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Archeological Survey of the Arroyo Roma Access Driveway, Starr County, Texas

Christopher Ringstaff

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Archeological Survey of the Arroyo Roma Access Driveway, Starr County, Texas

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Report for Archeological Survey

Archeological Survey of the Arroyo Roma Access Driveway, Starr County, Texas.

Christopher Ringstaff, Principal Investigator,
Antiquities Permit No. 8597

The environmental review, consultation, and other actions required by applicable Federal environmental laws for this project are being, or have been, carried-out by TxDOT pursuant to 23 U.S.C. 327 and a Memorandum of Understanding dated 12-16-14, and executed by FHWA and TxDOT.

Abstract

On October 11, 2018, TxDOT conducted an intensive archeological survey for the proposed Arroyo Roma Driveway project. The project consists of an access drive for the channelized Arroyo Roma Drainage facility in the City of Roma, Starr County, Texas. A small parcel of new ROW is proposed for the project. Given the limited ground disturbing impacts with maximum depth of impact of 18 inches the project is

A 100 percent pedestrian survey and backhoe scraping was conducted at the survey area of the proposed near the Roma Cemetery. The pedestrian survey noted significant ground disturbing impacts from prior grading and road construction of US 83. Two trenches long were scraped reaching a maximum depth of approximately six feet. Below the disturbed surface soils, intact Holocene sediments provided a good indicator of excavation disturbance such as grave shafts and none were noted. No cultural materials, features, funerary items, or remains were observed during the backhoe scraping. As such, any possible unmarked graves associated with the cemetery do not extend into the existing ROW and no further work is recommended.

A TxDOT archeologist evaluated the potential for the proposed undertaking to affect archeological historic properties (36 CFR 800.16(l)) or State Antiquities Landmarks (13 TAC 26.12) as well as any unmarked graves associated with the adjacent Roma Cemetery (13TAC 22 and Health and Safety Code Chapters 711 and 712) or the proposed FM 3338 roadway improvement project. Based on the pedestrian survey and gradall scraping of the APE, no archeological sites, archeological materials, grave shafts, human remains, or funerary materials were observed in the proposed project area. In addition, the majority of the APE had been substantively impacted by prior transportation construction and utilities. Based on these observed impacts and the results of the survey, any sites in the APE would likely lack sufficient integrity of location, association, and materials to be able to address important questions of prehistory or history (36CFR60.4 and would not be considered eligible for listing to the NRHP (36 CFR 60.4) or for designation as a SAL (13 TAC 26.8) and no further work is warranted for the project area.

Project Identification

- **Date:** 10/17/2018
- **Date(s) of Survey:** 10/11/2018
- **Archeological Survey Type:** Reconnaissance Intensive
- **Report Version:** Draft Final
- **Jurisdiction:** Federal State
- **Texas Antiquities Permit Number:** 8597 **District:** Pharr
- **County or Counties:** Starr
- **USGS Quadrangle(s):** Roma Los Saenz West
- **Highway:** US 83/ Arroyo Roma Drainage Facility
- **CSJ:** 0038-07-058
- **Report Author(s):** Christopher Ringstaff
- **Principal Investigator:** Christopher Ringstaff

Texas Historical Commission Approval

Signature

Date

Project Description

- **Project Type:** Improved Access Driveway Project
- **Total Project Impact Acreage:** 0.06 **New Right of Way (ROW) Acreage:** 0.04
- **Easement Acreage:** 0.0 **Area of Pedestrian Survey:** 0.06 acres

Project Description and Impacts: As shown in the project location map (Appendix A), The project consists of the construction of an access drive for the Arroyo Roma Drainage Facility. This proposed project would construct an approximately 100-foot long and 16 foot-wide improved access drive for the current two-track dirt road. Approximately the total project acreage is a mere .06 acres with .04 acres of new ROW.

The APE is considered low probability to affect Archeological Historic Properties based on the scope of the project. However a single cemetery was noted in proximity to the APE. The Roma City Cemetery is located less than 25 feet south of the current project ROW. The Roma City Cemetery is quite old and dates back to the Eighteenth Century. As such, the purpose of the survey was primarily to access presence or absence, identifiable grave shafts, funerary items, or remains associated with the cemetery (see Appendix A).

Project Area Ownership:

The proposed project is located within TxDOT ROW and a private parcel (Parcel 16) currently being purchased by TxDOT.

Area of Potential Effect (APE):

The Area of Potential Effect (APE) for the project includes the entire approx. 120-foot long and 30-foot wide APE. The entrance of the project is on US 83 existing ROW and has an area of approximately .02 acres. The connecting parcel to the Arroyo Roma (Parcel 16) has an area of approximately .04 acres. The depth of impact for the proposed project is estimated at approximately 1.5 feet (16 inches).

Physiographic Setting:

Topography: The proposed project area is located in the South Texas Plains physiographic region of Texas.

Geology: A Geographic Information System (GIS) overlay analysis using the Bureau of Economic Geology Geologic Atlas of Texas Brownsville Sheet depicts the survey area as Holocene Alluium.

Soils: A Geographic Information System (GIS) overlay analysis using the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) State Soil Survey Geographic Database (STATSGO), maps soils in the project area as Rio Grande Silty Loam. Archeological sites found in this geomorphic setting are may range from surficial to shallowly or more deeply buried.

Land Use: Land use across areas the project areas consists of transportation ROW.

Vegetation: Vegetation across the project areas consists largely of post-clearing secondary growth cacti, and short grasses.

Estimated Ground Surface Visibility: very good 80-90 %

Previous Investigations and Known Archeological Sites:

A record search of the Texas Historical Commissions Archeological Sites Atlas (Atlas) was conducted on 10/4/2018. The Atlas search revealed two surveys have been conducted immediately adjacent to the project APE. The surveys were conducted on September 9, 2009 by TxDOT and SWCA working in conjunction on the associated Arroyo Roma Drainage Facility Project. No archeological sites are recorded in the survey area and no further work was recommended.

Surveyors: Christopher Ringstaff

Survey Methods

Given the proximity to Roma City Cemetery (see Appendix A), the survey methodology was geared to cemetery scraping usually done via backhoe or Gradall with a wide non-toothed bucket. The designated survey area was examined by controlled and closely monitored backhoe scraping.

Collection: NO YES If yes, specify facility

Survey Results

A 100 percent pedestrian survey and backhoe scraping was conducted at the defined survey of the Arroyo Roma Access Drive near the Roma City Cemetery. The pedestrian survey of the small project area noted significant ground disturbing impacts from prior road construction of US 83 at the entrance and trenching revealed fill material in the area of new ROW (see Appendix A and B). Two trenches were excavated reaching a maximum depth of approximately six feet. Below the disturbed surface soils and fill section, intact Holocene sediments provided a good indicator of excavation disturbance such as grave shafts and none were noted (see Appendix B). No cultural materials, features, funerary items, or remains were observed during the backhoe scraping. Based on the scraping and the absence of grave shafts, funerary items, hardware, or remains, it is evident that unmarked graves associated with the cemetery do not extend into the existing ROW and no further work is recommended.

Recommendations

A TxDOT archeologist evaluated the potential for the proposed undertaking to affect archeological historic properties (36 CFR 800.16(l)) or State Antiquities Landmarks (13 TAC 26.12) as well as any unmarked graves associated with the adjacent Roma City Cemetery (13TAC 22 and Health and Safety Code Chapters 711 and 712) in the survey area within the proposed FM 3338 roadway

improvement project APE. Based on results of the survey, no unmarked graves are present along the graded ditch margin near the cemetery and any archeological sites were observed in defined survey and would likely lack sufficient integrity of location, association, and materials to be able to address important questions of prehistory or history (36CFR60.4 and would not be considered eligible for listing to the NRHP (36 CFR 60.4) or for designation as a SAL (13 TAC 26.8). Based on these findings, no further work is warranted for the project area.

APPENDIX A

Project Figures



Project

Location Map. Arroyo Roma Access Drive Project, Starr County, Texas.



Extent of backhoe scraping near Roma Cemetery, Starr County, Texas.

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APPENDIX B

Project Photographs



Trench 1 at Arroyo Roma Access Drive Project Area within Parcel 16(looking northeast).



Trench 2 scraping on US 83 ROW near Roma Cemetery (looking west).