

Arterial Corridor Reports

Urban Transportation Commission

May 13, 2014

The Austin Transportation Department, as part of the Austin Strategic Mobility Plan, has completed the preliminary engineering studies for the Airport Boulevard, North Lamar Boulevard & Burnet Road, Riverside Drive, and FM 969 Corridors. These corridors were part of the 2010 Mobility Bond package approved in November 2010 by Austin voters. These corridor reports are now available on the Austin Transportation Department's website at <http://austintexas.gov/department/corridor-studies>.

BACKGROUND

As part of the Austin Strategic Mobility Plan (ASMP), the City of Austin and the ASMP team implemented a robust public involvement process that worked with the community, a council appointed Citizens Task Force, and several other partnering agencies to develop the 2010 Mobility Bond program. The \$90 million bond package contained a variety of mobility improvements that included pedestrian, bicycle and transit facilities for selected roadways within the City of Austin. On November 2, 2010, Austin voters approved the bond package including funds to conduct a preliminary engineering study for Airport Boulevard, North Lamar Boulevard & Burnet Road, Riverside Drive, and FM 969.

PURPOSE

The purpose of performing the corridor studies was to identify the needs of the roadways in order to develop a multi-modal transportation system supportive of mixed-use, pedestrian, transit, and bicycle friendly development patterns. The projects required the establishment of a vision, plan, and implementation strategy for each corridor. The studies include the identification of short, mid, and long-term transportation improvements to improve safety; increase vehicular, pedestrian and bicycle mobility and accessibility; and improve quality of life along each of the corridors.

The process for each of the corridor studies included:

- A comprehensive public involvement process.
- Analyzing each corridor to identify key issues and needs and define the community vision.
- Land use and urban design recommendations to improve the function and appearance of the built environment and stimulate revitalization.
- Transportation analysis and recommendations for creating a safe, multi-modal, transit-supportive corridor, and identification of improvements for better circulation or connectivity.
- Identification of infrastructure improvements that would be required to implement the plan.
- Defining and prioritizing short-term solutions (typically those that can be implemented in the existing rights-of-way). These could include changes to intersections, medians, parking, signals, sidewalks and bike lanes, transit service, and more.
- Designing, costing out and evaluating medium-term solutions, generally involving redesigning and rebuilding the current roadway.
- Identifying and recommending long-term solutions, including changes to ordinances and policies, land-use planning, and improved ways to manage traffic and mobility.

CORRIDOR DETAILS

Airport Boulevard

The focus of this effort has been to create a long-term vision for the corridor. However, the ultimate outcomes of the process go beyond defining a vision to establishing a program of improvements and policy revisions that make incremental steps towards achieving the overall vision. The Airport Boulevard Project developed both short and medium/long-term recommendations for consideration as future funding opportunities arise, whether local, regional, or national. Development of an overall “complete street” concept that provides for all users was a guiding principal throughout the process. This effort was closely coordinated with the Upper Airport Boulevard Initiative that is currently underway by the Planning and Development Review Department.

Short-Term Recommendations

Quick implementation of improvements within the corridor can help to show progress in the wake of a significant public outreach effort, while also helping to move traffic in a more efficient manner throughout the corridor. Since intersections are one of the most significant factors controlling a corridor’s overall mobility, properly planned intersections and evaluation of new types of intersection control will assist in making incremental steps toward the ultimate vision for the corridor. Improvements to intersections were a focus of the Airport Boulevard Corridor Development Program, given the desire of the community to maintain a 4-lane configuration of the roadway. Pedestrian infrastructure and roadway crossing locations were areas of particular focus throughout the process.

Medium/Long-Term Recommendations

Medium and Long-Term projects will require significant amounts of coordination, planning, design, and ultimately funding in order to become a reality within the corridor. Construction of new bicycle and pedestrian improvements, implementation of the roadway vision established for the corridor, and addressing drainage and storm water improvements, are all part of the overall project recommendations.

North Lamar Boulevard and Burnet Road

This effort developed a set of recommendations to improve safety, mobility, and quality of life along Burnet Road (from Koenig Lane to MoPac) and North Lamar Boulevard (from US 183 to IH 35). A significant portion of residents along the Burnet Road and North Lamar Boulevard corridors are dependent on transportation modes such as walking, biking, and transit. Both roadways have significant pedestrian access needs some of which are caused by the fact that much of the storm drain systems consist of open ditches being adjacent to the roadway where sidewalks are typically located. This results in limited pedestrian access in many areas, as well as some flooding issues that must be addressed. Recommendations focus on all road users, including pedestrians, cyclists, and transit users, not just motorists. Portions of both of these roadways are TXDOT facilities. They will require investments to be converted from a facility originally designed to move highway type traffic to a modern urban facility suitable for all users.

Short-Term Recommendations

Roadway reconstruction projects are typically long-term projects, however, areas of particular need along both Burnet Road and Lamar Boulevard were identified for the short term implementation of complete roadway reconstruction projects. These locations are Koenig Lane to Anderson Lane on Burnet Road, and Rundberg Lane to Braker Lane on North Lamar Boulevard. Additional short term

recommendations include intersection improvements, signalized pedestrian crossings, bicycle facilities, street lighting and transit facility improvements.

Long-Term Recommendations

The long term recommendations consist of the continuation of the complete reconstruction that was initiated by the short term improvement projects. The roadway reconstruction includes raised medians, wide sidewalks with trees and street furniture, bicycle “cycle tracks”, bus pullouts, storm water drainage infrastructure, signalized pedestrian crossings, and driveway consolidations.

Riverside Drive

The East Riverside corridor study takes the vision of the East Riverside Corridor Master Plan and outlines an execution plan to make the vision a reality. This project also involved a multi-faceted “complete street” approach to provide a plan which includes a pedestrian friendly environment while offering multimodal access to areas of work, residence and recreation.

Short-Term Recommendations

These improvements focus on intersection improvements such as lane reconfigurations and the replacement of striping, signage, signals, ramps, and pavement. Pedestrian improvements such as sidewalk additions and replacements, and bicycle improvements such as the addition of signage, pavement markings and bicycle lanes along selected cross streets are also included in the short-term recommendations.

Medium-Term Recommendations

These improvements involve access management improvements such as driveway closures/consolidation as well as the closure of specific median openings. These actions will improve mobility and reduce pedestrian automobile conflicts.

Long-Term Recommendations

The long-term improvements that are recommended for East Riverside Drive are meant to change the overall physical operation of the corridor and be constructed with the planning horizon year 2025. Key long-term improvements include constructing center running high capacity transit from IH-35 to SH 71, cycle tracks, sidewalk areas that conform to the Riverside Drive Regulating Plan, additional pedestrian crossings of Riverside Drive, and landscaping including street trees along the median and sidewalks.

FM 969

FM 969 is located in East Austin and extends east through Travis County to Bastrop County. *Imagine Austin*, the city’s newly adopted comprehensive plan, has identified the area served by FM 969 / East MLK Jr. Boulevard as a desired growth area. Many large residential and mixed-use developments are planned for the area over the coming decades. This corridor development program determined the future transportation impacts of additional development served by FM 969 corridor and identifies a range of projects, policies, and/or services to improve mobility and safety.

Short-Term Recommendations

Recommended short-term improvements include those projects that can be implemented quickly and that do not require the purchase of additional right-of-way or roadway widening. Some short-term recommendations include installing traffic signals at SH 130 ramps (a project that has been completed), constructing new sidewalks and shared use paths, and installing safety lighting to existing signal poles.

The recommended short-term improvements address immediate needs related to bicycle and pedestrian safety.

Long-Term Recommendations

Long-term improvements are split into interim long-term improvements and ultimate long-term improvements. The interim long-term improvements are currently under design as road expansion projects being financed through a Pass-Through Financing agreement between Travis County and TXDOT. These projects are an interim step toward ultimate roadway improvements. Ultimate typical sections for FM 969 / East MLK Jr. Boulevard show a painted, raised, or landscaped median for different sections, striped or separated bicycle lanes, sidewalks on both sides of the roadway, a shared-use path in some sections, and at least four travel lanes.

The recommended long-term improvements to fully address future traffic volumes in 2025 require adding a third travel lane in each direction between US 183 and SH 130. The additional lanes will reduce congestion in the peak periods and will require additional ROW and significant utility adjustments.

MOVING FORWARD

The completion of the preliminary engineering study for these corridors represents a significant achievement through the Austin Strategic Mobility Plan and the Imagine Austin Plan. While it is in fact significant, there are still many roadway corridors within the City of Austin that would benefit from a similar analysis effort. One additional corridor, South Lamar Boulevard, was approved for analysis through the 2012 bond program. Guadalupe Street, in the vicinity of the University of Texas, has also received funding for conducting an analysis of that corridor.

Funding is needed to implement the recommended improvements for the corridors that have been studied. The 2012 bond package included partial funding for North Lamar Boulevard and Burnet Road corridors in the amount of \$15 million. Funding in the amount of \$1million was also approved for improvements to Riverside Drive with funding allocation beginning in FY 14.