

Amendment Process for Harris County's Major Thoroughfare and Freeway Plan for the Unincorporated, Non-Extra Territorial Jurisdiction Areas



August 26, 2025

Amendment Process for Harris County's Major Thoroughfare and Freeway Plan (MTFP) for the Unincorporated, Non-Extra Territorial Jurisdiction (ETJ) Areas

Background

The Harris County Major Thoroughfare and Freeway Plan (MTFP) is a long-range planning document that serves as a guide for future thoroughfares in unincorporated Harris County. The plan offers a strategic vision to address mobility needs through a collaborative planning process as growth and development occur by defining street functional classifications, such as Major Thoroughfares or Collectors, based on present and future land uses, environmental constraints, and travel patterns.

Major Thoroughfares are designated by a grid of functionally spaced corridors and are gradually implemented through right-of-way dedications and roadway construction as land is developed. Collectors are typically identified as the thoroughfare network becomes more firmly established and infill development begins to occur. The MTFP provides a pattern for orderly growth and serves as a guide for developers to ensure their projects contribute to the regional transportation network.

The locations of proposed street corridors in the plan need to be adjusted as needed, to match developmental needs or design constraints yet maintain the integrity of the plan. An established process is needed to ensure such amendments are assessed in an orderly and equitable manner, preserving regional mobility yet allowing for accommodations to avoid undue impacts on property owners and developers.

The current [Interim-Major Thoroughfare and Freeway Plan](#) for unincorporated Harris County was adopted in July 2024 and a County Corridor Agreement (CCA) executed with the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) that same year. The Interim-MTFP was developed by incorporating the Thoroughfare Plans within ETJ's of various municipalities in the county's unincorporated area and the County's existing Thoroughfare Plan for the unincorporated non-ETJ area. Of the 1,778 square miles of Harris County, 844 square miles is unincorporated area. The City of Houston's ETJ covers 91 percent of the unincorporated county area. The various municipalities in the county review and update their Thoroughfare Plans annually. When the County's Interim-MTFP conflicts with a municipality's thoroughfare plan, the municipality's plan takes precedence over the County's plan.

An update to the County Interim-MTFP is currently underway through the Harris County Transportation Master Plan (HCTMP) process, scheduled to be complete in the summer of 2026. The procedure outlined in this memo is a proposed process to amend the MTFP in the unincorporated, non-ETJ areas and will serve as the basis for the thoroughfare amendment process recommended in the upcoming HCTMP.

Thoroughfare planning throughout most of unincorporated Harris County is led by the City of Houston through the city subdivision regulations in Chapter 42 of the City's Code of Ordinances. The County's Interim-MTFP addresses the unincorporated, non- ETJ areas of the county that do not fall under another jurisdiction's thoroughfare plan in accordance with Texas Local Government code, Section 42.101.

Amendments to the county's MTFP are typically reflective of the amendments conducted through the individual municipalities' thoroughfare plans; however, a portion of Harris County near Crosby and Barrett is outside of any municipal jurisdiction, including the City of Houston ETJ. In addition, the State of Texas passed Senate Bill 2038 in 2023 that allows for the disannexation of unincorporated areas in the ETJ upon request by a majority of the property owner(s) of the area requesting disannexation. Once the disannexation takes effect, the subject area is not subject to the City of Houston's or any other municipality's thoroughfare requirements, leaving them solely the responsibility of Harris County. Texas counties are required to enter into an agreement with TxDOT for their thoroughfare plans (Texas Transportation Code, Section 201.619). In addition, the State of Texas also enacted legislation in 2023 (HB 3697) that requires county MTFPs to receive a CCA to be enforceable in the subdivision process.

Proposed Amendment Process

The Office of the County Engineer (OCE) staff regularly reviews subdivision plats and general plans in the unincorporated portion of the county that are submitted through the various municipalities. This process will continue as is. Plats in the disannexed or non-ETJ areas are submitted directly to the County and will be subject to this MTFP amendment process. Plats that propose to relocate, modify, or remove a designated major thoroughfare, will require an amendment to the county's MTFP. A coordination meeting with the developer will be held to discuss options for the proposed effect a plat has on the major thoroughfare. If a modification to the MTFP is warranted, the developer will apply via Harris County ePermits to amend the MTFP.

The City of Houston has an annual amendment process to their Major Thoroughfare and Freeway Plan (MTFP) that begins in January and concludes in September. Harris County proposes a process that mirrors the City's so that once the City adopts their amendments and updates its MTFP, Harris County will be able to incorporate amendments from the City of Houston, any municipalities that may have amended their plans, and the county into a single annual Harris County MTFP update.

Amendment Application

Applications for amendments must be submitted by the property owner/developer by the designated deadline set by Harris County through **ePermits** application. The application will provide the following information:

- Affected Street(s)
- Current classification
- Applicant name, address, contact information
- Property owner
- Location
- Legal description
- Brief description of proposed amendment
 - Realignment
 - Reclassification
 - Addition
 - Removal
- Justification for proposed amendment
 - Effects of not amending the thoroughfare alignment or classification
 - Effects of amending proposed amendment
- Supporting data
 - Area land use
 - Traffic volumes
 - Adjacent properties

The OCE will review applications then contact applicants for further information, if necessary.

Among the additional data OCE may request can include:

- Traffic Impact Analysis (TIA) according to OCE Traffic Engineering's Standard Operating Procedures
- Documented contact with adjacent property owners
- Additional information to justify amendment request, such as drainage impacts, cultural resources, or other environmental constraints.

Commissioner's Court

OCE staff will review the proposed amendments for mobility, connectivity, and feasibility; and will coordinate with appropriate agencies to document the effects of the proposed amendment. If the amendment request is determined to proceed, OCE will prepare a court item to request a public hearing during the months of June-August for Commissioner's Court approval.

Notifications of the proposed thoroughfare amendment will be sent to property owners and

tenants within 500 feet of the proposed amendment at least 30 days prior to the public hearing. OCE will conduct virtual Open house meeting(s) in coordination with the Precincts on the proposed amendments prior to the public hearing. At the public hearing, comments will be received and evaluated along with the merits of the amendment application. OCE staff will make a final recommendation on the MTFP amendment requests for inclusion on an updated MTFP at Commissioner's Court during the months of August-October. After Court action, subdivision plat applications may receive conditional approval reflecting the revised MTFP.

Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) Review

Consistent with the state procedure, the MTFP with the approved amendments will be forwarded to the TxDOT for review. After the District Engineer's and TxDOT headquarters' review, a CCA will be prepared and sent for the County Engineer's signature. The Commissioners Court provided authorization to County Engineer to review, discuss, and work with the TxDOT and other entities for negotiation and execution agreements concerning future transportation corridors affecting streets and transportation projects located in Harris County on August 29, 2023. Once signed by the County Engineer, as a designee of County Judge, the CCA will be sent back to TxDOT headquarters for final signature. Upon TxDOT's sign off, the revised MTFP will be in place and fully enforceable.

Schedule

The proposed amendment review and decision will take approximately one year to run through the county's process. The proposed HC process and general timeframe are shown **Figure 1**.

Figure 1: Harris County MTFP Amendment Process and Timeline

