

RESOLUTION NO.

WHEREAS, TxDOT is studying Interstate 35 (I-35) from Georgetown to Buda in a process referred to as Mobility 35; and

WHEREAS, the I-35 Capital Area Improvement Program (CAIP) currently being conducted by the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) represents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to rebuild the downtown Austin segment (Segment 5) of I-35; and

WHEREAS, in October 2013, Senator Watson helped appoint representatives of community groups to participate in the I-35 Downtown Stakeholder Working Group to recommend solutions to mobility, safety, and connectivity challenges along the interstate corridor in the downtown area; and

WHEREAS, this represents an opportunity to not only improve congestion, but also make central Austin safe and more connected, in keeping with Austin's community vision outlined in the adopted *Imagine Austin* Comprehensive Plan; and

WHEREAS, the placement of entrance and exit ramps has a significant impact on the freeway's overall design, as well as the possibility to reconnect cross streets for all modes of transportation; and

WHEREAS, TxDOT's current I-35 CAIP Implementation Plan shows a northbound exit ramp at 6th Street, which precludes the ability to connect 5th St. for all modes, and 4th St. for vehicles; and

WHEREAS, historic 6th Street is a pedestrian heavy street lined with historic structures and is frequently closed for both daytime and evening events; and

WHEREAS, the City is investing heavily in public improvements along 6th Street, including narrowing the street and widening sidewalks to better accommodate heavy entertainment-related usage; and,

WHEREAS, there are millions of square feet of residential, hotel, office, and retail projects now in the planning stages and under construction in downtown and in east Austin; and,

WHEREAS, in a July 2014 letter, the East Cesar Chavez Neighborhood Planning Team specifically requested “every east/west city street that abuts I-35 to be connected across I-35 by a multi-modal at-grade bridge, especially at 5th street;” and

WHEREAS, maximizing the east/west connections, above and beyond what exist today, through the heart of downtown will result in significant economic, cultural, and social benefits and is in the best interest of the City, and

WHEREAS, Council passed Resolution No. 20140306-025 stating its strong desire to see new east/west connections; and,

WHEREAS, depressing the main lanes of I-35 provides future opportunities for caps (or lids); and

WHEREAS, TxDOT’s work on Klyde Warren Park cap in Dallas is now seen as a huge economic and cultural generator for the region; and,

WHEREAS, TxDOT's current I-35 CAIP Implementation Plan shows one alternative with the main lanes of I-35 depressed below grade through downtown; and

WHEREAS, since 1997, Austin community and grassroots organizations have been vocally advocating for a depressed I-35 through downtown Austin, including a formal request from the Downtown Austin Alliance (DAA) which notes the DAA's primary priority with regard to the design of I-35: "Remove the barrier to East Austin and reconnect the grid with depressed traffic lanes;" and

WHEREAS, community groups representing 23,000 citizens of Austin again wrote letters to TxDOT in 2013 requesting further study of depressing and potentially capping I-35; and

WHEREAS, the City of Austin and the Urban Land Institute will be doing a Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) on I-35 through downtown per Resolution No. 20140807-100 scheduled for February 2015; and,

WHEREAS, the citizens of Austin, both now and for the past 17 years, have indicated a strong and documented preference for TxDOT's "Depressed" Alternative and rejected TxDOT's "Modified Existing" alternative also known as the elevated alternative; **NOW, THEREFORE,**

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

The City Manager is directed to communicate to TxDOT and the TxDOT Executive Director, personally, the need and desire of the City of Austin to maximize the east/west connections in the downtown/east Austin area, through the use of I-35 right-of-way, above and beyond existing connections,

and to discuss with TxDOT the City's strong preference to create a two-way, two-lane, at grade connection along 5th Street while keeping all existing east/west connections open and available.

The City Manager is further directed to work with TxDOT to aggressively pursue engineering solutions to any obstacles that may arise in order to maximize the City's downtown/east Austin connectivity. The City Manager and Traffic Engineer should endeavor to resolve any inadvertent negative effects on Austin traffic that might result from a TxDOT design that changes currently proposed ramp placement and increases connectivity.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager is directed to communicate the City of Austin's preference that the "Modified Existing" Alternative, also known as the elevated version, not proceed in the National Environmental Policy Act process.

ADOPTED: _____, 2014

ATTEST: _____
Jannette S. Goodall
City Clerk