

## **Bicycle Safety Task Force Summary and Recommendations**

### **April 15, 2016**

Travis County and the surrounding region has continued to see high rates of population growth. As this growth impacts the area's quality of life, it becomes increasingly important to plan and provide for safe alternative modes of transportation to ease the continuing problem of congestion. Coupled with the need to improve mobility, the area has seen increased numbers of persons bicycling and using roads to commute and for recreational purposes. As the use of alternative modes increases, it becomes ever more important to bring bicycle and pedestrian transportation into the mainstream of the county's ongoing management responsibilities including planning, organization, budgeting, programming and monitoring.

### **History**

State law allows the bicycle community to use public roads. However, the condition of some roads can make riding some roads risky. In 2011, voters approved \$3,300,000 for bike safety related projects in all four precincts of unincorporated Travis County. The Commissioners Court formed a Bicycle Safety Task Force (Task Force) with the objective to improve bicycle safety in the unincorporated areas of the County. The Task Force was chartered to provide three (3) deliverables to the Commissioner's Court; 1) List of projects to be completed with the 2011 Bike Safety bond funds, 2) Design Guidelines and 3) Bicycle Route Map, including a list of potential projects for consideration for future bond programs.

The appointed stakeholder members of the Bicycle Safety Task Force are:

Joe Gieselman: private citizen/recreational cyclist

Erick Benz: Bike Austin Board President/transportation cyclist

James Murff: 787 Racing/Team Brain & Spine Cycling/League of Bicycling Voters

Laura Dierenfield: Active Transportation Project Manager, City of Austin

Tomasita Louviere-Ligons: Black Girls Do Bike, Austin Chapter

The County included a group of advisors that provided key input to the Task Force:

Tom Wald: Bike Austin

Doug Ballew: Austin/Travis County HHS, Injury Prevention Program

Preston Tyree: Bike Safety Expert/League American Bicyclist/TX Bicycle Coalition

Nadia Barrera: City of Austin, Public Works

Chad Crager: City of Austin, Community Services Division, Bicycle & Urban Trails Program Manager

Andrew Willis: Texas Bicycle Racing Assoc./Holland Racing, LLC

Sara Krause: County Judge Sarah Eckhardt Representative

Barbara Rush: Precinct 2 Commissioner Brigid Shea Representative

Bob Moore: Precinct 3 Commissioner Gerald Daugherty Representative

## **Recommended Bond Project List**

Safety and cost/effectiveness were identified as the major priorities in selecting the short term list to be funded from the 2011 Bond. The proposed bicycle improvements are located on some of the highest used routes in the county and will increase the bicyclist's safety while using these routes (see Table A and Map 1). The recommended 2011 Bond project list includes:

- Three Pedestrian Hybrid Beacons (PHB)- Two PHBs at locations on the popular Austin-to-Manor bikeway as it crosses Johnny Morris Road and one PHB on Quinlan Park Road at a perennial safety crossing issue at Steiner Ranch Elementary School;
- Bullick Hollow Road and Circle Drive- These roads are currently scheduled to be paved, the Task Force recommends having them construct an additional 2-foot shoulder to provide a minimal buffer for the bicyclists traveling at slower speeds, especially where there are poor sight distances at curves along the roads.
- Howard Lane- Apply chipseal and restripe for a 4-6 foot bike lane to complete a gap between McNeil Round Rock Rd. and McNeil Drive, improvement provides improved connectivity to Capital Metro's Howard Lane Station
- Southwest Parkway- Application of slurry seal, a nominal expenditure to smooth over the rough trap rock along the shoulders between Travis Cook Road and SH 71 W, another popular bike route.

## **Freewheel and Spoke Bike Network Proposal**

Through the bond project selection process, the Task Force came to understand that the proposed projects only chipped away at the critical connectivity issues for biking. After evaluating numerous locations for the prioritizing of projects for the 2011 bond funds, the Task Force further developed a list of recommended projects that should become part of the next round of bond funding (see Table B and Map 2).

To accomplish this, the Task Force developed a plan identifying a network of routes that improved connectivity and provided safe opportunities into Travis County by bike. To further this concept, the Task Force developed the Travis County Freewheel and Spoke network. While no one entity has the ability to resolve all these connectivity issues, the first step is to recognize the problem. The idea is for Travis County to provide leadership

in this area to encourage the type of interjurisdictional cooperation necessary to achieve the vision.

Currently there is a ring around Austin where getting from inside the City to the surrounding communities, parks, and to lower volume roads in unincorporated Travis County is now blocked to most people who want to bike there. To resolve this, the Task Force developed a Travis County Freewheel and Spoke map (see Map 3). The purpose of this map is to identify corridors and routes out and around the City passing through what was affectionately described by participants as the “donut of danger”. This name came about because this ring has become increasingly more difficult to cross. The idea started with the concept that there should be at least one safe route from the center of Austin/Travis County in each direction: North, South, East, and West along with NE, SE, SW, and NW. This means at least eight safe, fast, and easy to navigate routes. In addition important surrounding communities and facilities were connected to form the Freewheel and Spoke map.

The use of the term “freewheel” was used to connote a classification of bikeway that is on par with the highway classification of freeway, meaning that the design standards for grades, sight distances, buffers to traffic, intersections crossings, etc. promote the highest level of bike safety with minimal disruptions. The Austin-to-Manor bikeway is as an example of such a freewheel facility, that if constructed, will attract high volumes of bike users. The heart of the Travis County Freewheel and Spoke network is an all ages and abilities facility designed that works for everyone. It is focused on network connectivity, promoting access and encouraging participation. The base design concept of this infrastructure are shared use paths to accommodate the large number of people who currently don't bike or don't bike often and want to bike more. These folks won't be comfortable and hence won't use infrastructure that is not separated from motor vehicle traffic. And this is where corridors without gaps in them, along the eight routes out of the city and connections between spokes, are critical.

The Task Force wants to acknowledge the continued need for both on street/road and off street/road facilities. There is not one set of infrastructure that will meet the needs of everyone who rides a bike that can be built in every location. Many of the current bike users need infrastructure that includes wide shoulders, bike lanes, and protected bike lanes. These users include many transportation and recreational cyclists. They tolerate the proximity to motor vehicles but they need the proper infrastructure to get where they are going. These accommodations can often be fit into or onto the current streets; they are there today and connectivity is critical to them today. We must continue to make reasonable accommodations for on street facilities.

The Task Force was not able to complete a detailed or comprehensive list for all these routes or identify specific infrastructure needed. What we could do is provide a template for the corridors and a vision for the type of infrastructure needed. With that in mind, the Freewheel and Spoke system provides an essential regional asset that will facilitate healthy transportation alternatives.

## Design Guidelines

The Task Force believes it is not enough to select a few bike projects to expend \$3 million in county bond funds authorized by the voters in the 2011 and then call it a day. The Task Force and we believe the Commissioners Court wants and expects more, much more. The Task Force wants to see bicycle and pedestrian transportation integrated into the county organization and institutionalized as a function of county government. To this end, the Task Force has made a series of recommendations to the County Commissioners Court that would bring bicycle and pedestrian transportation into the mainstream of the county's ongoing management responsibilities including planning, organization, budgeting, programming and monitoring.

The Task Force provides the following additional recommendations for consideration by the Commissioners Court:

- Approve a position in its 2017 Operating Budget for a Bicycle/Pedestrian Planning position.
- Within a year and working in concert with other local transportation agencies develop and adopt a Travis County Bicycle Master Plan for both off-system (within greenways, open space) and on-system (within roadway right-of-way) facilities.
- Adopt policies that put bicycle and pedestrian transportation "on par" with vehicular transportation.
- Integrate bicycle way construction and maintenance, signage and striping into the Annual Work Program of the Road and Bridge Division and the Parks Division of TNR.
- Amend the subdivision design standards and the CIP design standards to include standards for the design of bicycle facilities ~~by the private developers and the County's Transportation and Natural Resources Department.~~
- By 2017, integrate planned bicycle/pedestrian facilities into design and budget of the county's capital improvements projects and subsequent acquisition of right of way.
- Integrate bicycle safety into the County's traffic safety program, including the setting of regulatory speed limits, installation of traffic signs, signals, and beacons.
- Adopt elements of the "Zero Vision" policy that would reduce traffic fatalities through the engineering design of the county's road system that would minimize the conflict and speed differential between bicycles/pedestrians and motor vehicles. Additional information on Vision Zero is found below.
- Form a working group to further explore how to set up and take on the Vision Zero initiative including how to work with the cities in Travis County along with other important entities like CAMPO and TXDOT and how to scope and focus the County's efforts.

## **Adopt Vision Zero Plans and Policies for Travis County**

Vision Zero refers to a traffic safety concept that aims to reduce fatalities and serious injuries on roadways to zero for all road users. The Task Force is encouraged by the engagement Travis County has shown by participating in and working with the City of Austin's Vision Zero plan.

Furthermore the Task Force recommends that Travis County develop its own Vision Zero policies and plans. There are significant areas of Travis County not covered by the City of Austin's Vision Zero plan. The Task Force notes that the solutions in the unincorporated and more rural parts of Travis County are expected to be different than a predominantly urban and suburban setting found in the City of Austin.

We would encourage that the plan articulates ambitious goals including a two-year strategy to begin reducing traffic deaths in Travis County and working toward the goal of zero deaths and serious injuries by 2025. The actions in this plan should be evaluated and refined on an on-going basis.

A Vision Zero plan should be underpinned by several key principles:

- Traffic deaths and injuries are a preventable, public health issue. Any traffic death is too many.
- People will make mistakes; the transportation system should be designed so those mistakes aren't fatal.
- Safety is the primary consideration in transportation decision-making.
- Traffic safety solutions must be addressed holistically, through:
  - Education and culture change,
  - Enforcement and prosecution, and
  - Land use and transportation engineering.

Vision Zero is a data driven approach applied to the most prevalent and serious injuries and fatalities. It is critical that all modes of transportation and especially motor vehicles automobiles, trucks, and motorcycles be considered with all other road users including bicycles and pedestrians. This effort has the potential to be marginalized if we don't take everyone's safety into consideration. The Task Force would like to see a working group further explore how to set up and take on this initiative including how to work with the cities in Travis County along with other important entities like CAMPO and TXDOT and how to scope and focus the County's effort.

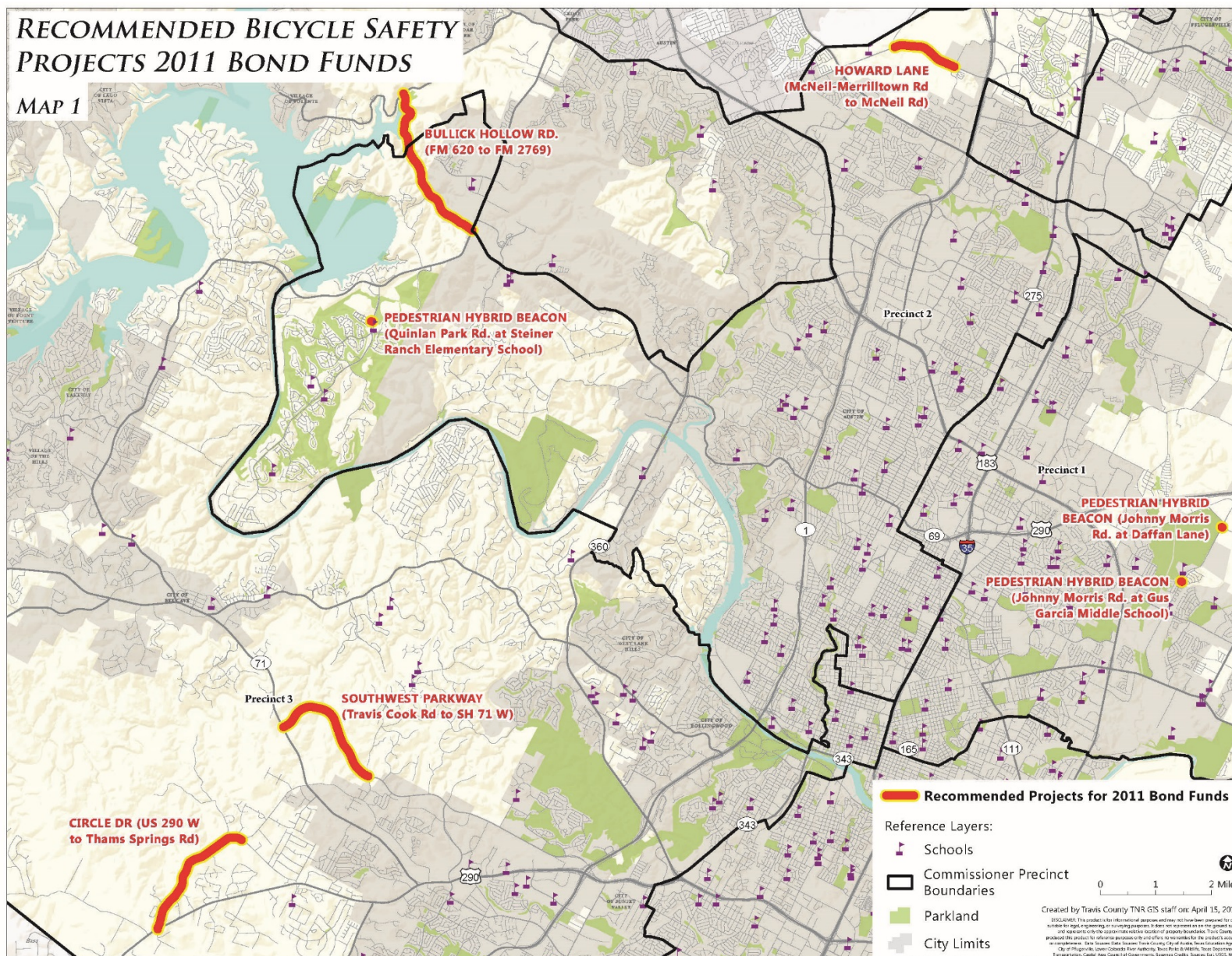
The Task Force expresses its thanks for being able to provide the proposed recommendations to the Commissioners Court. We hope these recommendations will provide guidance and more information into the decision making that occurs within County government. Overall, the Task Force will measure its success by the county's

sustained efforts to integrate bicycles and pedestrian transportation into its organization over the span of electoral cycles and through decades of programmed improvements.

DRAFT

<b>TABLE A</b> <b>Recommended Bicycle Safety Projects - 2011 Bond Funds</b>		
<b>Bicycle Safety Task Force Approved 10/9/2015</b>		
<b>Recommended Project</b>	<b>Project Description</b>	<b>Estimated Cost</b>
Pedestrian Hybrid Beacon (Johnny Morris Rd. at Daffan Lane)	Install Pedestrian Hybrid Beacon and approaches	\$87,000
Pedestrian Hybrid Beacon (Johnny Morris Rd. at Gus Garcia Middle School)	Install Pedestrian Hybrid Beacon and approaches	\$87,000
Pedestrian Hybrid Beacon (Quinlan Park Rd. at Steiner Ranch Elementary School)	Install Pedestrian Hybrid Beacon and approaches	\$87,000
Howard Lane (McNeil Round Rock Rd. - McNeil Dr.)	Construct chipseal and restripe for 4'+ bike lane	\$150,000
Bullick Hollow Road (RM 620 - FM 2769)	Construct 6' shoulders as designed ONLY. Will add lengths of 2' shoulders as budget allows	\$570,000
Circle Drive (US 290 W - Thomas Springs Rd.)	Construct 6' shoulders as designed ONLY. Will add lengths of 2' shoulders as budget allows	\$1,400,000
Additional 2' shoulders		\$859,000
Southwest Parkway (Travis Cook Rd. - SH 71 West)	Apply Slurry Seal	\$60,000
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$3,300,000</b>







**TABLE B**  
**CANDIDATE PROJECTS FOR 2017/2018 BOND ELECTIONS**

**(BSTF APPROVED 9/25/2015)**

<b><u>TRAIL NAME</u></b>	<b><u>SEGMENT</u></b>	<b><u>DISTANCE</u></b>	<b><u>JURIS.</u></b>	<b><u>COST</u></b>	<b><u>PRIORITY</u></b>	<b><u>COMMENTS</u></b>
<b><u>PARK BONDS</u></b> <b><u>(OFF SYSTEM)</u></b>						
Austin-to-Manor Trail	Decker Lane to Manor	3.9 miles	City/Co	\$6 M	A	
Onion Creek Trail	Burleson Road to FM 973 (ABIA)	1.8 miles	City	TBD	B	
Onion Creek Trail	FM 973 (Timber Creek Subdivision)	.81 miles	County	TBD	B	Corp of Engineers Project
North Walnut Creek Ph II	WC Metro Park to IH 35	.97 miles	City	TBD	A	Under design
North Walnut Creek Ph III A	IH 35 to Blue Goose	3.6 miles	City	TBD	C	
North Walnut Creek Ph III B	Blue Goose to S. Walnut Creek Trail, <b>or</b>	2.8 miles	City	TBD	C	
Austin-to-Pflugerville Trail	S. Walnut Creek Trail to Blue Goose	2.8 miles	County	TBD	B	MKT RR right of way (State)
Austin-to-Pflugerville Trail	Blue Goose to Pflugerville	3.6 miles	County	TBD	B	MKT RR right of way (State)
Gilleland Creek Greenbelt	Ben Fisher Park to FM 969	6.5 miles	County	TBD	B	
<b><u>TRAIL NAME</u></b>	<b><u>SEGMENT</u></b>	<b><u>DISTANCE</u></b>	<b><u>JURIS.</u></b>	<b><u>COST</u></b>	<b><u>PRIORITY</u></b>	<b><u>COMMENTS</u></b>
<b><u>ROAD BONDS</u></b> <b><u>(ON SYSTEM)</u></b>						
Circle Drive/Thomas Springs	SH 71 to US 290 W	4.0 miles	County	TBD	C	Complete remaining project

San Antonio Road	Austin CL to Hays Co. Line	3.2 miles	County	TBD	C	Needs Hays Co portion also
Old Lockhart Road	Slaughter Lane to Thaxton Road	3.4 miles	County	TBD	C	Part of Master Plan
Hamilton Pool Road	RM 12 to Blanco County Line	9.5 miles	County	TBD	C	
FM 973/SH 130	FM 969 to SH 71	4.2 miles	State	TBD	C	Some Bike Facility
FM 973	Moore's Bridge Road to Elroy Road	.1 mile	City	\$ 0.75 M	C	Shared use path, Project selected for TAP funding 2019
Elroy Road	Within ROW of SH130	.83 miles	State	\$ 0.6 M	B	Add sidewalks, Project selected for TAP funding 2019
US 290 W Bypass	Circle Drive to Fitzhugh	1.5 miles	County	TBD	B	Bike trail w/in gas line ROW
Fitzhugh Road	US 290 W to Travis County Line	2.9 miles	County	\$4.0 M	C	Add shoulders
PRIORITY A = Construction of planned bike trails on existing public property for which engineering has been completed						
PRIORITY B =Design and construction of planned bike trails on existing public property for which engineering has not yet been completed						
PRIORITY C = Design, right of way acquisition, and construction of planned bike trails for which right of way, engineering design, and construction has not been completed.						

**Map 2 - CANDIDATE PROJECTS FOR 2017/2018 BOND ELECTIONS- TO BE INSERTED**

## MAP 3

