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WEST RAIL PROJECT GETS APPROVAL FROM FHWA

County Judge Carlos H. Cascos, CPA received word today that the Federal Highway Administration has made a determination of a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for the Brownsville-Matamoros West Rail Bypass project. The finding means that FHWA, the federal agency charged with making a Record of Decision (ROD) on the project, has determined that the environmental assessment done for this project will have no significant impact on the human or natural environment.

According to FHWA, “the Build Alternative 1 is the preferred alternative and best fulfills the need and purpose for the project and meets the goals identified for the project with the least amount of impact to the resource areas”. “For us it is the second time in a just over two weeks that Cameron County has met all the requirements of the rigorous federal environmental regulations that are necessary for projects the magnitude of the West Rail under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). This doesn’t happen often and today I am most happy for the residents of Brownsville, Matamoros and Cameron County as we will all benefit from the relocation of the tracks in the downtown areas of the sister cities, Judge Cascos stated. This will be the first international rail bridge crossing on the U.S.-Mexico border in over 105 years. We can now work towards getting all the construction agreements in place to move forward on this much needed project.”

Cameron County, the project sponsor on the U.S. side, will construct a new international rail bridge, over U.S. 281 and the International and Boundary Water Commission levee, as well as the construction of approximately 5.85 miles of a new single track for a total of 6.1 miles of new track. “Cameron County will continue to work with its federal, state and local partners in the U.S. and Mexico to get this project to construction. The West Rail project is anticipated to be under construction in March of 2010 with operations on the new rail line scheduled to start in October 2011. “This will be the second of two international bridge projects (West Rail and Veterans Bridge) underway in Cameron County in the same year”, Cascos went on to say.

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