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In 2009, House Bill 2642 established the Texas Historic Roads and Highways Program, the goal of which is to identify, designate, interpret, and market historic roads and highways in Texas. The Texas Historical Commission (THC) and the Texas Department of Transportation jointly administer the program with the goals of identifying and commemorating historic highways in Texas, and producing a series of interpretive publications to encourage heritage tourism. The Texas Historic Roads and Highways Program is made possible by Federal Transportation Enhancement Program funds provided by the U.S. Federal Highway Administration.

The inaugural effort of the Texas Historic Roads and Highways Program, now underway, is the preparation of a historic context detailing the development of the Bankhead Highway and other named highways in Texas. The program's primary focus is the Bankhead, a transcontinental roadway that travels from Washington, D.C. to San Diego, CA, crossing Texas via Texarkana to El Paso roughly following the routes of historic highways US 67 and US 80. Anticipated program outcomes include a survey report that identifies, documents, and evaluates historic resources along the Bankhead Highway, an upgraded version of the THC's online Historic Sites Atlas, and the development of an online portal to distribute information to the public.

Since August, a team of professional historians and architectural historians has been conducting a series of public outreach meetings and field survey trips to document historic buildings and structures along the Bankhead Highway. The public outreach meetings will wrap up by December, and program staff will continue to receive input and materials until Spring 2014. The project is scheduled for completion by July 2014.

"The Bankhead Highway played a major role in helping to build and grow many of our local communities, and this project reminds us all that transportation infrastructure is truly the underpinning of our daily lives," said State Rep. George Lavender (R-Texarkana). "It connects family and friends, helps ensure that goods and services get to market, and that first responders can effectively serve their communities. As a member of the House Transportation Committee, I appreciate this effort to document and record the historic impact of our highways."



Photo of public outreach meeting in Mount Vernon (60-70 people in attendance); photo by East Texas Journal.



Photo Courtesy of THC staff: Auto repair shop in Texarkana



Photo courtesy of THC staff: BH Shot near Redwater

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