



Friday, October 31, 2008

## State surprises some by approving millions for FM 1460 project County, city had been told chances slim for funding

**BRAD STUTZMAN**  
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Good things come to those who wait - and sometimes to those who don't.

In an unanticipated development, the Texas Department of Transportation and Round Rock city government announced Thursday that TxDOT will provide the entire funding - about \$15 million - for phase one of the FM 1460 widening project.

The announcement came just days after TxDOT engineer Bob Daigh had said there was no guarantee - and perhaps even little hope - state funding could be found for the job.

Vowing to proceed with or without TxDOT help, on Tuesday the Williamson County Commissioners Court voted 4-0 to enter an agreement with Round Rock for the first two miles of widening along the seven miles of road.

Round Rock was going to do the actual widening work and split the \$15 million cost with Williamson County. The Round Rock City Council had signed off on that plan in September.

Round Rock and Williamson County had each committed \$7.5 million for the job. Now that money can be used for other projects or future FM 1460 work, officials said.

The money TxDOT has committed will pay for widening FM 1460 (also known as A.W. Grimes Boulevard) from its southern end at U.S. Highway 79 (also known as Palm Valley Boulevard) north to Old Settlers Boulevard.

Williamson County, Round Rock, Georgetown and a private developer plan to eventually widen the entire seven-mile road - all the way from Highway 79 to where it empties into Business 81 (also known as South Austin Avenue) in Georgetown.

### Local leaders pleased

Government leaders from Williamson County and Round Rock expressed pleasure - and some surprise as well - with the latest development, stating it was something they had hoped for but not necessarily anticipated.

"I'm surprised," County Judge Dan Gattis said. "It sounds like it's going to happen."

"I was always hopeful that they were going to pay for it," Commissioner Lisa Birkman said. "That's great news. That means we'll be able to fund a different portion of it [FM 1460]."

"I was surprised to some degree," said Pct. 4 Commissioner Ron Morrison, whose precinct takes in the Highway 79 to Old Settlers Boulevard stretch of 1460 where the first work will be done.

Morrison said Williamson County and Round Rock have always had a good relationship with TxDOT.

Morrison said he believes the Texas Transportation Commission and TxDOT allocated the money because they