

August 20, 2013

Ms. Stacey Benningfield
I-35 Program Manager
Texas Department of Transportation
Austin District
PO Box 15426
Austin, TX 78761-5426

Dear Ms. Benningfield,

The Austin Bicycle Advisory Council (BAC) is a grassroots citizen group advising the City of Austin and other jurisdictions on all matters relating to the use of the bicycle. Its purposes are to provide feedback to Austin city staff on infrastructure and policy plans, to make recommendations about bicycle-related funding priorities, and to offer a public forum for all bicyclists to bring their concerns and opinions. The BAC has operated in its current form since 2007 and welcomes lively debates between citizens and city government.

According to the American Community Survey, Austin currently enjoys a 2% mode split for bicycling citywide, with as much as a 10% mode split for certain core areas. A recent community presentation involving the Dutch embassy, ThinkBike, showed our community how we can reach beyond that 2%: build a network of cycling facilities that is safe and easy to navigate for all ages, including beginning cyclists. With this network, children will have more freedom to venture out on their own, adults can get more exercise, and people can swap their cars for bicycles for short trips, thus reducing congestion in the core.

Reconnect Austin's I-35 Cut and Cap plan will dramatically improve the landscape for cyclists of all ages. TxDOT's other proposed options, including No-Build, will not reduce the barrier effect that I-35 currently has on cyclists. Between Lady Bird Lake and 15th Street, the only safe crossing is at Holly Street in the Rainey District. The Cut and Cap plan is assumed to generate safe crossings at 7th, 11th, and 12th Streets, giving beginning cyclists choices in crossing I-35, and increasing the connectivity for all cyclists from either side of I-35. It will also create a less polluted environment for cyclists and all citizens living near the corridor or using the surrounding area. The BAC would prefer a design for I-35 that prioritizes cyclists to one that simply maximizes automobile traffic throughput, and the Cut and Cap plan would best meet that preference.

The BAC respectfully requests your attention to the I-35 Cut and Cap plan as the fourth alternative for the urban core segment.

Sincerely,

Allison Kaplan, Chair
Austin Bicycle Advisory Council

Cc: Federal Highway Administration, Texas Division
Council on Environmental Quality
Honorable Kirk Watson of the Texas Senate
Honorable Mayor and Council of the City of Austin
Black + Vernooy Architecture and Urban Design