

RESOLUTION NO.

WHEREAS, the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) has initiated an Environmental Impact Study to evaluate alternatives for improving mobility along US 290 and SH 71 in southwest Austin, including the Oak Hill “Y” intersection, and has included the alternative of a new limited-access roadway; and

WHEREAS, TxDOT, in cooperation with Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority (CTRMA), is preparing a federal Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for this project, named the “Oak Hill Parkway”; and

WHEREAS, the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO) 2030 Plan defines a parkway as a 'freeway without frontage roads', one example being MoPac between Lady Bird Lake and RM 2222; and

WHEREAS, since March 2006, local citizens organized as “Fix 290” sought to replace TxDOT's proposed elevated tollway and parallel frontage roads with a smaller footprint 'parkway' design through a critical 1.1 mile of US 290 between Williamson Creek and the “Y” intersection; and

WHEREAS, the project area would benefit from minimizing the US 290 physical footprint due to environmental sensitivities since it is in the Barton Springs zone, crosses and runs along the banks of Williamson Creek, and is bounded by a high natural bluff and private property occupied by Freescale Semiconductor; and

WHEREAS, an elevated roadway has the potential to significantly impact the cohesiveness of the Oak Hill community; and

WHEREAS, community members in a series of open meetings have expressed a preference for a design that could preserve Williamson Creek and the large heritage trees along its banks that give Oak Hill its history and name and selected “Oak Hill Parkway” as the name to describe this concept; and

WHEREAS, if some of this land were preserved rather than paved, it could become an extension of existing City greenbelt along Williamson Creek, potentially adding parkland in the center of Oak Hill; and

WHEREAS, a parkway (defined as a freeway without frontage roads) is physically feasible in Oak Hill because TxDOT has already acquired a majority of the right-of-way in this corridor needed for mobility improvements, leaving only a minimal number of businesses on private, adjoining property that would require driveway access to frontage roads; and

WHEREAS, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Sec. 1502.14 “Alternatives including the proposed action” states “the environmental impacts of the proposal and the alternatives in comparative form” should be presented, “thus sharply defining the issues and providing a clear basis for choice among options”; and

WHEREAS, TxDOT and CTRMA did not advance a concept without continuous frontage roads into the third screening stage for the proposed “Oak Hill Parkway” project and doing so would provide an additional alternative that would contribute to more sharply defining associated issues of the project’s location; and

WHEREAS, a concept without continuous frontage roads would contribute to establishing a range of reasonable and feasible alternatives for a proposed project in an EIS, which meets its standards, and freeways without

frontage roads are the norm in 49 states other than Texas, therefore such alternative is reasonable to consider; and

WHEREAS, failure to include such reasonable and feasible alternatives in an EIS can lead to unplanned delays to project construction; and

WHEREAS, by State law, an equal number of non-tolled lanes must be maintained if a project utilizes tolling as a way of financing a project, and TxDOT and CTRMA typically use frontage roads to meet this State law requirement; and

WHEREAS, neither a non-elevated option nor a parkway is advancing and the EIS process has not yet concluded; **NOW, THEREFORE**,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF AUSTIN:

The City Manager is directed to recommend to CTRMA, TxDOT, and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) that a non-elevated and non-tolled “parkway” design with minimal frontage roads be advanced as an option for full and fair consideration under the EIS in the final design phases for the US 290/SH 71 Oak Hill Parkway project.

ADOPTED: August 28, 2014

ATTEST: _____

Jannette S. Goodall
City Clerk