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City, School bond election set for Saturday

By Brad Rollins
Staff Reporter

One morning in October 2005, Maria Martinez walked two of her kids to the side of Texas 21 near the family's house, put them on San Marcos school bus No. 59 and watched as it moved down the road.

Minutes later, a big rig loaded down with 38 tons of sand slammed into the back of a two other trucks waiting behind the stopped bus on a stretch of the road without shoulders. The collision sent two dozen students to the hospital, two with broken bones.

Martinez's children were uninjured but it put a scare into her. She started a petition to lower the speed limit or upgrade the road and, with her husband, eventually collected scores of signatures from her neighbors on Texas 21.

"I was sure when I heard the crash that my kids were dead. They could have been and if it happened just a little differently, a lot of kids could have died," Martinez said.

With three children in San Marcos Consolidated Independent School District — and her too-close-for-comfort testimony of unsafe roads — Martinez would seem a likely voter in Saturday's bond proposals. With a job in San Antonio, she leaves town early in the morning and gets back late in the afternoon. Taking care of home and family takes up most of the rest of her time.

"I honestly think I may have heard something about this but it's definitely something I think I need to know more about," Martinez said.

A \$14.3 million proposition from the school district would provide enough money to finish the last three projects originally included in a \$122.7 million proposition approved by voters in 2004.

Hays County voters will decide whether to authorize a total of \$202 million — \$30 million for parkland and open space acquisition and \$172 million for a package of highway improvements. The state will reimburse the county up to \$133 million, as much as 85 percent, of the cost of adding lanes to 10.3 miles of Ranch Road 12 and six miles of Farm-to-Market Road 1626; building a three-miles segment of a loop around the city's east side; and adding turn lanes, possibly shoulders, to problem areas on Texas 21.

Officials from both entities are worried that, despite a deluge of letters and higher-than-average early voting turnout, voters won't know about, or won't turn out at the polls.

"My biggest concern is that those who have an interest in our schools may just not go out and vote. I believe that a majority of people believe we need to make these investments. I just want to make sure they get to the polls," said school board president Judy Allen.

For a list of polling locations, visit the county elections office Web site at http://elections.co.hays.tx.us/ For the county's page on the roads and parks proposals, visit http://2007bondprogram.co.hays.tx.us/ For the school district's page on the school construction bonds, visit www.smcsd.net/special/bond.htm

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