



Recommendation for Action

File #: 19-3607, **Agenda Item #:** 58.

12/5/2019

Posting Language

Approve a resolution authorizing the City Manager to officially request that the Texas Department of Transportation transfer ownership of State Loop (SL) 343 (portions of South Lamar Boulevard / Cesar Chavez Street) and State Loop (SL) 275 (portions of North Lamar Boulevard / South Congress Avenue) to the City.

Lead Department

Austin Transportation Department

Fiscal Note

This item has no fiscal impact.

For More Information:

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Additional Backup Information:

This Request for Council Action (RCA) initiates the process to transfer two State-owned roadways to City of Austin ownership. These roadways, SL 343 comprising portions of South Lamar Boulevard and Cesar Chavez Street, and SL 275 comprising portions of North Lamar Boulevard and South Congress Avenue, are important to the City's on-going Corridor Mobility Programs and to future Project Connect investments. This RCA makes a formal request to the Texas Transportation Commission for transfer and begins the negotiations process.

Transfer of these roadways will simplify on-going design and construction efforts as it will make the City the final authority on operations and design issues. Currently, TxDOT as the owner of both roadways, has authority over design, construction, and operational issues. For SL 343 (South Lamar and Cesar Chavez) the City has already taken over much of this responsibility for operations, maintenance and design oversight by way of a previous Municipal Maintenance Agreement (MMA). For SL 275 (North Lamar and South Congress) the State currently retains oversight over all operational, design, and maintenance issues.

The RCA authorizes the City Manager to negotiate a detailed inter-local agreement for the transfer. Prior to transfer, staff envisions an opportunity for Council to formally accept the roadways by way of additional Council action after the negotiation is completed.

Background: State Loop SL 343: South Lamar Boulevard (US71 to Cesar Chavez) /Cesar Chavez Street (Lamar to I-35)

State Loop 343 generally runs along what is locally known as South Lamar Boulevard and Cesar Chavez Street. Loop 343 begins in south Austin at the intersection of US290/SH71 and the southern terminus of Loop 360. It proceeds north along Lamar Boulevard for 3.5 miles towards downtown Austin, crossing Lady Bird Lake. At this point, Loop 343 heads east along Cesar Chavez Street to its terminus at I-35. This segment of Loop 343 is typically a 4-lane downtown city street. In 2018, the South Lamar portion of SL343 was identified as the 62nd most congested state roadway segment and the Cesar Chavez portion of SL343 was identified as the 85th most congested roadway segment in Texas.

The City of Austin currently has a Municipal Maintenance Agreement (MMA) with the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) to fully manage the entire portion of Loop 343 known as Cesar Chavez/South Lamar. The City of Austin is responsible for all pavement and drainage management of the roadway. The City operates all signals along the entirety of the route as well and makes all traffic management decisions independent of TxDOT supervision, per the MMA. The Lamar Bridge over Lady Bird Lake, identified as an historical structure, is fully maintained by the City of Austin. Because of this pre-existing relationship related to SL343 whereby the City is responsible for all maintenance responsibilities, no additional long-term expenses that are not already the responsibility of the City are anticipated.

Background: State Loop SL 275: North Lamar Boulevard (US183 to I-35) and South Congress Avenue (Slaughter Lane to Williamson Creek)

State Loop 275 follows what is locally known as North Lamar Boulevard and South Congress Avenue. The State-owned portion of SL 275 is comprised of two non-connected segments. The 6.0-mile northern segment follows North Lamar Boulevard between US 183 and the I-35 frontage road, just south of Howard Lane. The 3.2-mile southern segment follows South Congress Avenue, between Slaughter Lane, just west of I-35, and Williamson Creek.

TxDOT currently maintains pavement, bridge, and drainage infrastructure on the State-owned portions of SL275, described above. The City currently maintains and operates all signal infrastructure. The City and State coordinate on all traffic engineering regulations related to speed, lane designation, and related traffic management efforts. Maintenance of the segments in the central portion of Loop 275 (from US 183 to Williamson Creek) was returned to the City at its request in 1986 and 2000.

The City has only minor maintenance responsibility for SL275, and therefore, acceptance of this State roadway as a City owned arterial implies a long-term increase in City maintenance responsibilities. The Public Works Department has reviewed the proposal and notes that while TxDOT has made some recent investment in portions of South Congress, other portions of SL275 have not been a part of recent TxDOT work. Normal repairs for pavement and bridge maintenance can be expected within the next 10 years, as well as needs to modernize bicycle, pedestrian and drainage amenities.

In the short- and mid-term, the City may have opportunities to address these needs, including 2016 Mobility Bond funding related to North Lamar, and from future Project Connect investment in these corridors. On-gong maintenance and repair costs for this roadway would be expected to be absorbed into the overall maintenance program of the City, which could generate a need for additional transportation operations and maintenance funding in the long-term.

The South Congress Avenue portion of the corridor (along with the northern portion of South Congress Avenue already owned by the City of Austin) is currently being analyzed for mobility and safety improvements similar to those programmed on North Lamar Boulevard. Although construction of future projects on South Congress Avenue are not funded, the City is currently investing approximately \$500,000 developing a Corridor Preliminary Engineering Report (also known as a Corridor Mobility Plan) for South Congress Avenue from Lady Bird Lake to its southern terminus at Slaughter Lane (including that portion of the corridor currently on the TxDOT system of state roadways) that will include recommendations for future mobility investments in the corridor. The City of Austin is coordinating with TxDOT on this study.