



MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and City Council

FROM: Gina Fiandaca, Assistant City Manager

DATE: August 6, 2020

SUBJECT: Resolution 20200729-090: staff response regarding investment in active transportation, Vision Zero/safety, and Neighborhood Partnering Programs

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide a response to City Council Resolution No. 20200729-090 directing the City Manager to identify options to fund and implement Active Transportation and Vision Zero/Safety improvements. Staff's response is based on the current funding available to the programs, the ability of the departments to deploy the current and possibly expanded program, and our current understanding of unfunded needs.

As previously communicated in my [July 30, 2020, memorandum](#), the unfunded mobility infrastructure needs of our community will never fully be accomplished. As a fast growing and dynamic city, our needs evolve as we grow; infrastructure will periodically need to be reconstructed and new travel needs addressed. The City has successfully sought approval from voters for mobility funding in four bond referendums over the last 10 years, including 2010, 2012, 2016, and 2018. Mobility funds acquired in 2010 and 2012 are largely expended or allocated, with final investments underway this year. The 2016 and 2018 programs are anticipated to be substantially complete in 2024.

If Council wants to leverage a bond program to expand funding for the active transportation, Vision Zero/safety and Neighborhood Partnering via a 2020 funding referendum, we propose you consider a \$250 million bond, to be delivered over a 6-year period. Such a program would allow ATD and PWD to continue the current accelerated delivery path they are using for the 2016 and 2018 bond deployment, building to a peak expenditure rate in 2023 and then holding that rate through 2026. The proposed expanded funding would require the departments to modify their delivery process to accommodate the proposed increase in year-to-year expenditure in the 2022 to 2024 time frame, but staff believe this could be accommodated for our main-line programs while maintaining the high-touch management approach that has proven successful.

Available Funding

In my previous communication, I provided information on the current funding for active transportation and vision zero/safety related programs from the 2016 Mobility Bond and the 2018 transportation bond proposition (Proposition G). We have approximately \$126 million from 2016 dedicated to Active Transportation and Vision Zero/Safety programs, plus an additional estimated \$40 million included in the Corridor Programs for active transportation investments. We also have \$39 million from the 2018 bond program for active transportation programs. In total, The Austin Transportation (ATD) and Public Works Departments (PWD) have more than \$200 million in project funding allocated to Active Transportation, Vision Zero/Safety and Neighborhood Partnering improvements programmed through 2024 that will be built in the coming years. I have reattached below the funding table provided in my original memorandum for your reference. Please note that the table highlights updated information

from my July 30 memorandum and shows the balance of 2016 and 2018 Bonds specific to the target programs. Updated information is current as of August 3, 2020, based on the City Controller's website.

Additionally, Council will soon be considering implementation of a Street Impact Fee (SIF). The SIF requires new growth to help pay for the infrastructure costs generated by the need that for expanded transportation infrastructure. This new funding approach, if approved by Council, is expected to generate tens of millions of dollars per year over the life of the SIF program to fund new roadway capacity throughout Austin. Active transportation and transit assets located along new or expanded roadways are potentially viable expenditures under the definition of the SIF funding mechanism.

Available Bond Funding*

	Included in Proposition	Sum of Expenses (expenditures & encumbrances)	"Unspent"	Percent Unspent	Percent Spent
2016 Bond (Local Mobility only)**					
Bikeways	\$20,000,000	\$6,703,183	\$13,296,817	66%	34%
Sidewalks (<i>new sidewalks</i>)	\$37,500,000	\$25,644,388	\$11,885,612	32%	68%
Urban Trails	\$26,000,000	\$5,997,018	\$20,002,982	77%	23%
V0/Intersection Safety	\$15,000,000	\$10,549,960	\$4,450,040	30%	70%
Safe Routes to School	\$27,500,000	\$9,736,477	\$17,763,523	65%	35%
<i>2016 total from selected programs</i>	<i>\$126,000,000</i>	<i>\$58,631,026</i>	<i>\$67,368,974</i>	<i>53%</i>	<i>47%</i>
2018 Bond (Proposition G - select programs only)**					
Urban Trails	\$3,000,000	\$0	\$3,000,000	100 %	0%
Sidewalk (<i>rehab</i>)	\$20,000,000	\$2,871,165	\$17,128,835	86%	14%
Neighborhood Partnering Program	\$1,000,000	\$175,996	\$824,004	82%	18%
V0/Intersection and Pedestrian Safety	\$15,000,000	\$304,911	14,695,089	98%	2%
<i>2018 total from selected programs</i>	<i>\$39,000,000</i>	<i>\$3,352,072</i>	<i>\$35,647,928</i>	<i>91%</i>	<i>9%</i>

*Data are as of August 3, 2020, via the City's Controller website and represent updated/corrected data compared to the July 30 memorandum, including encumbrances.

**These tables do not represent the entire bond programs from 2016 or 2018 – only select programs.

New Funding for Active Transportation, Vision Zero/Safety and Neighborhood Partnering Programs

Per Council's direction, staff has evaluated the currently available funding for the combined active transportation, safety and neighborhood partnering programs to form this approach. Staff focused on a programmatic analysis of active transportation and safety project investments identified in the Austin Strategic Mobility Plan (ASMP), including current program status, unfunded need, and the potential value earned from a further investment in these programs, beyond the funding already available from the 2010, 2012, 2016 and 2018 bond programs.

The current active transportation and mobility safety programs are performing near maximum planned productivity, with a continued acceleration planned over the next 12 months, attaining our highest average rates of production over the next three years (See attached figure, page 8). Although both

departments believe this peak average rate of construction/expenditure could be increased, sustaining a significantly increased rate of activity for an extended duration would be challenging. The current programs, along with the larger impact of the full 2016 mobility bond and the 2018 bond, are already stressing the ability of the city to effectively manage and deploy the work. These programs require a high degree of interaction with the community and with individual property owners. The projects funded under these programs often require significant in-the-field engineering and design accommodation. These functions are best performed by staff under the supervision of the City Traffic Engineer or Public Works Director who have the authority to make commitments on behalf of the City and/or approve on-the-spot design changes. To accelerate the planned construction and expenditure rates beyond our ability to maintain this level of high-touch coordination with the community by using a program management or similar innovative delivery method that does not maintain direct departmental engagement is not advised. Failure to deliver high-quality projects that are also responsive to feedback during robust engagement processes jeopardize future projects and community support.

As mentioned above, should Council move to expand funding for the active transportation, Vision Zero/safety and Neighborhood Partnering via a 2020 funding referendum, we propose you consider a \$250 million bond, to be delivered over a 6-year period.

This approach would also allow for investment in several large-capital projects, providing investment in important pedestrian and safety projects identified through the 2016 Bond-funded substandard street preliminary engineering reports or defined by other similar system development studies. It would allow for meaningful investments in areas of our community such as the Eastern Crescent. These projects could include construction of a new pedestrian and bicycle bridge crossing near Longhorn Dam/Pleasant Valley Road across Lady Bird Lake, reconstruction of the substandard Ross Road and/or Johnny Morris Road, and a significant connection of the Southern Walnut Creek to Northern Walnut Creek Trail. The identified trail projects and the new crossing of Lady Bird Lake would provide critical connections through and between important parks across the Eastern Crescent. Furthermore, the large-capital projects approach would also allow an initial investment in the recommendations identified through the Congress Avenue Urban Design Initiative, which included pedestrian, multimodal, and streetscape improvements staff believes are important to the economic recovery of our primary activity center.

This proposal allows us to meet the policy direction set by the Council Strategic Direction 2023 and the ASMP by extending the current 2016 Bond delivery program through a future 2026 target while at the same time maintaining the integrity in our project development, delivery, and equity responsive public outreach process that we believe so necessary to the success of these programs. Such a funding proposal would support a future funding discussion with the voters as part of a comprehensive bond or other referendum during the City's next anticipated bond program, in 2024.

As mentioned in our previous memo, the City will continue to issue bonds related to the 2016 and 2018 bond programs, \$1.4 billion in total, that will require an estimated one and half cent additional increase to the city's debt service tax rate over the next four years. This approach for a 2020 investment in active transportation, Vision Zero/safety and the Neighborhood Partnering Program would require an additional one-cent increase in the tax rate by the end of the 6-year period. As a reminder, when a bond program is approved by voters, the appropriation of these bonds, the spending of these bonds, and the bond sales associated with the program occur over the duration of the bond program, in this case, six years.

Staff's approach is further detailed in the following sections. In preparing this response to Council, staff have identified funding categories and potential large capital projects that improve access to schools, transit, parks and recreation facilities, and key destinations within our community. We have needed safety improvements and we have laid the groundwork to prioritize equity while delivering these investments. In addition to the following details by program area, a tabular representation of the funding scenario is offered in an attachment at the end of this memorandum.

Sidewalks

Funding priorities for new and rehabilitated sidewalk projects follow the City of Austin Sidewalk and ADA Transition Plan, as adopted by Council. Current work combines \$37.5 million in 2016 bond funds and \$20 million in 2018 bond funds, all of which are projected to be fully spent by FY 2024. The sidewalk program has currently spent or encumbered 46% of these funds, or \$26.5 million. Unfunded need for the sidewalk network exceeds \$1 billion and more than 2,500 miles (note: the Sidewalk Plan sets a goal of constructing all high and very high priority missing sidewalks over the next ten years, an investment need of approximately \$250 million or 390 miles of sidewalks). Another \$90 million of unfunded needs exist for pedestrian crossing improvements associated with the sidewalk network. With the \$250 million staff-proposed funding recommendation, improvements to sidewalks and associated crossings could address another \$42 million of improvements to the pedestrian network, including more than 50 miles of sidewalks and 100 new Accessible Pedestrian Signals (APS). Worth noting is Public Works is initiating a process to engage the community and update the Sidewalk and Urban Trails Plans; equity will continue to be a key consideration in how we determine what sidewalks should be prioritized.

Urban Trails

Funding for Urban Trails follows the Urban Trails Plan, which identifies Tier 1 and 2 level urban trail priorities. Current work leverages \$27 million in 2016 bond funds and \$3 million in 2018 bond funds, all of which are projected to be fully spent by FY2024. The Urban Trails Program has currently spent or encumbered 21% of these funds, or \$5.9 million. Unfunded needs for the full build out of all Tier 1 (highest priority) urban trails are \$275 million. At a \$250 million funding level, another \$23 million in urban trail projects would enable the advancement of projects that have a completed Preliminary Engineering Report (PER) or are in design phase, such as the Northern Walnut Creek Trail Phase 3, which would connect the existing built segment of the Northern Walnut Creek Trail to the Southern Walnut Creek Trail. Worth noting is Public Works is initiating a process to engage the community and update the Sidewalk and Urban Trails Plans; equity will continue to be a key consideration in how we determine what urban trails should be prioritized.

Safe Routes to School

Funding priorities for school-based active transportation improvements follow the Safe Routes to School Infrastructure Plan, which identifies more than 4,000 potential projects to improve the safety of children in grades K-8 walking or bicycling to and from school. Current work combines \$27.5 million in 2016 Bond funding with Quarter Cent funding directed by Council. These funds are projected to be fully spent by FY 2024. The Safe Routes to School Program has currently spent or encumbered 35% of the 2016 Bond funds, or \$9.7 million. There is no additional Safe Routes to School funding from the 2018 Bond Program. Unfunded needs for the Safe Routes to School Program are estimated at \$260 million for all high and very high priority projects. At the \$250 million funding level, the Safe Routes to School Program could spend another \$14 million to continue to build out select high and very high cost-benefit projects, citywide.

Local Transit Enhancement

Funding priorities focus on improvements to transit speed, reliability, and access to and from transit, as well as improving safety for all users adjacent to transit, with an emphasis on enhancing local bus service not part of Project Connect. Current work is prioritized by the Transit Priority Working Group co-led by Capital Metro and ATD staff. This work is currently funded at less than \$1 million per year through a combination of ATD operational funds and Capital Metro funding. The Transit Enhancement Program has spent \$1.6 million on many low-cost but high impact projects to address transit speed and reliability on city streets. There is no other identified source of funding for transit enhancement projects of this type. Transit enhancement projects funded within a \$250 million funding scenario could enable a \$21 million program that funded bus stop optimization, signal priority, in-street concrete pads and pavement improvements at bus stops, shelter improvements, and customer safety improvements. It would also provide funding for first/last mile connectivity strategies such as expanded shared micro mobility fleets and parking facilities as well as investments in signal cybersecurity and connectivity such as Highly Accurate Global Positioning System (GPS) to improve location-based technologies for enhanced transit service.

Bikeways

Funding priorities for bikeways follow the Austin Bicycle Plan's All Ages and Abilities Bicycle Network (AAA Bicycle Network) as well as the Austin Strategic Mobility Plan Bicycle Priority Network (the updated AAA Bicycle Network). Current work combines a variety of funding sources, including \$20 million in 2016 Bond funds which are projected to be fully spent by FY 2024. The Bikeways Program has currently spent or encumbered 34% of the 2016 Bond funds, or \$6.7 million. There is no additional Bikeway Program funding from the 2018 Bond Program. Unfunded needs for the full build out of the on-street portion of the All Ages and Abilities Bikeway Network is \$200 million, as adjusted for an expanded Bicycle Priority Network in the ASMP, higher unit costs and quality standards. At a \$250 million funding level, another \$18 million in bikeways projects would address 62% of the All Ages and Abilities Bikeway Network.

Safety / Vision Zero

Funding for safety improvements allows for the reconfiguration of high-crash intersections, rapid response projects on the High Injury Network, system-wide signal improvements, speed management projects and pedestrian safety projects. Currently, the intersection safety work is funded at \$15 million in 2016 bond funds, and \$11 million in 2018 bond funding. Another \$4 million in 2018 bond funding is dedicated to pedestrian safety, with funding for both programs projected to be spent by FY 2024. These safety programs have spent 36% of the 2016 and 2018 bond funds, or \$10.8 million. There is currently no dedicated funding source for addressing the High Injury Network or speed management at any scale, instead relying on operational funds or remaining 2012 bond funds to advance these priority projects.

Project prioritization for intersection safety and investments on the High Injury Network are prioritized using systemic safety analysis completed by ATD and currently in use to prioritize 2018 bond funded intersection projects. System-wide signal projects are based on a citywide needs assessment and include battery backup systems, conflict monitors, retroreflective back plates, and new traffic signals. Pedestrian safety improvements follow recommendations in the Pedestrian Safety Action Plan, and include improvements to unsignalized and signalized crossings, lighting, school zone flashers, and curb and ramp work. Speed management is a newly developed program. Speed management projects will be prioritized based on emerging criteria to address egregious speeding on neighborhood, collector, and arterial level streets.

At a \$250 million funding level, a \$45 million comprehensive mobility safety program would enable another 16-20 intersection projects, speed mitigation on 60 street segments and a variety of rapid response projects on High Injury Roadways.

Neighborhood Partnering Program

Funding priorities for the Neighborhood Partnering Program (NPP) derive from applications submitted by community members which are vetted with staff and selected by a committee of executive leadership. Currently, NPP is funded with \$1 million from the 2018 Bond. Staff expect to fully expend these by 2024. The Neighborhood Partnering Program has currently spent or encumbered 18% of the 2018 Bond funds, or \$176,000, with another \$224,000 under final review currently. Given the community-based request nature of this program, it is difficult to predict exact program need. Therefore, staff believe that this program could only absorb another \$1 million in funding over a six-year horizon period.

Large Multimodal Capital Improvement Projects

Several named projects related to active transportation and safety priorities are also identified as part of the staff analysis. Under a \$250 million funding scenario, \$16 million is identified to build the Longhorn Dam bicycle and pedestrian bridge project to significantly improve safe access across the eastern end of Lady Bird Lake. Partial funding for Phase 1 of the Congress Urban Design Initiative is also proposed for partial funding at \$30 million to enhance the walkability and safety of Congress Avenue from Riverside Drive to 11th Street. A total of \$40 million is proposed for partial funding multimodal improvements to substandard streets, prioritizing improvements along Johnny Morris Road between Loyola Lane and East Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard and Ross Road, serving several residential neighborhoods and the Del Valle school system. Staff would seek grant funding, private development contributions, SIF or other resources to fully fund these projects. Due to their size, they are recommended as unique funding proposals, but they maintain the spirit of Council direction regarding an investment in active transportation and safety.

Scaling, Alternative and Accelerating Program Delivery

The funding scenario at \$250 million requires each affected program to scale existing program delivery models to their limits while also leveraging alternative delivery strategies and using traditional CIP delivery models for the larger capital projects.

Scaling existing program delivery models would require local hiring in the form of critical staff positions, as well as contractors for services such as design and project management. Scaling the delivery of rapid response and other quick build projects that use internal markings and sign capacity could leverage apprenticeships and partnerships with workforce development agencies to scale work citywide. Both ATD and PWD have employed these techniques in the delivery of the 2016 Mobility Bond and would use lessons learned to improve upon these strategies. Funding for these added requirements are included within the cost proposal brought by staff.

Risk Mitigation

Current capital funding for active transportation, mobility safety and neighborhood partnering programs will carry the departments through 2024. As currently planned, there is a spending step-down beginning in 2023 with a steep decline in capital funding after 2024 after which no additional funding is identified (see graph on page 8). Ideally, there would be an opportunity to seek additional funding for these programs well in advance of the 2024 timeframe through the normal City bond cycle to best plan for program scaling to multi-year steady state outputs.

A 6-year funding proposal, if approved by voters, could mitigate the risk of the significant fiscal cliff currently anticipated in 2024. It could allow the significant delivery engines that will be operating in 2021 through 2024 to continue delivering our programs without interruption through calendar year 2026. This could allow future City Councils to contemplate additional funding in the 2024 to 2026 timeframe while continuing to deliver on the needed infrastructure.

The following graph illustrates how the current CIP funded work integrates with the staff proposed 6-year program, extending the effectiveness of our current delivery approach through 2026 and addressing the issue of program ramp up.

Program Outreach and Equitable Project Prioritization

As stated in the initial response memo, the City has not completed any public engagement around a possible bond referendum for in 2020, other than the process that resulted in the Project Connect tax rate election. Typically, a process to engage the community about what their priorities are and what they are willing to financially support occurs prior to ordering a bond election. However, the base programs and project proposals have been developed based on public input gathered during the creation of the various modal plans (e.g. Bicycle Plan, Sidewalk and ADA Transition Plan, Pedestrian Safety Action Plan, Safe Routes to School Infrastructure Plan) and the Austin Strategic Mobility Plan, which included an extensive process to engage underrepresented community members and reflect priorities that are inclusive of all mobility needs. These community groups as well as the public at large would be consulted if 2020 funding is approved, as part of the standard project development process.

This vetting would most certainly include project prioritization to assure an equitable distribution of services. Projects are prioritized based on guidance provided in the Council Strategic Direction 2023 and Austin Strategic Mobility Plan (ASMP) and based on recommendations found in individual modal plans. The departments apply these guidelines through the lens of an annual mobility planning process developed under the 2016 Mobility Bond Program which gives transparency and accountability to the public and Council. The [2020 Mobility Annual Plan](#) includes a look ahead to over 400 planned and proposed projects citywide. We would also consult Council on an appropriate Board, Commission and Committee process to fully inform the prioritization process.

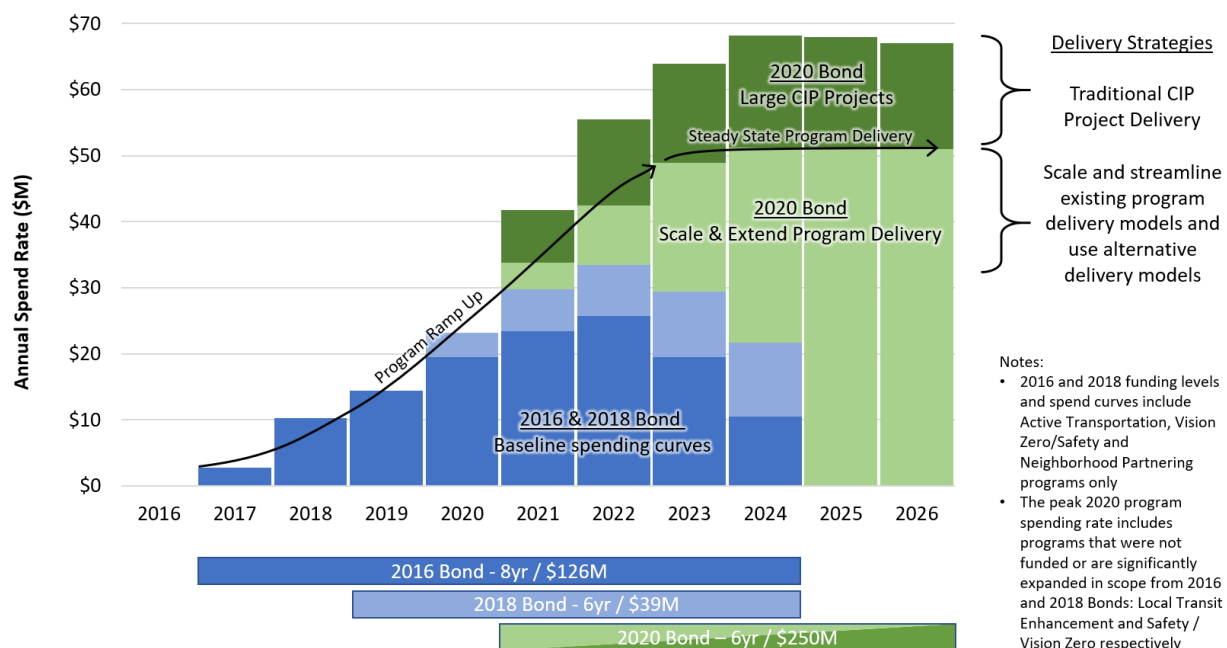
Green Infrastructure and Increasing the Urban Tree Canopy

Staff is also aware of the expressed desire to create green infrastructure and to increase the urban tree canopy. The 2016 Local Mobility Programs, notably the Sidewalk, Bikeway and Urban Trails programs routinely incorporate natural elements into the streetscape such as native and adaptive landscaping. Increasingly, these programs have been partnering with the Watershed Protection Department to incorporate rain gardens into infrastructure projects to manage stormwater in-place. ATD and PWD are currently participating with the Watershed Protection Department to restore riparian habitats by incorporating green infrastructure into mobility projects throughout the city. Continued coordination with Watershed Protection on this program, as well as coordination with the Urban Forestry Program in the Public Works Department, will contribute to maximizing opportunities for the integration of green infrastructure and increasing the urban tree canopy.

In closing, I want to reiterate the commitment by the City Manager's Office, Public Works Department, and the Austin Transportation Department to enhancing the mobility infrastructure of Austin. Austin has developed an outstanding infrastructure program, recognized around the world for its commitment to active transportation, Vision Zero/Safety, and to our neighborhoods. With the Project Connect plan approved by Council, we stand ready to commit to a world-class transit plan as well. We hope that this response answers the many questions you might have with regards to these important programs. I and my staff are available to discuss specific programs and projects or the overall approach to Council's request for this funding proposal.

CC: Spencer Cronk, City Manager
Nuria Rivera-Vandermyde, Deputy City Manager
Greg Canally, Deputy Finance Officer
Rob Spillar, P.E., Director, Austin Transportation Department
Richard Mendoza, P.E., Director, Public Works Department
Anna Martin, P.E., PTOE, Assistant Director, Austin Transportation Department
Pirouz Moin, P.E., Assistant Director, Public Works Department

Active Transportation, Vision Zero/Safety and Neighborhood Partnering Spending Scenario



ATTACHMENT 1: RESOLUTION 20200729-090

FUNDING SCENARIO FOR ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION, VISION ZERO AND NEIGHBORHOOD PARTNERING PROGRAM

6-YEAR, \$250 MILLION PROPOSED PROGRAM									
	Sidewalks	Urban Trails	Safe Routes to School	Local Transit Enhancement	Bikeways	Safety / Vision Zero	Neighborhood Partnering	Large CIP	Total
Program Funding (\$Million)	\$42	\$23	\$14	\$21	\$18	\$45	\$1	\$86	\$250
<i>Program notes</i>	Enables approx. \$3M/year for rehabilitation projects and \$7M/year for new sidewalk projects, reaching an estimated 58 more miles of sidewalk connectivity as well as 100 accessible pedestrian signal crossing improvements.	Enables projects that have completed PER or design phase to move forward to construction, such as the Northern Walnut Creek Trail Phase 3.	Continues progress on building out high and very high benefit Safe Routes to School projects citywide.	Funds transit speed and reliability projects, improved signal priority enhancement program, shared micro mobility support for first/last mile connections & cybersecurity safety & connectivity investments such as highly accurate GPS technology.	Extends progress on the AAA Bicycle Network connectivity, including system barriers and coordination with partner agencies to address connectivity. Funding level would achieve estimated 62% buildout of AAA Bicycle network by 2025 (Bicycle Plan goal is 80% by 2025)	Comprehensive safety program addressing pedestrian safety, speed management, high-crash intersection and High Injury Roadway improvements as well as systemwide signal safety improvements.	Project funding needed to cover anticipated project applications for FY2021-FY2024	\$16M Longhorn Dam Bridge; \$30M Congress Urban Design Initiative - Phase I partial funding; \$40 million towards substandard streets, prioritizing Ross Rd and Johnny Morris Rd and Walnut Trail connections	