




MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and Council

CC: Spencer Cronk, City Manager
Gina Fiandaca, Assistant City Manager

FROM: Robert Spillar, P.E., Director, Austin Transportation Department 

DATE: January 2, 2020

SUBJECT: **Assessment of Railroad Crossings Citywide** (Resolution 20190919-083, CIUR 2192)

[City Council Resolution 20190919-083](#) directed the City Manager to review railroad crossings citywide, including seven (7) priority locations identified by community advocates, for opportunities to improve the safety for people crossing the tracks on bicycles or scooters, people on foot and people using assistive mobility devices.

Assessment Outcome

The Austin Transportation Department (ATD) has conducted an initial assessment of all seven (7) railroad crossings named in Resolution 20190919-083 and summarized this analysis in the attached report. Four of these locations will be incorporated into existing capital improvement projects as part of the 2016 Mobility Bond Mobility Annual Planning (MAP) process. Two other locations will require further coordination and one location (Mary Street) was relatively recently improved, and it is not recommended for further work given other competing priorities. In addition, the Public Works Department (PWD) has initiated coordination with Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Cap Metro) on 10 locations along the Red Line, with four of those locations moving forward into the permitting phase.

Background

Railway crossings exist throughout Austin's transportation system and can be particularly challenging to safely cross for people riding bicycles or other wheeled devices, people using wheelchairs or other assistive mobility devices, and people walking. For bicycle crossings, guidance from the American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials (AASHTO) indicates angles of 45 degrees are acceptable, but 90 degrees is preferred. From a bicycle network planning strategy, ATD categorizes substandard railroad crossings as barrier projects and prioritizes such projects alongside the build out of the All Ages and Abilities Bicycle Network, as well as opportunistic projects that can be completed with significant cost savings (e.g. coordinating with routine street maintenance).

Next Steps

ATD will move forward with further development of four of the seven priority locations in coordination with larger capital projects along these streets. At the other two locations identified for improvement, and the additional locations along the Red Line, ATD and PWD will further their coordination efforts with regional partners as well as make recommendations for future funding needs through the annual budgeting process and capital planning mechanisms. Additional work is necessary to complete an assessment of railroad crossings at a citywide scale. ATD will continue this effort by identifying and mapping locations of existing railroad crossings, assessing the condition and state of those crossings, cataloguing the locations and conducting a feasibility analysis of potential improvements, and assessing opportunities for coordination with other infrastructure projects or partnership opportunities. ATD is also evaluating interim warning signage options at the approaches to a subset of these crossings. ATD estimates this citywide assessment will take an additional 6-12 months.

(1) Vinson Drive/Emerald Forest near St. Elmo Road



Assessment ATD has completed an assessment and found that the crossing angle in this location is estimated to be 10 degrees and the right of way is extremely constrained. Additional right of way would be required from Union Pacific Railway from their mainline track in order to install a sidewalk or shared use pathway.

Next Steps The Urban Trails Program in the Department of Public Works is currently coordinating with the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO) to conduct a study of the Bergstrom Spur from Vinson Drive to US 183. An initial public meeting was held on November 20th. Results of this study will help inform next steps as to further development of this corridor. For more information on this process, [click here](#), or visit www.campo.org and click on Plans & Studies.

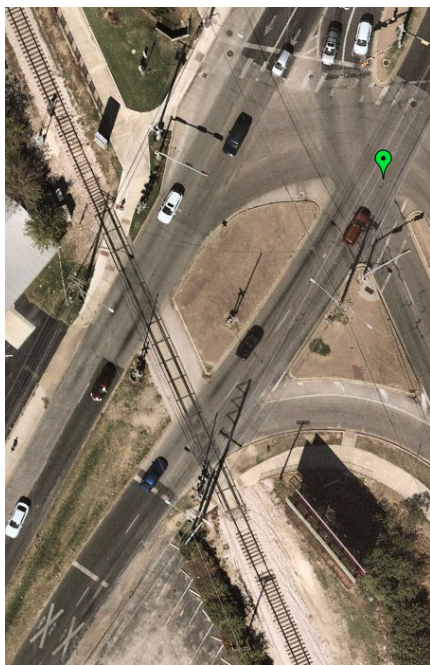
(2) West Mary Street near Evergreen



Assessment ATD has completed an assessment of this crossing and found that the crossing is currently greater than 45 degrees and would not be a priority for further improvement, given other higher priority barrier projects on the bicycle network. The Sidewalk Program in the Public Works Department improved the sidewalk on the north side of the street in recent years.

Next Steps Given current conditions of this crossing and limited resources citywide, no further work is recommended for this location.

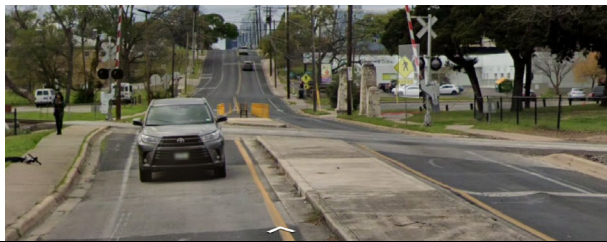
(3) Lamar and Airport near Crestview Station



Assessment This crossing location is part of the Airport Boulevard Corridor Improvement Project, which is in full design phase. Construction is expected in the 2021-2024 timeframe. This crossing location connects to the Red Line Trail and the Justin Lane two-way bikeway.

Next Steps ATD will continue to coordinate with the Corridor Program Office to review and recommend any necessary safety improvements to this crossing location for people crossing by bicycle, scooter, on foot or using other personal or assistive mobility devices.

(4) Rosewood Avenue near North Pleasant Valley Road Underpass



Assessment ATD has completed an assessment of this crossing and found that the crossing is approximately 30 degrees and may have opportunities for improvement to better align with AASHTO guidance. Rosewood Avenue from IH-35 to Springdale, including this crossing area, is scheduled for routine maintenance in 2020. ATD has initiated an analysis of the street, which will include options for improving the safety of this crossing.

Next Steps ATD plans to initiate a public process in February of 2020 to gather feedback on multimodal improvements for the Rosewood Avenue corridor from IH-35 to Springdale, including at the railroad crossing near the North Pleasant Valley Road underpass.

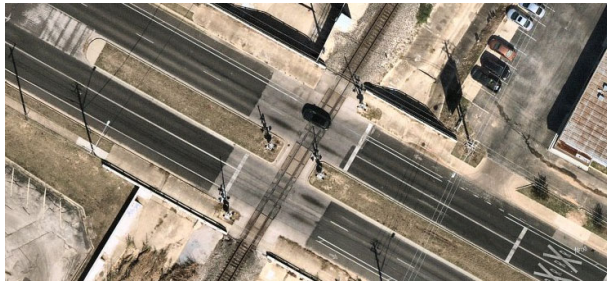
(5) North and Southbound MoPac Frontage Road between Gracy Farms Lane and Park Bend Road at the Red Line



Assessment ATD has completed an assessment of the east and west frontages and found that the crossings are at or above 45 degrees. ATD has found that a related issue is the lack of sidewalk connectivity across the tracks and to/from a recent Shared Use Path built along MoPac on the west side terminating just south of the railroad crossing at the Southern Walnut Creek Trail. The eastern sidewalk was recently connected.

Next Steps ATD will further its coordination efforts with TxDOT and the CTRMA to explore opportunities for completing connectivity across and to this nearby trail asset. ATD is also pursuing bikeway improvements on Gracy Farms Lane to bring this connection up to an All Ages and Abilities bikeway.

(6) Stassney Lane near Crockett High School

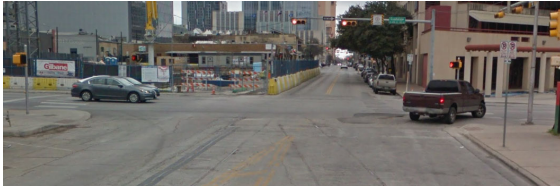


Assessment ATD has completed an assessment of this crossing and found that it is at or near 90 degrees. ATD has found that the clearest issue from a bicycle perspective is offering physical protection of the existing buffered bike lanes to bring the bikeway along this section of Stassney Lane up to a higher level of comfort.

Next Steps ATD has initiated a public engagement process for Stassney Lane from Westgate Boulevard to Manchaca Road. A community open house is scheduled for December 5th from 7-8pm at the ACC South campus at 1820 Stassney Lane. ATD will launch an online survey at that time and collect feedback through January 4th, 2020. ATD will then analyze feedback to determine what, if any, additional improvements may be made along this section of the street.

Assessment of Railroad Crossings Named in Resolution 20190919-083

(7) 4th and Guadalupe bus stop at nearby track along access route



Assessment ATD has completed a preliminary assessment of this area. Pavement condition is poor, and remnant railroad tracks create an uneven surface at the crossing of at Guadalupe Street.

Next Steps ATD will coordinate with the Public Works Department to determine whether there are any near-term opportunities for pavement surface improvements.