




MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and City Council

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

DATE: January 13, 2022

SUBJECT: Council Resolution 20210902-074 – Evaluation of Pilot to Provide Vehicular Access to Morrow Street by Opening the Gate Installed on Easy Wind Drive

Council Resolution 20210902-074 directed the City Manager to initiate a three-month pilot to provide vehicular access to Morrow Street by opening the gate installed on Easy Wind Drive and to assess the mobility and safety implications.

Background

Ordinance 20111215-077 rezoned and changed the zoning map for the property generally known as the Crestview Station Development located at 905 Banyon Street. Vehicular access to Morrow Street via Easy Wind Drive, both public streets, was prohibited via a locked gate, except for emergency vehicular use; however, bicycle and pedestrian access was allowed.

Analysis

To assess mobility and safety implications of the pilot, the Austin Transportation Department (ATD) completed an engineering investigation by collecting 24-hour traffic speed and volume data on Morrow Street, Easy Wind Drive, and Banyon Street, streets in the network most directly impacted by the presence of the gate. Data collection began in August 2021 with the gate closed to capture baseline conditions. ATD collected data at the same locations in October and November 2021 with the gate opened to compare results between the two scenarios. Results of the data collection are summarized in Table 1.

Daily traffic volumes generally increased immediately after the gate opened but leveled off after this initial increase. The resulting volumes with the gate opened are within expected and safe ranges for these types of streets. The speed data indicates that the prevailing speeds (85th percentile) were not impacted by the increased volumes, and drivers continued to travel within reasonable conformance of the posted 25 mph speed limits. Note that some data collection results were incomplete due to equipment malfunction; however, ATD determined that the remaining valid data were consistent to accept the results of the overall collection effort.

Table 1: Daily Traffic Volumes and Speeds with Gate Opened and Closed

Location		Daily Traffic Volume (vpd)			85 th Percentile Speeds (mph)	
		Eastbound/Northbound	Westbound/Southbound	Total	Eastbound/Northbound	Westbound/Southbound
904 Morrow Street	August 2021 (Gate Closed)	935	443	1,378	29.2	28.1
	October 2021 (Gate Open)	1037	623	1,660	24.2	27.6
	November 2021 (Gate Open)	1026	479	1,505	25.4	26.1
1112 Morrow Street	August 2021 (Gate Closed)	940	444	1,384	25.9	27.6
	October 2021 (Gate Open)	1236	754	1,990	26.5	22.4
	November 2021 (Gate Open)	1128	621	1,749	25.5	21.4
7412 Easy Wind Drive	August 2021 (Gate Closed)	109	118	227	17.5	17.1
	October 2021 (Gate Open)	230	282	512	-	-
	November 2021 (Gate Open)	-	-	-	-	-
7610 Easy Wind Drive	August 2021 (Gate Closed)	71	104	175	22.5	21.9
	October 2021 (Gate Open)	205	166	371	22.9	22.1
	November 2021 (Gate Open)	215	192	407	23.8	21.6
7800 Easy Wind Drive	August 2021 (Gate Closed)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	October 2021 (Gate Open)	413	244	657	-	-
	November 2021 (Gate Open)	329	259	588	15.7	14.5
910 Banyon Street	August 2021 (Gate Closed)	330	413	743	23.1	20.7
	October 2021 (Gate Open)	254	344	598	22.8	22.0
	November 2021 (Gate Open)	136	315	451	23.0	22.0

Recommendation

As City Traffic Engineer with purview of traffic control devices such as access control gates, and based on the review of the above data, I am recommending vehicular access to Morrow Street be facilitated by permanently opening and removing the gate installed on Easy Wind Drive.

ATD generally does not support restricting or closing public streets when such measures do not improve safety or mobility for the greater public. Connected streets provide the public with multiple choices of travel routes, which helps reduce travel times and congestion on our street network. Safe connections also support one of the principles of the City's Complete Streets Policy (Ordinance No 20140612-119): "2. Complete Streets require connected travel networks." Only in unique situations will ATD recommend such measures. The closure at Easy Wind does not present such conditions.

Additionally, ATD installed a sidewalk last year on the north side of Morrow Street from N. Lamar Boulevard to Watson Street. The recorded speeds, along with the existing pedestrian sidewalk, do not present a notable safety concern. Existing speed cushions on Morrow Street also serve to lower speeds on the street and improve safety.

Next Steps

With City Council approval, ATD will work with the Public Works Department to permanently remove the gate equipment on Easy Wind Street.

For more information, contact Eric Bollich, P.E., ATD Managing Engineer and Transportation Engineering Division Manager, at eric.bollich@austintexas.gov or (512) 974-7767.

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