

Bicycle Advisory Council Recommendation: US 183 from Metric Boulevard to Cameron Road

WHEREAS, the purpose of the Bicycle Advisory Council (BAC) is to advise the City of Austin and other jurisdictions on all matters relating to the use of the bicycle, bicycle infrastructure, and individuals of all ages and abilities who utilize bicycles;

WHEREAS, US 183 (Research Blvd.) from Metric Boulevard to Cameron Road is identified in the Austin Bicycle Master Plan and is recommended to have shared-use paths (urban trails) to accommodate users of all ages and abilities;

WHEREAS, US 183 shared-use paths (urban trails) would connect to a larger shared-use path network that includes shared-use paths along Shoal Creek at MoPac, Burnet Road, the Capital Metro Red Line (Red Line Trail), Little Walnut Creek tributaries (near Ohlen Road and near Cameron Road), Lamar Boulevard, and I-35, and a broader network of other all-ages-and-abilities bikeways and sidewalks.

WHEREAS, TxDOT is accepting input on the US 183 from Metric Boulevard to Cameron Road project at an open house on Thursday September 19, 2019, 6–8 p.m. at Westover Church of Christ Gym, 8332 Mesa Drive, Austin, Texas 78759 and through October 4th, 2019 via Shelly Eason, Shelly.Eason@txdot.gov, 512-832-7001, TxDOT Austin District, P.O. Box 15426, Austin, Texas 78761-5426;

WHEREAS, the proposed project will increase motor vehicle miles traveled and thus increase air pollution, noise pollution, and traffic crashes, and these effects could be mitigated by providing improved walking, bicycling, and ADA accommodations;

WHEREAS, the proposed project increases motor vehicle capacity on the main lanes and will thus allow repurposing of a service road lane in each way for pedestrian, bicycle, and ADA access;+

WHEREAS, there are numerous gaps in off-street pedestrian, bicycle, and ADA access and problematic intersections along the US 183 service roads in the area covered by the US 183 from Metric Boulevard to Cameron Road project scope;

WHEREAS, people using accessibility accommodations such as wheelchairs, personal mobility devices, or trikes, or people walking or bicycling must use and do use the service road travel lanes shared with motor vehicles traveling at speeds in excess of 40 mph and must cross and do cross at unsignalized and unmarked intersections in order to complete their trips;

WHEREAS, there is no alternative route for people to access most of the destinations on the US 183 service roads;

WHEREAS, there has been no day since November 7th, 2000 that there was not a fatality on Texas roads;

WHEREAS, one of the leading causes of traffic fatalities in the Austin area is a motor vehicle striking a pedestrian on a TxDOT service road;

WHEREAS, TxDOT is committed to eliminating all traffic fatalities in their transportation system by 2050;

WHEREAS, TxDOT staff is committed to safety above all other priorities, even above improving motor vehicle throughput;

WHEREAS, the lack of a safe complete walkway, bikeway, and ADA accessible route along the US 183 service roads is both an identified and solvable safety hazard within TxDOT purview;

WHEREAS, the mission of TxDOT includes not only serving those occupying private motor vehicles on its roads, but also serving those traveling on its corridors on foot, by bicycle, and via wheelchairs or other personal mobility devices, among other transportation users;

WHEREAS, the US 183 from Metric Boulevard to Cameron Road project, as proposed, does not yet explicitly mention filling in the above stated pedestrian, bicycling, and ADA access gaps, but does include motor vehicle throughput improvements that were chosen primarily for reasons other than improving safety;

WHEREAS, TxDOT projects are supported in large part by public funds other than user fee revenue earned on TxDOT roads or purchase and registration fees;

WHEREAS, a given person who is driving their private motor vehicle on the US 183 service road one day may be walking, biking, or using a wheelchair on another day;

WHEREAS, TxDOT acquired considerable private right-of-way to create the US 183 corridor that exists today and had the opportunity to acquire what it needed to accommodate its users at the time of these land acquisitions;

WHEREAS, TxDOT has devoted hundreds of millions of dollars, perhaps billions of dollars, and has acquired private right-of-way over the last several decades to make improvements to US 183 for motor vehicle use, but has still not completed the pedestrian and bicycle gaps;

WHEREAS, the BAC and community groups have previously requested completion of these US 183 gaps in the preceding years and decades on numerous occasions;

WHEREAS, TxDOT staff stated within the last several years that pedestrian and bicycle improvements to the intersection of I-35 and US 183 would need to wait until a project was planned with a scope that included US 183, and this is now a project that has such a scope to make those improvements at and approaching I-35;

WHEREAS, I-35 service roads approaching US 183 will be served by new shared-use paths in the coming several years as part of other TxDOT projects that would connect to and from US 183 shared-use paths;

WHEREAS, freedom of movement is a constitutionally protected right under both the United States and Texas Constitutions, and is further protected by numerous federal and state laws that require departments of transportation and land use authorities to provide and preserve access to destinations;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Austin Bicycle Advisory Council (BAC) requests, as part of the US 183 from Metric Boulevard to Cameron Road project, that TxDOT complete the shared-use paths along the outer sides of both US 183 (Research Blvd.) service roads in both the immediate, stated project scope area and preferably from Loop 1 to US 290;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the BAC requests that such shared-use paths:

- Be at least 10' wide, preferably 12' wide;
- Be separated from service road lanes by a guardrail, jersey barrier, or other similar barrier of fortitude to keep the shared-use path out of the so-called "clear zone" wherever possible;
- Be clear of any fixed-object obstructions or hazards, such as signs or utility poles, and that any obstruction, also including railings, ditches, and retaining walls be kept at least 1-2' from the usable trail edge;
- Where crossing non-state system roads, i.e. local streets and private driveways, that the crosswalk be raised to the level of the shared-use path rather than descend to the level of the road;
- Where they have a signalized crossing that requires user actuation, that actuation is either automatic (e.g. motion detection) or is via a mechanism (e.g. button) that is accessible to people on bicycles without requiring that they dismount;
- Be lighted, including in places where existing road lighting is inadequate or does not exist;
- Include a shared-use path along the southwest side of US 183 service road across I-35 and its service roads;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the BAC requests, as part of the project, that TxDOT add marked and signalized crosswalks along US 183 service roads at intersecting roads;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the BAC requests, as part of the project, that TxDOT either remove all slip lanes at intersecting roads, e.g. Lamar Blvd. I-35, and Cameron Road, or both raise the crosswalk to the shared-use path level and provide a traffic signal for each crossing with a wait no longer than needed to immediately cycle the signal to green, and in no case longer than 30 seconds;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the BAC requests, as part of the project, that TxDOT reduce service road design speeds to no more than 35 mph.

Date of Approval: September 17, 2019

Record of the vote: 9 - 0 with LeBlanc, Alcorn and Ortega absent and Fraser, Wald, Heathcott, and Koonz voting as full members for the purposes of the meeting

Attest:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Flowers', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Kathryn Flowers, BAC Chair