

Bicycle Advisory Council (BAC) Recommendation:

Active Mobility Recommendations for Texas Department of Transportation IH-35 Capital Express Project

WHEREAS, the Bicycle Advisory Council (BAC) advises 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; and

WHEREAS, the purpose of the Pedestrian Advisory Council (PAC) is to advise the 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;

WHEREAS, the City's 2014 Bicycle Master Plan envisions a core network of safe facilities suitable for people of all ages and abilities, and approximately three-quarters of the streets that cross this project corridor have been identified as being in the Bicycle Priority Network;

WHEREAS, the City's Sidewalk / ADA Transition Plan accounts for missing and broken sidewalks citywide, including significant very high priority missing and broken sidewalks along the project corridor and TXDOT has adopted a renewed focus on sidewalks and building an inclusive, accessible transportation system for all users;

WHEREAS, the Austin Strategic Mobility Plan (ASMP) calls for a reduction in the percentage of single occupancy trips to 50% by 2039;

WHEREAS, the High-Injury Network (HIN) identifies streets in Austin that are under City of Austin jurisdiction that has a relatively high number of serious injuries and fatal crashes, and 12 of the streets which cross this project corridor are included therein;

WHEREAS, the City's Vision Zero Plan calls for intersection improvements, raised crosswalks, signal upgrades, design modifications to major streets and other measures aimed at ending the needless deaths and injuries occurring on Austin roads every year;

WHEREAS, a significant number of people who were walking or riding bicycles or micromobility devices have been killed or seriously injured on or along Interstate Highway 35 (I-35) in Austin;

WHEREAS, the impact of these serious injuries and fatalities have been inequitable, disproportionately affecting people of color, individuals experiencing homelessness, and other marginalized communities;

WHEREAS, Cap Metro's transit service currently releases passengers near I-35 frontage roads, leaving them to make east-west connections across IH-35 or along the frontage road via whatever means of transport they have available, most often by foot or bicycle;

WHEREAS, the Purpose and Need document of the TxDOT I-35 Capital Express Central Project clearly states, "there is a need to provide safer and more continuous accommodations for bicyclists and pedestrians" (within the project corridor);

WHEREAS, the first stated goal of the TxDOT I-35 Capital Express Central Project is to “enhance safety,” however, significantly more energy and materials within the Virtual Public Meeting from 11/12/20 is spent describing current travel time issues than current safety issues, despite safety issues resulting in a profound loss of life;

WHEREAS, National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) guidelines for all ages & abilities bicycle facilities state bicycles should be separated from pedestrians where significant volume of either mode is present and American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials (AASHTO) guidelines state "segregation of pedestrians from wheeled [e.g. bicyclists] users may be appropriate";

WHEREAS, there will be high enough pedestrian volume throughout the project corridor to warrant that the walkway and bikeway are separate from each other;

WHEREAS, the Red Line Trail and Parkway are projected to have over 10,000 daily users at both crossings of I-35 upon completion circa 2030;

WHEREAS, TxDOT recognizes the "local and regional importance of the proposed I-35 Capital Express Central Project," and espouses to "encourage the participation of all interested stakeholders," but the originally proposed 30 day deadline for public comments on the Draft coordination plan and schedule, Draft project purpose and need, and the Draft range of alternatives is unduly inadequate for many interested stakeholder groups which convene only once per month;

WHEREAS, the City, County, TXDOT, and the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization have an obligation to consider past inequities and potential disproportionate impacts of project alternatives and mitigate negative impacts through equitable planning processes and outcomes;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the PAC and the BAC recommend that safety for all road users be prioritized above all other considerations during the design and implementation of the I-35 Capital Express Central Project, and that language reflecting this be added explicitly to the Purpose and Need clearly indicated as a higher priority than congestion;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the PAC and the BAC recommend that TxDOT prioritize safe, all ages and abilities east-west connectivity across and along the I-35 corridor;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the PAC and the BAC recommend the implementation of protected all ages & abilities high comfort bikeways which are separated from both motor vehicle lanes and pedestrian sidewalks along the entire project corridor;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the PAC and the BAC recommend project elements (aside from the controlled access facilities) should be designed and operated as multimodal city streets using target speeds, design speeds, and posted speeds of 30 mph or less in accordance with NACTO and City of Austin design guidelines, including sufficient safety lighting for all users;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the PAC and the BAC recommend all controlled access facilities should be designed with modern design guidance, including the most recent AASHTO Green Book, using target speeds, design speeds, and posted speeds appropriate for a dense urban context and to allow seamless and safe integration with a safe, multimodal urban street grid;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the PAC and the BAC recommend TxDOT commit to a full and honest consideration of alternatives to the current proposed design, up to and including fully burying the highway through downtown or dismantling and re-designating I-35 along another existing highway, e.g. US 183 or SH 130, to enable the City of Austin to reconnect its street grid and repair the divide that presently separates it;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the PAC and the BAC recommend TxDOT consider alternatives proposed by Our Future 35, Reconnect Austin, and Rethink35 in furtherance of this goal;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the PAC and the BAC recommend minimal implementation of slip lanes and that any slip lanes in this corridor should be designed with tight tolerances and clear sight lines to crossing walkways and bikeways that slow right turns to improve safety for people crossing those slip lanes, and that crossings be raised;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the PAC and the BAC recommend that any I-35 roadway lanes, i.e. both main lanes and frontage road lanes (street lanes), go below the Red Line Parkway at both Red Line crossings, i.e. next to 4th St. and near 43rd St.;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the PAC and the BAC recommend that the Airport Blvd. intersection configuration take into consideration a future Hancock transit station for the Gold Line and/or the Red Line by creating a superior pedestrian and bicycling crossing, including putting the intersection of Airport Blvd. and I-35 frontage road (street lanes) underground and providing plaza, park, and buildings opportunities on the surface;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the PAC and the BAC recommend that TxDOT and the City of Austin mutually pursue an interlocal agreement for implementation of surface-level improvements that are not within the direct purview of TxDOT, e.g. caps and real estate value capture;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the PAC and the BAC recommend that TxDOT consider utilizing pedestrian scramble phases at intersections with high pedestrian volumes;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the PAC and the BAC recommend TxDOT allow 90 days of public input after the publication of technical reports and other relevant project documentation for all public comment periods for the remainder of the environmental process;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the PAC and the BAC recommend that TxDOT provide \$500 million for pedestrian and bicycling improvements to local streets and trails within 3-5 miles of the project in order to mitigate the negative consequences of additional motor vehicle traffic on local streets caused by any additional motor vehicle capacity of the proposed project;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the PAC and the BAC request that Austin City Council actively engage in every phase of the TXDOT environmental process for I-35 central and incorporate these recommendations and those of other community groups into their own comments as appropriate;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the PAC and the BAC recommend that TxDOT provide \$650 million for facilitating construction of affordable housing and support programs for people experiencing homelessness on I-35 and Austinites displaced, or in danger of being displaced along the corridor;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the PAC and the BAC recommend that TxDOT adds to the Project Purpose and Need to align with local plans and goals, including, but not limited to, the Austin Strategic Mobility Plan, Street Design Guide, City of Austin Vision Zero goals, Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan, and the Austin Climate Equity plan;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the PAC and the BAC recommend that TxDOT design bike-ped crossings to be safe for vulnerable road users, especially in areas where a drivers' attention is primarily focused on merging with traffic;

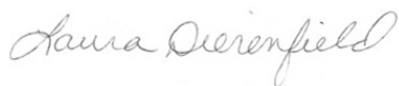
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the PAC and the BAC recommend that TxDOT create effective wayfinding systems to provide well-structured directions for people walking and biking. These would have distances to key destinations, as well as estimated time to bike or walk to those destinations;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the PAC and the BAC recommend that TxDOT provide bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure like street furniture, water fountains, and tree plantings to increase economic activity, improve environmental quality, and provide shade. Trees should be between fast-moving cars and people to add safety and comfort for vulnerable road users.

Date of Approval: December 15, 2020

Vote: 9-0.

Attest:

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Laura Dierenfield".

Laura Dierenfield, Staff Liaison