Study to find ways to improve stretch of FM 1960/Texas 6

By KIM JACKSON, Houston Chronicle Correspondent

State transportation officials are launching a study on a stretch of FM 1960/Texas 6 through Cy-Fair to address traffic and safety issues.

Catherine McCreight, a Texas Department of Transportation project manager, said officials are negotiating a contract with a consultant for an access management study on the stretch of FM 1960 from Texas 249 west to U.S. 290. At that point the roadway becomes Texas 6. The study also covers the portion of Texas 6 from U.S. 290 south to Interstate 10.

The consultant should be on board this summer, McCreight said.

That project team will study short-, medium- and long-range traffic improvements that could be made on the road to improve safety and traffic flow.

Short-term improvements include improving traffic-signal timing, restriping lanes, adding or removing medians and redirecting turning movements with U-turns.

Medium-term improvements include consolidating multiple driveways into neighboring business parking lots and building additional turn lanes.

Long-term solutions could involve writing guidelines for future development in the corridor, as well as larger state- or county-funded reconstruction projects.

McCreight said this FM 1960/Texas 6 study picks up where another study left off more than two years ago. That FM 1960 access management study covered the roadway from Interstate 45 to Texas 249.

Based on proposed improvements outlined in that study, TxDOT has allocated about $4 million to an FM 1960 improvement project, which includes the installation of raised medians in the continuous left-turn lane from I-45 to 249, synchronization of traffic signals, addition of traffic signs and possible removal of one traffic light.

"We anticipate similar findings from the Texas 249 to Interstate 10 access management study," McCreight said. "We are so interested in these projects that we have already applied for federal funding through the Houston Galveston..."
Area Council to do the phase one recommendations that come out of this study."

She said the team would schedule a public meeting at the beginning of the study to get input from residents and business owners in the area.

Another public meeting would be scheduled near the end of the study so the project team can get public feedback on proposed improvements.

"We get the best information from people who drive the roadway every day," McCreight said.

"We will also put together a steering committee with representatives from Harris County, the city of Houston, TxDOT and local chambers to manage and give input on the technical aspects of the study."

Niki Henson, a resident who lives on Fallbrook Road off FM 1960, said she uses the road on a regular basis and has several ideas for improving traffic flow and safety.

"I am not sure if it is feasible, but I think businesses that are located on corners at FM 1960 intersections should have access only on the side streets, like at Eldridge Road," Henson said.

"That would take some traffic off FM 1960."

Henson said a similar effect could be achieved by designating right-turn lanes only for cars making right turns into shopping centers or at intersections.

The middle lanes would then become "through lanes."

"FM 1960 is really the most direct route we have around here for people going east or west, but there is so much traffic and so many traffic lights that a 15-minute trip could take an hour," she said.

Bill Rowden, chairman of the Cy-Fair Houston Chamber of Commerce's transportation committee, said the study could be beneficial if the proposed improvements are implemented quickly.

"It is perfectly fine to do studies of this nature and extent, and well-founded, so long as we think about how to fund the suggested corrections," Rowden said.

McCreight said other sections of FM 1960 and Texas 6 would also be studied, including the sections from Interstate 45 east to Lake Houston or Spring to Humble/Kingwood, and from Interstate 10 south to FM 521 or Katy to Missouri City.

"We want to improve the roadway all the way around (the Houston area)," she said.