

MOPAC SOUTH ENVIRONMENTAL STUDY

INFORMATION SHEET – March 2015

(Information is preliminary and subject to change.)



ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE LADY BIRD LAKE BRIDGE



MoPac Expressway over Lady Bird Lake

The Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority (Mobility Authority) and the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) are working collaboratively with public and local partners to find solutions for improving mobility along MoPac from Cesar Chavez Street to Slaughter Lane. Within the MoPac South Environmental Study limits, there are two MoPac bridges, each approximately 400 ft., over Lady Bird Lake. If approved, the proposed project would add additional lanes at this location.

POTENTIAL EXPANSION OF THE EXISTING LADY BIRD LAKE BRIDGE

As proposed, additional lanes would be constructed within the 200 - 317 ft. of existing TxDOT right-of-way. Two new lanes would be added between the two existing bridges, requiring the bridges to be widened. An additional two new lanes would be added approximately 25 to 30 ft. above the existing bridge deck. Any additional structure would be designed to minimize visual impacts, and the community would be invited to help develop aesthetic treatments as part of a Context Sensitive Solutions process. Full-scale demolition of the bridge is not expected, and any new columns needed to support the new lanes would be spaced to reduce impacts to water flow. Column drill shafts would be designed and constructed to limit impacts to the lakebed.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROLS FOR LADY BIRD LAKE

A Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) will be developed to describe the storm water management controls and various Best Management Practices (BMPs) necessary to reduce pollutants in storm water runoff from leaving the construction site and entering the lake. The SWPPP will include emergency procedures in the event of a hazardous spill during construction and include the use of sediment curtains to contain any sediment disturbed and prevent displacement (cloudy and muddy water). The SWPPP is subject to approval by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ).

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 **Existing Lady Bird Lake bridge structure, Close-up on bridge railing**

Additional BMPs include the use of Permeable Friction Course pavement and other water quality controls, such as water quality ponds or vegetative filter strips, as well as best practices from previous lake construction.

Recent successful construction projects over Lake Bird Lake include the Boardwalk Trail (2014) and the initial phase of the Pflugger Bridge (2001).

Due to its proximity to the Edwards Aquifer recharge zone, the project would also include the preparation of a Water Pollution Abatement Plan (WPAP) for approval by TCEQ. Any new impervious cover over the recharge zone must meet the Edwards Aquifer Rules for the removal of total suspended solids from storm water runoff.

● ACCESS TO DOWNTOWN

Similar to the MoPac Improvement Project north of Cesar Chavez Street, the MoPac South Environmental Study is proposing mobility improvements that would connect directly from the proposed Express Lanes to Cesar Chavez Street.

● PARKLAND AND RECREATIONAL AREAS

We do not anticipate the need to acquire land from adjacent recreational areas and parkland, such as Deep Eddy or the tennis courts at Austin High School.



 **Pedestrian bridge below MoPac**

TxDOT's right-of-way over Lady Bird Lake is used by pedestrians, bicyclists and watercraft enthusiasts. Any improvements would be designed and constructed in a manner that avoids and minimizes disruption of recreational activities.

It has not been determined whether temporary closures of recreation facilities during construction will be needed. This could include the pedestrian bridge under the southbound bridge. No permanent closures are anticipated.

The bridges over Lady Bird Lake are currently illuminated across the entire span, and any new lanes would also have this continuous lighting. Upgrading the existing lighting and/or adding lighting will be

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considered, including upgrading to LED lighting. Lighting for new lanes would emphasize the importance of avoiding and minimizing light pollution and conform to TxDOT guidelines.

● ● **BUG, BIRD, AND BAT HABITAT**

Lady Bird Lake and the existing MoPac bridge structure do not provide habitat for any threatened or endangered species. The area does provide habitat for aquatic species, Rock Doves, and possibly a particular swallow species. Swans can be found nesting on Lady Bird Lake, as well as migratory waterfowl in the fall/winter. There is no bat habitat in the existing bridge structure. Aquatic species would benefit from the BMPs to protect water quality. Bird species would be protected through compliance with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, which calls for construction activities that directly impact nesting birds to occur outside of the nesting season (April through mid-August). Compliance with this Act minimizes the loss, destruction or degradation of habitat, and requires that nests are checked prior to any disturbance.

● ● **REGULATORY AGENCY OVERSIGHT**

The following agencies comprise the project's Technical Working Group and will be given an opportunity to review the environmental document:

- Barton Springs Edwards Aquifer Conservation District,
- City of Austin,
- Federal Highway Administration,
- Texas Parks and Wildlife Department,
- TxDOT,
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers,
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency,
- U.S. Department of the Interior,
- U.S. Department of Agriculture,
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service,
- TCEQ, and
- Texas Historical Commission.