



RECOMMENDATION

Pedestrian Advisory Council

Recommendation Number 20180111-05A: Draft Austin Street Design Guide

WHEREAS, the Pedestrian Advisory Council (PAC) shall advise City of Austin on pedestrian planning, policy, design, funding, education, and enforcement efforts regarding the creation, maintenance and operation of pedestrian facilities in order to ensure a safe and enjoyable circulation for both commuting and recreation within the City of Austin; and,

WHEREAS, the Draft Austin Street Design Guide (June 20, 2017) document sets out recommended street sections for the City of Austin, will inform the update to the Transportation Criteria Manual, and will be closely coordinated with the Roadway Table in the update to the Austin Strategic Mobility Plan; and,

WHEREAS, the assumption of the Transportation Department is to consider prioritization as Pedestrian (1), Transit (2), Bike (3), and Vehicle (4) in determine appropriate street design, and that street section design should be for all users of all ages and abilities; and,

WHEREAS, the PAC commends the Transportation Department for commissioning a document to review and update the street design in Austin and is grateful for the opportunity to collaborate in this process; and,

WHEREAS, reference should be made to the following:

- Great Street Master Plan – particularly for street sections in urban areas with shop frontages and café tables (<http://www.austintexas.gov/department/great-streets-program>).
- Complete Streets Policy – particularly integration of all mobility modes (<http://austintexas.gov/complete-streets>)
- Safe Routes to School Program – particularly methods to reduce barriers that prevent students from actively traveling to school (<https://austintexas.gov/department/child-safety-program>)
- Sidewalk Master Plan - particularly the importance of a connected network of sidewalks, intersection design, and the shared surface streets (<http://austintexas.gov/sidewalks>)
- Vision Zero Action Plan – particularly the section on ‘Designing for Walking’ and Engineering Action 21 “Revise transportation municipal codes (transportation criteria manual) to focus on safety and thorough review of transportation development projects. Continue to implement to Complete Streets Policy in every construction, reconstruction and/or development project.” (<http://www.austintexas.gov/visionzero>)
- Pedestrian Safety Action Plan (<http://www.austintexas.gov/pedsafetyplan>)
- CodeNEXT– accounting for rezoning and installing better pedestrian facilities to align with higher density development.

- Imagine Austin – Particularly Priority Program 1 creating a compact and connected Austin (<http://www.austintexas.gov/page/compact>).

WHEREAS, research shows (<https://nacto.org/>) that wider travel lanes leads to increased vehicle speeds and that vehicle speed has a direct correlation to crash fatality for all road users. And that vehicle speed is a key determinant in the feeling of safety for cyclists and pedestrians and the likelihood of these pedestrians to use a street.

WHEREAS, the design of street sections will serve the city for 100 plus years and should seek the highest quality of design and user experience on a daily basis, as their use will outlive all current vehicle technologies which have a shorter lifecycle and greater potential for adaptation or evolution.

WHEREAS, the City of Austin does not have a multi-modal level of service calculation for corridors or intersections.

WHEREAS, all streets in the city of Austin are required to comply with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and related laws.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Pedestrian Advisory Council makes the following recommendations in response to the Draft Street Design Guide, and acknowledges that if this document is not updated that these comments will apply to the subsequent update of the Transportation Criteria Manual.

Safety

The PAC recommends that safety must be a core key decision making criteria when considering target speeds and lane widths acknowledging that vehicles tend to travel faster on roads with wider travel lanes regardless of posted speed limit. The Street Design Guide document should start with details of the importance of safety in street design and the City Council's approach to ensuring safety as a paramount concern in public realm and street design in line with the Austin Vision Zero Policy.

The PAC recommends the Street Design Guide provide more detail on target speed on residential streets with specific reference to how these speeds are achieved in relation to recommended lane widths without resulting in future retrofitting of speed cushions or other 'tack-on' engineering solutions commonly added after initial roadway construction.

PAC recommends that wide travel lane widths should not be used to provide emergency vehicle access on low order residential streets. Other solutions, which do not induce excessive vehicle speed, should be set out in the Street Design Guide and future updates of the TCM.

Prioritization

The PAC recommends that the city work to adopt a transparent prioritization for street uses where minimum sidewalk widths are maintained regardless of the ROW restrictions. The PAC considers the basis of this priority assumption for streets should be to create accessible streets prioritizing Pedestrian (1), Transit (2), Bike (3), and Vehicle (4), with a starting point for downtown streets of 50 percent pedestrian and 50 percent vehicle by area.

The PAC recommends that where exceptions from the recommended street section are required, due to challenges of available right of way, priority to pedestrians should be used and consideration should be given

to down grading the street to reduce vehicle traffic capacity. The intention should be to maintain good quality pedestrian connections rather than vehicle Level of Service calculations.

Accessibility

The PAC recommends a 5' wide minimum straight corridor of accessible pedestrian travel unimpeded by poles and utility boxes, vegetation, chairs or other impediments be provided in the sidewalk area. Where single surface intersections are not available, ADA compliant drop curbs should be aligned with this 5' corridor of accessible travel. Please refer to the Great Streets Master Plan page 5-45 for further information on accessible sidewalks and integration with street cafes and tables and Sidewalk Master Plan.

The PAC recommends that the City of Austin exceed the minimum requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act for providing access on all street ROW within the City, for example including embedded textured leaders at crossings for blind pedestrians.

Clarity of Design Intent

The PAC recommends that clarity of design intent is given for the each of the street sections and roadway types included in the Street Design Guide.

Intersections

The PAC recommends that intersection cross sections and plans should be added to address turn lanes and complex turning actions.

The PAC requests that the Street Design Guide be integrated with the future Street Crossing Design Guide to create plan and section recommendations that are coordinated. Future iterations of the Street Design Guide document or the TCM update should include both section and plan details for each roadway type.

The PAC recommends that particular reference should be given to bulb outs, bike lanes at intersections and transit stops, transit stop access, and single surface intersections. Example photography and other 3D modeling should also be used to communicate the design intention of the street within each category.

Land Use

The PAC recommends that the connection to the land use code should be illustrated through increased pedestrian facilities and accommodations for streets which are planned to be adjacent to higher density residential development and nodes of pedestrian activities.

Shared Streets

The PAC recommends that a shared street design option for both residential shared streets and commercial downtown shared streets be included in the update to the TCM.

Other Issues

The PAC recommends that the document clarifies the nature and intent of the 4' buffer zones as protection for cyclists from car doors and that these will be made accessible to pedestrian and will not inhibit access from parking areas to sidewalk.

The PAC recommends that parking lanes should be 7'.

The PAC recommends that these street section requirements are also applied to private streets developed within the City of Austin.

The PAC recommends that other technology features are used to encourage safe driving speeds through the city including smart street design for autonomous vehicles and smart timing of traffic signals to align with lower than posted speed limit, or graduated or electronic speed control signage.

Date of Approval: January 11, 2018

Vote: 7-0, with Branigan Mulcahy and Sarah Gamble absent.

Attest:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'CHA', with a horizontal line extending to the right from the end of the signature.

Carly Haithcock, PAC Vice Chair