

Mill Creek/Peaks Branch/State Thomas Drainage Relief Tunnel Frequently Asked Questions

What is the purpose of the Mill Creek/Peaks Branch Drainage Relief Tunnel Project?

The Mill Creek/Peaks Branch Drainage Relief project is one part of a plan to provide storm drainage improvements to the Mill Creek, Peaks Branch, East Peaks Branch and State Thomas areas of Dallas. The existing drainage systems in these areas were constructed as early as the 1930s and do not meet current standards.

Has anything like the Mill Creek/Peaks Branch Drainage Relief Tunnel been done before?

Yes, large underground tunnels are commonly used to provide drainage relief. A similar tunnel has been constructed in San Antonio, and another tunnel is under construction in Austin. Also, the Cole Park Detention Vault and the North Central Expressway Drainage Tunnel are drainage projects in Dallas mined in the same rock formation.

How was the alignment of the Mill Creek/Drainage Relief Tunnel selected?

The alignment of the Mill Creek/Peaks Branch Drainage Relief Tunnel was selected to pick up storm flows from the existing trunk sewers in the State-Thomas, Mill Creek, Peaks Branch and East Peaks Branch watersheds. The alignment was selected such that the existing storm sewers south (downstream) of the tunnel would have the required capacity once all of the upstream flow is diverted to the Mill Creek/Peaks Branch Drainage Relief Tunnel. The local geology and issues crossing the Dallas Floodway levee makes an outfall at White Rock Creek more economical than an outfall at the Trinity River.

Will the tunnel eliminate flooding on my street?

The tunnel should have an immediate impact on flooding south (downstream) of the tunnel. Minor street flooding south of the tunnel may occur in large storms, but this flooding will be addressed in future projects that improve the "lateral" storm sewer systems that connect to the "trunk" storm sewer. Flooding north (upstream) of the tunnel will not be appreciably reduced by the new tunnel. Future trunk and lateral improvements north of the tunnel will be required to address flooding north of the tunnel; these improvements would presumably be part of future bond programs. The tunnel is needed first to provide an "outfall" for these future trunk systems.

Are easements required for this project?

The City will acquire subsurface easements from property owners along the alignment. These easements will begin approximately 50 feet underground and extend to approximately 300 feet underground and with few exceptions have no impact on the owner's use of the property within the easement. Many agencies have acquired subsurface easements for tunnel construction throughout the United States. The City will contact you and provide additional information to affected property owners.

What is a subsurface easement?

A subsurface easement grants permission from the property owner to the City to construct and operate a below ground facility, such as a tunnel, beneath the property. A legal document will be prepared by the City describing the subsurface easement and easement conditions for the property owner to review and execute.

Will the value of my property be affected by a subsurface easement?

Detailed studies performed by various agencies for other tunnel projects show no difference in resale value between comparable properties with and without subsurface tunnel easements. For most, there will be no restriction on the use of the surface of the property to a depth of approximately 50 feet over the subsurface easement.

Will the City provide compensation for the subsurface easement?

The City typically may not pay greater than “fair market value” for the easement rights acquired. However, the City will gratefully accept donations of the needed subsurface easements.

Will there be restrictions on future development of my property due to the subsurface easement?

The subsurface easements will restrict excavation and drilling below a specified depth – typically on the order of approximately 50 feet below the surface. Construction of greater than 250 feet high, approximately 20 stories, will require plan review and approval by the City to confirm no impact on the tunnel. In the majority of cases, current zoning is more restrictive than this height limitation. In addition, property owners in Texas have a duty to provide lateral support to adjoining landowners, which means that a property owner may not excavate his or her property such that adjoining land in its natural condition collapses, caves in, falls away, sloughs off, or washes away. The combination of zoning restrictions and the common law duty to provide lateral support means that many (if not most or all) the subsurface easements that the City is acquiring will not further restrict future development of the property above.

Will persons come on to my property to access the tunnel?

Persons will not enter or access the tunnel through private property. Access to the tunnel for inspection and/or maintenance will be through access shafts located in City-owned property along the tunnel alignment. The subsurface easement grants permission to the City to construct the tunnel below affected properties, and provides permission for operating and accessing the tunnel below affected properties.

Will I notice the below ground construction activities?

The noise and vibrations from the deep tunnel construction activities are not expected to be apparent at the ground surface.

Will tunnel construction damage property along the alignment?

The Mill Creek/Peaks Branch Drainage Relief Tunnel will be constructed in rock. There is almost no chance that tunnel construction in rock will damage homes or businesses above the tunnel. To assure the property owners and the City that there is no damage due to tunnel construction,

inspection of structures over the tunnel will be conducted before and, if necessary, after construction.

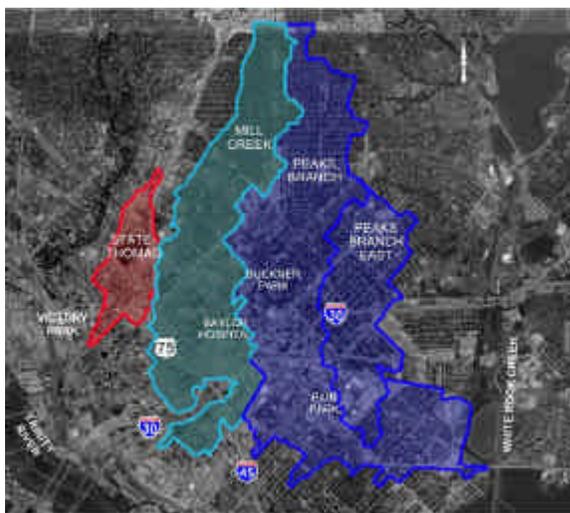
Further, the construction contractor will be required to monitor for items such as vibration and ground movement to ensure specified limits are not exceeded.

If I don't want to sell the City an easement, will the City acquire the easement by using its power of eminent domain?

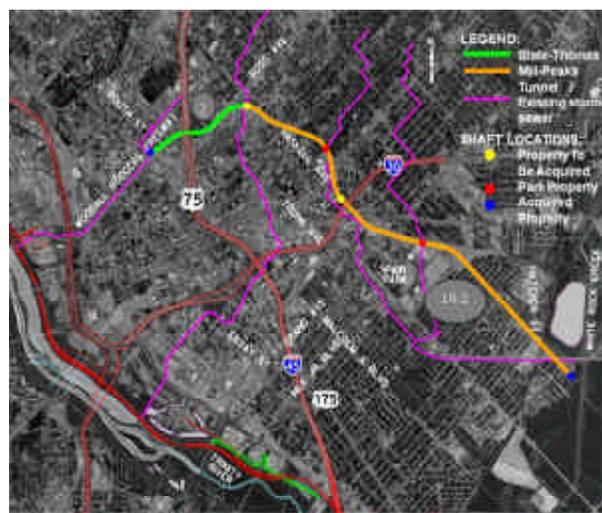
Yes. The City wants to substantially reduce the flooding along Mill Creek and Peaks Branch. Engineers retained by the City have determined where the tunnel should be located in order to maximize the reduction in flooding. Accordingly, the City needs these easements to construct the tunnel. Before the City may use its power of eminent domain to acquire an easement for this project, the law requires the City to provide you with a written appraisal from a certified appraiser detailing the adequate compensation you are owed for your easement, and make a bona fide offer to buy the easement. If you refuse the City's offer, you are entitled to a hearing before a court-appointed panel of three special commissioners. After the hearing, the special commissioners will determine the amount of compensation the City owes for the easement. If either you or the City is unsatisfied with the compensation awarded by the special commissioners, you and the City have the right to a trial by a judge or jury. If either you or the City is dissatisfied with the trial court's judgment, you and the City may appeal that decision.

Mill Creek/Peaks Branch/State Thomas Drainage Relief Tunnel Fact Sheet

- On November 6, 2012, the citizens of Dallas approved Proposition #2 to alleviate flooding issues along Mill Creek, Peaks Branch and State Thomas Watersheds.
- To address the flooding throughout the southern portions of these areas, a relief tunnel will be built.
- The tunnel will be built using a Tunnel Boring Machine.
- The total tunnel length is approximately 5 miles.
- The tunnel diameter is 30 feet.
- The minimum tunnel depth is 100 feet.
- The project will outfall to White Rock Creek, south of Scyene Road.
- Once constructed, the areas downstream of the tunnel should have sufficient stormwater capacity to meet the 100-year storm event under current conditions.
- **TIMELINE:**
 - 1 year of design remains
 - 2 years to obtain easements, advertise and bid project (concurrent with design)
 - Construction is anticipated to begin in early 2015
 - Construction is anticipated to be complete in 2019



Mill Creek/Peaks Branch/State Thomas Watersheds



Drainage Relief Tunnel Location