



MEMORANDUM

TO: City of Austin Council Mobility Committee
FROM: Justin Word, Director of Project Management, Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority
DATE: September 2, 2015
RE: MoPac South Environmental Study Update

The Mobility Authority would like to provide an update of the MoPac South Environmental Study. Several stakeholder groups, including Travis County and the City of Rollingwood, as well as a number of individual stakeholders, submitted informal suggestions for improving the operational configuration of the Express Lane Alternative for evaluation by the project team. The City of Austin submitted a more formal operational configuration, including a sketch-level drawing of the proposal.

The Mobility Authority has allocated \$300,000 to fully evaluate the City of Austin concept. These efforts include assessment of horizontal and vertical feasibility, evaluation of environmental considerations (noise, visual, park impacts, historic), determination of lane requirements based on travel demand models, determination of right-of-way requirements and operational analysis. Activities completed or substantially underway on the City of Austin concept include detailed engineering geometric layout and feasibility analysis to verify the concept is physically possible, computer-based microsimulation operational analysis to validate traffic flows as expected, preparation of detailed construction cost estimates, and investigation related to environmental constraints and potential impacts to park land and historic resources.

Five additional operational configurations are being evaluated as well. Descriptions of all of the configurations under analysis are described below.

- One Express Lane in each direction with direct connections to and from Cesar Chavez
- One Express Lane in each direction without a direct connection to and from Cesar Chavez
- Two Express Lanes in each direction with direct connections to and from Cesar Chavez
- Two Express Lanes in each direction without a direct connection to and from Cesar Chavez
- Two Express Lanes in each direction without a direct connection to or from Cesar Chavez, but with ramps near Barton Skyway. One ramp would take northbound traffic with a destination downtown from the Express Lanes to an auxiliary lane on the outside of the general purpose lanes near Barton Skyway, the other would take downtown traffic headed southbound from an outside auxiliary lane directly into the Express Lanes to continue southbound.
- The City of Austin unconstrained configuration with two Express Lanes in each direction between Cesar Chavez and US 290, one Express Lane in each direction between US 290 and Slaughter Lane, as well as collector-distributor roads and ramping variations.

These concepts and the supporting technical information will be made available for comment at the next Open House, tentatively scheduled for November 2015.

In addition to the operational configurations currently being developed, the Mobility Authority and the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization have engaged the Center for Transportation Research (CTR) at the University of Texas to provide dynamic traffic assignment modeling. These services will include developing and maintaining advanced modeling tools for use in the Austin region, and applying those tools to answer questions related to the planning and/or operations of roadway and transit services. These models will provide information regarding the potential impact of adding Express Lanes with or without a direct connection on the downtown core. Since the last presentation to the Council's Mobility Committee on August 5, 2015, we met with CTR and received updates on their work as well as provided additional guidance and some minor revisions to their approach given the feedback and input we have received from stakeholders. Refinements are being made now, and the analysis will be made available for stakeholder meetings beginning in late September. The information will also be made available at our next Open House meeting.

In addition, Mobility Authority staff has met 5 times with Austin Transportation Department staff to discuss and incorporate City input in the iterative design process and decision making framework. These meetings have allowed our staff to provide updates and follow-up engineering analysis for questions or matters raised by City staff, and provided the entire team with information needed to make collective design decisions to move the project forward.

The following is the projected schedule and activities leading up to the next project Open House.

Tentative Schedule until next Open House:

- September: Complete refinements to operational configurations and finalize CTR analysis of Downtown connection
- Late September: Begin stakeholder meetings and continue analysis
- November: Open House and Virtual Open House for public comment

About the MoPac South Environmental Study:

The MoPac South Environmental Study will thoroughly analyze the MoPac Expressway from Cesar Chavez Street to Slaughter Lane and determine the best alternatives for improving mobility. The result will be documented in an Environmental Assessment that will consider "build" and "no build" options, as well as traffic management strategies. Over the course of the study, a full range of alternatives will be developed that will take into account the needs of drivers, transit riders, bicyclists and pedestrians as well as surrounding businesses, neighborhoods and the environment. Through extensive analysis of the engineering feasibility, social, economic and environmental impacts of each alternative, as well as consideration of public input, the study team will recommend a solution.