

## **A case for multi-modal transportation in East Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Planning Area**

EMLK planning Contact team area spans 2 planning areas constituting of Pecan Springs, Springdale, MLK 183 and Oaksprings. This is a very large area with a population of 35 thousand people. The physical location is Airport Blvd. on the west, Johnny Morris on the east, Red Bluff Nature reserve and railroad track on the south and 51<sup>st</sup> street on the north side. Historically this has been one of the most underserved areas in the entire city. In the recent years there has been a population explosion due to unrestricted growth. The infrastructure to support this growth was never built hence there are major transportation issues in EMLK area.

### **Goal: Enablement not Entitlement, building equity through alternative modes of transportation.**

The proposed EMLK Hike and Bike tries to connect the following

5 major parks and green spaces which are

1. Red bluff Nature Reserve
2. Little Walnut Creek nature reserve
3. Springdale Park
4. Givens park
5. Morris Williams Golf Course

4 schools around the area - Ortega, Norman, Simms, Pecan Springs Elementary

1 Grocery which is HEB at Mueller

1 community center at Givens Park

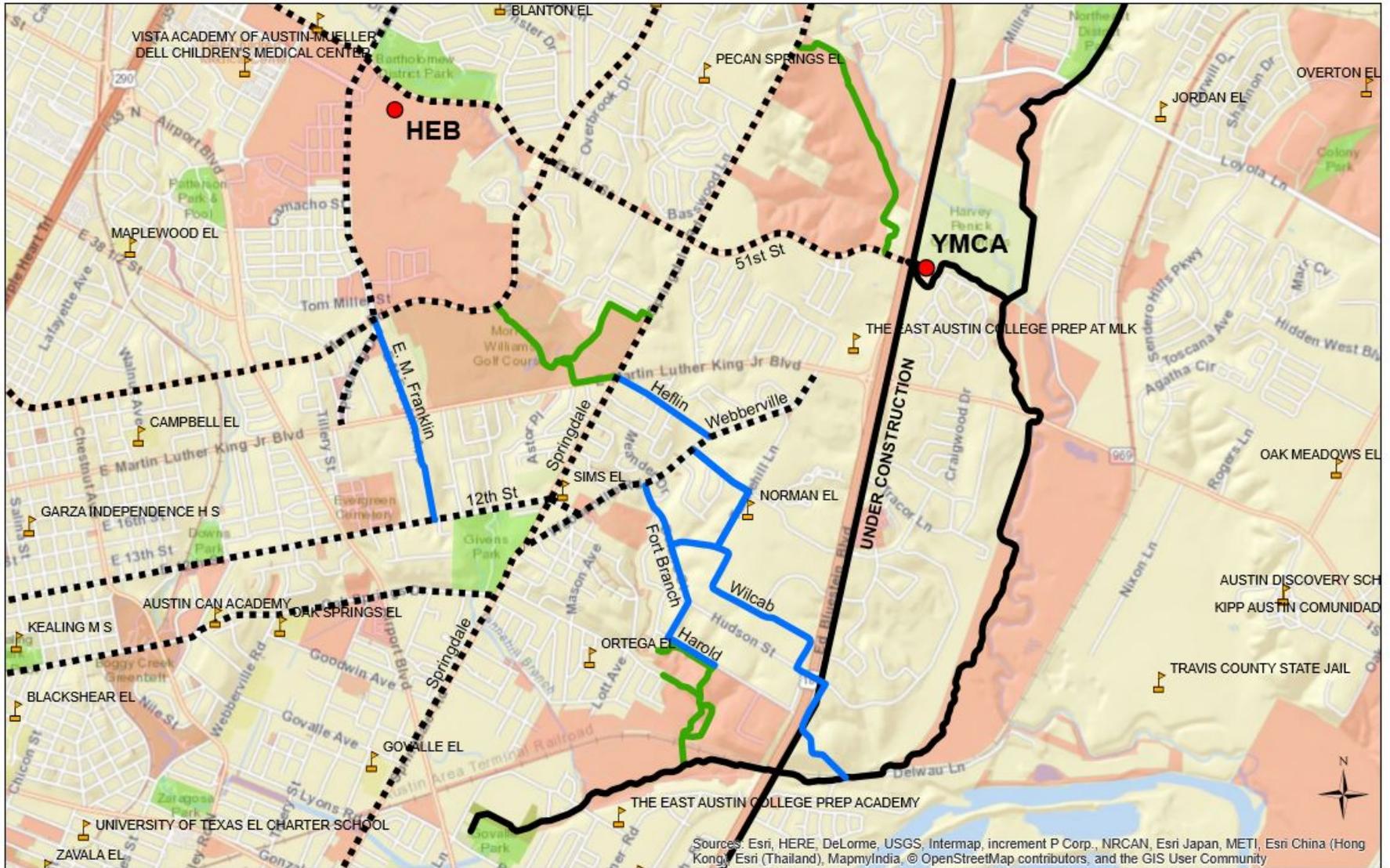
3 swimming pools - Bartholomew, Givens, Mueller

Transportation models influence econometric models which in turn affect all other models in modern society - the objective of the planning contact team is to facilitate the development of an “alternative” urban multi-modal transportation model in EMLK area which facilitates cycling, walking and alternate methods of transportation. For somebody who does not have an automobile, an alternate safe mode of transportation or mass-transit is not a choice but a “right”.

The entire EMLK area can be used as a canvas to provide equal rights to bicycles and cars by creating safe bicycle routes which are segregated from car routes through ground demarcation or physical barriers. Where ever possible we will use parks and other green areas (like Morris Williams Golf course) to reduce route lengths and take bicycles out of car routes.

The “equity” is in the form of transportation choice. Mueller HEB, being the only grocery in the area is visited is all neighbors from the south and providing a safe route to the grocery should be a mandate for the transportation commission. It is also important to mention that Mueller is also the source of employment for many of the southside neighbors. We want to provide people an option of choosing between paying their property tax and owning a car.

We have enormous support from the entire area including EMLK Planning Contact Team • Bike Austin • Bike Texas • District 1,3,9 CM offices • PSSNA • SANA • EMLKNA • Hogpen NA • PARD • Austin Yellow Bike Project.



## East MLK Neighborhoods Connectivity Trails



- Proposed bike lane or sidewalk
- Proposed off-road trails
- Existing bike lanes and trails (dotted lack protection)
- City of Austin Parcels

### **Facts about EMLK Hike and Bike Trail**

1. The economic impact of the hike and bike trail will be one of the biggest equity driver in the EMLK area for the next 25 years.
2. Cap Metro Routes are East-West Direction along the main routes like MLK, 12<sup>th</sup>, Manor. There is not much way to move from North to South.
  - EMLK Hike and Bike Trail Creates an opportunity of North-South Transit using alternate modes.
3. Much of the routes proposed in EMLK Hike and Bike Trail are already part of the Bicycle Master Plan or Austin Trails Master plan. EMLK Hike and Bike trail creates a comprehensive plan to create a value proposition.
4. The connectivity to YMCA will be greatly reduced when the 183 crossing at 51<sup>st</sup> street is closed. A hike and bike trail through Little Walnut Creek Park will greatly reduce various issues of going to YMCA which is the destination of thousands of kids along with their parents.
5. MLK Jr. Blvd is not bike friendly being under TXDOT. Riding on MLK Jr. Blvd can be suicidal.
6. There is no connectivity to Southern Walnut Creek trail from southern EMLK neighborhoods.
7. Eastlink Plan already exists. We are complementing the “Eastlink” plan with EMLK bicycle route in the southside. This will create one of the largest comprehensive bike map in Austin
8. Companies like “Austin B cycle” which provide multi-modal transportation do not exist in EMLK area – EMLK Hike and Bike Trail project creates an opportunity for them to create a network in far east (Eastern Crescent).
9. City council has passed resolution to acquire 90 acres of land also known as Red Bluff under PARD – it will be a nature preserve and not a regular park.
10. City Council has passed resolution to rezone all the land parcels within the Little Walnut Creek Park as “p” (public). This will ensure that PARD can develop the park. PARD does not have funding for any master plan.
11. EMLK Planning Contact Team and PSSNA (Pecan Spring Springdale Neighborhood Association) is working with several federal and private organization like National Park Foundation, Asakura Robinson to get a master plan done.
12. PARD has agreed to open the little Walnut Creek by end of summer 2017 with signage.
13. Public Works department has started the feasibility study of the La Loma trail - there is currently no fund to build the trail.

### **Goals and Objectives of the EMLK Hike and Bike Trail**

1. Building equity through connectivity.

- We want to connect to business centers “Mueller” in the North and “Think East” in the South. We want to connect to “Little Walnut Creek Park” in the North and “Red Bluff” in the South.

#### Red Bluff Nature Preserve:

2. EMLK Hike and Bike trail is proposing a “Hike and Bike Trail” through Red Bluff Nature Preserve and Hog Penn Neighborhood which will formally connect the southern neighborhoods to the Southern Walnut Creek Trail. Public works department is doing a feasibility study for the “La Loma trail” around the same region.
  - Individuals and students who use La Loma Trail to reach the Walnut Creek Hike and Bike Trail or East Side Memorial High School are forced to do so in unsafe conditions. For decades now neighborhoods have lacked a convenient crossing over the railroad tracks located just north of the East Boggy Creek Greenbelt.
  - Capital Metro also is also considering extending the Green line to Manor which will go through the same area. This will create an enormous connectivity opportunity.
  - This connectivity has been requested for the last 4 years.

#### Little walnut Creek Park

3. We want to create a safe route to YMCA when the 51<sup>st</sup> street crossing at 183 is closed.
  - The Little Walnut Creek Park is a one the hidden jewels of East Austin. A park larger than Zilker Park sits in the middle of large neighborhoods and close to Mueller without any financial or infrastructural support.
  - The parkland was acquired by city about 15 years ago and it is yet to be opened to the public. There are no basic facilities like restroom, resting places or water fountains. A large section of the land was not zoned correctly but we have taken steps to correct that and bring the entire parkland to correct zoning.
  - The residents of the area lose out on a golden opportunity to enjoy the park to its fullest potential. The initial step would be to create a master plan. The city does not have fund for doing the master plan. So, EMLK planning contact team, along with neighborhood associations like PSSNA (Pecan Springs Springdale Neighborhood association) are supporting the improvement of the park actively.
  - As an additional gift, the trail through the park will reduce the distance between the various neighborhoods and the YMCA by 0.75 miles and make it much safer.
  - We foresee this park to be the anchor point of many neighborhood activities for almost entire east Austin because there is no other alternative.
  - Once the basic master plan has been completed we will work on getting city budgets and other funds to realize the master plan in the next 3 to 5 years. It's daunting task but it has support of the entire east Austin.
  - This park is unused for last 15 years.

Little Walnut Creek District Park trail needs the following immediately

- Designated entrances at north (partially exists now) and south with 10-15 parking spaces
- Trailhead signage
- Picnic tables with shed
- Trash cans
- Gate to access the utility easement
- Water Fountains

#### Morris Williams Golf Course

4. We want to make the route to Mueller development safe by opening a hike and bike route through the Morris Williams Golf Course. 90% of this path already exists and usable now.
  - Aligns with Pecan Springs/Springdale Hills Neighborhood Association (PSSNA) Goals Within the PSSNA Boundaries
  - Aligns with Mueller Development Plan Goals
  - The precedent has been set at Hancock Golf Course
  - An extension of Mueller's Path's connecting to the surrounding communities
  - Watershed may participate in the project to help create a dam over the water crossing.
  - This connectivity has been requested for the last 4 years.

#### Springdale Park

5. Springdale Park is a large beautiful park in the middle of EMLK planning area which is highly underutilized because it has only one entrance from the west side.
  - Entire east and southside population cannot use the park easily because there is no bridge over a creek which flows on the east side of the Springdale park. This connectivity has been requested for the last 5 years.

#### **Activities till date**

1. Design of the EMLK Hike and Bike trail.
2. Present trail design to multiple city commissions including UTC and Parks Commission, Golf Advisory Commission, African American resource Advisory Commission.
3. Hold at least 20 community and city meetings
4. Meeting with Council members Tovo's office, Houston's office, Mayor office
5. City Resolution on Red Bluff
6. City Resolution on Little Walnut Creek Park
7. Application to Natural Park Foundation
8. Various site tours with all interested parties
9. Cleaning effort in Little Walnut Creek Park
10. Cleaning effort of Red Bluff Nature reserve
11. Design efforts from city on La Loma trail along with various site visits
12. Contact with Austin Energy regarding the golf course easement.

## Requests to the Urban Transportation Commission

EMLK area has been historically one of the most underserved areas in the city – we want to change the situation. We want UTC to adopt the EMLK Hike and Bike trail and make it a priority. We want to make it an exemplary project.

- Adopt EMLK area as a test bed for multi-model transportation as proposed by the Draft Street Design Guide (June 2017)
  1. Let's Create a committee for EMLK Hike and Bike Trail
  2. Design for an environment with less automobile and more
- Expedite the building of the La Loma Trail
  1. Funding for development of the trail needs to be part of the transportation bond.
- Help get permission to build the hike and Bike trail through the Morris Williams Golf course.
- Help increase the priority of the trail through the Little Walnut Creek Park from Tier 2 to Tier 1.
- Help create a connectivity to Springdale park from the south side through Fort Branch.

### References:

Aligns with East MLK Combined Neighborhood Plan Goals East MLK Combined Neighborhood Plan Goals [http://www.austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Planning/CodeNEXT/Austin\\_CodeDiagnosisAppendix\\_PublicDraft\\_web\\_050514.pdf](http://www.austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Planning/CodeNEXT/Austin_CodeDiagnosisAppendix_PublicDraft_web_050514.pdf)

La Loma Trail / Red Bluff Resolution (Passed): By now you've probably heard of La Loma Trail. Source: Austin City Council, District 3 Representative Renteria's newsletter <http://mailchi.mp/846c6e6c31f9/april-in-review-newsletter-1252385>

Proposition 1, approved by voters in 2016, included \$26 million for the Urban Trail Network, \$27.5 million for Safe Routes to School, and \$15 million for fatality reduction strategies. So I sponsored a resolution directing our City Manager to identify options and explore using general obligation bonds to fund connectivity improvements on La Loma Trail, including a safe crossing over the adjacent railroad tracks and connecting to the Walnut Creek Hike and Bike Trail. We also directed the City Manager to conduct a community-driven planning process regarding the preservation for public use of the Red Bluff Tract and return to Council within 120 days. Safely connecting our neighborhoods to quality schools, parks, and open space by accessible and active transportation is not just a quality of life issue, but also an equity issue we must stay committed to achieving. La Loma Video: <https://vimeo.com/123127559>

Austin City Council, District 1 Representative Houston's newsletter ([Link](#))

Support Letter from Bike Austin ([link](#))

Little Walnut Creek District Park ([Link](#))

Proposed Little Walnut Creek District Park trail Owned by the City of Austin Travis CAD Map: ([http://propaccess.traviscad.org/clientdb/Property.aspx?cid=1&prop\\_id=214064](http://propaccess.traviscad.org/clientdb/Property.aspx?cid=1&prop_id=214064))

The City of Austin owns all these tracts considered Little Walnut Creek District Park

Proposed Little Walnut Creek District Park trail seen on Parks Web Travis CAD Map:  
(<http://www.austintexas.gov/GIS/ParksWeb/>)

#### Morris Williams Golf Course Details (Link)

Quantity	Units	Unit Price	Item Description	Cost Estimate	Responsible Party
16	Each	\$120	Fruit/nut tree saplings	\$1,920	City of Austin Project Costs
27,000	SF	\$18	Concrete Sidewalk (10' for 2700 lf) (within the park)	\$486,000	27,000 SF \$6 Crushed Granite Path (10' for 2700 lf)
1	LS	\$1,000,000	60 foot span bridge over creek (includes engineering, permitting, inspection, project management and soft costs)	\$1,000,000	5,000 SF \$30 Sidewalk on MLK, Jr. Drive from Springdale Drive to path entrance. \$150,000
0.3	LS	\$1,798,000	30% Contingency - Applies to all City of Austin Project Costs	\$539,400	City of Austin \$ 1,798,000 Construction \$ 539,400 Contingency \$ 2,337,400
Project Total Cost					

Draft Street Design Guide for city of Austin ([link](#))

#### Morris Williams Golf Course: Conditions of the Parks Department

1. The trail needs to be a firm, formal surface, not a nature or gravel trail
2. It needs to be ADA compliant
3. Given its condition, the low water crossing would need to be rebuilt or a new crossing would need to be provided.
4. Signage is a required item. Language about entering an active golf course, stay on the trail, curfew hours etc.
5. A split rail fence will be required along one side of the trail in a section near the water crossing to discourage cutting across the course
6. Part of the trail is proposed within an Electric and Water or Wastewater Easement. The easements may need to be amended to add the trail or if the Departments are agreeable MOU's will be required.
7. The Parks Department will have maintenance responsibility for the trail, fence, and signage

#### Aligns with Mueller Development Plan Goals •

“Compatibility with Surrounding Neighborhoods: Development must maintain and enhance the quality of life in adjacent neighborhoods, providing complementary linkages, land uses and transportation patterns.” (<http://www.muelleraustin.com/plan/>)