement to accelerate completion of the parkway between Culebra and Potranco roads. Potranco also is slated for upgrades from the parkway to Loop 1604. Work, due to start in the third quarter of 2012, could be completed in 2014, officials said.

After fronting the \$55.6 million for construction, the county will be reimbursed by the state, but first the commissioners on Tuesday needed to authorize financing through the Westside 211 Improvement District.

"This is a great project for the West Side," County Judge Nelson Wolff said, although Commissioner Sergio "Chico" Rodriguez said traffic snarls during construction could be a nuisance.

"We'll make it the least painful possible," Commissioner Kevin Wolff said.

Plans for the parkway, also known as Texas 211, call for filling the 7.6-mile gap from Culebra to Potranco. Potranco, which is FM 1957, will be widened from two to four lanes on the 4.7-mile stretch from Loop 1604 to just west of the parkway.

Currently the parkway has two disjointed segments, from U.S. 90 to Potranco and from Culebra to Bandera Road. County officials said the financing arrangement with the state will accelerate the projects by at least a decade, hastening relief for the area's overburdened roads.

Officials said improvements to the two arteries are crucial because in the next decade, most of the county's home building will be in western Bexar.

In addition to the \$55.6 million being spent by the county, developers have agreed to contribute \$15 million for right-of-way, environmental clearances, design costs and other expenses.

The county plans to issue about \$63 million in bonds in 2012. Texas Department of Transportation would reimburse the county's construction costs upon completion of the projects.

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