

To: Austin City Council and City Manager

From: The City of Austin Planning Commission

Date: March 25, 2014

Re: Recommendation on the Long-Range Capital Improvement Program Strategic Plan

Mayor, City Council, and City Manager,

As required annually by the City Charter, the City of Austin Planning Commission (PC) offers the following feedback and recommendations for consideration in regards to the Capital Improvements Program (CIP). In evaluating the CIP for the fiscal year 2014-2015, the CIP Committee of the PC considered the city's Long-Range CIP Strategic Plan (LRCSP). The LRCSP a newly developed tool created to guide and inform city officials and departments, as well as citizens and city commissions, more effectively. The LRCSP also presents a marked departure from CIP processes of the past in regards to how the CIP Committee analyzes fulfills its City Charter charge. The LRCSP and its development have made analyzing and evaluating the CIP much more efficient than in years past. Through the information provided within the annually updated LRCSP, we can better align our CIP in support of the Imagine Austin (Imagine Austin) Comprehensive Plan and its implementation, essentially bridging Imagine Austin and the CIP.

The LRCSP will be developed and drafted annually prior to the traditional 5-Year CIP Plan, with PC review and consideration during February and March. The Long-Range CIP Strategic Plan provides guidance and direction for the 5-year CIP Plan which outlines the City's projected major capital improvements during the following five years based on existing and anticipated available funding. Subsequently, the 5-Year CIP Plan is used as the basis for developing the capital budget as part of the City's annual budgeting process. Below is a diagram illustrating this relationship:



To assist the community and the PC to more completely understand the City's CIP, the LRCSP contains basic information about the CIP, as well as more detailed information about our infrastructure challenges and strategic investment opportunities. Appendix B of the plan is an index of rolling CIP needs organized by infrastructure categories as well as related on-going CIP programs and strategic projects.

An innovative feature of the LRCSP is the Strategic Investment Overlay maps. Organized through the lens of Imagine Austin implementation, these maps show the varying levels of intersecting CIP needs and priorities. The maps provide a launching point for further development of focused CIP projects and programs that meet multiple City priorities; however, the maps need to be taken in their respective individual context in regards to what they specifically illustrate. No single map is a comprehensive compilation of all CIP programs.

One of the key outcomes of the LRCSP is to provide a long-range strategic direction for the CIP program that directly supports the implementation of Imagine Austin. In achieving this outcome the Planning Commission acknowledges applied uses of the LRCSP, such as its ability to inform and launch CIP coordination and collaboration regionally and among other local CIP delivery agencies such as Travis County, Austin Community College, and the Austin Independent School District.

We also note the data-driven approach to the LRCSP and the need to develop its data resources and quality over time so it can realize its full potential; ongoing analysis is needed to identify additional areas and needs. It is our understanding that staff will continue to develop the LRCSP processes and address related data needs in the coming months and in subsequent planning cycles.

With that background the Planning Commission has the following Capital Improvement Program recommendations for FY 2014-15:

1. Strategic opportunities for CIP investment to implement multiple priorities of Imagine Austin are apparent in the Plaza Saltillo, North Lamar/Rundberg neighborhood Center, and Riverside Drive areas since these areas resonated across all map categories. In addition, certain highlighted areas resonated within certain maps, such as key corridors within the Compact and Connected map series and water corridors in the Nature and City series. These highlighted areas should be further analyzed by staff for strategic CIP project and program development.
2. Ongoing infrastructure needs related to meeting basic levels of service and keeping-up with growth exceed available funding across the CIP; however, focus should be on City facilities and mobility infrastructure as the need and funding gaps are the most apparent in these CIP infrastructure categories so the City can continue to provide exceptional service to our ever-increasing population.
3. Mobility infrastructure is a catalyst investment for several hot spot areas noted in the mapping exercise. Future mobility investments should be coordinated with affordable housing and other types of infrastructure where feasible to ensure a high return of investment for the community.
4. Due to the city-wide need related to green infrastructure and mobility, staff should leverage basic needs by coordinating and collaborating on the development of CIP program and projects in these areas. Leveraging is especially important to stormwater infrastructure due to the reprioritization of CIP funds related to the response to the October 2013 floods and reprioritization of CIP needs.
5. Finally, the development of CIP projects and programs should be cognizant of the strong relationships between mobility infrastructure and both public health and housing affordability.

We applaud the collaboration between the Capital Planning Office and multiple city departments in creating the LRCSP and the work that will surely follow as it is developed and applied.

Regards,

Alfonso Hernandez
Chair, PC CIP Committee

Dave Anderson
Chair, Planning Commission