

CHAPTER
11

FORT WORTH FREEWAYS

Fort Worth and Dallas have always been rivals and opposites. And to see how opposite they can be, just take a look at the role and influence of their freeways. In Dallas and adjacent cities, nearly everything of interest is along or very close to a freeway. The arts district. The stadiums and arenas. The zoo. Dealey Plaza. SMU and the Bush Library. The Galleria and Northpark shopping malls. The Telecom Corridor. Las Colinas. Addison Town Center. Legacy in Plano. The list goes on. But in Fort Worth, virtually nothing of interest is along or near a freeway.

Does that make Fort Worth any less of a freeway city? Well, yes. But still, Fort Worth is no slouch when it comes to freeways due to the diligence of its leaders in the 1940s and 1950s who had the foresight to place a good system on the map.

Like Dallas and Houston, Fort Worth planned its first freeways before and during World War II and was ready to start building as soon as the war ended. In fact, Fort Worth was even somewhat ahead of Dallas since it had two freeways poised to begin construction, the present-day South and West Freeways, while Dallas initially focused only on North Central Expressway. In 1951 Fort Worth had 7.4 miles of freeway open to traffic, more than any other city in Texas. In 1953 a delegation from Houston visited and reported that Houston and Fort Worth were “neck and neck” in freeway construction, and in 1954 highway experts from Chicago praised Fort Worth, saying “Fort Worth is doing one of the best jobs” they had seen in their nationwide freeway tour.¹

The key to Fort Worth’s early success was the willingness and ability of the city to acquire needed right-of-way for the freeways. Prior to 1956 local governments were responsible for 100% of the cost of right-of-way acquisition for freeways. Once the right-of-way was available, TxDOT was typically able to begin construction immediately. The West Freeway, present-day IH 30, was aligned through commercial districts as it approached downtown, making

Fort Worth vs. Dallas	
Fort Worth and Dallas have historically been rivals and opposites, and the same is true for freeways	
Fort Worth	Dallas
Virtually nothing of interest is located alongside or close to a freeway	Almost everything of interest is located alongside or close to a freeway
Top civic leader Amon Carter had little or nothing to do with freeways	Top civic leader Robert L. Thornton was a big advocate of freeways and was actively involved in projects
Freeway opening celebrations were rare and usually small	Celebrated freeway openings with huge events, crazy stunts and political appearances
Anti-toll	Pro-toll
Only two freeways are named for a person, most others for compass direction or destination	Nearly all freeways and tollways are named for a person
No freeway loop around downtown	Downtown has a freeway loop
Freeway through downtown (IH 30) was moved south of downtown.	Freeway through downtown (Woodall Rodgers Freeway) was transformed into the centerpiece of downtown.

property acquisition costly and time-consuming. However, property in the right-of-way for the South Freeway, then US 81 and now IH 35W, consisted mostly of homes so acquisition was able to proceed relatively quickly, allowing the South Freeway to become Fort Worth’s first freeway in 1949 (see opening photo page 3).²

Suburbia Booms, and Freeways Follow

Like everywhere else in the United States, suburban housing construction expanded rapidly in Fort Worth in the 1950s, prompting the subsequent freeway construction boom to get all the new suburbanites to their jobs which were then mostly downtown and at the aircraft factory adjacent to the present-day Joint Reserve Base. Fort Worth freeway construction was strong and steady from the late 1950s to the late 1960s, with a peak occurring in the early 1960s.



International Center of Photography, 1956⁸¹

Prospective homebuyers eagerly inspect the housing opportunities in 1955 at a new Fort Worth development.

Of course, acquiring the right-of-way took money, and Fort Worth voters supported critical propositions to keep freeway construction at full speed. An October 1945 bond issue provided funds for right-of-way acquisition and another issue in 1951 included \$8.65 million (\$78 million in 2013 dollars) targeted for right-of-way, at the time a very large amount of money. In 1953 Tarrant County voters approved a property tax surcharge for a five-year period to raise funds for highway right-of-way acquisition. Local political leaders and the chamber of commerce stood firm in their support of the expressway construction program when opposition arose due to its high cost. TxDOT officials reported the estimated savings provided to the public by the 7.4 miles of freeways in Fort Worth. Reduced travel time, lowered fuel consumption and less vehicle wear saved motorists \$1.9 million in 1952—about \$17 million in 2013 dollars.³

Right-of-way costs continued to expand as the planned freeway system grew in the 1950s. In 1955 TxDOT unveiled a new plan for Tarrant County, dubbed the “Dream” freeway plan, which added new freeways and most of Loop 820 (see map page 50). The right-of-way costs for the new plan were estimated to require an additional \$25 million (about \$217 million in 2013 dollars), and the City of Fort Worth did not have the financial strength to provide the funds. Officials began discussing new approaches to right-of-way funding, including having Tarrant County take over the responsibility and shifting more of the cost to TxDOT. Fort Worth was not the only city facing a daunting challenge to provide right-of-way funds for freeway construction. It was a statewide and national problem, with Dallas and Houston also overwhelmed with the financial burden.⁴

Fortunately for Fort Worth and cities everywhere,



UT-Arlington Library Special Collections⁸²

Above, new homes sprout on the Fort Worth prairie in this undated photo from circa the early 1960s.

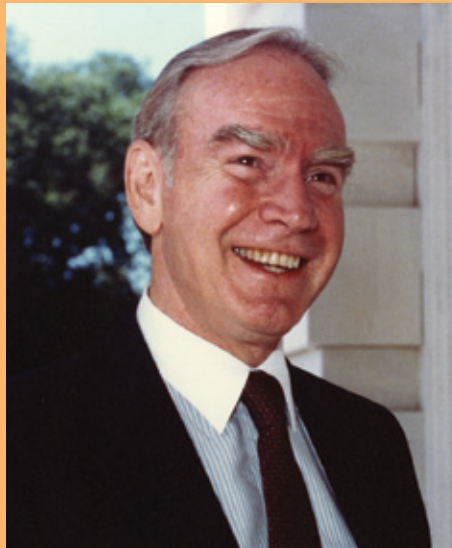
This 1958 view shows present-day Interstate 20 nearing completion at Westcreek Drive in south Fort Worth. New homes had already filled the land along the north side of the freeway. At the time of this photo the freeway was designated as Loop 217. The Loop 217 designation was removed in 1963 when the freeway became part of Interstate Loop 820 and in 1971 this section of Loop 820 became Interstate 20. The freeway at this location was widened and modernized in 1995.



TxDOT Travel Information Division, 1958

TCU Library Special Collections⁸³

Amon G. Carter, 1879–1955

TCU Library Special Collections⁸⁴James Claude "Jim" Wright, born 1922
Speaker of the House 1987-1989

Two Influential Leaders One Freeway Advocate

Amon Carter was a huge champion of Fort Worth, particularly in the 1920s through 1940s, and is the city's top civic leader. Although he was involved in a wide range of activities including publishing, oil, aviation, the arts and philanthropy, he was not an advocate of freeways and appears to have had no role in the early development of the freeway system. Jim Wright, first elected to office as US Representative in 1954, became a top political leader in Washington DC and used his influence to benefit Fort Worth, including strong support for freeways.

help was on the way. The Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956 shifted 100% of the cost for right-of-way and construction of the Interstate Highway System to federal and state governments, with the federal government covering 90%. In 1957 the State of Texas approved legislation requiring TxDOT to pay for at least 50% of the cost of right-of-way on non-interstate highways. The new legislation greatly reduced the local financial burden, with US 287 and SH 121 the only remaining projects requiring a large local funding contribution. In November 1957 Tarrant County voters approved an extension of the property tax surcharge for freeway right-of-way by a four-to-one margin. By 1957 the plan for the Fort Worth freeway system had been finalized. With the new federal, state and local funding, right-of-way acquisition proceeded quickly and the stage was set for the golden age of freeway construction from the late 1950s to the mid-1960s.⁵

As construction on the original Fort Worth freeway plan proceeded at full speed in the 1960s, the plan was updated to meet anticipated future needs. A transportation plan prepared for the City of Fort Worth in 1964 reaffirmed the need for the downtown freeway loop and other planned freeways. Freeway planning for the immediate Fort Worth area inside Loop 820 reached its peak with the 1967 plan which showed an east-west freeway along Rosedale Street, a two-pronged freeway in southwest Fort Worth, the SH 199 freeway inside Loop 820 and the previously planned north and west sections of the downtown loop (see maps pages 52, 54 and 56). The Rosedale Street freeway was canceled in 1974, but the downtown loop and SH 199 freeway remained in the official plan until their cancellation in 2000. The western fork in the southwest Fort Worth freeway was removed in 1974 and the corridor ultimately became the Chisholm Trail Parkway toll

Also see: Map and listing of canceled Fort Worth Freeways, pages 70-75

road which opened in 2014.⁶

While the inner-city freeways were canceled, new freeways were added in outlying areas where construction was less costly and the political environment more friendly. New facilities included SH 170, the upgrading of SH 114 to a freeway and the planned Loop 9.

It is perhaps unexpected that one name is absent from the civic leaders who were influential in the early development and implementation of the Fort Worth freeway system: Amon Carter. Carter was just about Mr Everything to Fort Worth—the publisher of the *Star-Telegram* newspaper, responsible for attracting leading businesses to Fort Worth, proponent of the aviation industry, leading civic booster focusing on the arts and culture, and philanthropist. But Carter had no public role in efforts to build the freeway system. His name does not appear even once in all historical highway reports which were reviewed for this book. It is possible that he trusted others with the responsibility of highway construction, or perhaps his advancing age in the 1940s forced him to focus on his main areas of interest. Or, maybe he had no interest in highways at all. Nevertheless, the Fort Worth freeway system was in good hands with committed leaders in the City of Fort Worth and at TxDOT. It is probably safe to say that the Fort Worth freeway system would be no different than it is today had Carter been more involved.

In 1955 a new person entered the political scene who would become the most influential individual in the construction and expansion of the Fort Worth freeway system: Congressman Jim Wright. Wright was a leader of the efforts to secure the approval of IH 20 between Fort Worth and

Dallas, with advocacy beginning in 1957 and succeeding in 1964. The northwest section of Loop 820 was an ongoing pet project for Wright, with the 1968 interstate designation and 1970s construction requiring all of Wright's political skills and connections. Wright was influential in obtain-

ing funding for improvements to aging and inadequate parts of Fort Worth freeways, including the interchange at IH 30 and IH 820 in east Fort Worth which still remains the only modern freeway-to-freeway interchange to be constructed on the former Dallas-Fort Worth Turnpike.



Interstate 35W South The South Freeway

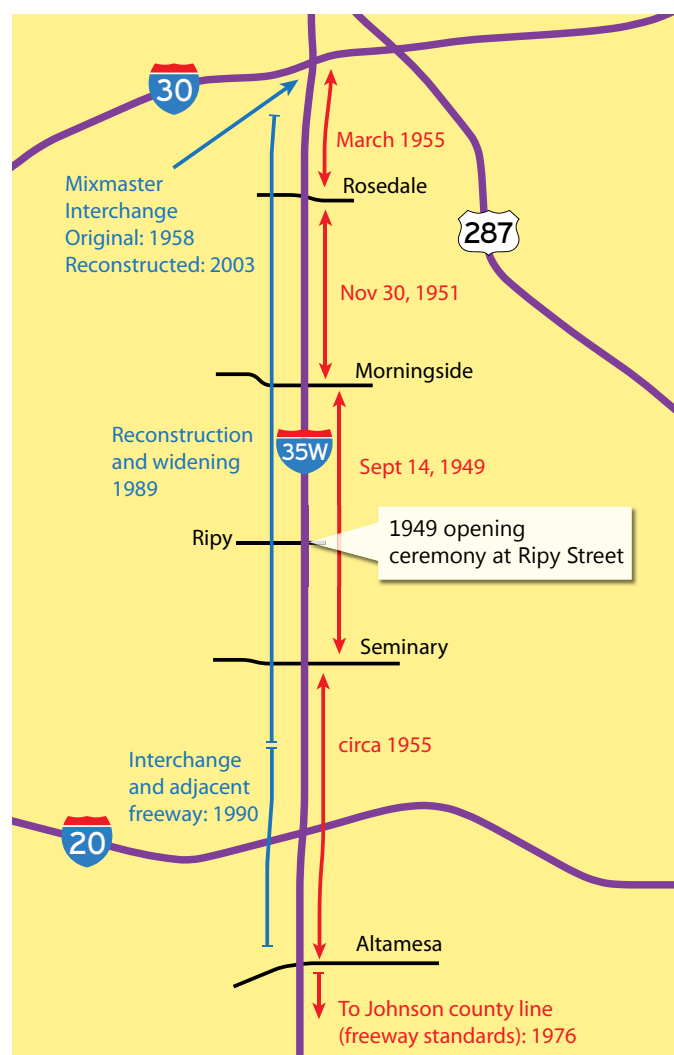
The construction of IH 35W south of downtown, then US 81, was one of the top two priorities of the early planning for the Fort Worth freeway system, along with IH 30 west of downtown. The City of Fort Worth was responsible for 100% of the right-of-way acquisition cost, and the city provided the resources to acquire and clear the right-of-way through several residential areas to speed the freeway toward construction. Preparation of construction plans was underway in May 1946 and a groundbreaking ceremony for the first freeway in Fort Worth, the section from Seminary Drive (then Kellis Street) to Morningside Drive, was held on April 7, 1947.⁷

On September 14, 1949, several thousand people gathered at the Ripy Street overpass for the official opening of the first freeway in Fort Worth. After a concert by the Carswell Air Force Base Band and a B-36 flyover, officials cut the ribbon to open the freeway. It turned out to be the largest event ever held for a new freeway opening in Fort Worth, and one of only a few with substantial participation of the general public. Although many future openings would be observed, they were typically small or informal with ribbon cuttings attended mainly by political officials. The opening of the first section of Central Expressway in Dallas a few months earlier had been an even larger celebration than the Fort Worth event, and Dallas would continue to celebrate its freeway openings throughout the 1950s and 1960s with large ceremonies and creative stunts.⁸

Widening

IH 35W may have been modern when it opened in 1949, but its mid-1940s design soon became obsolete due to increasing traffic and improving standards. A center guardrail barrier was not included in the original design and was added in 1960. Reconstruction and widening from the downtown Mixmaster interchange to IH 20 was under study in the 1970s and in 1974 there was discussion of adding lanes on elevated structures, although it isn't clear exactly what was envisioned since there was sufficient right-of-way available for widening without elevated struc-

Also see: Photograph of 1949 opening, page 3

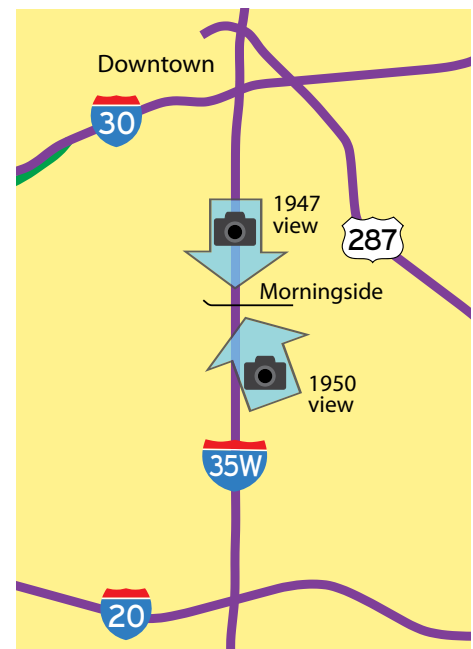


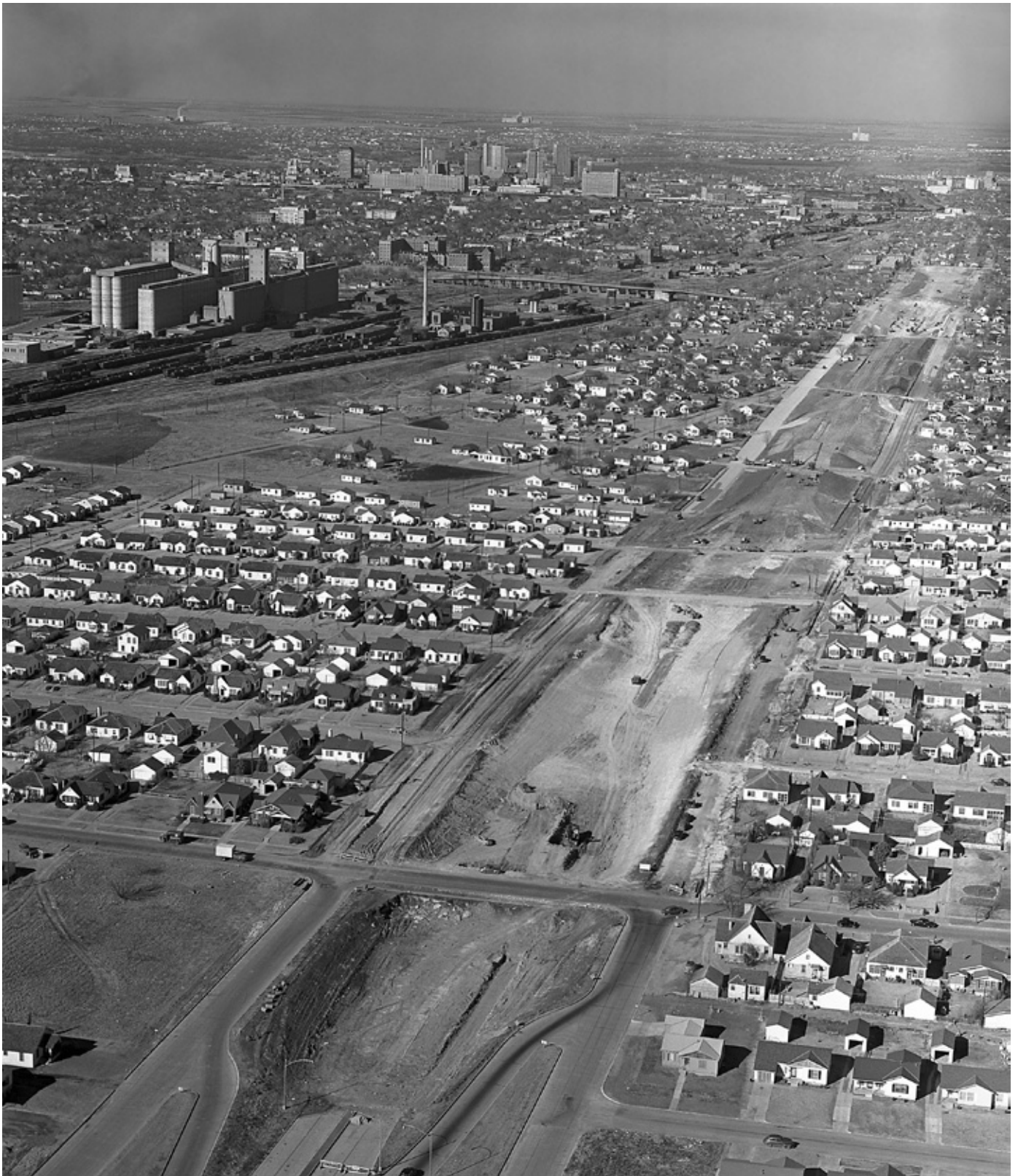
tures. New standards for noise impacts eliminated the elevated structures from consideration, and in 1977 officials were preparing options for a ground-level widening. Preliminary work began in May 1980 south of IH 30, but most

UT-Arlington Library Special Collections, 1947⁸⁶

Freeway coming through This December 1947 view looking south at Morningside Drive shows construction underway on the first section of present-day IH 35W. The homes in the foreground were living on borrowed time since work would soon be underway to extend the freeway northward to downtown. The right-of-way clearance was coincidentally connected to one of the more influential figures in the development and construction of the Interstate Highway System, Dallas native and Texas A&M graduate Francis Turner (1908-1999), who served as Federal Highway Administrator, the top federal highway position, from 1969 to 1972. Turner's parents' home was in the path of the freeway and was slated for clearance. "They said, 'Son, can't you do anything?'" Mr Turner told a reporter later. "And of course I couldn't. Well, they didn't want to leave the old place, but when they got settled into the new house, all brick, they were happy."⁸⁵

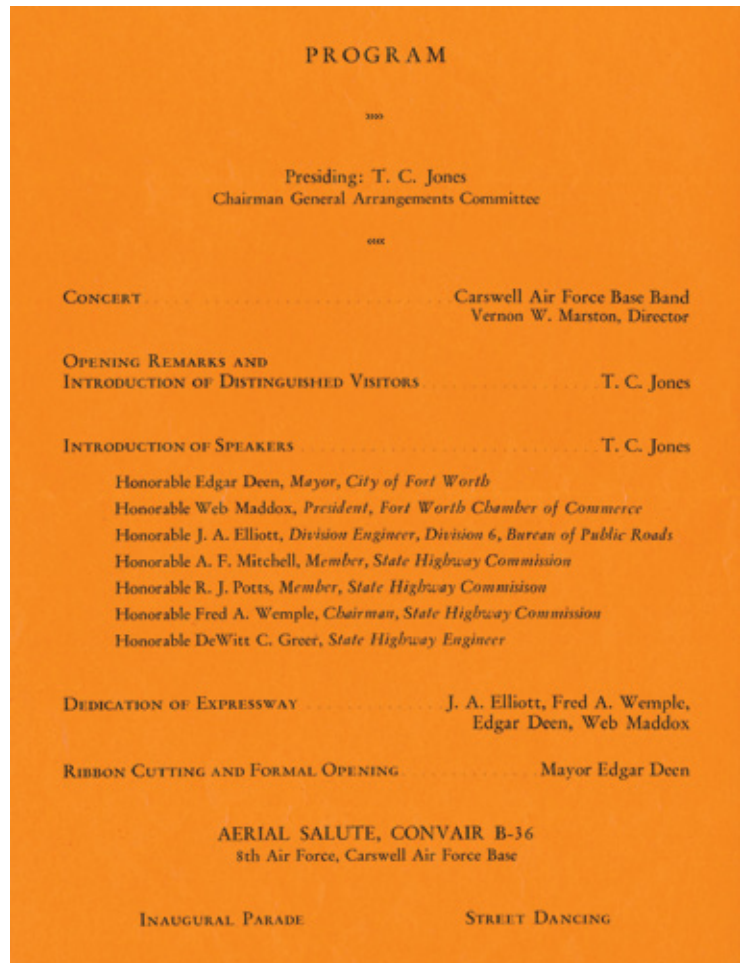
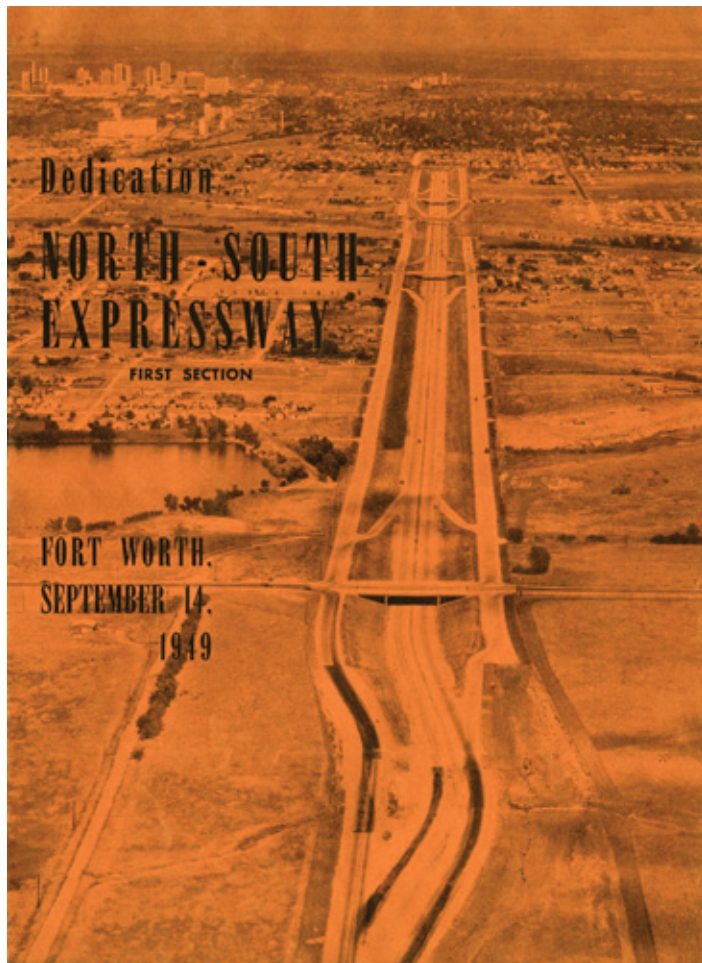
of the section slated for widening was part of a larger project which included rebuilding the Mixmaster interchange in downtown Fort Worth at IH 30. Construction was delayed by litigation involving the Lancaster Elevated (see pages 491-502). In 1984 the IH 35W expansion was split into a separate project, allowing it to proceed separately from the controversial Lancaster Elevated project. Work was underway in August 1984 and main lane construction was substantially complete in 1989, with a large new interchange at IH 20 open in 1990. However, the largest project remained—reconstruction of the downtown Fort Worth Mixmaster. The controversy and litigation engulfing the IH 30 Lancaster Elevated was finally settled in 1989. Construction was underway in fall 1993 and the interchange was completed in 2003.⁹ ■





UT-Arlington Library Special Collections, 1950⁸⁷

This aerial view from circa 1950 looks north at Morningside Drive with the freeway construction proceeding northward from the first section which opened in 1949. The homes shown in the freeway path on the previous page were in the cleared area just above the cross street in the foreground.



Texas State Library and Archives Commission

These views show pages from the orange-colored brochure which was distributed at the opening event for the first section of IH 35W South, then called the North-South Expressway and signed as US 81, on September 14, 1949. Speakers included Mayor Edgar Deen and State Highway Engineer D.C. Greer, who is regarded as the father of the modern Texas highway system. The brochure also indicates a parade and street dancing after the formal ceremonies. See page 3 for a photo of the ribbon-cutting.



This undated view from the early-to-mid 1950s shows the freeway looking north from the Morningside Drive overpass. The original freeway had four main lanes and lacked a median barrier.

TxDOT Travel Information Division

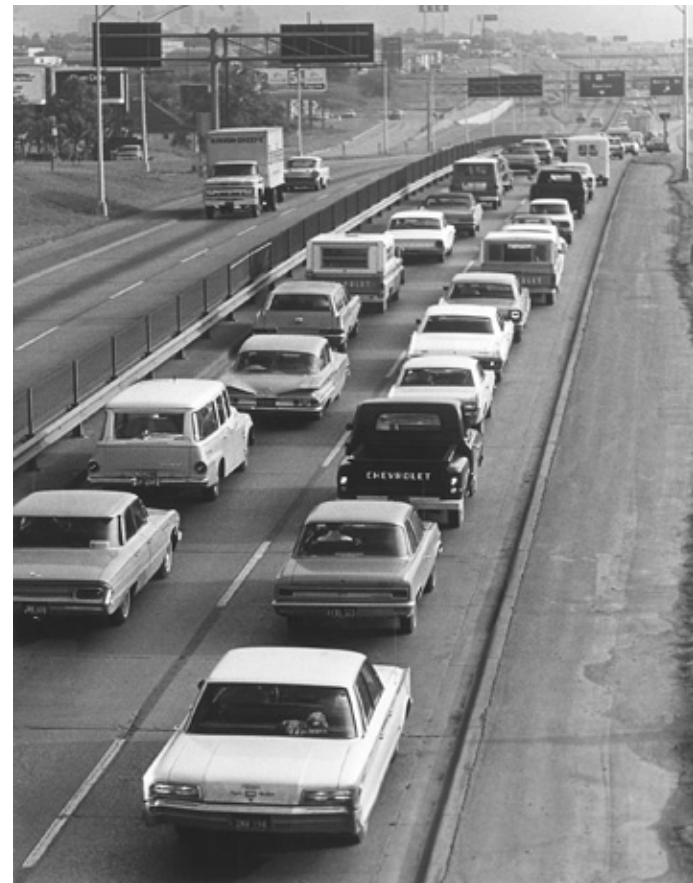


TxDOT Travel Information Division

Originally US 81, the freeway was absorbed into the federal Interstate Highway System in 1956. Above, an undated view from the early-to-mid 1950s shows a low-to-the-ground US 81 highway shield along the roadside looking north just south of Berry Street. The freeway was signed as IH 35W starting in 1959, and the May 1959 photo on the right looking north at Ripy Street shows one of the first signs to be installed. The original shield design placed a small “W” beneath the route number. Since the 1960s the “W” has been placed to the right of the route number in the same font and size as the route number.

UT-Arlington Library Special Collections, 1959⁸⁸UT-Arlington Library Special Collections, 1961⁸⁹

This 1961 view looks south at Berry Street. The median barrier was installed in 1960.

UT-Arlington Library Special Collections, 1973⁹⁰

This 1973 view looks north from the Ripy Street overpass.



UT-Arlington Library Special Collections, 1987⁹¹

This June 1987 view looks north along IH 35W just south of downtown with the Vickery Boulevard exit ahead. The full length of the original substandard freeway, from IH 30 to IH 20, was widened to eight main lanes with the work completed in 1989 except for the section at the IH 20 interchange which was completed in 1990. The lower view looks northeast across the interchange at IH 35W and IH 20. The interchange originally opened in 1957 with a cloverleaf design (see photo page 505).

Author, 2009





Author, 2011

This October 2011 view looks northbound along IH 35W at Morningside Drive with downtown Fort Worth visible on the left in the distance.



Interstate 35W North The North Freeway

The south leg of IH 35W in Fort Worth was the focus of attention in the first wave of Fort Worth freeway construction in the late 1940s and early 1950s. IH 35W south was complete to downtown in 1955, and attention then turned toward IH 35W north. Work immediately north of IH 30 began in 1958 but difficulties were encountered north of downtown, slowing progress. A large gravel pit had been excavated along the freeway path north of Belknap and the right-of-way was tied up in litigation in March 1960. The issue was resolved resulting in a one-year delay, and the section of freeway opened in May 1962. Additional sections opened regularly in the 1960s and the freeway was complete to Denton in July 1969, with the final original construction, the interchange at IH 35E, dedicated on April 15, 1970. The freeway benefited from improved design standards in comparison to IH 35W south of downtown, but IH 35W north was still a minimal freeway by modern standards, ensuring it was only a matter of time before the

freeway would be inadequate to meet demand.¹⁰

The North Freeway corridor remained mostly vacant land in the 1970s, but in the 1980s it became the focus of huge investments and real estate developments. The Perot family and their real estate firm Hillwood began accumulating land around 1985, and by December 1986 the Perots had assembled 16,300 acres sprawling along the IH 35W and Highway 377 corridors in northern Tarrant and southern Denton Counties. The centerpiece of their real estate plans was Alliance Airport, the brainchild of Ross Perot Jr and the nation's first industrial airport, designed for cargo and maintenance operations. Groundbreaking took place on July 9, 1988, and the airport opened just eighteen months later on December 14, 1989. In 2013 the Alliance Texas and adjacent Circle T Ranch developments, both by Hillwood, comprise 17,000 acres.¹¹

The 1990s brought the second major development along the North Freeway, Texas Motor Speedway. The



UT-Arlington Library Special Collections, 1959⁹²

This June 1959 view looking south shows work under-way on IH 35W east of downtown Fort Worth.

This October 2007 view looks south along IH 35W at the original interchange with Loop 820. In 2013 work was in progress to build a modern-design four-level interchange.

North Central Texas Council
of Governments, 2007





Author, October 2011

These October 2011 views show Texas Motor Speedway along IH 35W. In the top photo, IH 35W runs across the lower part of the photo. The bottom photo is a closer view looking north showing the 1.5-mile quad-oval track, which features 24-degree banked curves to allow higher speeds.

Author, October 2011





Author, October 2011

This October 2011 view looks north along IH 35W with the SH 170 intersection ahead and Alliance Airport in the background. The North Tarrant Express project will expand this section of freeway to six regular main lanes and four toll lanes.



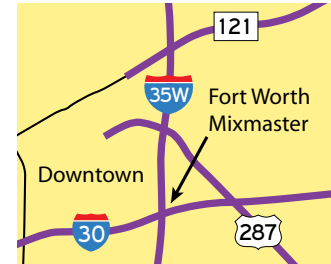
The Fort Worth Mixmaster



The age of fins This undated view from circa the early 1960s shows the ramp structures of the original Mixmaster interchange with a 1959 Cadillac sedan passing through. Featuring long and prominent fins, the 1959 family of Cadillacs was arguably the greatest achievement in automotive fin design.



The downtown interchanges in both Dallas and Fort Worth are named the Mixmaster, and the name originated with the Fort Worth Mixmaster which was substantially completed and open to traffic in March 1958, and fully complete in 1960. It was the first four-level interchange in Texas. The present-day interchange was completed in 2003.⁹³



The term "Mixmaster" was first reported to be a widely used nickname in February 1958 when the Texas Turnpike Authority used it in their monthly audit report. The *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* article reported that "the name was derived from the fact the interchange, at first glance, appears to be some kind of monster gadget designed for the purpose of hopelessly confusing motorists."⁹⁴

In the world of household consumer goods, the Mixmaster was a market-leading kitchen mixer produced by Sunbeam and the tangle of freeway ramps at the interchange, not previously seen in Texas, looked like the result of a mixing operation. The advertisement comes from the March 1958 issue of *Good Housekeeping* magazine.

TxDOT Travel Information Division



TxDOT Travel Information Division

These views look north along IH 35W at the Mixmaster. The upper photo showing the original Mixmaster is undated from circa the early 1960s. The modern structure shown below in September 2009 was completed in 2003.

Author, September 2009





Interstate 30 West The West Freeway

Planning for an east-west freeway across Fort Worth began with a 1944 design study prepared by Parsons Brinkerhoff engineers for a freeway across the Dallas-Fort Worth region. In the downtown area the 1944 plan aligned the freeway along the north side of Lancaster Avenue, requiring a major right-of-way clearance. In 1946 the planned freeway ignited the first anti-freeway protest in North Texas when local officials tried to begin construction on the project. While the downtown freeway was temporarily on hold in the 1940s due to the controversy, work proceeded west of downtown, closely following the alignment proposed in the 1944 plan.¹⁵

Prior to 1956 local governments were responsible for 100% of the right-of-way cost for new freeways. In heavily developed urban areas right-of-way was a very substantial cost, typically comparable to construction costs and sometimes higher. The section west of downtown required the most difficult and costly right-of-way clearance in the Fort Worth freeway system, and the city's willingness and ability to finance the right-of-way acquisition kept the project on a fast track.

The project was called the East-West Expressway and was signed as US 80. Artist depictions of the planned

Also see: Lancaster Elevated controversy, pages 491-502; chapter 4, the Tom Landry Highway, starting on page 393 for Interstate 30 in east Fort Worth

freeway in west Fort Worth were released in June 1945 and appeared with press reports in the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*. Preparation of construction plans for the freeway from downtown to Camp Bowie Boulevard were underway in 1946 and the first construction contracts for drainage work were awarded April 1948. The first main lanes opened on September 3, 1951, and the freeway was complete from present-day SH 183 in west Fort Worth to the edge of downtown in June 1954.¹⁶

After years of controversy and inaction the plan for elevating the freeway through downtown was approved by Fort Worth City Council in May 1952. Work was underway in 1958 and the Lancaster Elevated section of the freeway opened in March 1960. For complete details of the controversy of the downtown section, see pages 491-502. The freeway was absorbed into the Interstate Highway System and in 1959 was designated as Interstate 20. It was renumbered to be Interstate 30 in 1971 when Interstate 20 was shifted to its current location in south Fort Worth.¹⁷

This July 1948 view shows the right-of-way for the first section of the West Freeway with work just underway in the foreground.





TxDOT Travel Information Division

This undated early 1950s view shows the freeway at Camp Bowie Boulevard with a sign in place announcing plans for the freeway: “Future Route US 80 East West Expressway, a Controlled Access Highway”. Prior to its designation as IH 20 (and subsequent designation as IH 30), the freeway was US 80.

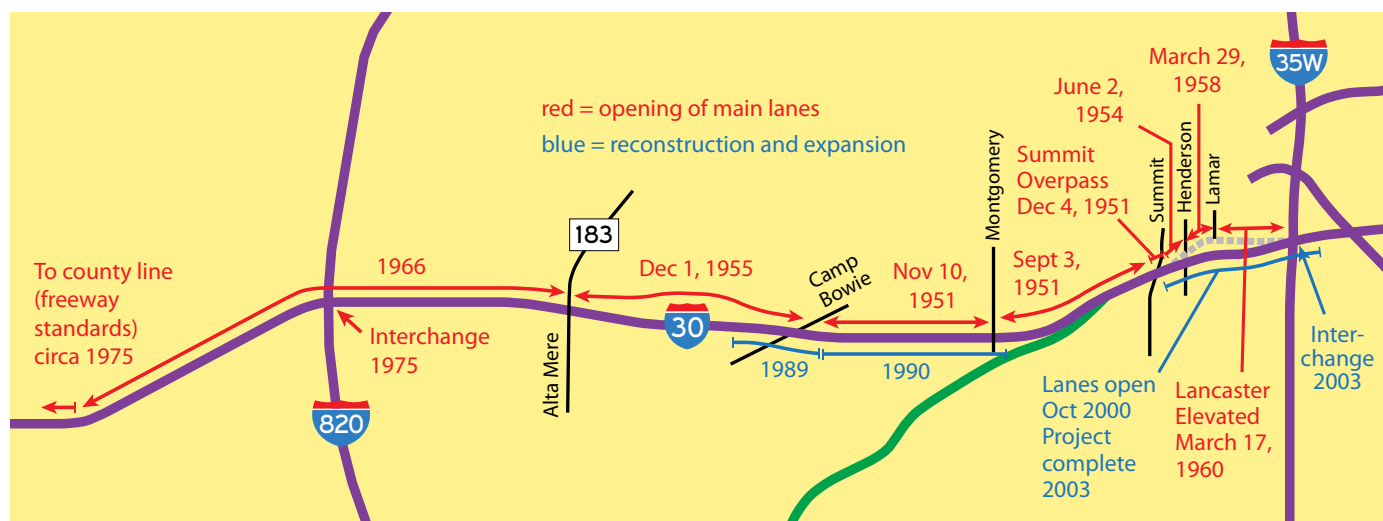
Reconstruction

The 1940s design of IH 30 became obsolete as traffic volumes increased and design standards improved. By the 1970s it became necessary to modernize Fort Worth's most outdated freeways, including IH 30 west, IH 35W south and IH 20 on the south edge of Fort Worth.

Early concepts in 1974 included elevated structures to add new lanes in the sections with narrow right-of-way in the Arlington Heights area of west Fort Worth. New standards for freeway noise eliminated consideration of the

elevated lanes, and by 1977 three options without elevated lanes were being studied, all requiring substantial right-of-way acquisition in the Arlington Heights neighborhood.¹⁸

In 1979 a compromise plan emerged to acquire new right-of-way on the south side of the freeway, displacing about 123 homes and 123 businesses. The design included space in the median for a future “commuterway” bus and carpool lane. Construction between Merrick and Montgomery Streets was underway in October 1987 and complete in 1990, replacing the antiquated original freeway with a





TxDOT Travel Information Division

The above undated photo likely from the late 1950s looks east along the freeway at Hulen Street with Arlington Heights High School visible on the right. The lower view, looking east near Montgomery Street, shows original overpasses with an arch design using cast-in-place concrete—similar to the arched overpasses of the original Central Expressway in Dallas. The freeway in these views was reconstructed and expanded to its present-day configuration in 1990.



TxDOT Travel Information Division



UT-Arlington Library Special Collections, 1953⁹⁶

This September 1953 view shows the freeway ending at Summit Avenue in the foreground with work in progress on the section from Summit to Henderson. Continuation of the freeway into downtown was delayed due to the controversy over the design along Lancaster Avenue in downtown, and work on the final section did not begin until 1958. The building at Summit Avenue which reaches nearly to the edge of the freeway is the Mrs Bairds Bakery (see photo page 497 and related story page 498).

A typical Fort Worth freeway opening This view shows the opening ceremony for Interstate 30 from Camp Bowie Boulevard to Alta Mere Drive on December 1, 1955. It was a brief and simple ceremony with the motorcycle escort leading the first vehicles onto the new freeway. This small and basic opening observance was typical for Fort Worth. Dallas, in contrast, held large ceremonies and often huge celebrations for important freeway openings.

UT-Arlington Library Special Collections, 1955⁹⁷





UT-Arlington Library Special Collections⁹⁸

The undated view above from circa the mid-1950s shows the downtown approach to Fort Worth just west of Henderson Street. Like IH 35W south, the West Freeway was originally constructed without a median barrier and had only a narrow grassy median. The 1951 view below looks east near Forest Park Boulevard.

UT-Arlington Library Special Collections, 1951⁹⁹





UT-Arlington Library Special Collections, 1987¹⁰⁰

This December 1987 view looking west at Montgomery Street shows work underway on the freeway expansion. A wide strip of right-of-way on the south side of the freeway was cleared for the project. Below is a September 2009 view of the freeway looking east at Hulen Boulevard.

Author, September 2009





Author, September 2009



UT-Arlington Library Special Collections, 1973¹⁰¹

The first modern-design four-level interchange in Fort Worth was completed at IH 30 west and IH 820 in 1975. The four-level downtown Mixmaster had opened in 1958, but it featured left-side exits, sharp curves and poor geometrics. The September 2009 aerial view looks east across the interchange. The construction photo shows a beam about to be lifted into position in April 1973.

roomy and modern design. The oldest and most inadequate section of freeway had been improved, but older sections of freeway still remained both to the east and west. Initial work on replacement of the downtown Lancaster Elevated

was underway in 1993 and the new freeway, realigned south of downtown, opened in 2001. The entire project, including reconstruction of the downtown Mixmaster, was completed in 2003.¹⁹ ■

30

The Lancaster Elevated 1960-2001



UT-Arlington Library Special Collections, 1989¹⁰⁶

Interstate 30 through downtown Fort Worth ranks as the number one controversy in the history of North Texas freeways (see page 64 for rankings). But the 1980s battle was not the first time the freeway was the focus of civic dispute. In 1945, four years before the first freeway opened in Fort Worth, it sparked the first freeway-related public protest in North Texas. The compromise solution in response to the protests that began in 1945—the construction of elevated main lanes along Lancaster Avenue, informally called the Lancaster Elevated—set the stage for the much larger controversy in the 1980s. The plan to widen the Lancaster Elevated became a hugely contentious and divisive issue in Fort Worth. A key court ruling in 1985 set the wheels in motion for a 1989 compromise which

This April 1989 view looks west along the Lancaster Elevated.

relocated the freeway south to a new alignment. The long drama of the Lancaster Elevated came to an end in 2001 when it was demolished, clearing the corridor for the new ground-level boulevard.

Origins of the Lancaster Elevated

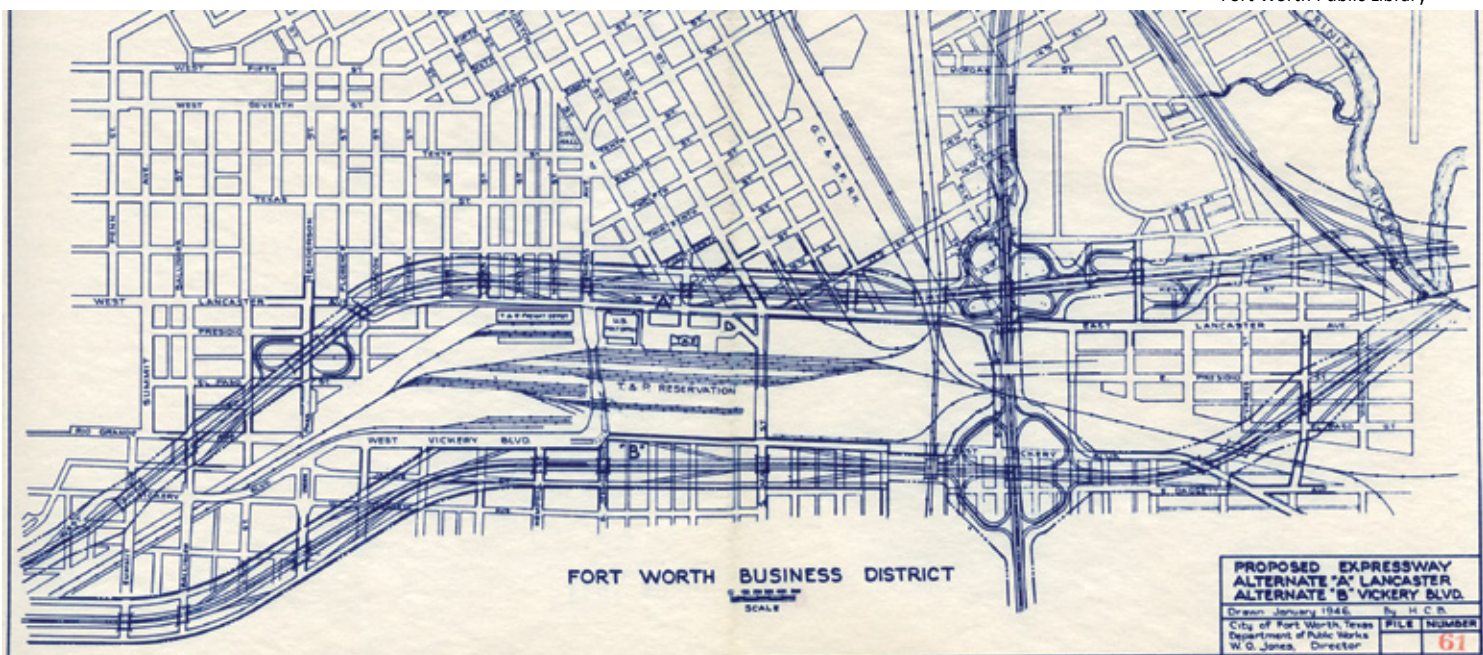
The first plan for an east-west freeway through Fort Worth was the comprehensive report for an expressway across the Dallas-Fort Worth region prepared for TxDOT by Parsons Brinkerhoff engineers in October 1944. The report's recommended alignment for the expressway west of present-day IH 35W was very close to the as-built align-



Fort Worth Public Library

The above 1946 depiction of the east-west freeway through downtown shows the proposed design with the freeway in a trench. The corridor width required a large number of displacements, prompting a swift and well-organized public protest which temporarily killed the planned freeway. The January 1946 map below shows an alternate alignment south of downtown, avoiding Lancaster Avenue entirely. Ironically, opponents of the plan to widen the elevated structure in the 1980s advocated sinking the freeway into a trench, and the ultimate compromise approved in 1989 moved the freeway south of downtown to an alignment similar to the January 1946 map.

Fort Worth Public Library



ment of the original IH 30. The report showed the expressway in a trench on the north side of Lancaster through downtown, with a large area of displacements required for the project.⁵⁶

In October 1945 detailed plans for the downtown freeway were released, showing a 369-foot-wide corridor along the north side of Lancaster with the main lanes sunk into a trench. The wide corridor required a large number of displacements, sparking a swift and well-organized protest from businesses in the proposed path. The opposi-

tion placed a full-page advertisement in the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* comparing the loss of property to the result of an atomic bomb blast (see image page 493). The cost of acquiring the property would be very high and was entirely the responsibility of the City of Fort Worth, so city officials were hesitant to endorse the wide corridor.⁵⁷

In March 1946 Fort Worth developed a new plan which reduced the corridor width to 110 feet and downgraded the facility from a freeway to a surface street with underpasses at busy cross streets. TxDOT was unwilling

MF FORT WORTH SHOPPER, Sunday, Nov. 11, 1945 PHONE EARLY SUNDAY (Before 12:30 P.M.)

SHOULD AN ATOMIC BOMB HIT FORT WORTH

you would read headlines something like these!

66 Business Buildings and Bus Terminal Destroyed!
OVER \$15,000,000 A YEAR
BUSINESS VOLUME DESTROYED!
CENTER OF WHOLESALE DISTRICT DEVASTATED!
Fort Worth Set Back Years
In Business Progress!
Area 3-4 Mile By 369 Feet Razed to the Ground!
Many Firms to Leave City Owing to
Impossibility of Locating New Quarters!

\$6,000,000 IN PROPERTY WIPED OUT!
Blow Spells "Finis" to Fort Worth's
Aspirations As Wholesale Center!
**1,165,000 SQUARE FEET OF FLOOR SPACE
LOST TO FORT WORTH INDUSTRY!**
SCORE OF HOMES DESTROYED!
\$40,000 ANNUAL TAXES LOST TO CITY!
—AND DAMAGE TO TRackage-PROPERTY AND
UTILITY LINES NOT YET ESTIMATED!



ARROWS INDICATE JUST A FEW OF THE 66 BUSINESS BUILDINGS WHICH WOULD BE COMPLETELY DESTROYED

And this is exactly what will happen to Fort Worth If the proposed Express Highway follows Lancaster.

FORT WORTH DOES NOT WANT THIS EXPRESS HIGHWAY

- (1) The official bond ballot did not specifically separate it and many voters had no chance to vote directly for or against it.
- (2) No sound preliminary estimates or plans were available at the time of the bond election and no one realized the magnitude or cost of the project.
- (3) It is unduly extravagant and the cost will greatly exceed preliminary estimates. The cost is over a million dollars a mile—probably nearer \$2,000,000.00.
- (4) The huge elevated or depressed sections of the highway would be a blot on the landscape in many places. It would constitute a dead-end to the metropolitan district and close a number of streets.
- (5) It is part of a major plan by which the federal government interferes with urban highways. Other cities are recognizing this. Some San Antonio citizens have sued to set aside their bond issue (passed by a very narrow majority). The Dallas December bond election of \$40,000,000.00 has sidestepped the issue and fails to include anything for the express highway.
- (6) If built in the near future under inflationary costs, the public will get the least for its money.
- (7) To build it soon, as contemplated, will compete with private business at a very time when labor and materials are short and the government should stay out of large public works.
- (8) It will damage the whole city commercially through the destruction of wholesaling and warehousing properties which are irreplaceable under present circumstances.
- (9) It will destroy many buildings and homes at a time when it is almost impossible to rebuild on any comparable scale.

HIDDEN COSTS AND RECKLESS DESTRUCTION

- (1) The strip through the central business district alone will destroy 66 buildings on the tax rolls for \$1,175,000.00. Probably over \$1,500,000.00 of property would come off the tax rolls, representing a loss of taxes to the city of over \$40,000.00 a year.
- (2) Over 1,165,000 square feet of floor space critically needed by Fort Worth will be destroyed. This is as much space as the office space in the 15 principal office buildings in Fort Worth. It is more space than all of the larger department stores in Fort Worth occupy. Its loss would be a civic blow.
- (3) Many of the companies destroyed will be unable to find similarly advantageous locations and may suspend business temporarily or permanently. It will be almost impossible for the Bowen Bus Terminal to duplicate its present convenient location for the traveling public.
- (4) Some of the businesses interrupted may move to other towns. This especially applies to the Bowen Shops, with over 400 employees.
- (5) About 2000 employees will be badly displaced and payrolls disturbed.
- (6) Over half a mile of spur tracks will be removed and much trackage property not taken rendered useless.
- (7) Water, sewer, gas, light and electric lines will be disturbed at great costs not yet reckoned.
- (8) We are bound to pay in taxes whatever the express highway costs. If Fort Worth's direct contribution for right-of-way is five million dollars, it will cost us \$250,000.00 per year for approximately twenty-five years.

HIGHWAY INFORMATION COMMITTEE

Wm. Monnig, Chairman
Ben E. Keith, Vice-Chairman
Oscar E. Monnig, Secretary

FORT WORTH DOES NOT NEED THIS EXPRESS HIGHWAY

- (1) The scheme originated as a military highway, which the atomic bomb has made obsolete. Even a military highway does not have to go through the center of town.
- (2) As part of an inter-regional highway, it will serve to carry through traffic just as well or better if run through the edge of Fort Worth.
- (3) U. S. 80 to Dallas is practically a double highway and 183 has just been opened. We do not now need another new highway to join the two cities.
- (4) It was not originated or planned by Fort Worth people or Fort Worth Engineers. Fort Worth itself has never felt a need for any such monumental project.
- (5) It originated with and was planned by outside engineers who had in mind concentrated eastern metropolitan centers. Fort Worth will not reach that stage for many years.
- (6) It was never presented to the voters of Fort Worth as a separate issue and they never realized its cost or destructive effects.
- (7) It will do Fort Worth absolutely no good and will only serve to increase the concentration of up-town traffic near the restricted number of inlets and outlets of the highway. It is an experiment of doubtful civic value.
- (8) Fort Worth could spend its share of the project's cost to better advantage in a number of moderate street widenings or the purchase of up-town parking lots.
- (9) It is a single enormous over-rated project which would be of no service at all to many parts of the city, such as the North Side.

Interests opposing a freeway along Lancaster Avenue and the displacements it would require published this full-page advertisement in the November 11, 1945, *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, comparing the impact of the right-of-way clearance to the destruction of an atomic bomb blast. The opposition succeeded in stopping the freeway temporarily, but the need for the freeway and opposition to right-of-way acquisition led to the construction of the Lancaster Elevated.



TxDOT Travel Information Division

This undated aerial view looking west from circa the early 1960s shows the original Fort Worth Mixmaster interchange in the foreground and the Lancaster Elevated, then signed as Interstate 20, in the background.



TxDOT Travel Information Division

This undated 1990s-era view shows the Lancaster elevated, looking north-northwest along Throckmorton Street with downtown Fort Worth in the background.

to agree to the surface street plan, so the issue remained unresolved. In the meantime, work continued to build the east-west freeway west of downtown.⁵⁸

In 1951 the issue of the downtown freeway along Lancaster was revived with a new plan from TxDOT. The right-of-way would be expanded to 200 feet, wide enough to provide frontage roads and space for an elevated structure with main lanes. The opposition once again became vocal since the widening of the corridor would displace more businesses than the surface street plan. But Fort Worth City Council viewed the new proposal as an acceptable compromise and approved the new plan on May 21, 1952, setting the process in motion to build the Lancaster Elevated. It was ironic that the original 1945 plan placed the freeway in a trench, and opposition to right-of-way acquisition resulted in the compromise design with an elevated structure. Efforts to eliminate the elevated structure in the 1980s once again advocated a trenched design.⁵⁹

The freeway approaching downtown from west Fort Worth reached Henderson Street in June 1954 and the Dallas Fort Worth Turnpike was slated to open in 1957, so completion of the downtown section became a priority. TxDOT took over right-of-way acquisition in 1956, and con-

struction contracts were awarded in 1958. The Lancaster Elevated freeway opened on March 17, 1960, with four traffic lanes (two each way). The minimal design ensured that it was only a matter of time before the freeway would need to be expanded.⁶⁰

The Battle

TxDOT began planning to widen the Lancaster Elevated in 1977 and preliminary plans were unveiled in 1979. The proposed design widened the elevated structure to nine traffic lanes and totally rebuilt the Mixmaster interchange at the intersection with IH 35W at the east end of the elevated structure. By 1981 substantial opposition had developed and it became clear the project would be controversial. In June 1981 Fort Worth City Council refused to endorse the preliminary plan. By 1983 the controversy over how to expand the freeway had mushroomed into a raging dispute involving political officials, civic leaders, downtown business organizations, prominent citizens and the general public.⁶¹

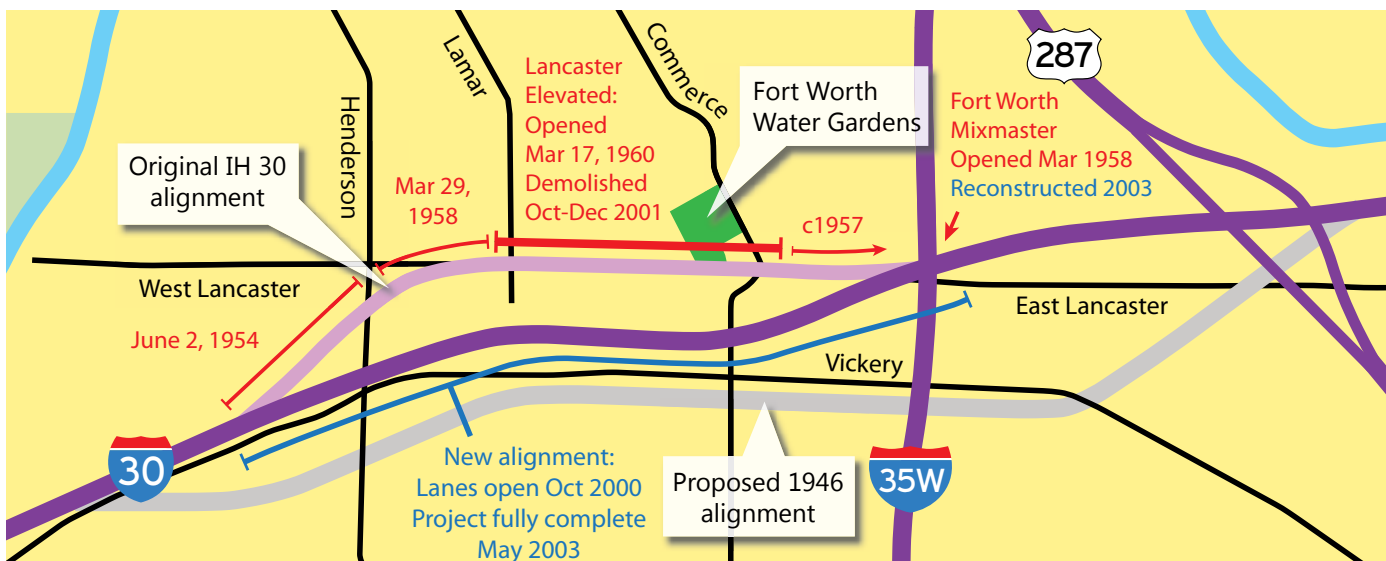
Opposition to the elevated structure was led by the group Interstate 30 Citizen Advocates for Responsible Expansion, or I-CARE. I-CARE was backed by some of the


UT-Arlington Library Special Collections, 1983¹⁰⁷


TxDOT Travel Information Division

This is a rare photograph of reclusive billionaire Robert Bass, part of the prominent Bass family of Fort Worth. Bass was appointed member of the Texas Transportation Commission in 1986 as the controversy was raging and is shown in this official photo from his tenure, which ended in 1987. Publicly, Bass did not play an active role in the controversy. However, Bass's wife Anne (known as Anne T. Bass) was a leader of the opposition to the elevated structure.

This model shows the proposed widened Lancaster Elevated and the new multilevel interchange at IH 35W in the upper part of the photo. Lancaster's ground-level traffic lanes, which were not covered by the original elevated freeway, would be entirely covered by the widened freeway deck.





UT-Arlington Library Special Collections, 1988¹⁰⁸

The Mrs Baird's Bread bakery along the south side of IH 30 was the last issue to be resolved before the realignment of the freeway could move forward. The Texas Historical Commission viewed the 1938 structure as historic, citing its prominent location and aroma, and in July 1987 opposed its demolition. The historical commission later allowed the demolition to move forward, perhaps realizing that a smell can't be historic.

most influential and wealthy residents of Fort Worth, including Ruth Carter Stevenson, daughter of Fort Worth civic legend Amon Carter, and the husband-wife team of Robert and Anne T. Bass of the wealthy Bass family.* Both I-CARE and the Fort Worth Central Business District Association, led by Robert Bass, advocated the demolition of the elevated structure and the placement of the freeway main lanes in a trench below ground level.⁶²

Supporters of widening the existing elevated structure maintained that it would be the fastest, least expensive and least disruptive way to add the needed highway capacity. Texas Rangers owner H.E. "Eddie" Chiles (1910-1993) was the best-known advocate of the elevated plan, which was supported by other prominent citizens.

Behind-the-scenes efforts by key players in 1982 and 1983 to reach a compromise were unsuccessful, and in March 1983 I-CARE filed a lawsuit in federal district court, contending that TxDOT failed to comply with federal laws mandating environmental reviews and public hearings, as well as violation of laws protecting park land and historic sites. Further efforts to reach an out-of-court settlement

failed, and the case went to trial in September. On October 2, 1983, the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* published a special 8-page section titled "Dividing a City – The Interstate 30 Standoff", stating that "...the brawl over widening the Interstate 30 overhead through downtown has shaken the city's leadership like no other issue in recent years."⁶⁴

The trial continued into late October, lasting about five weeks. While awaiting a ruling from the court, I-CARE modified its case to exclude adjacent sections of IH 30 and IH 35W, leaving the Lancaster Elevated as the only issue in the case. On February 2, 1984, the court returned its decision, ruling that TxDOT had been in compliance with all laws in planning the project and could proceed with widening the elevated structure.⁶⁵

The battle was far from over, however. Just days later I-CARE announced it would file an appeal with the Fifth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. Arguments were heard in May 1985 and on August 23, 1985, the appeals court ruled in favor of I-CARE, overturning the lower court ruling. The appeals court found that TxDOT had not properly studied the impact of the planned expansion on the adjacent Fort Worth Water Garden. The ruling became legally binding in November 1985 when the court refused TxDOT's request

* *Forbes* magazine listed Robert Bass's net worth at \$4.0 billion in 2009.⁶³



UT-Arlington Library Special Collections, 1990¹⁰⁹

This April 1990 view shows the path of the realigned freeway prior to its construction. The new alignment displaced several warehouses and crossed the busy Tower 55 railroad junction in the foreground.

to rehear the case.⁶⁶

From that point on, negotiation and the public participation process would shape the final outcome of the dispute. A mediation consultant called Conflict Clinic was brought into the process in 1986 to attempt to bring all interests to an acceptable compromise. In April 1986 Governor Mark White appointed Robert Bass to the Texas Transportation Commission. As TxDOT's final decision-making authority, the commission was in a position to be very influential in the Lancaster Elevated controversy, and now there was a strong advocate for a non-elevated option in the three-person commission. However, Bass appears to have let the process move forward with little interference from the commission.⁶⁷

In August 1986 the mediation team unveiled 11 options for freeway expansion. As public meetings continued into 1987, the option which gained the most support was neither an elevated structure nor the trench design which had been advocated by I-CARE. Instead, IH 30 would be realigned south of downtown to be just north of Vickery Boulevard, removing it entirely from Lancaster Avenue. The route, called the Vickery Alternative, received the endorsement of the mediation team in December 1987 and appeared to be the long-sought solution to the contro-

versy. The only downside was cost—at an estimated \$138 million, it was \$35 million more than an elevated option and \$11 million more than a trench design on Lancaster Avenue.

There was one more complication before the Vickery Alternative was a done deal. A new path would need to be cleared for the freeway and in July 1988 the Texas Historical Commission issued a letter stating that one large building, the Mrs Baird's Bakery, and three railroad bridges in the new right-of-way qualified as historic structures. The historical commission later agreed to allow the demolition of the structures and in April 1989 TxDOT officially approved the plan to relocate the freeway and ultimately demolish the Lancaster Elevated. Legal proceedings concluded in June 1991 when the original I-CARE lawsuit was dismissed. The ten-year ordeal of controversy and conflict had mirrored Dallas's epic twelve-year battle over the reconstruction of Central Expressway. In the end a better result was achieved in both cases, and everyone was happy. It was time to move forward to construction.⁶⁸

Construction, Destruction and the Future

The project included both the relocation of IH 30 to its new alignment and complete reconstruction of the downtown



Fort Worth Star-Telegram

This October 2000 photo looking west captures a period in time during construction when westbound traffic used the Lancaster Elevated (on the right side) and eastbound traffic used the new freeway alignment. All traffic was shifted to the new lanes by the end of October 2000 and the Lancaster Elevated was retired from service.



After traffic switched to the new alignment in October 2000, the Lancaster Elevated stood derelict for about a year. This August 2001 view looks west along the abandoned freeway just before demolition began.

Author, August 2001

A large celebration was held in August 2001 to launch the demolition of the Lancaster Elevated. The banner hanging from the freeway depicted the vision for a revitalized Lancaster Avenue, which is still a work in progress in 2013. The main event of the celebration was a pyrotechnic display as jackhammers broke out the first pieces of pavement from the freeway deck. See photo page 24.

TxDOT Travel Information Division





Author, December 2001

This view shows demolition of the Lancaster Elevated nearing completion in December 2001.

Fort Worth Mixmaster interchange, originally opened in 1958. To further complicate the task, the construction zone was above heavily trafficked railroads and the Tower 55 junction, one of the busiest railroad crossings in the United States with about 90 trains passing through the location daily. The first contracts were awarded in 1993 for the complicated seven-phase job. Additional delays occurred in 1994 due to a dispute with a railroad, but the project was finally able to move at full speed after an agreement was reached in November 1995. On October 12, 2000, eastbound traffic was shifted from the Lancaster Elevated to the new freeway, and westbound traffic was shifted later that month. The derelict Lancaster Elevated became a temporary monument to a past era of freeway building. It was time to tear it down.⁶⁹

On August 17, 2001, a crowd of 350 gathered for breakfast and a round of congratulatory speeches. Outside the weather was stormy, but the main event was able to proceed. Amid a display of pyrotechnics two jackhammers aimed at the bridge deck and broke out a slab of concrete

Also see: Pyrotechnic event to celebrate the August 2001 start of the elevated structure demolition, page 24

which fell to the ground. Demolition was complete in December 2001. The Lancaster Elevated, 1960-2001. May it rest in peace.

Officials gathered one more time for a ceremony on May 12, 2003, for the final completion of the entire \$173 million freeway reconstruction project. It was more than a quarter-century after the first plans for the freeway expansion were developed in the late 1970s. There was hardly a dull moment during the entire process, from the controversies and legal battles to the huge and complex construction zone. Just like the freeway project, the planned revitalization of Lancaster Avenue has taken much longer than expected. Reconstruction of Lancaster was completed in 2008 after years of delay, and six distinctive new sculptures in the median were added in May 2009. Lancaster Avenue is finally ready for its next life as a pedestrian-friendly boulevard.⁷⁰ ■



Author, September 2009

The above September 2009 view looks east, showing Lancaster Avenue on the left and the realigned IH 30 on the right. Improvements to Lancaster Avenue to bring it to its current configuration were completed in 2009 after numerous delays. The 2011 ground-level view below is positioned where the elevated structure once stood. Metal artwork has been installed in the median.

Author, July 2011



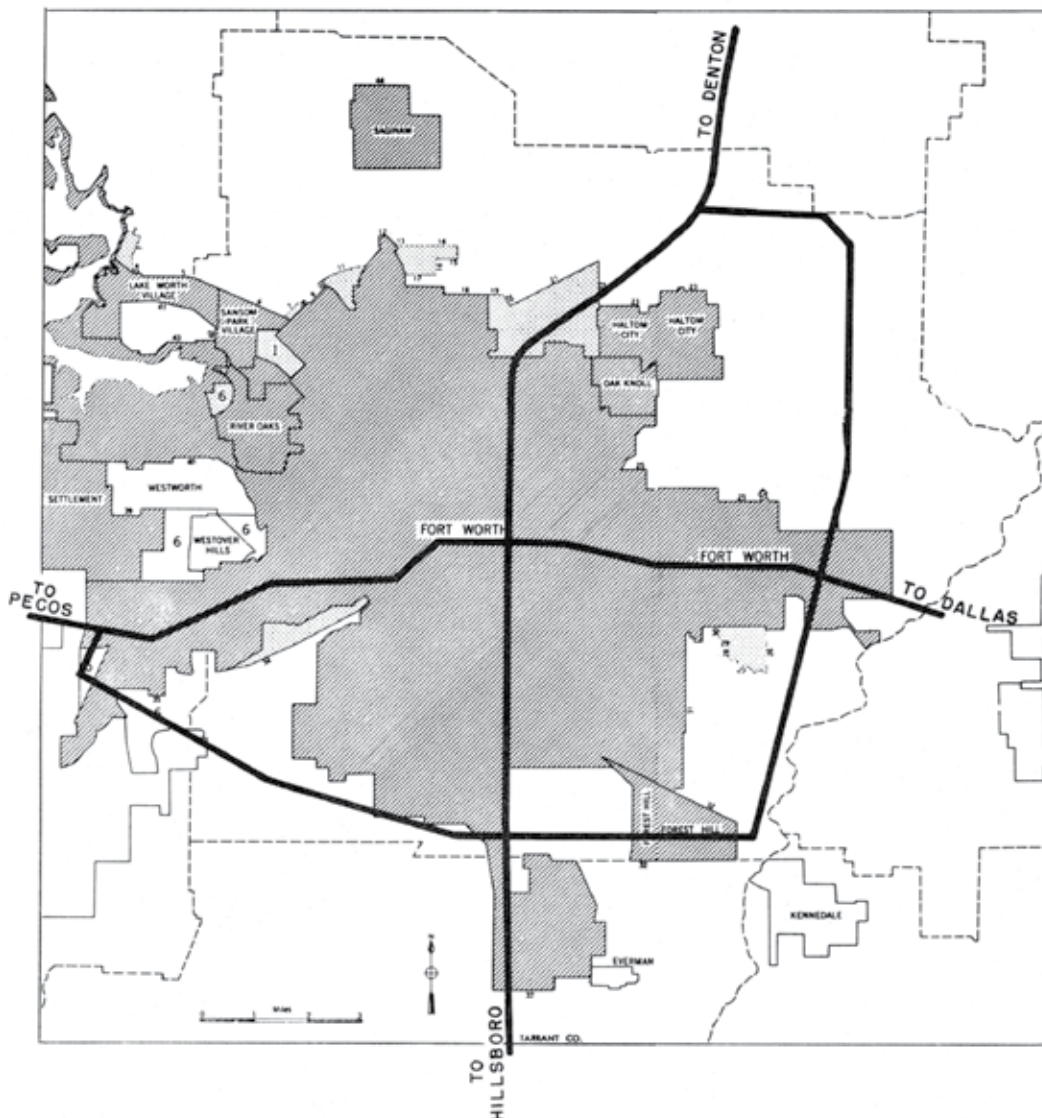


Interstates 20 and 820 including the Jim Wright Freeway

Planning for the first highway which ultimately became part of the Fort Worth freeway loop began in 1935 when county commissioners identified a need for a road link between the Waco and Weatherford highways, now IH 35W south and IH 30 west. Planners defined an alignment but the project did not move forward to construction. In 1951 TxDOT designated the southwest section of the loop as a freeway and officially named it Loop 217. After years of delay due to right-of-way acquisition difficulties, construction was underway in 1956 from present-day IH 35W to Vickery Boulevard. The first section opened in March 1957 and the entire originally planned freeway section was com-

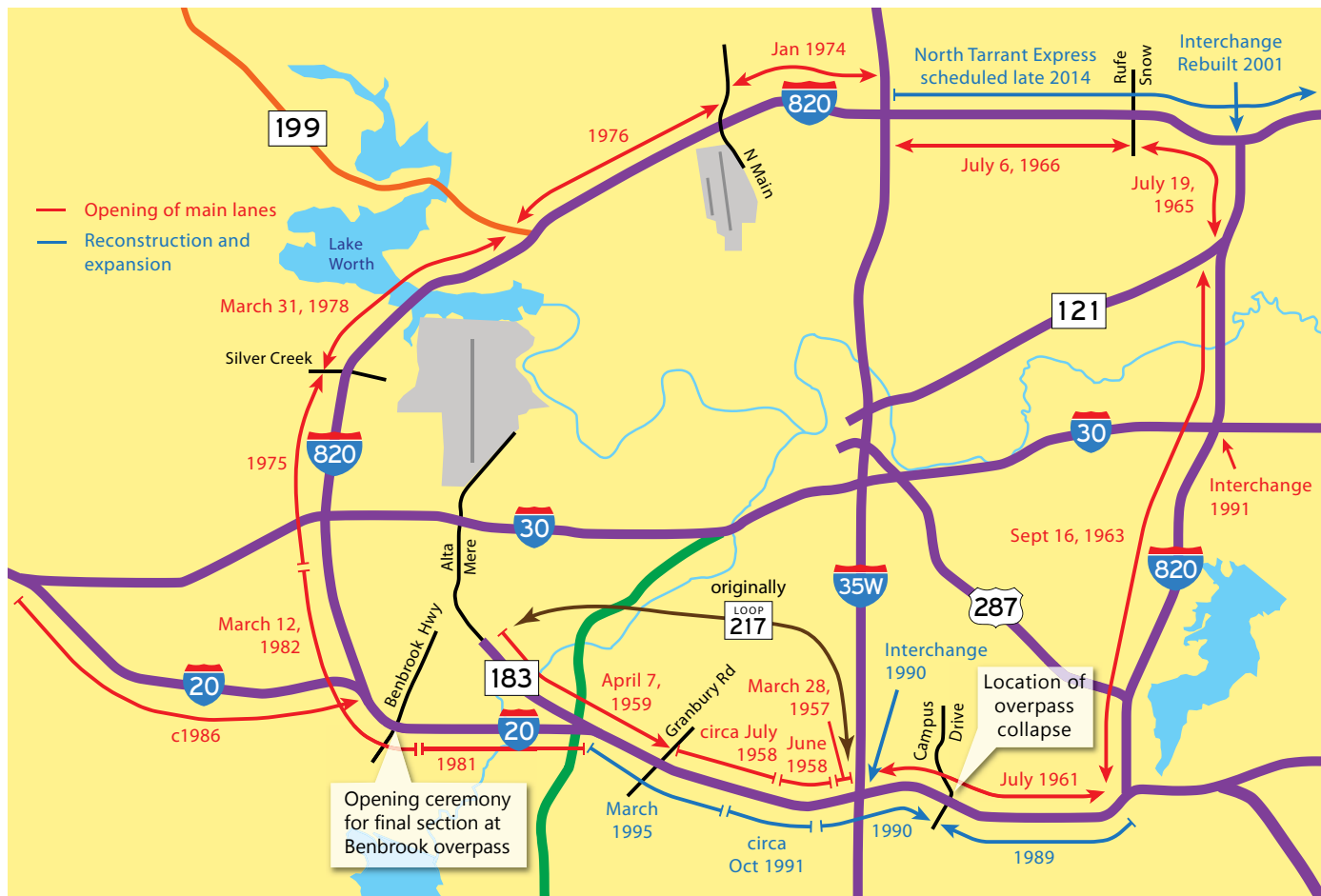
plete in April 1959.²⁰

Efforts to secure approval of the eastern half of the loop, from IH 35W south to IH 35W north, were underway in 1952 and nearby cities rallied around the plan. In 1955 the U.S. Bureau of Public Roads published *General Location of National System of Interstate Highways*, commonly known as the "Yellow Book". The Yellow Book included about two-thirds of the loop, extending from near present-day IH 30 in west Fort Worth to US 377 (Denton Highway) on the north side, excluding the northwest section (see map). When the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956 became law, the Yellow Book section became part of the Interstate



This is the original conceptual interstate highway plan for Fort Worth as shown in the 1955 Bureau of Public Roads publication *General Location of National System of Interstate Highways*, commonly known as the "Yellow Book" due to its yellow cover. The Yellow Book showed interstate plans for all major cities in the United States and was used to help build support for funding the planned Interstate Highway System, which was approved by Congress one year later with the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956.

The part of Loop 820 shown on this map was in the original interstate highway plan approved in 1956. Adding the northwest section of the loop required a substantial effort, with Congressman Jim Wright leading the way to secure federal approval in 1968.



Highway System and was on the fast track to construction with 90% federal funding. In 1966 the east half of the loop, from IH 35W north to IH 35W south, was complete, as well as the section of Loop 217 in southwest Fort Worth completed in 1959.²¹

The first plan to swing the loop further west of Fort Worth than present-day SH 183 (Alta Mere Drive) was made public in October 1957. It branched the loop away from the original Loop 217 in south Fort Worth at the present-day split of SH 183 and IH 20, and looped around the west side of Fort Worth to a terminus at SH 199 west of Lake Worth with no lake crossing. The plan also included the cancellation of a proposed north-south freeway in west Fort Worth (see map page 50).²²

Securing interstate highway status for the northwest section and getting it built turned out to be a difficult and time-consuming task. Fortunately for Fort Worth, it became a pet project of Congressman Jim Wright who worked tirelessly to bring the complete loop to reality. The alignment of the northwest section was approved by TxDOT in April 1965, and in 1968 the link was designated as part of the federal Interstate Highway System. The project was ready to begin construction in the early 1970s but problems were encountered obtaining environmental clearance for the Lake Worth bridge. Jim Wright was in regular communication with Secretary of Transportation Claude

Brinegar, working to obtain final clearance for construction. Finally in October 1974 Wright secured approval. At the groundbreaking ceremony for the Lake Worth bridge on January 4, 1975, Wright read a humorous poem reflecting on the struggle with the federal bureaucracy.²³

It takes nine months to make a child,
And three weeks for a chicken,
But weeks on months on years are piled...
When a bridge goes politickin'.

And Brinegar says, "I'm simply amazed
That the bridge has not already been raised
To move traffic across that lake
And give northwest Tarrant County a break,
And in spite of the way you portray it,
It was never our purpose to delay it."

So the ground is broken with flags unfurled
To connect northwest Tarrant with the rest of the world,
And here in Tarrant there's rejoicing aplenty
From I-35 all the way to I-20.

But the moral of this tale is, plainly,
In persuading the government don't try to talk sanely,
The only sure cure for the long hesitation
Is a threat to cut off their appropriation.

The bridge opened on March 31, 1978, with Wright

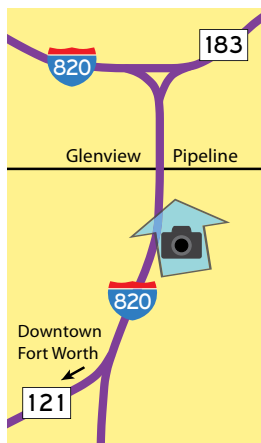


TxDOT Travel Information Division

This view looks west along the newly-completed Loop 217 freeway at IH 35W south circa 1958, with IH 35W running from left to right across the lower part of the photo. The Kimbell Grocery Company warehouse is on the right side. At the time of this photo the freeway stopped at IH 35W. The original cloverleaf interchange was replaced by a modern interchange in 1990 (see photo page 476). Originally constructed as Loop 217, the freeway was officially renamed Interstate 820 in 1963 and Interstate 20 in 1971.

TxDOT Travel Information Division

This circa 1963 view shows work just under-way on the northeast corner of Loop 820, looking north.





UT-Arlington Library Special Collections, 1976¹⁰²

This April 1976 view shows construction of the Lake Worth bridge. With the implementation of new environmental regulations in the early 1970s and uncertainty in their interpretation, the bridge project was at risk for lengthy delays. Congressman Jim Wright used his influence to move the project through the federal bureaucracy, allowing construction to begin in 1975.



UT-Arlington Library Special Collections, 1982¹⁰³

Jim Wright, at the podium, was the featured speaker at the dedication of the final section of Loop 820 on March 12, 1982, which took place underneath the US 377 (Benbrook Highway) overpass. Since he first took office as a congressman representing Fort Worth in 1955, Jim Wright had worked to obtain approvals and funding to complete the loop. The final section of freeway to be built was a four-mile segment from Winscott Road to Camp Bowie Blvd.



Dallas Morning News

Too close for comfort This photo at IH 20 and Campus Drive is perhaps the most amazing photo in the history of North Texas freeways. The driver of the vehicle walked away from the incident with minor injuries when the bridge deck landed on her vehicle just inches behind the front seat, crushing the rear half of the car but leaving the front half mostly intact. The incident occurred on July 11, 1984, when a 75,000-pound water tank trailer broke loose from its tractor and struck one or both of the bridge supports, causing the bridge deck to collapse.¹⁰⁴

cutting the ceremonial ribbon (see photo page 21). The final link of Loop 820 was dedicated on March 12, 1982, in southwest Fort Worth. Jim Wright was the man of the hour. He had spent most of his career in the House of Representatives, starting in 1955, working to get the loop built, and although it had been a long and difficult quest the final completion was definitely a moment to savor.²⁴

The final sections of IH 20, connecting IH 30 west of Fort Worth and the southwest corner of Loop 820, were completed in 1985 and 1986. This part of IH 20 remains mostly rural in 2013.

Improvement

The newer west half of the loop was constructed to modern standards, including the first modern-design four-level

interchange in Fort Worth at Loop 820 west and IH 30, which opened in 1975. However, the rest of the loop was built in the 1950s and 1960s, and by the time the loop was complete in 1982 much of it was in need of expansion and improvement. Since the south leg of the loop was absorbed into IH 20, it became the first priority for modernization and expansion. Construction took place in the 1980s and 1990s, including the impressive interchange at IH 35W which opened in 1990. A modern interchange was added on east Loop 820 at IH 30, the former Dallas-Fort Worth Turnpike, in 1991. In 2013 it remains the only freeway-to-freeway interchange on the former turnpike which has been upgraded to modern standards. In 2001 the sprawling interchange with SH 121 at the northeast corner of the loop was modernized after an eight-year construction



Author, September 2009

This September 2009 aerial view looks east along IH 20 at Trail Lake Drive in south Fort Worth. This section of freeway originally opened as Loop 217 in 1958 and was rebuilt to its current configuration with eight main lanes in 1995.

effort.²⁵

But the most troublesome bottleneck still remained: the four-lane section of Loop 820 in northeast Fort Worth between IH 35W and SH 121/SH 183. In 2001 TxDOT was finalizing plans to expand the freeway to ten main lanes, and funding was reported to be allocated for construction. But nothing happens quickly in the world of highway con-

struction funding, and while the project was in the waiting phase the state legislature approved new legislation in 2003 authorizing private investment in toll road projects and requiring TxDOT to consider unsolicited proposals from private industry.²⁶

In 2004 Kiewit construction submitted a proposal for a 27-mile, four-lane toll road between Dallas and Fort Worth, generally along SH 183 and including the northeast section of Loop 820. In August 2004 the regional planning council, NCTCOG, unveiled a plan to add tolled express lanes to several Tarrant County freeways, including north Loop 820. In October 2004 TxDOT formally solicited proposals for privately financed toll lanes on Loop 820 and SH 183, and it was a virtual certainty that Loop 820 would get toll lanes if an acceptable private-industry proposal would be received. Under the toll lane plan, northeast Loop 820 would be expanded to six regular main lanes and four tolled lanes.²⁷

The complicated project remained under study for the next two years until December 2006 when TxDOT unveiled a new plan for a comprehensive system of managed toll lanes on IH 35W, Loop 820 northeast and SH 183. The plan was officially named the North Tarrant Express. Although the project was exempted from new legislation in 2007 which placed limits on privately funded toll roads, the project's cost and complexity slowed progress in 2007 and 2008. In January 2009 the process finally reached the point of selecting a private developer, with a team led by Spanish toll road operator Cintra the winner. The first phase of construction of the North Tarrant Express, the 13.5-mile section including north Loop 820 from IH 35W eastward to SH 183 and continuing east on SH 183 to the split with SH 121, was underway in 2011. The project had an initial construction cost of \$1.15 billion and a 52-year life-cycle cost of \$2.5 billion.

Future plans include the expansion of east Loop 820, although there is no funding or schedule in place as of 2013. The north half of the east section, north of IH 30 to the northeast corner of the loop, is higher priority than the south section.²⁸ ■

This view shows the northeast corner of Loop 820 in 2007, looking southeast. In the foreground the freeway is in its originally constructed configuration with only four main lanes. In the distance is the interchange with SH 183 and SH 121, which was expanded and modernized in 2001. In 2011 work was underway to widen the northeast section of Loop 820 as part of the North Tarrant Express project, which will add two toll lanes in each direction. Construction is scheduled to be complete in late 2014.



North Central Texas Council of Governments, 2007



North Central Texas Council of Governments, 2007

The above view looks west along the north Loop 820 at Denton Highway in October 2007. The freeway had only four main lanes and was one of the most congested freeways in North Texas. This section of freeway became part of the North Tarrant Express, a public-private partnership to widen freeways and add tolled managed lanes. Construction was underway in 2011 with completion scheduled for late 2014. This section of Loop 820 will have six regular traffic lanes and four tolled lanes. The view below looks east along the section of IH 20 southwest of Fort Worth which connects between IH 30 and Loop 820. This section was opened in 1986 and remains mostly rural in 2013.

Author, June 2011




 TEXAS
121

State Highway 121 East The Airport Freeway

Efforts to build the original SH 121 began in 1928 when Fort Worth voters approved a bond issue including funds for the construction of the highway in Tarrant County and TxDOT agreed to extend the highway eastward to McKinney. The highway in Tarrant County was complete in 1930 and around 1940 the east end was extended to reach the Dallas-to-Denton highway in Lewisville, close to present-day IH 35E. TxDOT finally began its share of work in 1949 and the highway was complete to McKinney in 1951.²⁹

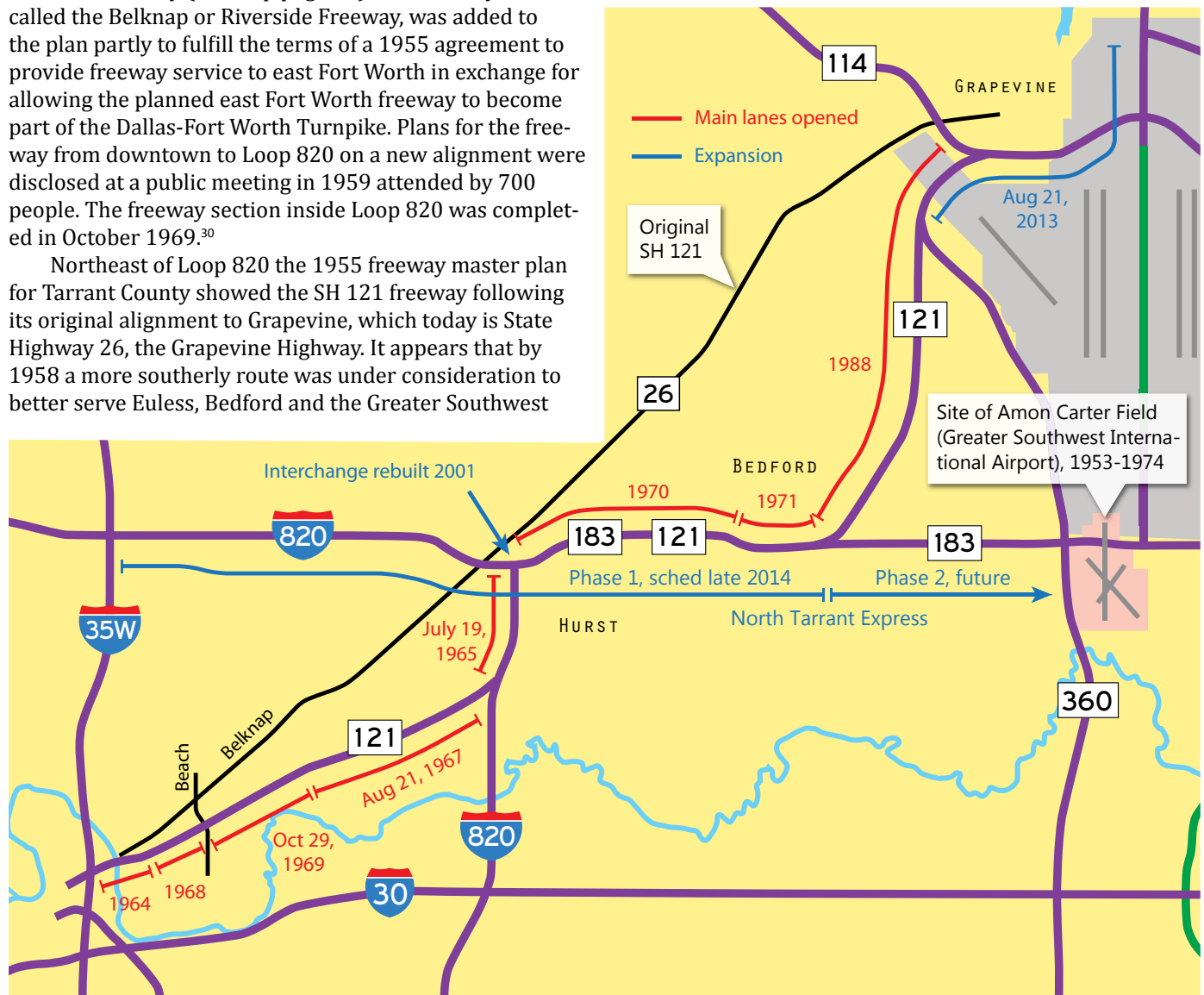
The SH 121 freeway first appeared on planning maps in 1955 with the release of an updated plan for freeways in Tarrant County (see map page 50). The freeway, then called the Belknap or Riverside Freeway, was added to the plan partly to fulfill the terms of a 1955 agreement to provide freeway service to east Fort Worth in exchange for allowing the planned east Fort Worth freeway to become part of the Dallas-Fort Worth Turnpike. Plans for the freeway from downtown to Loop 820 on a new alignment were disclosed at a public meeting in 1959 attended by 700 people. The freeway section inside Loop 820 was completed in October 1969.³⁰

Northeast of Loop 820 the 1955 freeway master plan for Tarrant County showed the SH 121 freeway following its original alignment to Grapevine, which today is State Highway 26, the Grapevine Highway. It appears that by 1958 a more southerly route was under consideration to better serve Euless, Bedford and the Greater Southwest

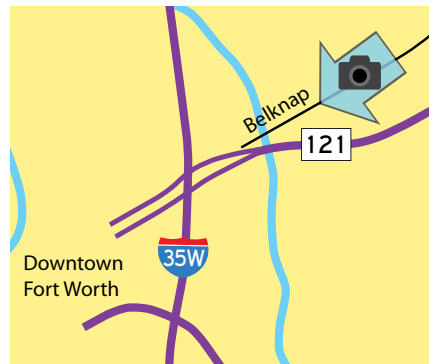
International Airport.

In February 1958 local officials began efforts to obtain TxDOT approval of SH 121 outside Loop 820, then calling it 121-A. The route was designated as a freeway by TxDOT in August 1962 using the southern alignment. Construction of the freeway east of Loop 820 was expedited by the designation of the site for DFW Airport in 1965, and the freeway to the south entrance of DFW Airport, consisting of both SH 121 and SH 183, was complete by 1972.³¹

The section of SH 121 on the west side of DFW Airport was the last to be built in east Tarrant County. A public



hearing was held in May 1970. Work was underway in the late 1970s on the frontage roads and the SH 121 freeway from downtown Fort Worth to the north entrance of DFW Airport was complete in 1988. Expansion of SH 121 from SH 360 to north of DFW airport was completed in 2013 as part of the \$1.1 billion DFW Connector project. The section of SH 121 which is co-signed with SH 183 is part of the North Tarrant Express project which will rebuild the freeway and add four tolled lanes. For details on the North Tarrant Express see pages 478 and 508.³² ■



This 1961 view looks southwest along Belknap Street just before the SH 121 Freeway was built to the south (left) of the street. The freeway at this location was completed in 1964. The interchange with IH 35W is in the distance.



TEXAS
121

Plans for the Downtown Fort Worth Freeway Loop, 1956-2000



Why doesn't Fort Worth have a downtown freeway loop? It's not due to lack of effort. For over 40 years local officials tried to build a freeway across the north and west sides of downtown to complete the loop. As recently as 1997 planning was still alive and well. But in December 1998 Fort Worth City Council unexpectedly ended its support for the missing link of the loop. Just over a year later, in January 2000, the downtown loop was officially removed from the region's long-term transportation plan. Fort Worth's hopes of having a downtown loop were dead.⁷¹

Efforts to build a freeway loop around downtown began in 1956 with the Gruen Plan for Fort Worth. Victor Gruen (1903-1980) was an architect best known for being a pioneer in suburban shopping mall development, and the City of Fort Worth contracted with Gruen's firm to develop a new master plan for downtown Fort Worth. The 1956 plan envisioned a freeway loop surrounding the core of downtown with large parking garages along the loop. Most vehicles would be banned from the core of downtown, and motorists would leave their cars in the garages and proceed on foot to their destinations on streets which were

converted to pedestrian malls. It was a bold concept, and one which would have likely been doomed to failure had it actually been built. The most critical element in the plan was the downtown loop highway—without it, little or none of the Gruen plan could move forward.⁷²

In September 1956 Fort Worth officials asked TxDOT to participate in the construction of the Gruen Plan freeway loop. Two weeks later the response arrived: TxDOT would not become involved in the Gruen loop, but would continue its efforts to complete IH 30 through downtown. By 1958 the Gruen loop was dead and local officials had a new plan for a downtown loop, this time using the already-approved IH 30 and IH 35W freeways on the south and east sides of downtown. A new freeway was proposed to complete the loop, following Henderson on the west side and the Trinity River on the north side of downtown. Local officials made a proposal to the Texas Transportation Commission in April 1958, offering to pay half the cost of right-of-way for the project. In July 1958 the City of Dallas presented its plan to the Commission to complete the downtown Dallas freeway loop with the construction of Spur 366, the Woodall



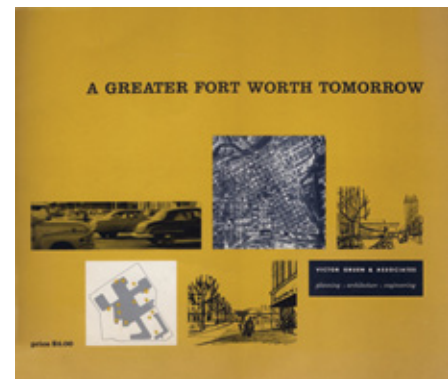
Victor Gruen

Fort Worth Public Library

The Gruen Plan

Austria-born Victor Gruen (1903-1980) was one of the most influential architects of the post-World War II era in the United States, pioneering the rise of suburban shopping centers. He is credited with the design of the first regional shopping center, the originally open-air Northland Center opened in 1954 in Southfield Township, Michigan near Detroit, and the first fully enclosed mall, Southland Center opened in 1956 in Edina, Minnesota near Minneapolis. While Gruen achieved great success with his suburban projects, he was particularly interested in urban planning and revitalization. Gruen's firm was hired to develop the Fort Worth downtown renewal plan because of the efforts of J.B. Thomas, president of Fort Worth-based Texas Electric Company.¹¹⁰

Announced to the public in March 1956, the Fort Worth plan was among the most ambitious urban renewal plans ever devised for an American city. It sought to banish virtually all vehicles from downtown streets and convert the streets to pedestrian malls, plazas and parks. The plan received extensive national publicity after its release, with *Businessweek*, *Time*, *Newsweek* and the *New Yorker* running articles spotlighting it.¹¹¹



This view from the publication *A Greater Fort Worth Tomorrow* shows the six large parking garages, colored gray with white cross-hatching, along the Belt Line Highway. Motorists would use the Belt Line Highway to reach the most convenient parking garage for their destination, parking their cars and making downtown streets automobile-free. Most streets would have been converted to parks, plazas or pedestrian malls. The Gruen Plan proposed a network of underground tunnels for trucks to make deliveries to downtown buildings.



Fort Worth Public Library

This artist's depiction looking north-northeast with IH 30 across the lower part of the photo shows the ultimate buildout of the Gruen Plan, with the Belt Line Highway enclosing a fully redeveloped downtown Fort Worth. This view suggests that nearly all existing structures in the loop would be cleared to make way for new development and parking garages.

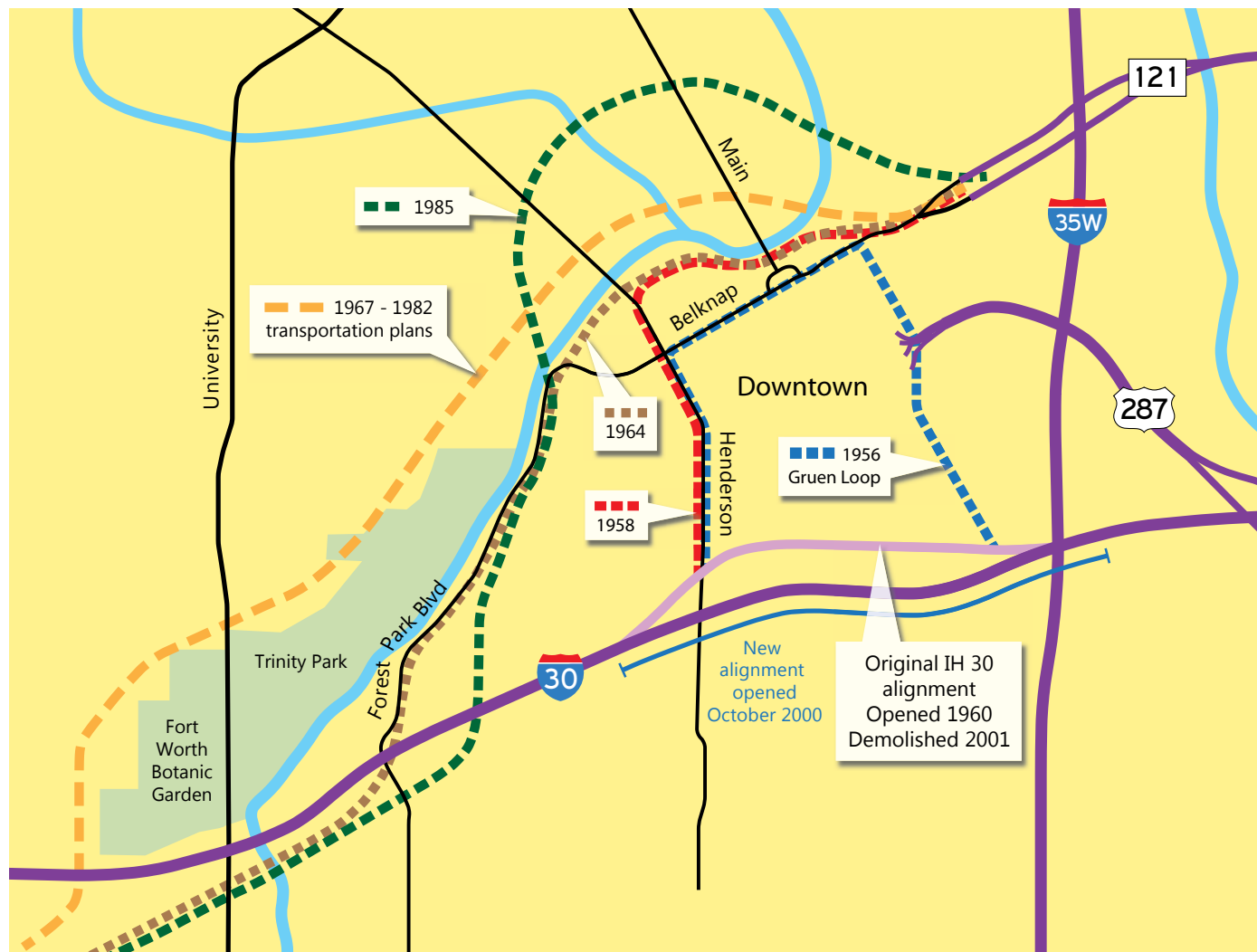
Essential to the plan were the Belt Line Highway around the periphery of downtown and the large parking garages connected to the highway, allowing motorists to park their vehicles and continue to downtown destinations on foot. So when TxDOT announced in October 1956 that it would not participate in the construction of the Belt Line Highway, it was a huge blow to the Gruen Plan. The originally conceived Gruen Plan was dead, but there was a chance certain elements could move forward if state-level legislation could be passed.¹¹²

Two key pieces of legislation

dubbed the Gruen bills were considered in the 1957 session. One bill allowed cities to condemn and clear blighted areas for new development and the second allowed cities to build and operate parking garages. Neither bill became law, with the condemnation bill failing due to the property rights concerns and the parking bill falling to opposition from private parking firms. With the demise of the legislation, the Fort Worth Gruen Plan was dead and nothing in the plan would be realized.¹¹³

In retrospect, the demise of the Gruen Plan was fortuitous for Fort

Worth. The plan's philosophy is entirely at odds with modern views on the subject of downtown revitalization. If fully realized, the plan would have wiped out many existing buildings, including historic structures and older properties which give downtown its character. The idea of pedestrian malls, implemented with some limited success in a few other cities, was found not to be the key to downtown renewal. It's safe to say that virtually no one in Fort Worth would want to trade today's downtown for something that looks like the Gruen Plan.



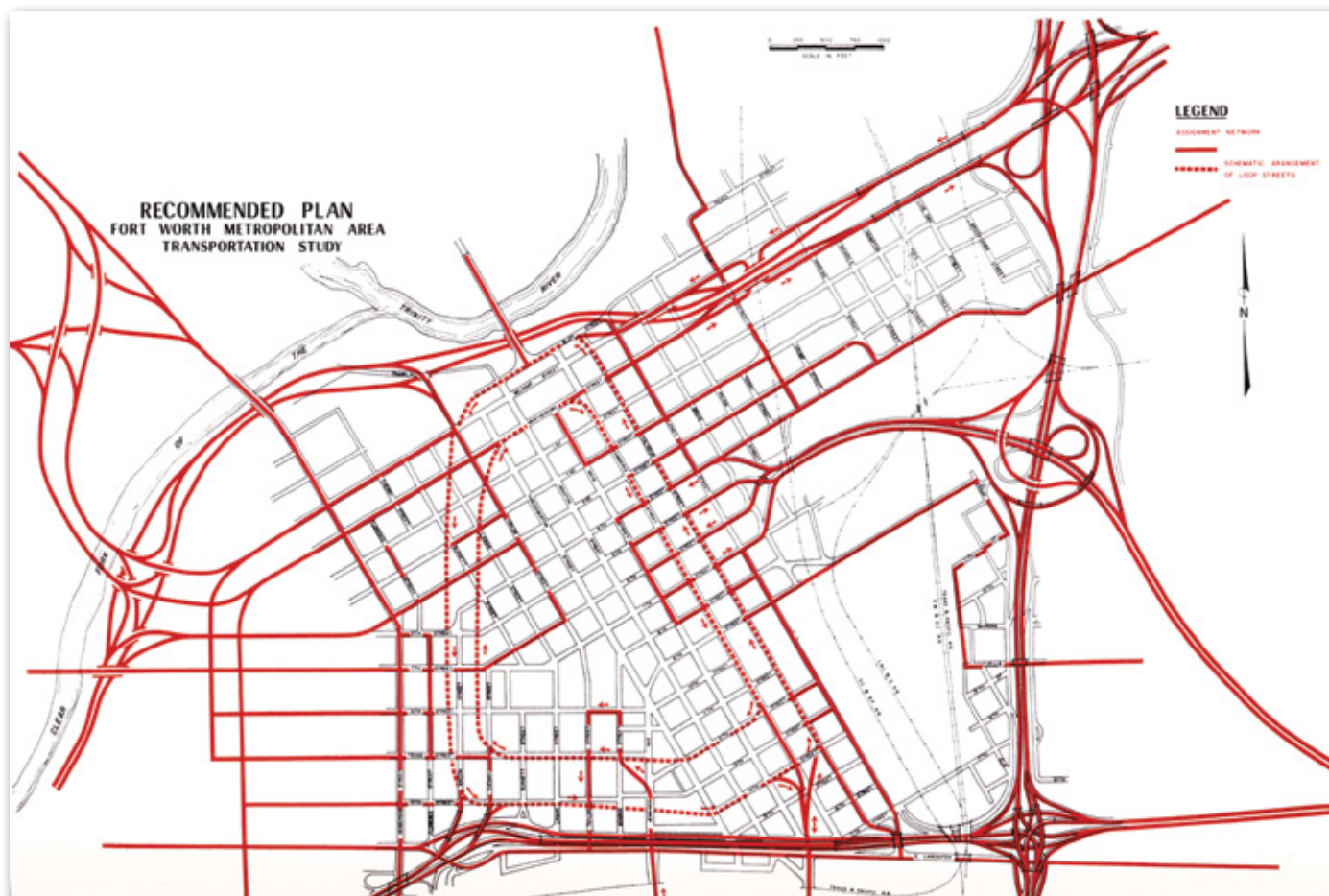
Rodgers Freeway. Dallas offered to pay 100% of the cost of right-of-way. In August TxDOT made its decision. It would build the Dallas freeway link, but would not commit to participation in the Fort Worth project. By the late 1960s Dallas may have suffered a case of winner's lament when right-of-way costs for the Woodall Rodgers Freeway far exceeded estimates and a nasty dispute ensued between the City of Dallas and Dallas County over who would cover the cost overrun (see page 248).⁷³

The setback to the downtown loop was a disappointment, but local officials remained optimistic. More money was needed to cover right-of-way costs, and a future city bond issue was expected to fill the gap. But in the short term, local officials focused their efforts on building other freeways which were approved, including SH 121 (the Airport Freeway), US 287 (the Martin Luther King Jr Freeway), and east Loop 820. In May 1964 a new transportation plan for Fort Worth included the downtown freeway loop and listed it as a top priority. The alignment of the north leg of the loop remained along Belknap, but the western leg was shown to be along Forest Park Boulevard and the Clear Fork of the Trinity River. The freeway loop

was included in the comprehensive 1967 mobility plan for Dallas-Fort Worth with an alignment further to the west. In 1970 TxDOT approved the route for inclusion in the state highway system and authorized environmental and alignment studies. In 1969 and 1970 TxDOT approved numerous large and ambitious freeway projects for inclusion into the state highway system, and it turned out to be a bad time to make expensive promises. With the 1970s came public opposition to freeways, rampant inflation in highway construction costs and stagnant revenue from gasoline taxes.⁷⁴

One thing was certain about completing the downtown loop—it would be expensive and controversial. In 1969 opposition had already developed due to the potential impact on Trinity Park and the Botanic Garden. TxDOT's finances were in steep decline in the 1970s and by 1975 TxDOT was in a severe financial crisis, leaving all new highway construction in doubt. The downtown Fort Worth freeway loop was under review for cancellation.⁷⁵

The downtown freeway loop survived, but building it would become increasingly difficult as the years passed. In 1984 the Texas Transportation Commission declined to



This view shows a map included in the 1964 publication *Fort Worth, Texas Transportation-Planning Survey*. The report recommended that the downtown loop be made the top priority in Fort Worth freeway construction. An article in the May 6, 1964, *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* was headlined "Downtown fringe loop called must". Compared to the 1958 alignment, the new recommended alignment took the freeway off Henderson Street and aligned it along Forest Park Boulevard.

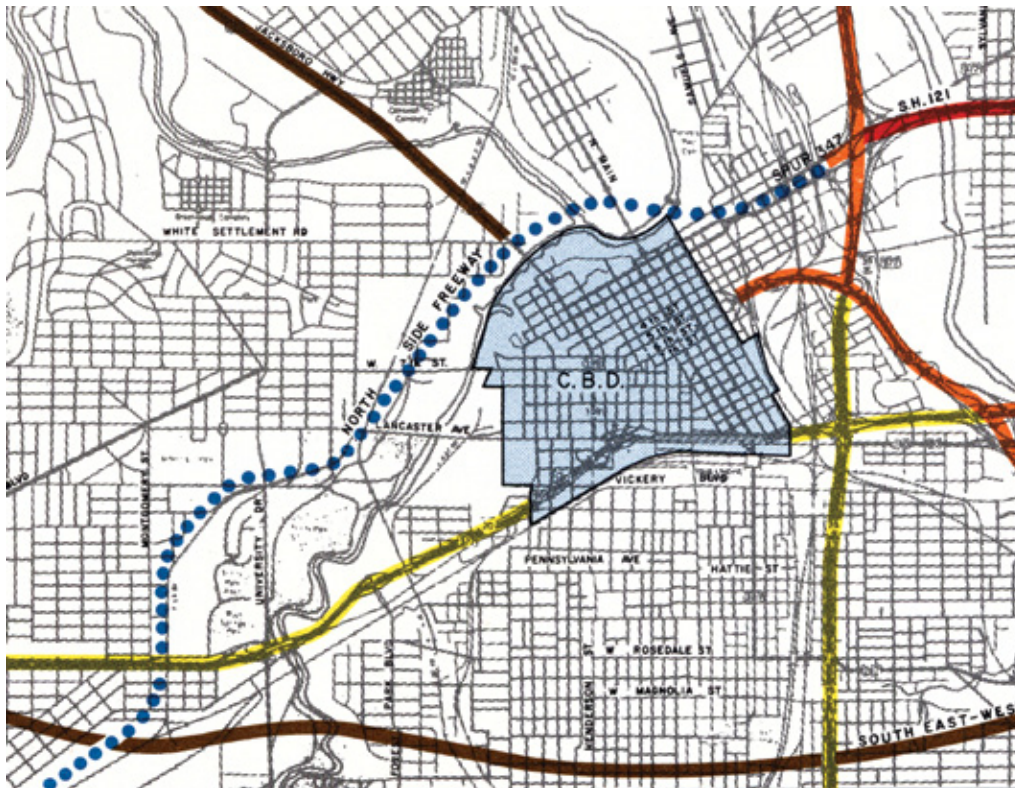
include the loop in TxDOT's 10-year construction plan. In 1985 the City of Fort Worth paid for a new study to identify an alignment which minimized the impact of the freeway on the Botanic Garden and the Cultural District. The Texas Transportation Commission was impressed with the new alignment and the substantial local funding contribution, and the project appeared to be back on track for inclusion in TxDOT's construction plans.⁷⁶

But by 1989 there was more trouble. TxDOT was seeking to adjust the alignment to avoid a hazardous waste site on North Main Street and also wanted to elevate the freeway at three locations. The idea of an elevated freeway was an explosive issue, since a long and contentious battle about the IH 30 Lancaster Elevated had raged for most the 1980s and had just recently been settled with a plan to remove the structure.⁷⁷

In 1992 TxDOT changed the status of the project from active to pending, indicating construction was no longer imminent, due to impacts on historic homes. The downtown loop appeared to be on the verge of cancellation once again. In addition, new guidelines for selection of

transportation projects emphasized cost-effectiveness, and the expensive downtown loop ranked poorly. Downtown business interests rallied to persuade local officials to save the project. In 1994 there was some good news when the downtown loop was included in the National Highway System with funding earmarked for future planning. The first discussion of turning the project into a toll road also occurred in 1994, and a formal study for toll feasibility was underway in 1995. There was renewed hope in 1997 when US Representative Kay Granger expressed optimism that federal funding could be secured to move the project forward. Local officials looking to build a new minor league baseball stadium at LaGrave Field in 1997 were forced to look elsewhere because the site was in the path of the planned downtown loop.⁷⁸

Then, suddenly and unexpectedly, a mortal blow was dealt to the downtown loop. On December 8, 1998, Fort Worth City Council was set to consider the SH 121 Southwest Parkway toll road project which included the downtown loop. It was a controversial and emotional issue, with a crowd of 300 filling city council chambers to capacity for



This view from the 1971 *Dallas-Fort Worth Regional Transportation Study* shows the alignment which was adopted in 1967. Labeled the “North Side Freeway”, the alignment was moved north and west of the Trinity River, taking it much closer to the Cultural District and skirting the north and west sides of the Fort Worth Botanic Garden. This alignment remained intact until 1985 when a new alignment was developed to minimize impacts to the Botanic Garden. This map also shows two other freeways which were canceled, the SH 199 freeway, labeled as the Jacksboro Highway, and the South East-West Freeway along the bottom edge of the view.

the vote. Before the vote, council asked to have the downtown loop removed from the plan. With the downtown loop removed, council proceeded to vote 7-2 to endorse the project. After decades of support, the City of Fort Worth had given up on the downtown loop. It was perhaps a realization of the futility of trying to build the loop, and a recognition that another worthy but difficult project, the Southwest Parkway south of IH 30 (renamed the Chisholm Trail Parkway in 2011), could be built only if unencumbered by the controversy and cost of the downtown loop.⁷⁹

In April 1999 officials resumed plans to build a new

baseball stadium on the LaGrave Field site since the freeway was no longer coming through. In January 2000 the death of the downtown freeway loop became official when the regional planning council approved a new long-term plan without the loop. Joining the downtown loop in the freeway graveyard was the SH 199 freeway inside Loop 820, which was planned to connect with the downtown loop. The demise of the downtown freeway loop certainly wasn't due to a lack of effort. It just couldn't be done, no matter how hard local officials tried.⁸⁰ ■



The Chisholm Trail Parkway Originally State Highway 121 South

The 1955 freeway master plan for Fort Worth showed a freeway in the southwest area, but it served west Fort Worth along a north-south axis roughly halfway between Horne and Hulen streets (see map page 50). The north-south freeway was removed from plans in October 1957.

The original proposal for a freeway extending southwest from the downtown area appears to have been the 1960 City of Fort Worth thoroughfare plan. In 1962 Fort Worth formally asked TxDOT to begin planning the freeway. A 1964 transportation study reaffirmed the need for

Also see: Photographs of demolition event on Dec 7, 2006, page 27; opening celebration on May 10, 2014, page 12

the Southwest Freeway and recommended it be given a high priority. Since its inception, the Southwest Freeway was planned to begin at IH 35W on the northeast side of downtown, forming the north and west sides of a downtown freeway loop and then continuing south of IH 30. Completion of the downtown loop was a high priority for local officials, but it was also expensive, controversial and

difficult to move forward due to the potential impact to parks and historic structures. The issues and efforts associated with the downtown section of the Southwest Freeway are detailed on pages 513-518.³⁷

The Southwest Freeway was included in the comprehensive 1967 regional plan and remained in the plan for all updates in the following decades while the project was unable to move forward to construction. In 1969 TxDOT authorized a route study to determine the feasibility of the Southwest Freeway. Hearings and studies continued into the early 1970s and the Texas Transportation Commission approved an alignment in 1974. The 1970s was a bad time to launch new freeway projects. TxDOT's financial position was in steep decline as rampant inflation escalated construction costs while revenue from the fuel tax was stagnant. By 1975 TxDOT had descended into a financial crisis, with drastically reduced funding for new construction and virtually no chance for all-new projects like the Southwest Freeway to receive funding. It was up to local officials to save the freeway from cancellation so it could perhaps come back to life in the future.³⁸

In 1978 Fort Worth officials asked TxDOT to revive the project and TxDOT proceeded to prepare new estimates of the cost of right-of-way. Fort Worth City Council continued its efforts to preserve right-of-way in 1983 and 1984 by directing city staff to work with land developers south of IH 20 to keep a corridor clear for the freeway. But the biggest challenge for the Southwest Freeway would be the downtown section, from IH 35W north of downtown to IH 30 west of downtown. The planned alignment would impact the cultural district and the Fort Worth Botanic Garden, so in 1984 Fort Worth City Council contracted with a consultant to develop a new alignment for the downtown section to minimize impacts. The report was delivered in June 1985.³⁹

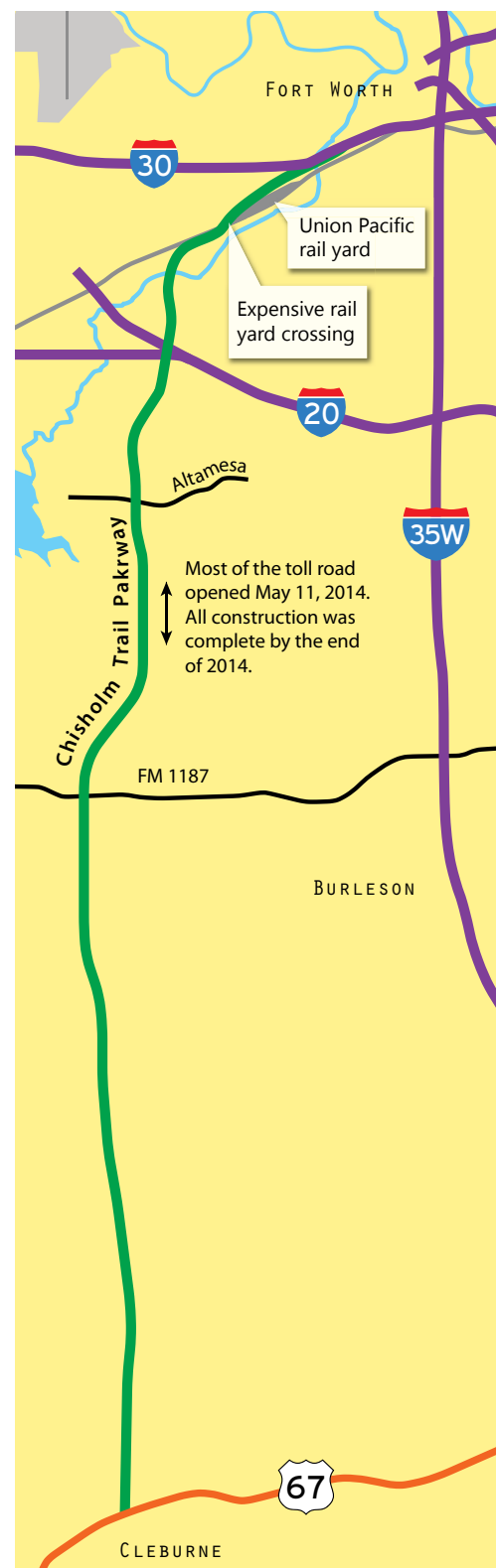
The Southwest Freeway south of IH 30 was not embroiled in controversy. But since the south section was

part of the overall project, it remained on hold as officials tried to solve the problems of the downtown section. By 1992 the entire Southwest Freeway appeared to be at risk for cancellation as the cost and impacts of the downtown section lowered TxDOT's priority of the project. In 1994 the project gained new life when it was designated as part of the National Highway System, making new planning funding available. Also in 1994 the regional planning agency (NCTCOG) first proposed turning the project into a toll road. The project was renamed the Southwest Parkway since it was no longer expected to be a freeway.⁴⁰

On December 8, 1998, the project reached a critical point when Fort Worth City Council voted on its future. With a crowd of 300 filling city council chambers for the vote on the controversial project, city council stripped the downtown section from the project, effectively killing the downtown Fort Worth freeway loop, and then voted 7-2 to endorse the Southwest Parkway south of IH 30. Later that month the North Texas Turnpike Authority (NTTA) voted to proceed with detailed financial and engineering studies. Section one of the project, an 8.2-mile stretch from IH 30 near downtown to Altamesa Boulevard south of IH 20, was estimated to cost about \$180 million and a second phase, from Altamesa to Farm Road 1187, about \$60 million for a total of \$240 million. In 2000 the City of Fort Worth, TxDOT and NTTA signed a formal agreement for funding the project. The Southwest Parkway had strong political support and some momentum, but there was a long struggle ahead before construction could begin.⁴¹

In 1999 the Southwest Parkway Citizens Advisory Committee was formed to act as a liaison between nearby neighborhoods and planning authorities. The committee unveiled its preferred design in October 1999, emphasizing

visually pleasing designs, landscaping and minimal impact by keeping the freeway at or below ground level. Opposition from nearby neighborhoods lingered, however, and in 1999 authorities brought in seven nationally





City of Fort Worth, December 2011 (above and below)

Political leaders and transportation officials gathered on December 20, 2011, to launch the construction of the Chisholm Trail Parkway with a groundbreaking ceremony. Mike Moncrief, shown holding two shovels, served as Fort Worth mayor from 2003 to July 2011 and provided leadership to help the project overcome the numerous challenges it faced during his mayoral tenure. The billboard below along West Vickery Boulevard, photographed in October 2013, announces the 2014 completion of the tollway and the traffic relief it will provide.

Author, October 2013





Author, October 2013

This view looks north at the construction zone for the interchange with Interstate 20 in October 2013.

known planning experts to review the design and make recommendations to minimize the impact on the inner city. Ongoing vocal opposition and a cost increase to \$275 million in 2002 combined to make the future of the project uncertain, prompting the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* to publish an editorial in November 2002 headlined “Southwest Parkway: not dead yet” citing strong political support and transportation demand as reasons the project was needed and still viable.⁴²

In 2003 the draft environmental impact statement for the project was released. Its conclusion that the project would have no significant environmental impact prompted further criticism from project opponents and the concerns of political leaders, including Congresswoman Kay Granger and Fort Worth Mayor Mike Moncrief. Granger, Moncrief and other political leaders urged more study and additional public input. By the end of 2004 Fort Worth City Council was satisfied with the environmental document and in December it voted unanimously to endorse the final environmental impact statement. By 2005 environmental concerns had been addressed and public opposition was no longer a threat to stop the project.⁴³

Then a new bombshell hit. The cost of section one of the project, which had previously been revised upward to \$320 million, was now estimated at \$825 million. Project backers scrambled to explain the massive cost increase and

maintain political support. The original cost estimate was for construction only of a four-lane toll road, and the new estimate was for a six-lane toll road and included all other associated costs of utility relocation, right-of-way, engineering, project management, toll collection, landscaping and a contingency fund. The increased cost was primarily the responsibility of the NTTA, which initially stood firm in its commitment to build the project after the cost increase was disclosed. But by August 2005 the NTTA board was considering withdrawing from the 2000 funding agreement so it could focus its resources on projects which were more financially attractive, particularly the Bush Turnpike in Dallas County. When NTTA agreed to maintain its role in the project, a new dispute erupted over the toll rate for the Southwest Parkway, with Dallas County interests urging higher toll rates to offset the higher project cost. In November 2005 it was first reported that the NTTA was considering building the entire parkway, both the 8-mile section one in the north and the south section, an additional 20 miles to Cleburne. In February 2006 the NTTA was once again firmly committed to the Southwest Parkway and stating that construction could begin in 2008.⁴⁴

Cost increases were also straining the City of Fort Worth, which was responsible for utility relocation, right-of-way acquisition and the cost of architectural enhancements. In 2003 Fort Worth’s share of the cost was estimat-



Author, November 2013

This view looks toward downtown from the West Rosedale Street overpass in November 2013 .

ed at \$95 million, and after spending \$30 million officials were looking for ways to reduce the cost of the remaining \$65 million. However, with the massive cost increase in 2005 and additional unexpected expenses, the price tag for Fort Worth would only go up. In 2005 the architectural and landscaping enhancement costs escalated to \$60 million from the original estimate of \$8 to \$16 million. In July 2007 it was reported that the cost for section one had risen to \$944 million with the City of Fort Worth's share ballooning to \$144 million.⁴⁵

The Southwest Parkway had survived the cost increase, at least for the moment. But then in 2007, just when it appeared construction could actually begin, a new crisis developed. The tollway's path took it over the large Union Pacific Davidson rail yard south of West Vickery Boulevard and Union Pacific's approval for the overpass was needed before construction could begin. Union Pacific wanted to ensure there would be no disruption to operations, which sorted rail cars for twelve incoming and twelve outgoing trains per day. Preventing any disruption would require construction of new tracks and reconfiguration of the track incline which allows rail cars to coast through the yard. It was potentially very expensive, up to \$150 million. Negotiations continued through 2008 to find an affordable solution which would not hamper the rail yard's operations and would not bust the already-stretched budget. A preliminary agreement was reached in January 2009 with final approval by Fort Worth in September. The cost of \$95 million for the rail yard bridge pushed the estimated cost of section one to \$1.2 billion and the full length of the toll road to Cleburne to \$2 billion.⁴⁶

There was one remaining challenge which was yet another potential show-stopper: finding the money to build the project. By 2008 efforts focused on building the entire 28-mile project from Fort Worth to Cleburne, rather than

just phase one. As of November 2009, only about \$1 billion in funding was available for the estimated \$2 billion project. Reducing the southern 13 miles of the tollway to only two lanes and delaying construction of some connection ramps at the IH 20 interchange provided some savings, and \$144 million from the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act covered some expenses. In early 2010 TxDOT and the NTTA entered into a complicated financial arrangement in which the Southwest Parkway was combined into a single financial entity with the Grand Prairie section of the Bush Turnpike, SH 161. TxDOT agreed to use its gasoline tax revenue to back the bonds issued for the combined entity, lowering interest rates and allowing an additional \$400 million to be borrowed, closing the funding gap. NTTA gave final approval in August 2010 for the project, which had a final price tag of \$1.62 billion. Construction contracts were awarded in 2010 and 2011. The parkway was dedicated with Fort Worth's largest-ever freeway opening celebration, the Chisholm Trail Parkway Run & Ride on May 10, 2014, with running and bicycling events on the main lanes (see photos page 12). Most of the toll road opened to traffic the following day, with all construction complete by the end of 2014.⁴⁷

Since the mid-2000s the southern section of the project had been called the Chisholm Trail Parkway, in recognition of the Chisholm Trail cattle drive route which was used to move cattle from Texas to Oklahoma and railroads in Kansas, mainly during the period from 1867 to 1884. The Chisholm Trail passed through Fort Worth and was a well-received name due to the city's cattle heritage. In 2011 state legislation designated the full 28-mile length of the tollway as the Chisholm Trail Parkway, officially retiring the name Southwest Parkway and its predecessor names which had been in use since the 1960s.⁴⁸ ■



US 287 Southeast The Martin Luther King Jr Freeway

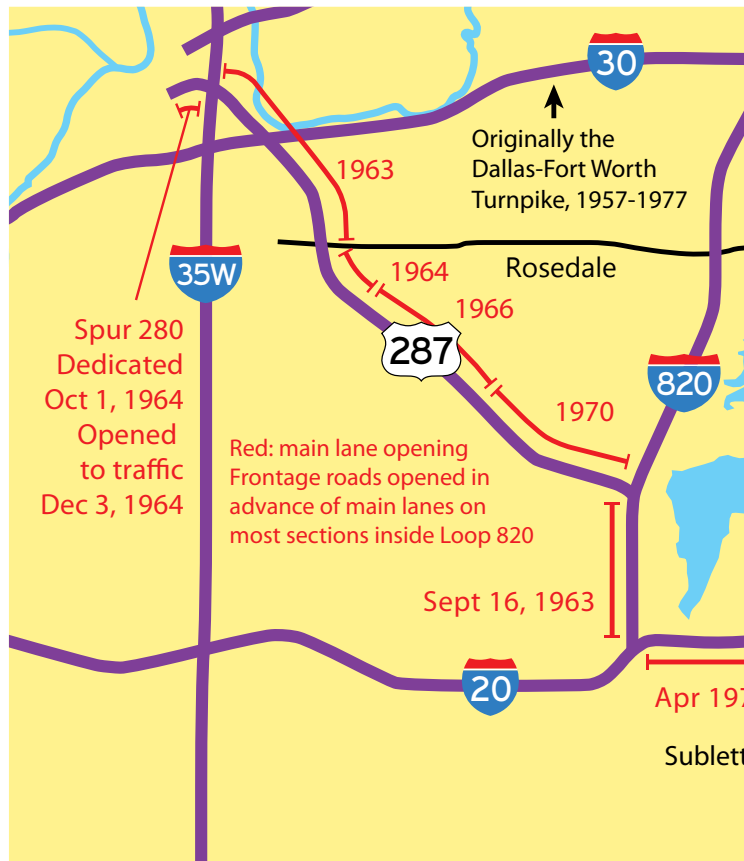
The US 287 freeway originated as a result of east Fort Worth's opposition to the construction of the Dallas-Fort Worth Turnpike. The turnpike alignment had been designated to become a freeway, and east Fort Worth interests

were upset that they would be stuck paying tolls while everyone else would get freeways. In January 1955 the opposition agreed to end their protest in exchange for a promise that east Fort Worth would receive a freeway.³³

East Fort Worth was expecting a freeway generally along Rosedale Street, but in the summer of 1955 TxDOT proceeded with planning for two freeways to serve east Fort Worth, US 287 to the southeast which would provide access to a proposed new southern freeway between Dallas and Fort Worth (today's IH 20), and a second to the northeast generally paralleling Belknap Street (today's SH 121). Much to their dismay, east Fort Worth residents would get an improved conventional highway instead of a freeway.³⁴

In 1957 TxDOT made the project a high priority, authorizing alignment determination and right-of-way acquisition. In its early days the freeway was informally called both the Southeast Freeway and the Poly Freeway. The name Poly Freeway was in reference to the Polytechnic Heights neighborhood which was named for Polytechnic College, the original name of the today's Texas Wesleyan University. Poly Freeway later became the official name. Construction on the first segment from downtown

to Rosedale was underway in 1960 and the first section opened in 1963. The freeway inside Loop 820 was complete in 1970. Planning for SH 287 south of IH 20 was underway in 1966 and right-of-way acquisition began in 1968.³⁵



Fort Worth City Council renamed the freeway the Martin Luther King Jr Freeway in November 1981 in response to a campaign by the alumnae of Delta Sigma Theta, an African-American collegiate sorority with branches at local universities. However, private funds were required to pay for official signs to designate the freeway name, and in 2006 signs still had not been erected due to lack of funds. After privately funded signs announcing the Ronald Reagan Memorial Highway were erected in Arlington soon after its designation in 2005 (see photo page 458), local activists began a fund-raising campaign and funded the installation of large signs at the ends of the designated freeway section between IH 30 and Loop 820.³⁶ ■

This September 2009 view looks northwest along US 287 with the Erath Street overpass in the foreground.

The view below looks northbound along US 287 just north of Sublett Road in Arlington on April 3, 2012, as a tornado passed by. The storm caused an outbreak of around 12 tornadoes in North Texas with \$300 million in damage in Arlington, Lancaster and surrounding areas but no fatalities or serious injuries.

©Clint Perkins/TexasWeather360.com

Author, September 2009





Other Freeways

SH 170, SH 183, US 287, SH 199

SH 170

Around 1985 the Perot family, through their Hillwood real estate development firm managed by chairman Ross Perot Jr, began making large land acquisitions north of Fort Worth along the IH 35W and Highway 377 corridors in northern Tarrant and southern Denton Counties. By December 1986 Hillwood had assembled 16,300 acres. Of course, land needs to be conveniently accessible to be valuable, so Perot, other landowners and the City of Fort Worth formed a partnership to bring transportation improvements to the area. In July 1987 a coalition led by Fort Worth Mayor Bob Bolen traveled to Austin to present their proposal to the Texas Transportation Commission. Perot, Hunt Investments and IBM offered to donate 450 acres, virtually all of the right-of-way needed for SH 170 and the widening of an adjacent section of SH 114, and also pay for

engineering and environmental study costs of \$4 million.⁴⁹

In December 1988 political leaders rallied around the proposed highway, favoring the northern route of two potential alignments. In March 1990 the project was cleared for construction to begin when Ross Perot Jr presented Texas Transportation Commission chairman Robert Dedman a deed for 430 acres of donated right-of-way and TxDOT appropriated \$41 million for construction of the frontage roads. It was believed to be the fastest highway construction project in modern Texas history, moving from conception to construction in just 32 months. A dedication ceremony for the completed frontage roads was held on April 20, 1992.⁵⁰

Perot had big plans for his approximate 17,000 acres, which included Alliance Airport opened in 1989 just west of IH 35W near its intersection with SH 170 (see photo



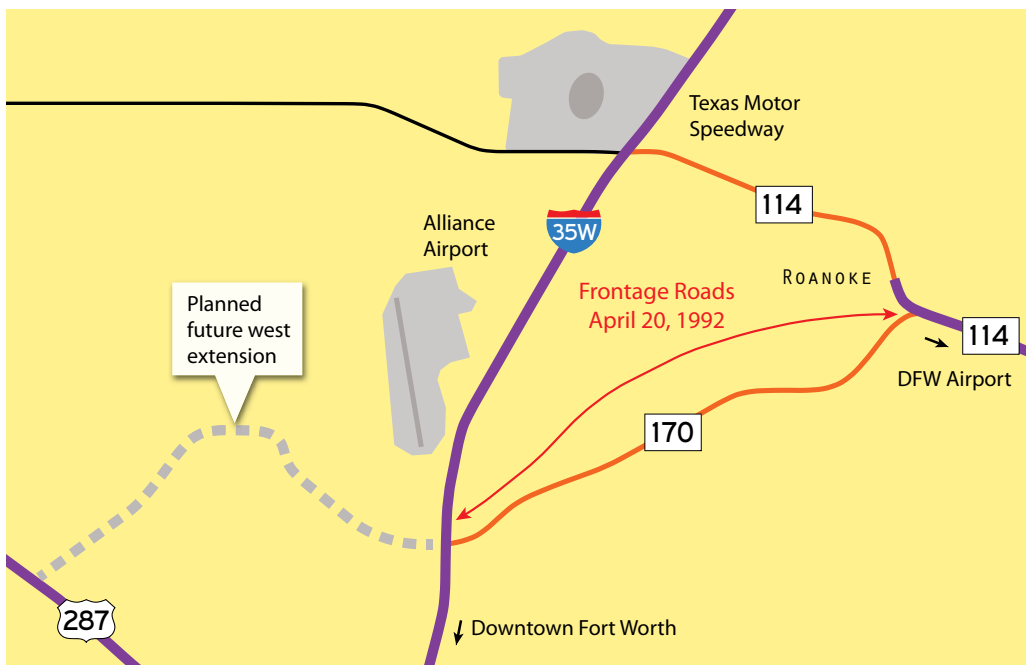
Hillwood Development Company, April 1992

The opening ceremony for SH 170 took place on April 20, 1992. Seated on the right side of the photo are Fort Worth Mayor Kay Granger and Ross Perot Jr, the driving force behind Alliance Airport and the construction of SH 170. At the podium is Arnold Oliver, executive director of the Texas Department of Transportation.



Author, October 2011

This view looks west along SH 170 near Alta Vista Road. In 2013 SH 170 remains in its originally constructed configuration with frontage roads only, with construction of the \$365 million tolled main lanes scheduled to begin in 2015.



westward from IH 35W had been contemplated in the late 1980s and was revived for further study around this time. In 2006 regional authorities asked the North Texas Turnpike Authority (NTTA) to study the feasibility of tolled main lanes on SH 170, and in 2008 and 2009 TxDOT transferred responsibility for planning the tolled main lanes to the NTTA. A 2009 retrospective in recognition of the twentieth anniversary of the opening of Alliance Airport reported that \$7.2 billion had been invested in the the airport and its associated real estate development,

page 481). As property development proceeded and the Alliance Airport area became an employment hub, traffic steadily increased. However, construction of the main lanes was not funded and not planned for the indefinite future. In 2003 the first discussions arose for building the main lanes as a tolled facility, with Perot actively supporting the toll lanes on SH 170 and providing funding for toll studies on both SH 170 and IH 35W north. The extension of SH 170

with 290 companies employing 28,000 workers.⁵¹

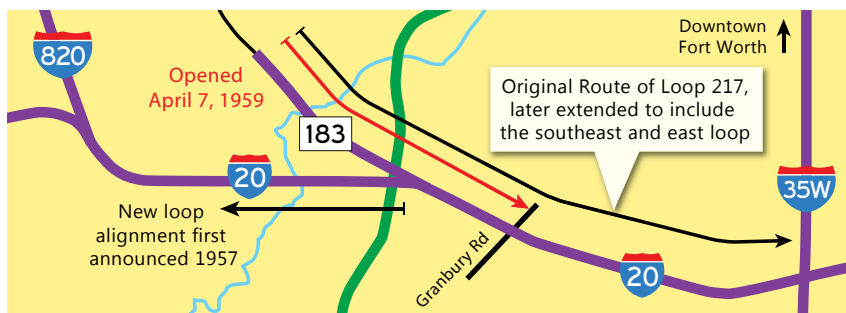
In 2013 preliminary work is proceeding for construction of the tolled main lanes between IH 35W and SH 114, and construction is expected to be completed before 2020. The extension west of IH 35W is included in the regional long-term plan but construction of main lanes is not planned prior to 2035.

SH 183

The short section of the SH 183 freeway in southwest Fort Worth is a relic of the original Loop 217, also known as the Southwest Loop. Efforts to build Loop 217 began in 1949 and the first section opened in 1957. The west section of Loop 217, which would become SH 183, was opened on April 7, 1959. Plans for the present-day alignment of southwest Loop 820, which later became IH 20, were revealed in 1957. Most of Loop 217 was absorbed into Loop 820, but a short section at the west end became an orphan when the new alignment branched away from Loop 217. The orphan section was renumbered as State Loop 820 in 1963 and was designated as SH 183 in 1977.⁵²



TxDOT Travel Information Division



This view looks southeast along the original Loop 217 at West Vickery Boulevard just prior to the opening of the freeway on April 7, 1959. This section of Loop 217 became SH 183. The freeway remains in its originally constructed configuration but has been brought up to modern standards

This view looks northwest along the corridor of SH 183 in September 2009. In the lower part of the photo, IH 20 branches away from the alignment of the original Loop 217, creating the short orphaned length of Loop 217 which became today's SH 183. In 2011 the area in the foreground became a major construction zone as work began on the interchange for the Chisholm Trail Parkway toll road, which opened in 2014. See page 521 for a view of the construction.

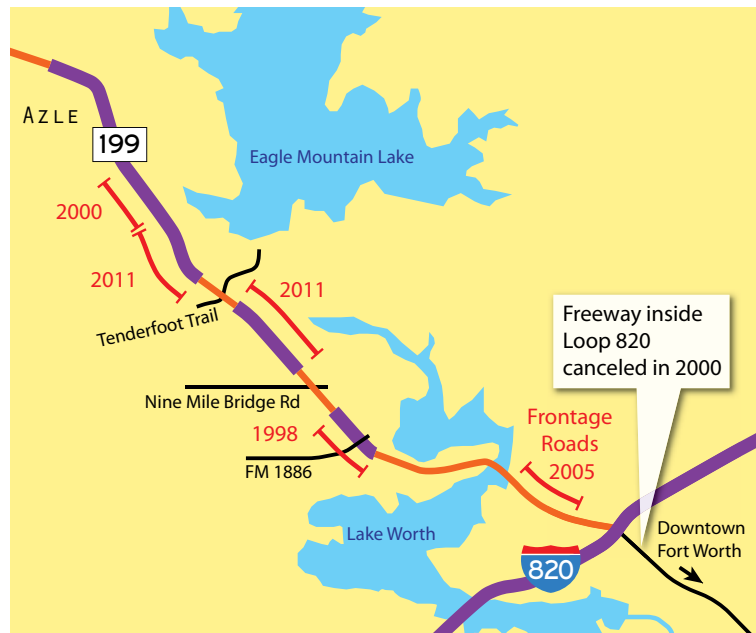
Author, September 2009



SH 199

The 1955 map of the proposed Fort Worth freeway system (see page 50) shows SH 199 as a free-way, starting near the intersection with SH 183 and proceeding northwest toward Azle. The first major improvements to SH 199 were completed in 1956 on a 7.3-mile section from the Lake Worth crossing to the south side of Azle. Although the improved section had frontage roads and main lanes, it was not a true limited-access facility since there were at-grade intersections with both the frontage roads and main lanes, making the highway hazardous, especially as traffic increased in the following decades. A true limited-access freeway was completed through Azle in the early-to-mid 1960s, featuring a left-side exit to Main Street for northbound traffic which was called the “ski jump” interchange. The ski jump was replaced in 1968 with a safer, conventional design.⁵³

In the city of Fort Worth, the SH 199 freeway was a lower priority than other planned freeways so there was little or no progress toward its construction. In 1964 the city released a new transportation plan which recommended new freeways but did not recommend full freeway standards for SH 199 in Fort Worth, instead recommending a high-capacity arterial with some grade separations at busy intersections. The ambitious 1967 freeway plan



for the North Texas region (see page 51) designated the full length of SH 199 as a freeway from downtown Fort Worth to the north side of Azle and in August 1969 TxDOT announced its intent to proceed with planning for its construction. However, TxDOT's financial crisis of the 1970s drastically reduced new freeway construction and scarce

This view looks northwest along SH 199 at Telephone Road, just north of IH 820. This section of SH 199 was upgraded to a frontage road configuration in 2005, awaiting construction of the main lanes in the wide median.

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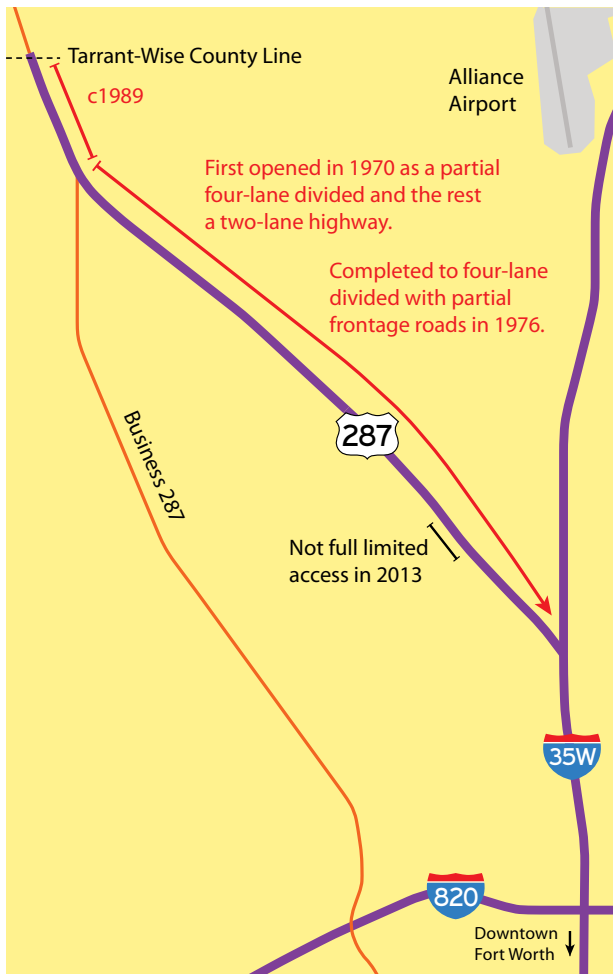
funding was directed to completing partially built freeways like Loop 820, not building expensive all-new freeways like SH 199. The SH 199 freeway survived the 1970s without being canceled and remained in the regional plan as a freeway from downtown Fort Worth to Azle. However, there was minimal progress toward construction of the freeway during the 1980s and 1990s as other higher-priority projects received funding in the Fort Worth district. Inside Loop 820 SH 199 remained a regular arterial street with no planning for the freeway. North of Lake Worth to Azle, SH 199 remained in its hazardous configuration with frontage roads and main lanes having at-grade intersections.⁵⁴

On December 8, 1998, Fort Worth City Council voted to end its support for the SH 121 freeway on the north and west sides of downtown. The SH 121 freeway would have connected to SH 199, so the rationale for SH 199 inside Loop 820 was diminished. In January 2000 the downtown section of SH 121 and SH 199 inside Loop 820 were both officially removed from the regional transportation plan. Plans for the SH 199 freeway outside Loop 820 remained intact, and in the late 1990s work was finally underway on two short sections of new freeway. In the 2000-2012 period the hazardous section was upgraded to have frontage roads meeting modern standards. Two new sections

of freeway opened in 2011. In 2013 SH 199 remains a mishmash of varying designs along its eleven miles to Azle, including frontage roads, four-lane divided highway and freeway. As of 2013 there are no near- or intermediate-term plans to complete the freeway. The facility has not been designated as a toll road by regional planning authorities, so most likely it will be completed as a freeway in the next 20 years.⁵⁵

US 287

US 287 north of Fort Worth, which also carries US 81, branches away from IH 35W three miles north of Loop 820. No information about the origins and planning for US 287 north was found. The present-day alignment from IH 35W to near the Tarrant-Wise county line, where the freeway re-joins the original alignment of US 287, was opened around 1970. In 1976 the full length in Tarrant County was a four-lane divided highway with overpasses at major intersections, not a limited-access freeway. The highway in Tarrant County was gradually improved during the following decades, upgrading it to freeway standards along nearly all of its length. All crossovers at the level of the main lanes have been closed, but in 2013 some direct access to property along the right side of the main lanes is allowed.



This view looks northwest along US 287 with the FM 156 intersection ahead. The US 287 corridor in northwest Tarrant County remains only partially developed in 2013, and the lack of development has minimized pressure on the freeway, contributing to the slow addition of improvements since its original opening in 1970.

Author, October 2011



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