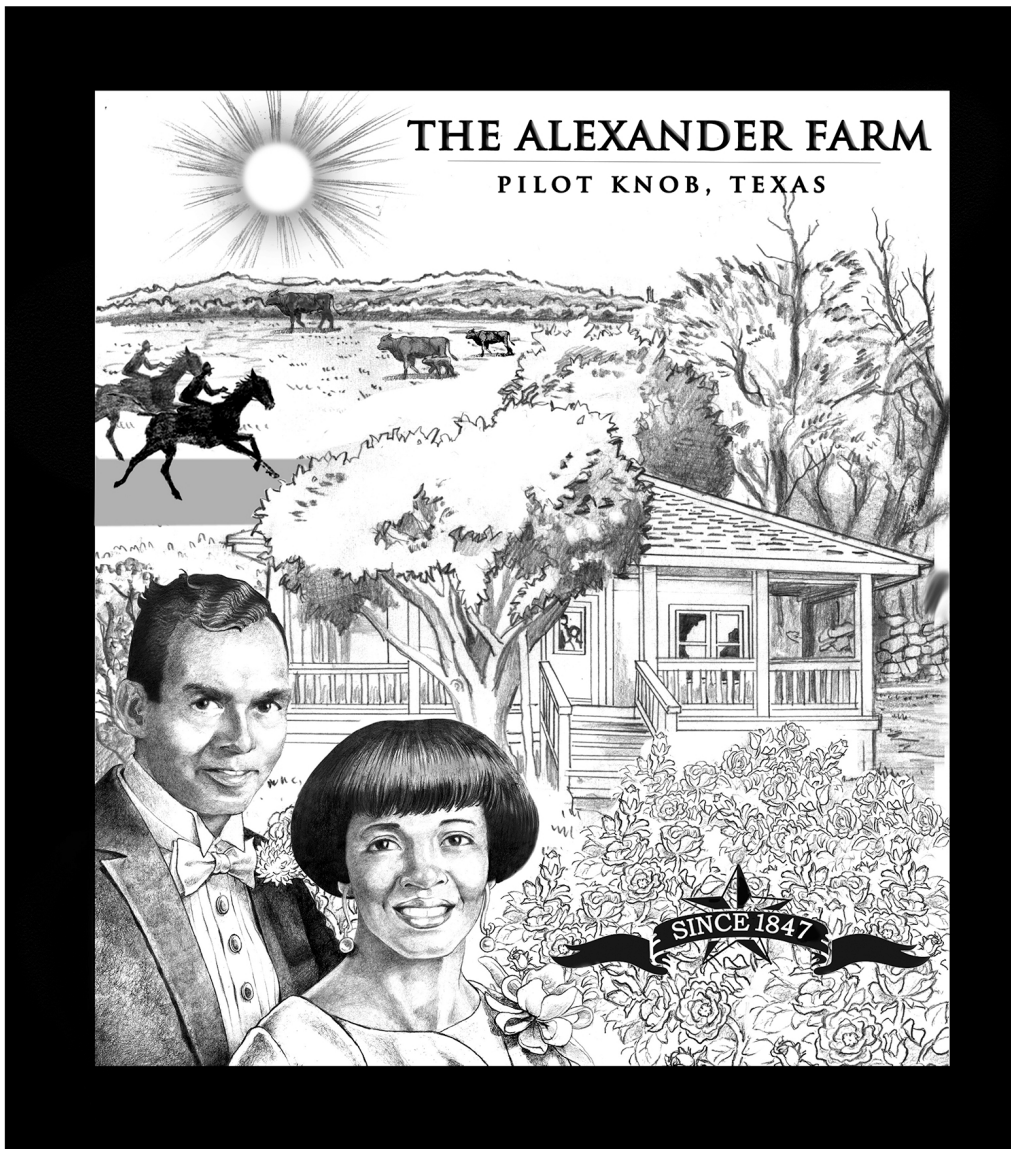


# **THE ALEXANDER FARM AND ALEXANDER CEMETERY**

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

for CAMPO (Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization)  
Policy Board Meeting  
held virtually from Austin, TX  
on Monday, October 12, 2020  
from 2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. CT

(<https://www.campotexas.org/event/transportation-policy-board-10/>)



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## **THE ALEXANDER FARM AND ALEXANDER CEMETERY PUBLIC COMMENT**

*for CAMPO ((Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization) Policy Board Meeting held virtually from Austin, TX on Monday, October 12, 2020, from 2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.CT (<https://www.campotexas.org/event/transportation-policy-board-10/>))*

### **Public Comment at Beginning of the Meeting (Agenda Item #2)**

#### ***FIRST COMMENTER: Rosalind Alexander-Kasparik***

My name is Rosalind Alexander-Kasparik. I am a sixth-generation, Texas-born and bred descendant of Daniel Alexander and his mother, Ceney.

THE ALEXANDER FARM and ALEXANDER CEMETERY, seated between 5800 and 6000 Highway 183 South just over a mile outside of Austin, was founded by my great-great grandfather, enslaved Thoroughbred racehorse breeder and trainer Daniel Alexander. Daniel and his mother Ceney first came to Travis County in January of 1839 with the family of Texas founding father Thomas Freeman McKinney. Generations of McKinneys had owned and raced Thoroughbred horses from the mid-1700s in Virginia, Kentucky, and Missouri. Their progenitor immigrated to America from Scotland before the Revolutionary War. When the McKinneys got to Texas, they raced their Thoroughbreds first in Galveston in the 1820-1830s, then at Onion Creek near McKinney Falls, Texas, from the 1840s forward. Daniel also accompanied Thoroughbreds on the McKinney and Williams Company fleet of ferries and schooners to New Orleans and other horse races with hefty purses throughout the country.

Daniel was one of thousands of enslaved—highly skilled—African-Americans in the early days of our nation whom historians now refer to as “race horse men.” They nurtured and developed horse racing into America’s first sport. They were not only the first riders in the Kentucky Derby, they were the sport’s celebrity athletes, coaches and mentors of their day. Daniel Alexander is well-remembered by his celebrity mentees in the nation’s racing records of the late 19th century. Daniel Alexander trained the McKinney’s Thoroughbred horses, at least one of which was sired by Sir Archy’s line, a bloodline that eventually brought the world triple-crown winner Secretariat. Daniel also trained Copper Bottom, General Sam Houston’s Quarter Horse, who was also of the Sir Archy blood line.

As were many of his fellow Black racehorse men, Daniel Alexander earned favored status from the McKinneys for his mastery of animal husbandry that led to wins on the tracks. THE ALEXANDER FARM has been held by Ceney and Daniel’s descendants from at latest 1847 when he was given the land to

homestead in exchange for his horse racing acumen. He was also introduced by the McKinneys to an Irish indentured servant, Emeline Adams, whom he married by 1864.

The Choctaw Muskogee Yamassee Nation of indigenous people now headquartered in Oklahoma still recognizes Daniel Alexander as one of their own. Like Sam Houston whom the Cherokee dubbed “Raven,” Daniel Alexander’s community races during the Republic of Texas years, during Reconstruction, and into the early 20th century were legendary. Indeed, indigenous pre-history has never been far from our homestead. The Smith Rock Shelter used since 500 BCE by Central Texas’ indigenous peoples at McKinney Falls near The Alexander Farm is also on the National Registry of Historic Places.

The acreage that Daniel Alexander raised his family on for decades is still the Alexander homestead. The gated Alexander Cemetery contains Daniel’s remains, and those of some 60 marked and unmarked Alexander descendants. If THE ALEXANDER FARM and ALEXANDER CEMETERY are harmed by this roadway expansion, please understand that there is no other such place—no replacement—in Central Texas or the United States for our farm and its cemetery.

***SECOND COMMENTER: Marcellus Alexander, Jr.***

I’m Marcellus Alexander, Jr., sixth-generation descendant of Ceney and Daniel, and namesake of my paternal and maternal grandfathers.

In 1966, the National Historic Preservation Act and the US-DOT Code became the law of the land. It prohibited the taking of historic sites. Despite the law, in 1968 the then-Texas Highway Department took land from the front of THE ALEXANDER FARM and ALEXANDER CEMETERY, to convert Rural Route 2 into the four-lane-plus-median version of today’s US-183 South. Daniel Alexander’s grandson, Milton Everett Alexander, fought the taking. He was distressed that TxDOT’s pre-cursor not only took our land, but “wasted” a hundred-foot sliver on the other side of what is now the highway.

Similarly, McKinney family historian Margaret Henson writes that the enslaved people’s burial grounds nearer McKinney Falls were bulldozed to create a golf course—because there were no preservation mandates in place at the time.

So we, the Alexander family descendants of Daniel and Ceney, come to CAMPO, a body of elected county and municipal officials with oversight responsibility for roadway expansion, to be sure you know our land’s legacy, its story, and our legal right to prevent TxDOT incursion. We are proud of our heritage in this specific place, during this particular 200 years of Texas and American history and culture. Since Ceney and

Daniel's day, our family has produced farmers, ranchers, entrepreneurs, as well as corporate executives and professionals. We've taken Daniel's tack and built a way out of the "no-way" of slavery.

This place, THE ALEXANDER FARM and ALEXANDER CEMETERY, is our home. It is the bedrock of our sense of place as a family. It is a source of pride for our community as evidenced in our historical recognitions by state and local government and cultural agencies. We are first in the Founding Families Room at the Carver Museum and Cultural Center and have been featured at the Bergstrom International Airport. We are repeatedly referenced in Texas state publications as among Central Texas' longest-standing African American family farms. We were born with and have managed to keep what has been stripped away from so many African-American families in Texas and the United States. That is a clear sense of place, of where we come from, and who we are. Our father, used to tell us: "Stay put, stay strong, be patient, and the world will come back around to your way of thinking." We remain optimistic.

**THIRD COMMENTER: Winell Alexander Herron**

I'm Winell Alexander Herron, sixth-generation Texan and descendant of Ceny and Daniel Alexander.

We learned of TxDOT's plan to expand Hwy 183 and potentially take property from us—again—in November of 2019 when we received a postcard informing us of a community meeting for input from concerned parties and stakeholders.

We shared claims confirming our property's historic significance, and we were reassured that the Health Codes and our designations from the Texas Historical Commission should prevent any incursion.

We watched as plans for Hwy 183 North of Hwy 71 stretched from four lanes and a median to 12 lanes (including the access roads) based on contracts approved by this board and others in 2014—the year we laid our parents to rest in the Alexander Cemetery.

Our Dad, Marcellus Winston Alexander, passed away five days after our mother in November of that same year. He had lived on THE ALEXANDER FARM his entire 97 years.

Our mother, Juanita Alexander, had lived on the farm since she married our father in the small house in which the current owners of THE ALEXANDER FARM grew up.

After the shock of the 1968 Texas Highway Dept. taking of Alexander land, we were confused and further distressed by the lack of information and direction offered at the TxDOT community meeting.

We learned that TxDOT's proposed route would destroy and eliminate our gated cemetery and most of the houses and other buildings on our farm.

We asked for and were granted a "stakeholders" meeting with TxDOT in early February 2020. We were calmed by verbal promises of alternative routes to be delineated and evaluated by TxDOT engineers.

We waited and heard nothing more from TxDOT.

We sought and won the support of state-level elected officials who also called a meeting with TxDOT. TxDOT officials repeated their assurances with no new information as to alternative routing of expansion of the roadway that abuts our 173-year-old African American farm.

My sister, Rosalind, began offering public comments objecting to the expansion project as it appeared in CAMPO's Regional Plans.

We also wrote a formal letter as a family to TxDOT. We received a copy of the contract that had been awarded to CP&Y in the summer of 2019 to conduct a study of the expansion.

A mere three miles from our gates, we recently witnessed the start of construction on new highway infrastructure for Hwy 183 South just past Hwy 71.

Still no word from TxDOT on the promised alternative routes.

To be clear, our family wants this board to know that we don't view our participation in today's meeting as an academic exercise.

This is our property. We care deeply about it and are focused on preserving the rich history of our ancestors, as well as looking forward for future generations of our family.

Thank you, that concludes our comments at this time.

## **Public Comment for Agenda Item #9**

### **FIRST COMMENTER for Item #9: Rosalind Alexander-Kasparik**

During the July CAMPO meeting, Commissioner Brigid Shea verbally expressed her lack of support of TxDOT's US-183 expansion harming THE ALEXANDER FARM and ALEXANDER CEMETERY. During the August meeting, Commissioner Shea's protestations won the promise of a status report from TxDOT on the impact of its highway expansion on THE ALEXANDER FARM. We were elated at the prospect of learning which alternative routes were being considered. We wanted assurance that the partially built exchange at SH 71 and US-183, did not preclude or exempt from study any routing alternatives that would avoid us entirely.

The September CAMPO meeting was canceled, but TxDOT took the opportunity to brief some Commissioners on how their expansion might affect our farm. But, TxDOT—forgetting its pledge to us and our elected state supporters—neither told the Alexander family of the briefings, nor invited us to attend them.

We also learned that the long-abandoned Longhorn Speedway property across the highway from part of THE ALEXANDER FARM had been sold in June and July of 2020 to Holt Cat, manufacturer of the heavy freeway construction equipment and cranes that will doubtless be necessary for the expansion's construction.

We learned that the Charles F. Austin Cemetery across the highway from THE ALEXANDER FARM is the final resting place of McKinney's mother and sister who joined the McKinney brothers at the Falls in the 1850s. Both the ALEXANDER CEMETERY and the Austin Cemetery have been designated historic by the Texas Historical Commission. They sit on opposite sides of US-183 South that is slated for expansion by TxDOT. There has still been no word from TxDOT on its plan to honor moral and legal codes that were enacted to prohibit people's burial sites from being bulldozed.

We have awaited TxDOT's alternative routes as we witnessed its continuation of US-183 North's extensive widening. IT HAS NOW BEEN NEARLY A YEAR SINCE WE RECEIVED THE POSTCARD BLITHELY ANNOUNCING THE NEW STUDY OF US-183 SOUTH'S EXPANSION. TXDOT'S PRELIMINARY ROUTE WILL OBLITERATE THE ALEXANDER FARM AND ALEXANDER CEMETERY.

For this meeting, we marked a few maps that we asked the CAMPO staff to share with the Board on the screen. We are not engineers, but in the absence of any other alternatives from TxDOT except the one

that will obliterate our farm and cemetery, we thought we'd share some advice that we secured from transportation professionals.

Please understand that we are not suggesting that these are the *only* viable alternatives. Surely they are not. We seek TxDOT's examination of any and all alternatives that will prevent further obliteration of THE ALEXANDER FARM AND CEMETERY.

***(Maps of THE ALEXANDER FARM and its ALEXANDER CEMETERY along with possible parallel or looped expansion routes were shown on the Powerpoint presentation that was livestreamed during the CAMPO Policy Board Meeting. The maps are included in this document on the following four pages.)***

# The Alexander Family Farm

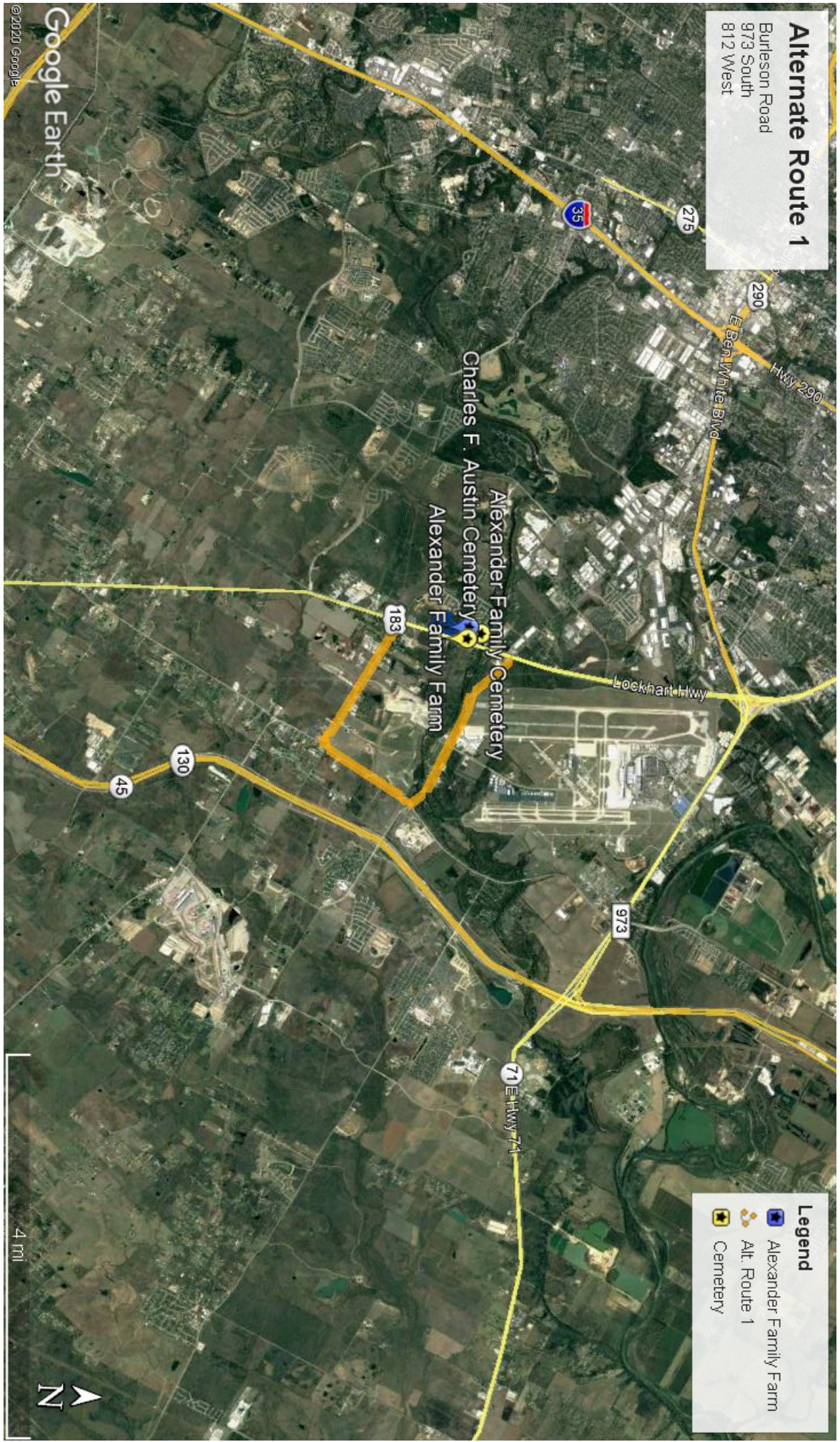


Google Earth

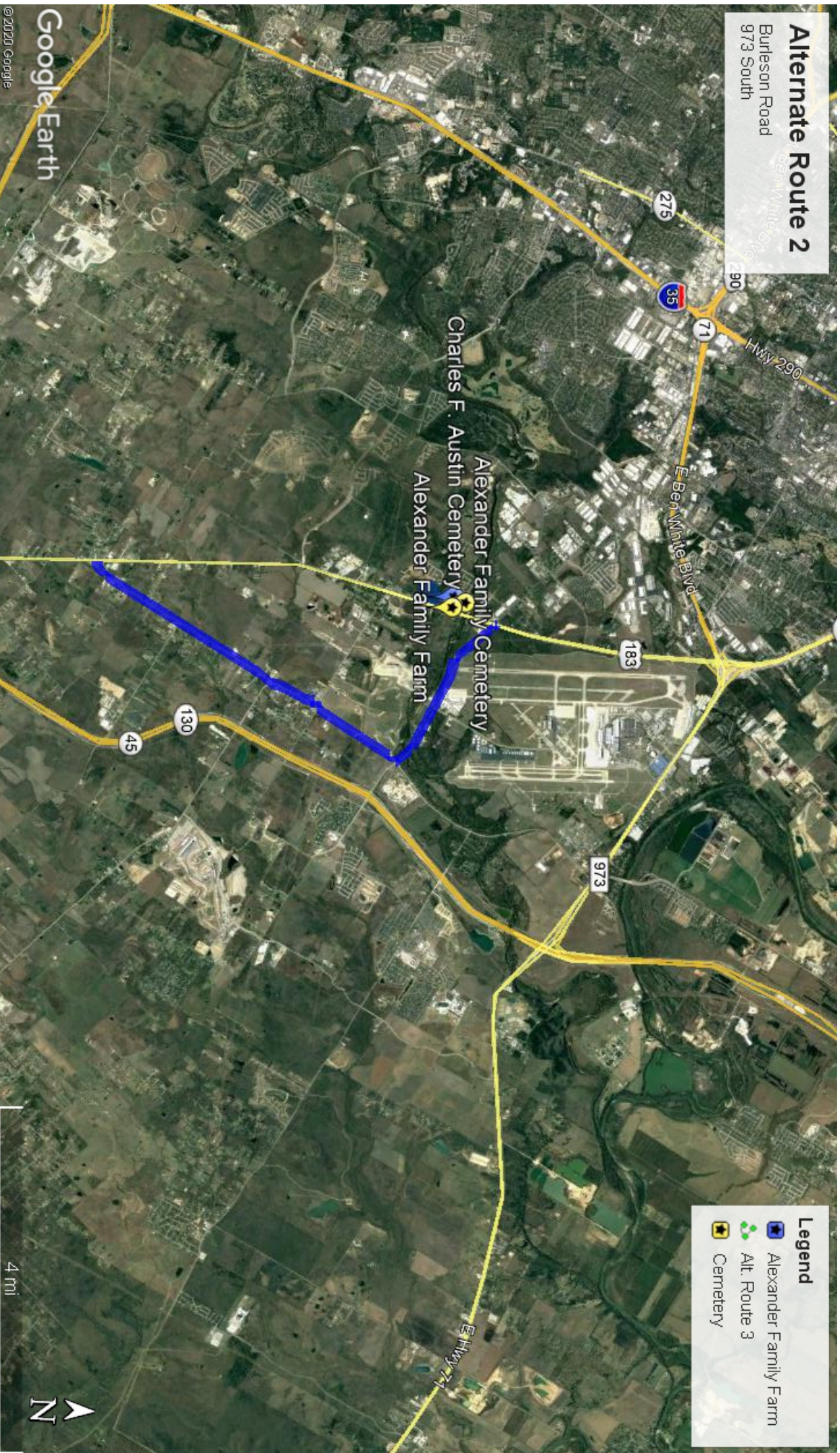
©2020 Google



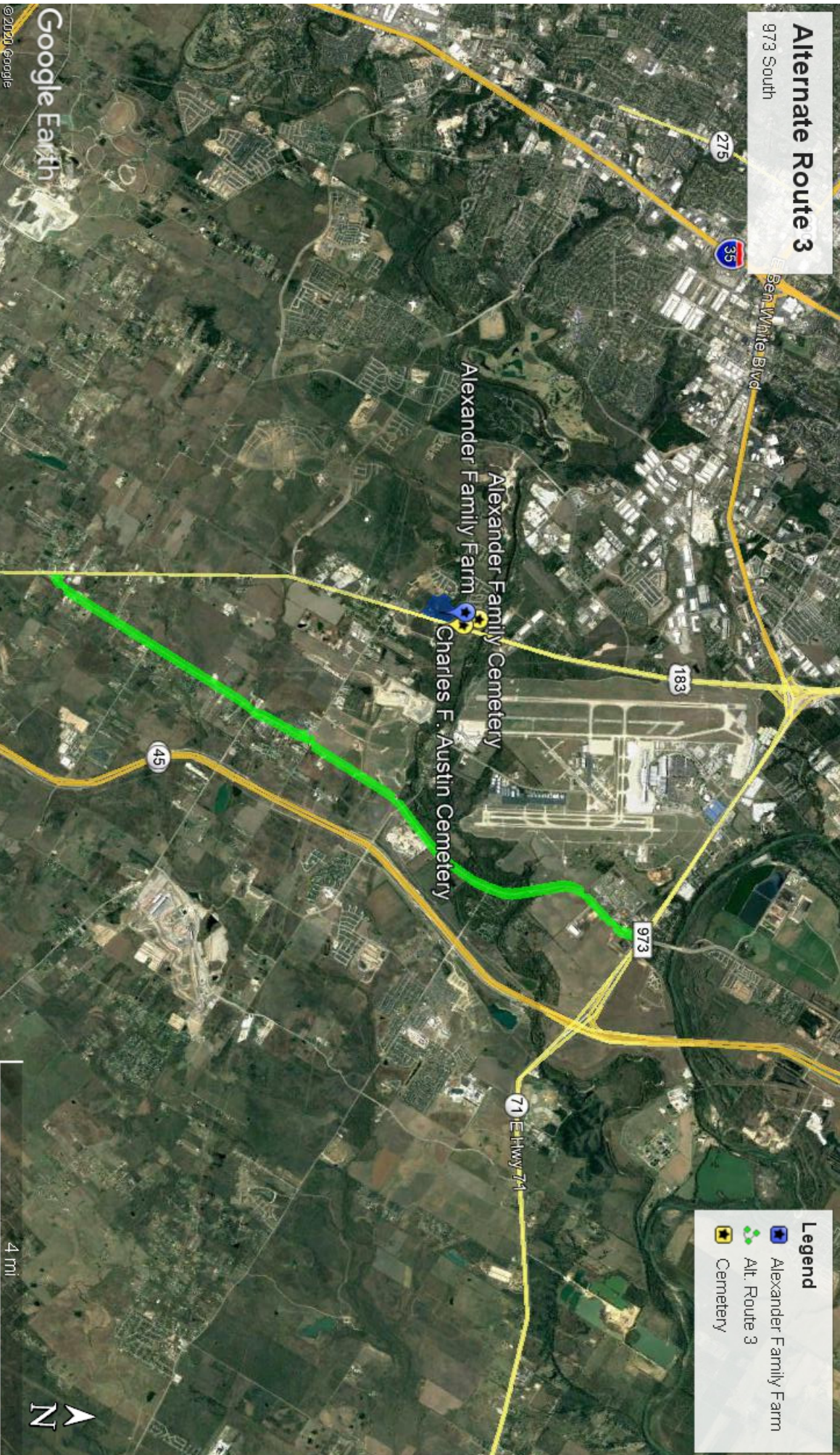
**Alternate Route 1**  
Burlison Road  
973 South  
812 West



**THE ALEXANDER FARM AND ALEXANDER CEMETERY** Public Comment to CAMPO Policy Board  
10.12.20, 2:00 - 5:00 pm CT, (Held Virtually)



**THE ALEXANDER FARM AND ALEXANDER CEMETERY Public Comment to CAMPO Policy Board**  
10.12.20, 2:00 - 5:00 pm CT, (Held Virtually)



**Alternate Route 3**  
973 South

**Legend**

- Alexander Family Farm
- Alt. Route 3
- Cemetery

Google Earth  
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**THE ALEXANDER FARM AND ALEXANDER CEMETERY Public Comment to CAMPO Policy Board**  
10.12.20, 2:00 - 5:00 pm CT, (Held Virtually)

**SECOND COMMENTER for Item #9: Elizabeth Merritt, Deputy General Counsel, National Trust for Historic Preservation** *(Comments delivered verbally and “live” at the CAMPO Policy Board Meeting)*



**National Trust for  
Historic Preservation**  
*Save the past. Enrich the future.*

**Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO)**

Re: US 183 from SH 71 to SH 130

October 12, 2020

My name is Elizabeth Merritt, and I serve as Deputy General Counsel for the National Trust for Historic Preservation, based in Washington, DC.

I’m participating in this meeting because I want to make sure that the transportation agencies understand, from a national perspective, the stringent legal requirements that apply to protect the Alexander Farm, and compel the development of alternatives, in order to avoid and minimize harm to the Alexander Farm.

The most important of these legal mandates is Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act. For any project that includes federal transportation funding, Section 4(f) prohibits any “use” of historic properties, and other protected sites, unless there’s “no feasible and prudent alternative” to the use of the protected property, and the project includes “all possible planning to minimize harm.” In order to justify rejecting an alternative that would avoid the protected site, or be less harmful, the transportation agency would have to show that the less harmful alternative would pose “unique problems,” or “truly unusual factors,” or would involve “cost or community disruption of extraordinary magnitudes.”

In addition to Section 4(f), Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act requires the transportation agencies to “take into account” the potential adverse effects of the project on the Alexander Farm and other historic properties. That “take into account” requirement is accomplished through a unique consultation process with interested parties, to “develop and evaluate alternatives or modifications to the [project] that could avoid, minimize or mitigate [its] adverse effects on historic properties.”

Now in this case, there’s no dispute that the Alexander Farm is a historic property protected by these laws. And no dispute that this historic property would

The Watergate Office Building 2600 Virginia Avenue NW Suite 1100 Washington, DC 20037  
E [law@savingplaces.org](mailto:law@savingplaces.org) P 202.588.6035 F 202.588.6272 [www.savingplaces.org](http://www.savingplaces.org)

be “used” and “adversely affected” by the project as currently proposed; so it’s not a *de minimis* impact. (And, as you’ve heard, the cemetery on the other side of US 183 from the Alexander Farm is also a historic property.) Therefore, avoidance alternatives need to be developed now, before any further planning work goes forward. Fortunately, it’s still early in the environmental review process.

In response to the proposed project, the family members developed a few conceptual alternatives. As you can see from the maps that were submitted, Alternative 1 would serve as a loop to the east of US 183. Alternative 2 would be more of an elongated triangle to the east. And Alternative 3, which is my favorite, would veer to the northeast along Route 973, and continue directly up to Route 71, which would then connect back up to US 183.

These are just conceptual ideas developed by lay-people, but they serve as examples of the kinds of alternatives that the transportation agencies need to develop now in order to satisfy their strict legal responsibilities under Section 4(f) and Section 106.

We urge the transportation agencies to initiate Section 106 consultation, and thank you in advance for considering these comments.

### THIRD COMMENTER for Item #9: Donna Carter, FAIA

(Comments delivered verbally and “live” at the CAMPO Policy Board Meeting)

# Memo

CARTER • DESIGN  
ASSOCIATES  
817 WEST ELEVENTH STREET  
AUSTIN • TEXAS • 78701  
(P) 512.476.1812 (F) 512.476.1819  
ARCHITECTURE • PRESERVATION • PLANNING

**To:** CAMPO (Public Comment)  
**From:** Donna D. Carter, FAIA  
**Date:** 12 October 2020  
**Re:** Texas Department of Transportation Impact on the Historic Alexander Farm

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The historic value of the Alexander Farm and its importance to the family has been demonstrated. The significance of the farm and its capacity to tell the story of African American settlement in central Texas is equally important. The homestead lands, the farm and the historic cemetery are witness to the Alexander family, their relationship to other African American families and the settlement of Pilot Knob. It shows a family self-sufficient, yet inextricably bound to the broader social order of how African American and white families were connected and what that means for the telling of Austin’s History.

As a preservation architect, the fact that TxDOT might blithely find no other alternative than to dig up and take away from this legacy is really a measure of the lack of respect, we as a community have endured for so long, and indeed have come to expect. As Dr. Andrea Roberts has said in her study of Freedman Colonies,

*“if you are to interrupt this space with a pipeline, a new freeway, clear-cutting – not only have you done something unpleasant and interrupted a sense of place, you are interrupting peoples ability to have a communal identity”*

This is about how African American assets are reviewed, and valued; about whether places where African Americans not only lived, but thrived, not only have roots, but have our own roots, developed with our own hands and where we determine that our lives matter; are taken seriously. What has happened to date is an indictment on how our places are revered and protected. **OR NOT.**

Systemically disenfranchised communities often have little to show for their history. There is often no tangible whole property retained by a family. There are no heirlooms passed down through the generations. The land is the only witness. This land -- that is likely to yield information important in history (a criterion for historic designation). This land that is likely to yield in insights into the telling of Austin’s African American history. This land that will help reveal a history that is not often told in a nuanced and fully contextual way.

Instead this land can be bulldozed, documented in a government report and then driven over by thousands who have no idea what they have destroyed.

The Alexander family cemetery is a tangible witness to time. The burials are capsules in time that ask to be respected and left undisturbed. Family griots receiving those in the future; maintaining witness to the past; to soak up the salt and tears of today and form a bridge to the future.

We ask that planning agencies and public bodies come together to develop alternatives to respect this hallowed place, so they are no longer complicit in the systematic removal dare we say, paving over of our heritage.

**FOURTH COMMENTER for Item #9: Winell Alexander Herron**

Why are we at CAMPO, telling you about THE ALEXANDER FARM's illustrious, unprecedented-in-length history? Because we understand that you collectively determine the next generation of transportation options for the region we call home.

You have it within your power to put the decades-old, systemically racist and discriminatory practices of TxDOT's takings in check. We know that the mix of public and private funding of the state's roadways can be complex and politically fraught.

But, the effects of your fiduciary oversight are too rarely advantageous to Black, Indigenous, and People of Color. You, CAMPO Board, have it within your power to begin to correct the pattern of abuse of African American landowners through TxDOT's weaponization of eminent domain in central Texas.

It is a weaponization THE ALEXANDER FARM and ALEXANDER CEMETERY have borne the brunt of twice. We're here appealing to you because you have the power to stop this taking of a founding family's legacy that has tenaciously persisted against all the horrors of slavery, Jim Crow, African American disenfranchisement, and the depths of social injustice we have only begun to understand and rectify as a community, a state, and a nation.

You can take a different approach; you can protect and preserve a rich and unique part of TEXAS history.

Thank you.