

WILLIAMSON COUNTY

## State to pay for portion of widening FM 1460 in Round Rock

**County, city had agreed to pay for widening after state pulled out of project in November.**

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The Texas Department of Transportation informed the City of Round Rock and Williamson County on Thursday that it will fund and construct the widening of A.W. Grimes Boulevard in Round Rock from U.S. 79 to Old Settler's Boulevard.

The state was initially going to pay for turning the two-lane road into four lanes with a continuous left-turn lane from U.S. 79 in Round Rock to Quail Valley Drive in Georgetown.

The state pulled out in November because it lacked funds, and to keep the project moving, the county and city agreed to pay \$7.5 million each to widen that section of A.W. Grimes, which is also FM 1460. Thursday's announcement means that the state will pay for the project after all.

The project is expected to cost \$14.5 million and begin in about 18 months, Transportation Department spokesman Marcus Cooper said. The funds will come from money the state had allocated for rehabilitation of roads, said Bob Daigh, TxDOT's Austin district engineer.

Widening the road has become a priority for Round Rock and the county because the area is becoming a medical education hub. The Texas A&M Health Science Center broke ground in August on a medical school on A.W. Grimes just south of University Boulevard. The campus' first phase is scheduled to be completed in fall 2009.

Texas State University-San Marcos and Austin Community College, which share space in the Round Rock Higher Education Center near the intersection of University and A.W. Grimes, each plan separate campuses nearby to be open as early as 2010. Waterstone Development Group is also planning a mixed-use development on 937 acres in the area.

"It's a dangerous road, and with the medical facilities, schools and all of the projected growth out there, something had to be done," County Commissioner Ron Morrison said. "We certainly welcome TxDOT returning to the table and participating in it."