

**Pedestrian Advisory Council Recommendation -  
Regarding the Bowie Underpass Project and Cypress & Shoal Creek Public Space Strategy  
Recommendation 20211004-01**

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 creating, maintaining, and operating pedestrian facilities;

WHEREAS, the Austin Community Climate Plan (ACCP) recognizes that

- (i) climate change is one of the biggest threats to our economy and way of life in Central Texas;
- (ii) in order to avoid the worst impacts of climate change, greenhouse gas emissions must be reduced; and
- (iii) transportation and land-use constitute 35% of total community-wide emissions;

WHEREAS, the Austin Strategic Mobility Plan (ASMP)

- (i) calls for a reduction in the percentage of single occupancy car trips to 50% of all modes of transportation by 2039; and
- (ii) recognizes that a top strategy to reach 50/50 mode share by 2039 is to “build active transportation access for all ages and abilities on sidewalk, bicycle, and urban trail systems”;

WHEREAS, the Mayor’s Task Force on Institutional Racism and Systemic Inequities Report published on a March 31, 2017 (the City’s Institutional Racism and Systemic Inequities Report) calls for the City of Austin to establish “a program to put in actual affordable communities on transportation corridors in high opportunity areas that include lower-income serving businesses, recreation, education, health care, and publish transportation as well as housing”;

WHEREAS, for over two decades, the City as well as local community groups and stakeholders have developed and maintained numerous plans which contemplate the construction of a pedestrian and bicycle underpass at Third and Bowie Streets under the railroad tracks that separate the Pfluger Street Bridge and the Market District (the “Bowie Underpass Project”);

WHEREAS, the Bowie Underpass Project is part of

- (i) the longstanding Seaholm Power Plant Redevelopment Project; and

(ii) the “Cypress and Shoal Creek Public Space Strategy,” which has been jointly developed between the Downtown Austin Alliance and the Shoal Creek Conservancy;

WHEREAS, as reported by the Austin Monitor, a memo dated August 17, 2021 from the City’s Economic Development Director indicates that city staffers have terminated negotiations with Union Pacific Railroad to develop the Bowie Underpass;

WHEREAS, as reported by the Austin Monitor, City staff members are currently working on recommendations for reallocating the \$6.6 million in funding once allocated for the Bowie Underpass Project;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the PAC recommends that

- (i) the City recommit appropriate and necessary staffing and resources to complete the Bowie Underpass Project; and
- ii) the City consult and engage local stakeholders, community groups, and other affected parties to develop creative solutions that will bring about the completion of the Bowie Underpass Project;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the PAC recommends that in the event staff fail to secure the agreements necessary for the Bowie Underpass to proceed, Council should require staff to report back to Council with details regarding the specific obstacles and costs involved by October 31st, 2021, so that Council and the public can consider next steps;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the PAC recommends that in the event the Bowie Underpass Project cannot be completed as intended, then the City consider alternative bicycle and pedestrian connections between the Pfluger Street Bridge and the Market District, including for example an open call design and public input process similar to the Longhorn Dam proposals and alternatives;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that in the event the City decides to reallocate the \$6.6 million in funds earmarked for the Bowie Underpass Project, such funds be spent in accordance with the goals and priorities identified in the ACCP, ASMP, and the City’s Institutional Racism and Systemic Inequities Report, which include but are not limited to

- (i) significantly reducing carbon emissions resulting from transportation and land-use;
- (ii) building “active transportation access for all ages and abilities on sidewalk, bicycle, and urban trail systems”; and
- (iii) furthering the development and preservation of “actual affordable communities on transportation corridors”.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the PAC recommends that high-quality pedestrian connections to the Amtrak station, YMCA, and areas west of Lamar, including a second pedestrian bridge across Lady Bird Lake west of Lamar, using best-practices for design, be part of the future plans for the area in order to provide safe access across Lamar, Cesar Chavez, the railroad tracks, and the lake;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the PAC recommends there be one or more areas in the project boundaries that function as safe and welcome community public spaces that encourage lingering and socializing; and

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the PAC recommends that the Austin City Council

- i) adopt the Cypress & Shoal Creek Public Space Strategy as the guiding document for public space improvements in and proximate to the Seaholm District; and
- ii) amend the Seaholm TIF Project Plan to enable the use of TIF funds to be used for construction of Cypress & Shoal Creek public space improvements.

Date: October 4<sup>th</sup>, 2021

Vote: 6-0 with Stratton, Riegel and Ahmad absent

Attest: Kimberly Levinson, PAC Chair

*Kimberly Levinson*