

Mobility Committee Transcript (MOBC) – 1/20/2022

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>> Council member Harper Madison has not joined us yet, but we will get started and hopefully she'll be able to join us in just a minute. I am the chair of the mobility committee, city council member Paige Ellis. I am joined by vice chair Kelly, council member kitchen, mayor pro tem Alison alter. I will call this meeting to order at 1:08 P.M. It is January 20th, and I am located here at Austin city hall this afternoon. We will be hearing from three citizens communications speakers. They are all signed up to speak on item 5. But before we get to that, I did want to briefly mention that item number 3 is going to be postponed. It is an update on the project connect blue line bridge, and the Orange line, and we are going to postpone that requested by the transit partnership and supported by city staff. And that request was made because there have been some questions brought up by the urban transportation commission,

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and we wanted to make sure that they had some time to develop their responses to those questions. So we are planning to bring that back at the very next meeting in February. So I just wanted to daylight that here as we're getting started, so that we understood what was on our plate today. So we knew how to move through this. With that, I will let audio bring up our citizens communications. We have Angelo, bill George, and Hasan ready to come speak to us today, all of them on item 5, the taxi franchise briefing. >> This is Hasan. I am present. >> Ellis: Okay, go ahead. >> This is Angelo. I am here with the co-op Texas. >> Ellis: Okay. I have Angelo on my list first. Would you like to go ahead and make your remarks, sir?

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>> I wonder, do we have to make our remarks first, or -- has to present what he proposed. >> Ellis: We typically take the citizen communication up front, so we know you're all registered to speak on item 5, but the way that we take our communication during the committee meetings is to go ahead and hear from speakers first, so you don't have to wait on the phone for the entire committee meeting. >> Okay. All right. If that is the case, then I will start. Well, as I mentioned, my name Angelo artem. I'm the current co-op taxi resident. The co-op taxi, ATS co-op taxi, as you all know, is the cooperative that was established

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about five years ago, over five years ago. And it's managed and on rate by the drivers. So, recently, we changed the management in our company. But what happened is that we found through our members that there was -- proposing that the franchise, it has to be moved from the city council into mobility authority or mobility operation authority. So, we didn't get that communication from the transportation department. But we get that one from our drivers. So our drivers were asking us, what is this and what it means. So, we said we don't know.

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Let us find it from the -- so we call and he responded and he explained to us what he is proposing. So, with that meeting, we don't have opinion now, but let us go back to our members. So when we met with our members, we told them that he want to take the responsibility or authority or franchise under the city council into operation authority under transportation department. Our drivers reject the idea. So, then, a couple days ago, we have another June meeting with the central taxi and with that

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meeting, we also told him our opinion and the decision of the members, that the proposal he's proposing is objected by the drivers and the members already signed a petition, so it's now under way to get delivered to him and the city council, that they don't like an idea, they want to keep the franchise under the city council. So, in that meetings, we told if there is anything regarding the -- we should be contacted and then require our opinion. So, yesterday, we got an email from him telling us that we have a meeting today. So that's why I myself, all of

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you to see our concern and we want to speak on this one. >> Ellis: Thank you. >> So, with that said, with that said, is that if anyone wants to help drivers based on what he is saying, how this change is going to help us or is not going to help us. >> Ellis: Yes, sir. Thank you. Can you finish your thought here? The three-minute buzzer time. But I do want to hear the rest of your thought. >> Okay. We rejected it and opposed it and want to remain on the city council and the proposal for those loans.

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To be the loan maker and to be the -- so that is not going to help us in any way. >> Ellis: Yes, sir. Thank you. >> We have a lot of -- if the city wants to help us -- >> Ellis: Sir. >> We have a lot of stuff, the city can help us. One of them is this. >> Ellis: Yes, sir. Thank you very much. Appreciate you being able to collect your thoughts for us so we can hear from you. >> Kitchen: Chair. This is Ann. I would like to -- it doesn't have to be right now. Maybe it's when the item comes up. But I will have more questions for these folks. I think it's really important that we understand. I want to really understand what their objections are. So, you know, so I -- I want to be able to hear the rest of their thoughts. But I'm happy to do that later, if that's what you'd prefer to do. >> Ellis: Yes, let's see if we can keep them on the line, if that's something that they are available to do.

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We do have two other speakers that we'd like to hear from, and so I know that today is a briefing that is kind of starting this process, so that we understand how this conversation is transpiring. But we have heard from individuals that want to be able to share their concerns. So, if they can stay on the line, we'd be more than happy to hear their input later in the day. We don't typically continue citizen communication throughout the committee meetings. But we absolutely do want to hear from them, whether it's later today or in writing to make sure we're hearing the concerns of the folks that are affected by this particular option that we will have ahead of us. >> Kitchen: Okay. Thank you. Thank you, chair. >> Ellis: Thank you. Our next speaker will be bill George. >> Hi. Thank you. My name is bill George. I'm the CEO of whcatx. We are the company that acquired the assets from yellow cab out of bankruptcy court in August of this year. We operate a company called G

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trip, which we're in 26 cities and 14 states. We also, through this bankruptcy process, acquired the yellow cab operations in Austin and Houston. We are supportive of this change, in all the cities we do

business in. It's rare to have this kind of franchise agreement, and I know that the city council tried to change this several years ago and met with opposition from the former owners of yellow cab. We think it is a better model, what is being proposed, because it is more flexible as the market changed, as all the technology comes into the market, as the competition changes, it requires companies like ours to be a little more nimble, and the franchise agreement itself served a great purpose for a long time. It's a little bit antiquated right now. And so we are supportive of the changes that have been proposed. We think it's fair to all the players who are in the business. It actually makes it easier for new players to get into the business. It protects those that are in it because it keeps high standards

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there, and it's good for the residents, it's good for business, and it's good for visitors, so we would be very supportive of this change. And I'm happy to stay on and answer any questions. >> Ellis: Okay, thank you. It sounds like some of the committee maybes may want to be able to ask you questions and the previous speaker, Mr. Ahtem, if he's able to stay on the line, too. And our last registered speaker is Hasan aruri. >> Yeah, hello, hi. This is Hasan aruri. I am the owner of central city taxi. Thank you all for having us here today. I only have three minutes. That's not really been explained at all. First of all, this was a surprise to us by Jacob. As companies and as taxi drivers. It was a shock and surprise. We believe this thing is being worked in the dark. And secretive.

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We didn't know anything about it. We didn't even know about today's meeting. We didn't know about even the part that might go on the agenda of the city council. There is a big secret behind it. And honestly, when we talk to Jacob a couple of days ago, he said well this model is being used in Dallas, Houston, and Austin. Well, that's fantastic. Did you actually do the research to see the income of the drivers of these cities compared to the Austin taxi drivers? No. What's going to end up happening. Right now, no one can change any of the ordinance, okay, without going to city council. And we like that, as drivers, we like that as companies, because it protects -- it protects us as drivers and companies. Right now, what they're asking for is to take all that power, all that power and put it in the hands of one person, and like

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Mr. Angelo said, now, this person is going to be the judge, the prosecutor, and the lawyer. He can change anything he wants. What we really believed was going on, this is going to destroy the taxi industry, and what's left of it. Who's going to gain? Big companies, okay? And honestly, it's going to bring in the companies into this game. Their income is significantly lower than the taxi drivers. And they

work three times more than we do. Big companies, they want to open the market, because what's going to end up happening is, now, if you're going to have 200, 300 drivers show up and each one of them starts his own little company, they're not going to get any business. They're all going to go and sit at the airport. What's going to happen? You're going to have 200, 300 companies sitting at the airport. The airport is going to actually say, this is not going to work. We only need one company to service the airport, and this happened in other cities.

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So now, all these cab drivers are forced to join that company to work. So right now, yes, it will serve big corporations. To remove all laws, to remove all ordinances, because it supports them. They've been after there for a long time. This taxi franchise style is protecting us. We are the last of the mohicans that are standing to serve this city. If it wasn't for us, taxi drivers, under this taxi franchise, Uber would have actually taken the whole entire market. >> Thank you. Your time has expired. >> I'm sorry? >> Ellis: Thank you, sir. Your three minutes has expired. If you need to finish your sentence, we'd like to hear that, and it sounds like if you can stay on the line, there may be some questions later. >> Absolutely. Just one last thought. I really want Jacob to explain -- to bring the research that he

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did about the income of the drivers from other cities, okay? And I want to know from the other companies as well, the gentlemen who supported this idea, what's the income from the cities that he's working in. Thank you. >> Ellis: Thank you for coming to speak. I appreciate all the speakers signing up and being available, if it's within your schedule, to be able to answer some questions later. We will be moving through the rest of the schedule today, as I mentioned earlier. Item 3 is being postponed, so we will not be taking that item up today. But I would just like to flag for when we do get to item 5, I think a few of us would just like to understand a little better since this was requested for staff to be able to come and speak to this committee today. Where we are in the process, what are the future conversations going to look like. So I just wanted to flag that, so that people have a better understanding of timeline or when decisions might be made or how to be involved in a public manner, because I know that we all do want to hear from folks who are affected by this, via

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email or via public comment, like we've been able to hear today. So, I will now -- we will move on to item 1. There was one small adjustment in the meeting minutes, and that is in the upper right-hand corner, the special immediating was Thursday, November 10th, 2021. And in the heading, the date still said October 7th. So I just want to read into the record, it's going to be amended to say November 10th,

2021 to match what's in the upper right-hand corner. With that small edit, do I have a motion to approve the minutes of that meeting? Made by mayor pro tem alter, seconded by council member Harper Madison. All in favor? I think I saw unanimous hands there. Item number two, we will take up the cap and stitch design strategy for inclusion in the I-35 capital express central expansion. This was an item that vice chair Kelly requested to be on our

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agenda today, and we will hear a presentation now by Mike tremble, who is the director of the corridor program office. >> Thank you, chair. Good afternoon. Mime tremble with the corridor program office. I'll walk you through a brief presentation about the project, a little bit of background, but then also where we're at today and next steps. You can go ahead and move on to the next slide. So, as you know, I-35 has been a -- both a symbolic and a physical barrier between east side and downtown Austin, going back to the 1928 plan, where black communities were relocated to east Austin, on the other side of east avenue, hispanic communities also were relocated over there in that area through different policies that were occurring in the early 20th century. And so it really became an important location for communities of color and east

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avenue, former I-35 was a major connection point back to downtown, back to the business districts in Austin. Beginning with the highway construction program in the 50s and 60s, plans for I-35 to move forward, and that replaced east Austin, thereby creating really that physical barrier along with the symbolic barrier between east Austin and downtown. Next slide. And so here's I-35 today. Again, you can see what we're talking about. You have the upper decks that go through downtown, several elevated areas of I-35 through downtown area as well. And so given the current condition, the current configuration of I-35, again, I-35 continues to be the physical barrier between east Austin and downtown, with very limited connectivity, crossing I-35 as a pedestrian and bicyclist is very challenging, not very safe. And so we really want to make

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sure that we're improving the condition of the connections across 35, but also seeing what we can do to address this legacy of I-35 as it's been this kind of east-west divide barrier for our community. Next slide. So, with the plans by txdot to reconstruct the highway down town, the capital express central project, the plan is to depress the highway lanes below street level through downtown. So this provides us an opportunity to put in place a series of caps and stitches. Caps are just really a covering over those areas above the highway where they would go below street level. You can see a representation on the left

there, and that really provides us an opportunity to put certain uses and amenities for the community on top of those caps. If they work well, you don't really realize there's a highway

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underneath you. For example, the Clive Warren park in Dallas. So there could be a great opportunity for the community to really reclaim this space that has been taken up by I-35 right now. And then on the right, you see the stitches. And the stitches are really widened crossings. And this provides us an opportunity to really get better separation between the modes. Between the bike pedestrian vehicular modes, add landscaping, and add the buffers that really provide for a much better quality of crossing and connection point between east Austin and downtown as well. So the concept is that we would be able to put a series of caps and stitches, you know, through these areas where we have this opportunity. Next slide. Now, this is just some of the benefits of put these improvements in place. Obviously, there's several. We can think about the environmental benefits, reclaiming this space, adding green space to it. Addressing air quality issues. Really creating better connectivity. Addressing the legacy issues of

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I-35, as I mentioned. And really enhancing the safety and mobility aspects for the community, really making it a local connection point from downtown to east Austin as well as a great space, gathering space for the community as well. Also, it could be a great support to the local economy. We've already seen that in other projects of this nature that have happened in Dallas and other locations around the nation. Next slide. So, beginning in 2020, there was a study done by the urban land institute in conjunction with the downtown Austin alliance, and this really set the blueprint and the playbook, so to speak, for what we've been working off of since then. The study really called for leveraging the opportunity, and even looked at some preliminary locations for where these caps could go in downtown. It also then called to come up with a comprehensive funding strategy to working with

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stakeholders in the community, looking at leveraging various sources to try to make this opportunity a reality. Another key component of that was to have really robust involvement from the community, and really form basically a partnership between the community, the city, and downtown Austin alliance as we look towards implementation to really make sure there's an organic aspect of the development of this project. Next slide. And again, the project partnerships we have here. A lot of entities involved, a lot of agencies we're working with. But primarily, we're working very much in partnership with the downtown Austin alliance, who's been helping out with some of the community outreach and discussions. The Texas department of transportation, of course, as they're developing the alternatives

for the capital express central project and the community. And so we've had various ways that we've started to involve the community through stakeholder groups and

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engagement. Next slide. So, after the study was done in 2020, beginning in the summer of 2020, there was a series of community conversations, really sponsored by downtown Austin alliance, but working with kazi, the local radio station, and other stakeholders to have conversations with the community about the legacy of I-35 and what it's meant. And a couple of big things came out of that. Obviously, a strong desire to address that, and really -- if there are going to be some benefits out of the I-35 project for the community, to be able to see some of those community benefits returned to those communities that were affected by I-35 in the first place, namely communities of color, that lived in proximity to I-35. And so these are some of the key things that we heard out of that. Out of those community conversations we developed a scoping working group, which is a community-based stakeholder group. Our co-chairs are Dr. Pierce Burnett for that, and Linda Guerrero, and we've been working with them over the last year, year and a half or so, as you've

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been developing the project as well. Next slide. So here's where we're at in seizing this opportunity. Working very closely with txdot and our Atkins design team. In this first phase of feasibility analysis, we've been able to identify a series of possible cap locations. Really beginning at Caesar Chavez and working north to 8th street. And there's other opportunities that we think are viable from 11th to 129. And airport boulevard as well might present an opportunity.th. And airport boulevard as well might present an opportunity. We do think this is going to modify with the updated alternative that txdot is going to be coming out with next week. We do think, however, it will still provide substantial opportunity for cap and stitch locations. It's definitely above 20 acres. So pretty much in the same range, if not more opportunities for cap, stitches, and even some mini caps in different locations

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through downtown. And so we'll have more information available once that's released. Also, txdot is already including funding for the stitches along several crossings in downtown. And that will be an additional 20 feet on each side, which really allows us to start to put in that separation of modes and some of the landscape buffers that we started talking about with the stitch improvements. So that is already incorporated into the project and funded. Txdot will also be looking at enhancing their aesthetics program, which will be looking at, you know, beyond looking at, you know, I guess aesthetics such as stamp concrete and those types of things, looking at art piece, looking at landscaping, trees,

other amenities that might be possible, shading structures, and we're working closely with them, both transportation team, my team, coordinating with txdot to see where those opportunities might exist. They are looking to fund those improvements and then looking to us to see how we can work out

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some type of maintenance agreements. But we'll be working on those types of approaches over the next several months. Next slide. So here's just a high level cost profile for where we're at right now. This is very high level. We really need to get into the next phase of preliminary engineering and design to get some refined numbers. Where we're at right now is about 400 to \$500 million estimated for the structures themselves, so everything up to the actual lid structures. And then about 250 to \$300 million for surface amenities. But again, really preliminary right now, and we really need to work with the community over this next year to start to develop what those desired amenities and improvements should be on the caps and that will give us a much better understanding of what those cost estimates will be. But right now, we're looking at 700 to \$800 million at this stage of the project. Just a note on that, that does not include the ongoing

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operations and maintenance costs, and they can be -- you know, right now, for example, I think they're in the range of two to three million for the Clive Warren park cap, and so we are trying to get a good estimate of what those costs are as we start to look at fire safety, ventilation, other types of things that will be needed to maintain both the structures, the spaces underneath them, but also the spaces on the surface as well. So, we'll be working on those costs as well, and trying to come up with really a comprehensive funding strategy for both capital expenditures as well as the operations and maintenance. Next slide. This is an overview of where we're at in the project, and some of the next steps. As I mentioned, we were doing a feasibility assessment with our Atkins consultant team. And we are starting to wrap that work up. You may be aware that we had a public open meeting -- public open house that kicked off on December 13th of last year, and we released some concepts and I'll show you those in a little bit. But as we're getting those, and

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some of the public feedback based on those, and the survey results, we'll start to wrap up that work. We're also then hoping to launch into the next phase of preliminary engineering and design. Council awarded that contract on November 18th and we're hoping to get that contract executed in February and March timeframe. At the same time, we'll also be hoping to launch the contract for the connecting equitably contract, the Austin economic development corporation, but also very much integrating into

our project. This will be looking at how to leverage some of the land use and value capture recapture opportunities for those benefits to be returned to the community, and coming up with a set of recommendations for that, based on some of that initial feedback received from stakeholder groups in the community. And then the goal ultimately is to get to about 30% design and get that incorporated into the contract. Txdot is looking to let that contract in late 2024-2025

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timeframe and get that contract in place. So that's kind of what we're working towards, and that really is dictating the timeline that we're on right now, as well as working with them through the environmental phase for the capital express central project. Next slide. So speaking of txdot. Here's an overview of their timeline. We're very much working in parallel with them, in coordination with them and their timeline. They're incorporating the cap locations into the environmental clearance process. And will be working with us on that over the next year or so. As they work through that, we'll also be coordinating with them on their environmental impact analysis and coordinate throwing -- coordinating that with some of the information as we work through our next phase of design and the connecting exwith itly study that Austin will be doing. So we'll be coordinating that very closely with txdot over the next year, year and a half or so. And as I mentioned, everything is headed towards trying to get

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these structures incorporated into the txdot design build construction contract. Parallel to that, we'll also then work on finishing out design of the surface amenities and come back and get those completed once we get the surface structures in place as part of the capital express central project. Next slide. So here's just an example of some of the concepts that came out to the public in December. This is based on an opportunities and constraints analysis. Just looking at what's feasible, what might be possible, given the opportunity, given some of the constraints based on the highway design right now, and what's there. So these are just some of the concepts we've released. We're very preliminary. We tried to not get into too much supposing of what would actually go onto the caps. We want to take that time to work with the community on that, over the coming months, the coming year. And so that next phase will begin in earnest, and really start to refine some of those concepts for what goes on on

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these caps, as well as refining the cap locations with txdot as they refine their alternatives, working towards a preferred alternative in their process. Next slide. This is an example of a cross section of stitch, and again, you can start to see nor those widened crossings how you can get some additional space. And so you get a much comfortable buffered crossing for bikes and pedestrians. Also a possibility

of getting trees and shape structures that really go up against the barrier between the highway and the stitch. And so, again, creating a very comfortable minimiing from a bike and pedestrian standpoint. Next slide. And again, just another example of the concepts. And so what we're trying to work through now is to say, okay, where could possible amenities go, where could possible green spaces go. Also, are there possibilities

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for facilities as well. We do think there are possibilities for a one-story, possibly two-story structures on certain areas near the crossings, or near the frontage roads. They have to be on the outside of the caps. We do think there are some opportunities, not substantial. I wouldn't anticipate any multi-story -- based on what's required. But there will be some facility opportunities, and we will be continuing to explore those particularly as we get into the next phase. Next slide. Just an overview of some of the community feedback we received on that public open house that we did for the cap concepts, and the stitches. And again, we tried to focus on were the desired uses that the community wants to see for these spaces, as well as how they -- kind of the behaviors basically, and how do you get around, how do you -- what are you excited about, how do you use, you know,

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the space now, the crossings, so we've got a lot of great feedback on that, as far as what folks wanted to see, as far as some of the enhancements for the connections, as far as some of the different space uses and amenities that folks would want to see, and what we'll do is we'll summarize this and we'll bring there in to the next phase of design, and it will start to inform some of the next round of concepts and preliminary schematics that we start doing for the cap and stitch improvements. Next slide. So just some examples of what we've been looking at, as we start to look at what's possible on the cap and stitches here. I mentioned the Clive Warren park. This is in Dallas. It's a very well-used space by the community. You can see some of the green space uses there. They have kind of an amphitheater space, concession spaces as well, vendor space on the cap.

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So, again, we've looked at this as an example of what txdot has been able to work through with the city of Dallas and the Dallas community to get in place. And so, again, I think both txdot and the city and the da are drawing on some of those aspects and what we can learn from that and bring in our project. Next slide. Here's an example of a stitch, a widened crossing. You can see the planters between bike and pedestrian and the roadway. Some of the shade structures there and the trees and landscaping provides a buffer to the highway as well. Again, just drawing some inspiration on what might be possible for

these crossings. You also see the mural piece there. We think there's a huge opportunity for art pieces to be of and for the community, really developed in coordination with the city. To really make that a really, really nice amenity and really

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represent the community and really some of the historical aspects of our community as well. Next slide. And here's an example of a facility on a cap and really kind of a super-stitch, for lack of a better term. This is at union station in Columbus, Ohio. This is a single story retail and vendor space. You can see a cafe space right there. And really, when you're going through this crossing, it really just looks like a corridor, a downtown corridor. Something that could be downtown Austin, where you don't really know that there's a Loy around you as well. highway around you as well. This is something they were able to develop as part of a development agreement. So we are going to be exploring these types of opportunities as well, particularly as we start to develop more, the priorities of the community wants to see, on the cops and on these stitches. We do have these types of super-stitches, widened mini caps or widened crossings. We do have several of these opportunities that we see are possible as part of the new highway design as well.

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Next slide. And just to sum up, these are our priorities going into '22. As I mentioned, we're hoping to launch design phase in the next month or so and really start to refine the design concepts with the community and develop some better cost estimates. We are also helping -- hoping to work on a comprehensive funding strategy for the cap and stitch improvements and we'll be looking at all the different opportunities that might be available. The infrastructure bill did pass recently, and we know there will be some federal funding available, but we don't know if that's going to be able to cover all the costs. We're looking for all the different opportunities. And typically, with these types of projects around the nation, they tend to be a stacking of funding from different sources and that can be local funding, mixed with federal funding, grant funding, other funding sources. There's even some private foundation funding, for example, in the city of Dallas, as they did their funding stack. So we'll be working very closely with our finance team here at the city as well as Austin alliance and others to figure

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out how best we can do that. And then also, as I mentioned, the study by the Austin economic development corporation will be kicking off at the same time that the design phase will, the next phase of design, and looking at those opportunities for value capture, land use benefits for the community. And again, just again, a lot of robust coordination with the txdot team as they refined the alternatives,

which will impact the cap and stitch design and the locations. Also working very closely with Austin transportation department, who is taking the lead on the coordination on the highway project to make sure that everything is well-coordinated, because kind of everything impacts the other at this point. So, a lot of coordination, a lot of connecting the dots happening over the next year. So, with that, I think I'm done. I'm ready to answer any questions you may have. And we also have some key folks from our cap and stitch team. Eric from Austin transportation department, Derek, and Susan

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Daniels, who has been working on the next phase, getting ready for the next phase of design. So, with that, I'll take questions. >> Ellis: Thank you for that presentation, director tremble. I have a couple, but I see vice chair Kelly has her hand up, so why don't you go ahead and take the microphone. >> Kelly: Thank you so much, chair, and thank you, Mike, for giving this presentation. I was really excited when we went on our chamber trip to Nashville and I got to see it firsthand, and I know that the community is grateful that you were able to present that same information to them today. So that's all I had. Thank you so much. >> Thank you, council member. Appreciate it. >> Ellis: Thank you. Let's go to council member kitchen, and then council member Harper Madison. >> Kitchen: I just have one question. I appreciate that -- first off, I think this is an exciting project. And with a lot of opportunity. There's a big hill to climb in terms of the funding, but in the scheme of things, when we're talking about this, you know, highway essentially, it's not a

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huge amount of money. So I wanted to ask if you could give us some idea of the sources of funds to stack. I know you're still analyzing. But I think that I'd like to understand a little bit more specifically the particular funds that you might be looking at. >> Yeah. So there are a couple different things that we're looking at. One is obviously the federal funding. We do think there's going to be some federal funding opportunities that we can take advantage of. We're looking closely at that. There's programs such as the infrared grant program, the rays grant program. But there's also a new program called reconnect communities in the infrastructure bill. That will have funding specifically for projects like this. They're looking to reconnect communities that were impacted by the old highway construction program in the mid 20th century. So there are several federal funding sources that we're hoping to take advantage of. But I definitely think there

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will be some local funding scenarios that we'll have to take a look at as well. Be working with, you know, Ed van enuw, Kim, and the finance team to do that and to look at what scenarios might be possible or

might be feasible, and we will potentially have some recommendations to bring back to council as well. We're also looking at, you know, if there's some federal loan programs available as well, and how that might work, and so that is a possibility. We'd have to look at what revenue sources are available to serve as that type of loan. But that's the type of thing that we're looking at right now. We'll be work on that in earnest over the next six months or so. >> Kitchen: So I think you just answered my question with your last statement. But what's your timeline for bringing -- and do you anticipate this following course where you would bring, you know, sort of the set of recommendations or ideas or whatever back to council? What's your timeline for that? >> Yes, and absolutely, council

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member, we do anticipate coming back to council with really an overview of what we see the recommended funding stack to be. And then those recommendations for potential funding source. And so, I would anticipate trying to get that back to council within the next six months or so. >> Kitchen: Okay. And then just one more question. The reconnecting communities grant process. Can you just advise everyone so everyone's aware. You know, it's a federal grant process. There's an application timeline for it. During the process of setting parameters, can you just tell us what you know about that program right now, so everybody is understanding what we know? I know there's still information we don't know. >> Yeah, they haven't released the full funding announcement yet. And so what we know is very preliminary. But what we do know is some of the priorities that if U.S. Department of transportation is

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looking at for all of their grant programs, they release that information to their agency heads about a month ago. And so we are starting to get an idea of what those priorities, those funding priorities are going to be for U.S. Dot. So we're going to be looking at those, thinking about those, and starting to put together kind of our case for how we meet those priorities, you know, in the coming weeks. We are hearing that those opportunities might become available, you know, as soon as the next 60 to 90 days. And some of the programs will be available, such as the more established programs, like the grant program, rays grant program might be available in that same timeframe as well. And even sooner. So we're really looking at how -- you know, what are the best opportunities to go after and Lao we can start stacking that funding for construction.how we can start stacking that funding for construction. >> Kitchen: Do you have an idea for order of magnitude for the funds that might be available for that kind of source?

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>> Not sure exactly what will be available, but I think right now we're looking at, you know, hopefully in the hundreds of millions. But I don't think it's going to be enough to cover the full amount. So I definitely want to manage expectations there. I don't think we're going to be able to cover the full -- even the estimate that we have right now. >> Kitchen: Okay. All right. Thank you. >> Ellis: Council member Harper Madison. >> Harper-Madison: Thank you. My colleague asked the one question that I did have, and then also led by saying how excited she is about this project. I also see a lot of opportunity here. It would be a failed opportunity to think about the money. When I was running, one of the things my daughter asked me, momma, what's Austin going to look like in 2080? And I want us to think about this with the mind of an 11-year-old. They're thinking that far out. And I think it's worth every

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penny to have infrastructure that works for the future. And we have to plan for that now. And there are far too many cities that we can give examples. They had an opportunity to get high quality infrastructure and didn't do it, and other cities don't work, and they don't have that level of economic opportunity. So, I'm excited, and most of my questions, I'm going to reserve. There are several presentations that are yet to come. And so there's more information to come. And so I won't belabor it now, but I just really appreciate all the work that's gone into this so far. I love how thoughtful the presentation was. So, thank you, director Tremble. >> Yes, thank you. >> Ellis: I appreciate those remarks. Council member Kitchen also touched on one of the things that I had highlighted. So I won't belabor the point, but I will just say I speak for myself and hopefully more people when I say we look for any and all opportunities to be able to partner in this funding, depending on which part of this project you're looking at, there are a lot of different communities impacted by it. So I think the more of us that can come together to build

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something big and different, you know, with more of a green footprint, that will help connect our community and be advantageous for us for generations to come on this particular topic. On slide 16, there's a couple of the line items on the chart that have an ellipsis on the end. I didn't know if this slide could be adjusted and reposted just to fully explain one size economic development, but it looks like there's another word behind it. And so I think there's two more, like creating unique and opportunity to house community members. So maybe if that could be adjusted and reposted or resent out to us, that would be helpful for us to see some of those headings. And I did have another question on slide 11. In the schedule overview chart,

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the equity impact analysis section, how is this similar or different to the general Nepa socioeconomic impact study? Is that going above and beyond what Nepa requires in partnership with our equity office? Can you explain how that may be similar or different from what txdot may already be doing on their end? >> Right. So as part of the Nepa analysis that txdot is doing, I think they're going to be looking across several different areas, kind of any and all impacts of the potential highway project. You know, from an environmental standpoint. But also social impacts and a lot of things. There are a lot of things incorporated there. But this study in particular really hones in on the -- any of the economic opportunity coming from, you know, if we do some improvements for the cap and stitches as part of the highway project, does that provide some additional land use opportunities or value recapture

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opportunities that we could leverage for the benefit of the community. So, it really hones in on that. And so, and that's why Austin economic development corporation is doing it, quite honestly, because they have more of that expertise. And so we're going to make sure it's very integrated. They're going to have pretty robust community discussions as well as part of that. And we'll make sure that that's synced up very well. So there's not a lot of duplication of effort and everybody understands what we're doing. But that really is going to be the focus. And that would really result in a set of recommendations that we would bring back, and I definitely want to talk about with the mobility committee and council about what those recommendations are. Coming out of those opportunities. >> Ellis: I can appreciate that, and I know this conversation will continue into the future. I had one other quick question. On some of the conceptual drawings, the caps have some green space and some other space that is in, like, a sandy color. Are those just locations you haven't quite figured out what is the best community results to

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see there? Are we potentially going to be capping and putting more concrete space on top? What is that for right now? Is that a place holder? What do you expect to see there in the future? >> That's exactly right, chair. It's really a place holder. It's really polygonal right now because we don't want to get ahead of the community. So what we're trying to show the community is here's what might be possible, but let's also imagine what those spaces could be used for and what those priorities that the community wants the see, you know, those spaces to be on the cap locations. So that's the work that's really going to kick in as we get in this next phase of preliminary engineering design that will kick off in the February March timeframe. So we'll refine that and say, okay, now we know what's possible for an opportunities and constrains standpoint, but now we know what opportunities exist and what might be possible. Now let's really refine that. Now what do we really want to see. Is that some type of green space. Is that an event space. Is that retail space. What is that. And so that's really what we're

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going to work through. That's why we left it polygonal, just to say that we don't know what's going to be there yet, but here's the types of things that might be possible. >> Ellis: I appreciate that. I like the flexibility of knowing the community can come and say we have ideas, we want this to be incorporated into this project, we want you to hear us, and so I think that is really helpful. I know that we on the dais have had many conversations about extra park space, shade structures, added trees for air quality, heat island mitigation. So I think this conversation is still progressing, but I do appreciate the openness of leaving space in a plan for community members to provide their input about what they really hope to see in these projects. Do we have any other questions for director tremble before moving on to the next item? I see mayor pro tem alter. >> Alter: Thank you. Good afternoon. I've had an opportunity, as I think many of my colleagues have, to meet with txdot about

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the latest iteration and making an announcement on Tuesday. Can you speak a little bit to how that process is going to unfold and how people can provide their feedback and what kind of feedback we should be expecting from your office on those new plans when they are revealed next week? >> Yeah. So, council member, I'm not sure exactly how the feedback mechanism is going to work from the txdot perspective. I know there will be opportunities to do so. I don't know if it's going to be similar to what we've seen in some of the prior public open houses as they've gone through the Nepa process, but I know they will be seeking feedback. From my perspective, and our perspective, you know, what I think we're hoping to see and what we will see is that there are, you know, continued opportunities, if not more opportunities for cap and stitch locations based on some of the updated alternatives included in what they're releasing next

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Tuesday. And even some better opportunities for connections off the caps, into the areas on either side of the -- you know, what was then the highway. But actually, being able to get onto the caps and being able to actually use the stitches, and we think there might even be some enhanced opportunities there to where it's not as -- you know, you don't have to cross a frontage road in the same way that you would today to get to that space and use it. I think there are going to be some enhancements that I'm excited about, and definitely the same type of opportunity from a total acreage that we can take advantage of. >> Alter: I also want to say I look forward to a more detailed conversation about the estimated cost and the funding sources. I really am hopeful that this project can be funded, you know, perhaps with considerable federal investment through the infrastructure ability. But also from other actors in our community, particularly the

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private sector, which has been part in parcel of the model for doing these kinds of enhancements, not just through things that are effectively still public money, but through actual donations and investments and re. I know there's opportunities with UT for them to contribute to pieces of this as well. So I just want to echo the calls of my colleagues for these partners, if we are going to make this kind of investment, this can't just be on the city, and we really do need people to come up, and there's some really good examples of that right here. Thank you. >> Thank you, councilor. >> Ellis: Thank you for that presentation, and if there's no further questions, we can move on to item number 4, affordability unlocked case study on mobility, the Chicon phase II affordable housing development. I think that's Mr. Garretson that needs to be moved over.

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>> Good afternoon. Can you all hear me okay? >> Ellis: Yes. >> I think they're getting ready to cue up the presentation. Shall I go ahead and jump in? >> Ellis: Yes. The presentation has just loaded up. >> Okay, great. I put my reading glasses on this also. Good afternoon, it's good to see some of you I've known for a while, and it's nice to meet some of you for the first time. It's also very interesting for me to follow that last presentation by Mike tremble. I've been a big proponent of the cap and stitch since Sinclair black first introduced that. And the success of projects like ours that are multi-modal development hubs that we're creating a largely dependent on the success of global connectivity. You know, with the downtown being the largest employment sector and employment center in all of Austin, having that connectivity from east Austin

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allows projects like ours to succeed. So my name is Sean Garretson. I also own an urban planning and development firm, pegasus, and serve as a developer agent for the overall non-profit. So, I'm super excited to talk about this new project, the ivory, today. It is the third building of three buildings called the Chicon right at Chicon and this one is at 14th, between 13th and 14th. I feel like we're really helping to define what affordability is. We call it workforce housing, instead of affordable housing. I think that really makes a difference in the eyes of the buyers and renters. Especially by adding solar to a project like this, and creating a multi-modal hub, it saves a tremendous amount of money to the owners or the renters. Next slide, please.

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So just to kind of frame this problem a little bit, I found the slide recently, and it's from 2019. Austin is the most car dependent city in Texas. You can see by this slide, there's only 5% of households without access to a vehicle. I am proud to say, I am now one of them. I am going to be an owner of one of these market rate units in this building, and I had to sell my car and I sold it two days ago. So I'm now asking my friends for lifts all over the city. I'm joking. It is also one of the least affordable cities in Austin, and car ownership alone costs around \$10,000 a year. So by the savings of solar rebates in an all-electric building, which this is, and not owning a vehicle, we could allow and illustrate to the buyers that they can save another 10,000 to 12,000 per year. Next slide. So we all see the accolades on a daily basis of how amazing our economy is.

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I do a lot of economic development. I see that firsthand. But we also know the accolades that are not so good, related to how unaffordable we have become. Next slide. Our non-profit chestnut neighborhood revitalization corporation. It was created in 1999 by reverend Joseph parker. Some of you might know him as the reverend at chapel church. It's managed by community members. So we've build a bunch of single family homes, we've built a 22-unit project, mlk in Franklin, and we've built the first two buildings of a 33-unit mixed use project called the Chicon. Next slide. So, addressing affordability is not new for us. We purchased these properties with city of Austin, Austin housing finance corporation bond funds, I think, from the first

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affordable housing bond back in 2012. You can see the proximity to east 12th street. And, you know, at that time, you know, one of the buildings was an old pool house used as -- where they were selling crack. A couple of other buildings, one was the fresh up club, which had not been used for many, many years. Amazingly still had mirrors on every wall, including in a bathroom. I'm not going to ask questions about that. Next slide. So, we were originally going to build three buildings, totalling 43 units, 33 of those are going to be affordable with 8700 square feet of commercial space. We decided to not build that third building at that time. I will say if you have not been to the Chicon, I highly recommend going. All of the commercial units are first-time small business owners and they've been tremendously successful. We have bakeries, coffee shops, a pet store, and others.

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So, next slide. Affordable housing unlocked really was a game-changer for us. I got accepted into an affordable housing accelerator class about two years ago, right about the same time that affordable housing was being discussed, and I decided to put all my efforts into figuring out how we could do this

on our third building. Most people thought I was pretty crazy. Perhaps I am, to some degree. But here we are, two years later, about to break ground on exactly more than what we had envisioned. So, we had left to build a couple of affordable units. Actually, 12. It says six. 12. And we are now almost tripling that. So we're building 40 more affordable units under affordable housing. It was going to be a three-story mixed use building. We could have gone up to seven stories. We decided to go up to five stories. So, it's a 53-unit project with 40 affordable units, 13 market

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rate units, and then three commercial units. Next slide. So the ivory. A lot of people gave me flak about it. If we're actually causing gentrification, the perceived whitewashing, calling it ivory might not be a good brand. But we held to it because this building is named after Scotty ivory. Some of you might know her. Her father was E.L. Davis. Her whole family has been activists in east Austin many, many years, probably since the '20s or the '30s. She's excited about what we're doing, and I'm excited about presenting more of it to you. Next slide, please. So, this is, again, the -- the website is there, the ivoryatx.com. I recommend you checking it out. It talks a lot more about overall sustainability. We are going to be fully electric. Again, 56 residential units.

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40 of those workforce. Three commercial units. And no parking. Next slide. So we do have two Ada spaces. We have a car program that we have. We have a new cap metro canopy, even though we -- the ridership on that line doesn't justify a canopy. We're going to pay for that, and cap metro is working with us. We have six B cycles that are going to be there. We have an on-site bike charging room. So, you know, all of this is with just some amazing partners. I'd be remiss if I didn't first talk about Austin energy. You know, they not only have just done an amazing job with us, and illustrating the solar rebates that we're going to be getting, the bike rebates we're going to give. They also gave me this t-shirt. I don't know if you guys can see this. I decided to wear this for the

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presentation. Electric is greater than gas. This is going to be 100% electric building. So when we're putting solar on top of the building, we modeled it and we know that every one of those buyers is going to get also 90-95% of their electric costs rebated back to them on a monthly basis. Every household is going to get a free electric bike that we're paying for. We have an agreement with a locally owned electric bike company, mod bikes, and quantum solutions is a management team from the former Austin care share. They're going to be owning and managing the two vehicles that we're going to have on the site. So, great partnerships with all these folks. Next slide, please. So, one of the things that has

come up in some of our discussions with the community, you know, we had the zoning with affordable housing. We didn't necessarily need the community buying off on that.

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But, you know, just as a neighborhood-based development organization, we definitely went out to the community, talked with them about what we're doing, and they had justifiably some concerns about how, one, whether or not it's going to be guaranteed somehow, which is not that -- all the owners are not going to have a vehicle. We're giving them every opportunity to lose their vehicle before they move here. But they've talked about overall mobility on 12th street, Chicon, improved bike lanes on all those crosswalks on Chicon. You know, if you know that area of east Austin from mlk to 12th street on Chicon, there is no stop sign, there's no stoplight. There's no pedestrian islands, et cetera. We've had really good discussions with transportation. We're on their list.

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Department of transportation, we know that they're getting ready to look at 12th street as an improvement area. I think one of the things that is interesting for you all to consider moving forward with affordable housing unlocked is that the mobility bond and the mobility bond funds did not factor in affordable housing. They did not factor in projects like ours that could create a massive individuals that are going to have mobility needs right there. I'm not sure how that can move forward. But I think in your discussions that's something that you can consider. I just want to say lastly -- next slide. The market loves the ivory. We have done very little marketing since I think early December. We've secured 35 of the workforce housing buyers through our prequalification process. We have nearly 300 interested buyers for 13 market rate and three commercial units.

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We have those who have expressed interest knowing about not having parking there. We are hoping to close out by the end of February, pending the receipt of our set plan, and building permits, which seems to be going well. Lastly, before -- maybe you have some questions or comments, I just want to say thank you. We would definitely not have been able to do a project this special, with the larger number of affordable units, without affordable housing unlocked, and without your all support with that kind of a project. Thank you very much. >> Ellis: Thank you for that presentation, and congratulations on such an innovative project. Do we have any questions from the committee members? Council member harper-madison. >> Harper-madison: Every now and again, that unmute button will

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just stick and won't do anything. Thank you for recognizing me, chair. It's good to see you, Sean. I'm obviously excited about the project, and I was one of those people that gave you a hard time about the name! So, I appreciate that you explained to me. I think it's important that we're all very conscientious about how we move in neighborhoods. So I'm super proud to have this next iteration right smack dab in the epicenter of district 1. We've been working pretty tirelessly to make 12th street safer, too. And so, I just really look forward to having one more robust partner recognizing what some of the tricks are. You think that giant hump that you hit right at 12th and Chicon and launches you down the hill would stop people, but it doesn't. And so I really appreciate that you -- this is our neighborhood, right? We get the opportunity to really see it firsthand, and it really does need this injection of, you know, interest and pedestrian activity.

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Having the Chicon pop up, and my daughter insisting that she can walk to the French patisserie by herself is a cute thing to watch her grow and develop because those kinds of amenities are close, literally right around the corner. I'm not going to lie, I followed the first time. But she did just find. She crossed the street well and did everything fine. I think this will not only increase our opportunities from an economic perspective. I think this increases the opportunity from a community perspective. It's one of those things where you don't create community spaces and mixed income neighborhoods by just throwing people together. You have to have the programming and the amenities that bring them together and offer them the opportunity to interact. So I'm really, really excited about there project. Thank you for your presentation. >> Alter: I agree with all of that. I have a question. How many more free bikes are you giving out? >> So, we're giving out 56

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bicycles, 56 electric bikes, and we have an agreement with mod bikes for every one of those. They're giving us a pretty good discount on all of those. Trying to figure out if there's a way for me to get a discount before I buy one of those option, so I have an option for mobility right now, being Carles. >> Ellis: It's fantastic. I appreciate the slide that you included about the impact of car ownership on a household's budget. I mean, the biggest cost drivers are putting a roof over your head and how you get from point a to point B. What kind of transportation options do you have and even when you own your car outright, you know you still need to give it oil changes, tire rotations, things like that. So I do really appreciate that. Could you tell me if you've had any people reach out with an interest to get into the ivory that said never mind, I really need a certain amount of parking? Have you heard any stories along those lines too? >> You know, a lot of my good friends are realtors, but I will

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say, I have found that the only individuals that ask if there's any parking are the realtors that have not read the website. So as soon as I kind of defer them to the website -- because the website is very thorough in terms of being right up front that this is a car-less community, zero parking spaces, et cetera. So all of the potential buyers have not blinked at it. They've read it, they understand it. All of the language they put out to them, when they first expressed interest, I'll send another email out with the prequalification form. In that, I reiterate parking, we're excited about it. Next month is when they'll be putting down 1% non-refundable earnest money on their sales. We may lose a few, but I don't think so. We ask everybody to kind of talk about their age or how many they

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have in a household, and what their ethnic origin is and everything, and it's a really good mix, and I'm very excited about that. I was a little worried we were going to get a lot of UT college students or grad students. Not that there's anything wrong with that. We have everything from workers in the coffee shop that are going to be buying units, to single moms with two kids that want a two-bedroom unit, and elderly people as well. So, I'm pretty excited about it. So far, we have not heard that feedback yet. >> Ellis: I appreciate that. It's certainly an exciting project and we're glad you've been able to create the partnerships that you have, so we look forward to seeing the success moving forward. Are there any other questions before we move on to the next item? I don't see any. Thank you so much for joining us today to give this presentation. It was really insightful about a

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new and innovative project. With that, we will move to item number 5, the recommendation for taxicab franchise transition. Again, this is just a preliminary briefing. >> Good afternoon, council members and community members. Thank you for having me today. Please excuse the rough voice. I do have a bit of a cold. Non-covid, I would say. >> Ellis: That's okay. Can I interrupt for just one moment? I'm not sure that the presentation made it into backup, so could I just suggest as we're going through this, maybe someone can make sure the latest version is on our website for folks following along at home? Okay, go ahead and continue. Thanks. >> Thank you. Today I'm here to present on taxicab franchise transition from a franchise system to an

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operating authority system. Please go to the next slide. So, for a quick update on taxicab operations within the city of Austin, there are three current companies operating in Austin, atx co-op, taxi, central city taxi, and yellow cab. During the pandemic, in may of 2020, lone star cab unfortunately closed their doors and longhorn taxicab company also closed their doors. They had started in September on the ordinance passed by Austin city council for franchise license, but they were unable to meet the requirements necessary to continue. So unfortunately, they had to close. Next slide. So, in fiscal year 2018 to 2019, there were 1,016 taxicabs operating in the city of Austin, and as you can see, going to

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2019 and 2020, that number was reduced to 245 cabs operating in the city. And now, during fiscal year 2020 and 2021, 220 cabs operating in the city. That number is increasing this year, this is good to see. But we have to wait and see for the first quarters and to find the numbers on that exactly. Next slide. Right now, atx co-op taxi is operating and has permitted 125 taxicabs, 117 standard, and eight wheelchair lift cabs. Central city taxi has 50, 45 standard and four wheelchair lift. Yellow cab has 80 taxicabs, 74 standard, and six wheelchair lift. Next slide. This is a five-year comparison

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of taxicab number of trips, from 2016 to 2017, there were roughly three million trips conducted within the city of Austin by taxicabs. Then in 2017 to '18, 1.8 million down to 2018 and '19, a million. And so far, after calculating for 2020 and 2021, fiscal year, 248,690 trips conducted for all taxicabs within the city of Austin. Next slide. So, taxicab companies were first licensed in Austin by ordinance from the Austin city council on March 8th, 1932. Taxicab companies then operated under an operating authority model until being declared public utilities and formed into franchises by an ordinance passed on June 8th, 1950. At the time, the taxicab franchise ordinance was established to ensure citywide transportation

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to the people of Austin, and to reserve public infrastructure for the exclusive use of taxicabs, such as taxi Zones. Additionally, the only public transportation available at that time, besides taxicabs, were options centered in the downtown area, which made it difficult for the community to find transportation to areas outside of downtown. Today, however, multiple competitive transportation options are readily available throughout the entire city. In 2017, transportation network companies, or tncs, such as Uber and Lyft, began operating in Austin under state regulatory authority. At the same time, taxicab franchises experienced that 70% decline in their number of trips that we previously saw in the last slide. To address this decline, council approved atd's presentations in 2018. Those were intended to lighten franchise restrictions and to level the playing field between

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taxicabs and other transportation operations offered throughout the city. Shortly after these reform measures were passed, taxicab franchises did experience a slight increase in their number of trips followed by a brief stabilization. But now in the midst of a global pandemic, taxicab franchises have experienced the lowest trip numbers on record and are in need of reform measures that will eliminate more regulatory barriers, increase operational flexibility, and provide a greater ability to compete with other mobility services offered within the city. Currently, all other vehicle for hire companies licensed by the city, other than taxicabs, such as limousines, charter vans, charter buses, touring and sight-seeing coaches, petty cabs, electric low speed vehicles, et cetera, are licensed as operating authorities. The benefits of licensing vehicle for hire companies under an operating authority model versus a franchise model are demonstrated in the comparison table on the next slide.

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Transition that over. All right. Thank you. So, with the franchise model, over on the left side, you will see kind of the complications with the franchise model. The application times take more than 30 days to complete. It requires a council action approval -- for approval, renewal, or transfer of a franchise license. It has to go through a three readings franchise approval process, which may take three to six months to complete. And, of course, is governed by the chapter 11 of city charter under franchises. It has rigid application timeframes and deadlines. It's difficult to scale vehicles, vehicle fleets to demand when necessary. They have to increase or decrease per quarter. And with other operating authorities, they're able to get temporary licenses for five days for special events, which could

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be very beneficial to the taxi industry, as long as they're a current license company, this would not include companies that were not licensed. They have the inability to cease or resume operations when necessary, whereas an operating authority can pause their operations, instead of having to close down within the franchise ordinance now, taxicabs must maintain at least 25 cabs on the road at all times, or they are disqualified from their franchise and lose their business. This would allow for time such as we have experienced already in the pandemic for them to reduce or pause operations for a time, until transportation options pick back up. We believe the franchise model has limited driver autonomy and choice. It's very difficult for newer

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companies to gather what they need and to make the requirements necessary to open up their own taxicab business, which we would still continue all of the regulations of the franchise, except for the rigid requirements of a franchise. Right now it is unique vehicle for hire category, unlike any others in the city, and it does not align with taxicab permitting systems in other cities. Additionally, transition to an operating authority model will align Austin's taxicab permitting systems with permitting systems of other large cities, where taxicabs are currently licensed, including Houston, Austin, Dallas, Fort Worth, El Paso, et cetera. To be clear, transitioning the taxicab companies from a franchise model to an operating authority model would not change any taxicab operations or alter current standards or

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requirements existing in city code for taxicabs. It would simply change the licensing mechanism and remove unnecessary barriers existing within the franchise model. Such as three readings process before council for transitioning license, for opening a new company. This would establish prerequisite criteria, just like we have for all of our other operating authorities. That as long as that prerequisite criteria was met, a taxicab company would be able to get a license and begin operations. Just as we do for all of our other operating authorities. For example, on multiple occasions, taxicab franchises have requested simplified application processes, speedier license approval times, streamlined vehicle fleet additions and removals, as well as the ability to cease and resume operations, as I mentioned. When necessary for natural disasters, or for nationwide

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pandemics, licensing taxicab companies as an operating authority would meet all of these objectives. Some recent outreach that we've had, in November 2021, atv created an informational web page and distributed fliers directly to taxicab drivers, which was mentioned by one of the company representatives earlier. Which contained information regarding the proposed transition of taxicab licensing from a franchise model to an operating authority model. The web page and fliers also provided taxicab drivers open opportunities to converse directly with licensing staff, management, such as myself, ask questions and provide their feedback or suggestions. Atv licensing staff management has spoken with several taxicab drivers throughout this period who have spoke in support of an operating authority model relating that it would remove further barriers for new taxicab companies to enter the market, and in turn, lead to greater driver autonomy and choice.

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Atv has received no comments in opposition to the transition from taxicab drivers. On September 7th, 2021, atd presented the recommendation to transition taxicab franchises into taxicab operating authorities to the urban transportation commission, the utc. And received a unanimous 11-0 vote in support. Throughout the last few months, atd has met with taxicab owners and presidents and discussed a transition to an operating authority licensing model. Out of the companies that have voiced opposition -- sorry, one was in favor, and two have voiced their opposition. The companies that have voiced their opposition have stated that they believe the transition might remove ordinance process and oversight of the Austin city council from the taxicab industry. However, this is not the case. The taxicab operating authority ordinance would simply replace

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the franchise ordinance and remove the taxicab industry from the rigid requirements of a franchise system as outlined in chapter 7 -- sorry, chapter 11 of city charter. Atd, therefore, recommends that taxicab companies no longer be regarded as public utilities under a franchise system, but rather as a valuable part of a diverse and ever-evolving network of competitive mobility options, as operational standards and practices would remain unchanged, this ordinance transitioning taxicab companies from a franchise licensing model to an operating authority licensing model would now interrupt any current taxicab services. And with that, I'll open it up to questions or comments. >> Ellis: Thank you for that presentation. Can we pull that down? I think council member kitchen may have some questions.

[2:32:00 PM]

And I will, too, but I'll let you go first. >> Kitchen: Well, I'll just ask one and then hand it off and think about more. So, I wanted to just get down to the source of the concern that was raised earlier for us. I believe one of the persons who testified spoke to the drivers being in opposition to this. And that was one of the -- that was the franchise that is perhaps a co-op or -- so you just said there was no opposition from drivers. But I think I heard that there is. So, can you just help me understand that? And also understand what the -- what we think their concerns might be? >> Sure, absolutely. Thank you for the question, council member. So, atd passed out about 300 fliers throughout the city to different drivers directly. We used our parking enforcement officers and our mobility

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enforcement officers to pass out those fliers at common places where taxicabs usually interact. On that flier was a link to a website that would provide them with information regarding the transition, as well as my direct contact information. I received approximately seven or eight phone calls from different taxicab drivers at different times who also stated that they were representing other taxicab drivers that

were coworkers with them. They asked some very simple questions, if there would be any changes in operations, the basic outline of the franchise -- or the operating authority system itself. And after explaining to them essentially what I've explained to y'all today, they voiced their support for it, and I have not yet received any opposition from any drivers regarding the

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transition we recommend. Now -- sorry, to your second question, about what the company is addressing. I think there's a little misunderstanding that occurred the last meeting I had with some of the taxicab companies in that they believe that the switch over to an operating authority would take the taxicab ordinance away from city code and be placed in perhaps a set of rules that could be changed quickly by atd management. But this is not the case. It would simply be placed into an ordinance just like the rest of the operating authorities for petty cabs, for limousines. It would become its own ordinance. In fact, it would almost be an identical ordinance to the franchise ordinance now, except it would no longer be a utility

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and placed under the authority of the franchise agreements under chapter 11 of city charter. So that would be the difference, is it wouldn't have to go through three readings processes at city council to simply award a license to a company or to transfer a license from one company to another company or if a company was purchased. >> Kitchen: Okay. Well, chair, you can come back to me. I know others have questions. >> Ellis: Let's go to vice chair Kelly. >> Kelly: Thank you. I'm just wondering if -- what the state law is regarding this sort of action, and if it would at all -- I mean, obviously, it probably wouldn't conflict, but could you explain how we're able to do this as a city? >> So the city of Austin has been regulating taxicab services within the city since 1932.

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They were formed in franchises in 1950. Before that, they operated as operating authorities. The state has always given municipalities the authority to regulate transportation options within those municipalities, except for a recent change with tncs, transportation network companies such as Uber and Lyft, which were eventually placed under state regulatory authority in 2018. So, we don't regulate tncs, but we do regulate all other transportation options, which occur within the city of Austin with few exceptions. >> Kelly: Thank you so much. >> Ellis: If I don't see other hands right now, I'll go ahead and ask my few questions and see if council member kitchen has any others she wants to address in a little bit. My first question would be,

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changing from Fran counterclockwise model to operating authority model, would this only affect taxicab companies, or would this impact any other companies that operate under franchise? Like, I know there was some discussion earlier about dockless mobility having a franchise structure. You mentioned limos and petty cabs. Are there any other formats that currently operate under franchise that would change under this as well? >> So, there are other franchises that exist within the city, such as the power company and perhaps other utilities. All of our other transportation options licensed within the city are currently operating as operating authorities. Scooters, micromobility operates as an operating authority. And it's essentially -- what operating authority means is that the city has an ordinance

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that authorizes the operation of said vehicles and permits them to operate within the city. So that's essentially what it is. It's a very simple process. There's -- there are set prerequisite criteria that are established by city code, and can only be changed by city council, of course. And as long as the company can meet those prerequisite criteria, they're able to obtain a license as they can. >> Ellis: Okay, that's helpful. Thanks for bearing with me. I don't think we've had too many of these franchise discussions come to council. I think we've done it with maybe some of the ambulatory services, but some of the others that have been on the dais a little longer may have better recollection of how some of these conversations have progressed in the past. Could you tell me what next steps are? You said it was approved 11-0 at

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the urban transportation commission. But I don't know that this was on my radar until we wanted to be able to bring it up here for a briefing. Can you tell me what the next steps are and timeline, and especially for the folks who called in earlier to understand what the public comment or public involvement and notification -- you know, just awareness, even if it's not a formalized notification, what communication can they expect from the city to make sure that all parties understand how this is progressing in the conversation no matter what ends up happening when it gets to council. committed to outreach with all of our partners with the taxicab companies as well as the drivers, and I would love to hear from any of them. We have a web page set up right now, and a feedback system where they can contact me directly. I've been in communication with the companies on several occasions and I'll continue to

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communicate with them about this process. Essentially, we went to utc with this recommendation back in September, and we were kind of moving along to generate a draft ordinance and really what it would look like. And coming to mobility committee, to discuss before going to council with atd's recommendation. So, we were planning to come to council on February 3rd to discuss further perhaps or to move forward our recommendation to switch or transition to an operating authority model, and out of a franchise model. I don't know if Jason Redford from atd has anything to add to that. >> Actually, this is Robb, the director of Austin

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transportation., the director of Austin transportation. As Jacob said, madam chair and committee members, we're currently scheduled for February 3rd. We can certainly slip that to February 17th, if that would give us some extra time and I would love to hear feedback from you all. Our goal is to move this forward this spring before we get into the spring festival season just so we can move forward. That's sort of the plan, madam chair. >> Ellis: Thank you for that, director spiller. I would probably have to consult with some of my other colleagues before making that, but I just -- my anecdotal thoughts at this point would just be since we do have back-to-back meetings, this is probably something that would be helpful for us to discuss at a work session, and I'm not quite sure what the city manager -- you may need ask him to see what city manager cronk has in store for the work sessions on the 1st and the 15th, just because I think this is probably something we need to sit as a

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dais and understand better and allow for more feedback from the companies and to be able to do some q&a with staff on all the different angles. >> That's understood. I'll move to start delaying it a little bit. Any time we talk about a franchise, and just to reiterate, this is only the vehicles for hire franchise, it's the only discussion that this would revolve around. But it sounds like collectively we need more time to communicate on this. So I'll work with assistant city manager fiandaca to make that happen. >> Ellis: That would be really helpful, just because I know we want to be sure we're up to speed on the conversations that happened, and sometimes when things do go to a commission, we start hearing about them at that point, and so I'm -- maybe it did come in and maybe we did have communication back in September, but I'm just not sure if it was on our radar, because we were probably switching gears

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from the budget adoption process back into our normal meeting process. >> Understood. And of course, covid, and the pandemic has made it difficult to keep things going in a straight line, or a consistent, sequential line, at least. >> Ellis: Yeah, everything we're trying to work on and figuring out timeline has that asterisk next to it that says covid is still going on and we are still trying to navigate everything as best we can. I have one last question, and it was about the slide that talked about the wheelchair lift vehicles. Is there like an Ada standard by which the companies are abiding right now to make sure they've got enough of those available for individuals? And if so, how would that be protected under a new model to make sure that we make sure everybody with all types of abilities or disabilities has access to a cab or other modes of transit when and where they need it? >> Yeah. Thank you for that question, madam chair.

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Yes. So, the 6% requirement is a federal mandate for taxicab companies to maintain 6% of their overall fleet as wheelchair lift cabs. So, this is a very important requirement, and that would be maintained as well as all of the other operational requirements under an operating authority. So there would really be no operational changes in a transition from a franchise to an operating authority model. It would simply just change the mechanism by which we license the companies. >> Ellis: Okay, that's helpful. Thank you for the extra explanation. I might just ask if there could be a frequently asked questions either sent to us or updated. I do really appreciate all three speakers signing up and coming to speak to us today. I know it seems like at least one was a little bit surprised that it was coming to us, and

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wanted to make sure that he had an opportunity to come share his thoughts with us as we have this conversation. So I really appreciate this, but just want to make sure, especially for those of us who haven't been intimately involved with the franchise taxi model in the past can get more up to speak as we try to understand this idea better and where it comes from and what pros and cons are involved in changing to something like this. I see mayor pro tem alter and it sounds like council member kitchen may have a couple more questions on this topic. And it is about 2:45. We've got two more items to get through. So just want to keep an eye on our time right here. >> Alter: Thank you. I'll be quick. I think it would be really helpful if we could get in writing sort of what the -- can you hear me? >> Ellis: Yes. It's a little quiet. So maybe just speak up. >> Alter: Okay. I'll come in close.

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If I move somewhere, it changes the sound. I wanted to ask if you could provide a written explanation with respect to the operational requirements and how those are staying the same. I share the concern that council member Ellis raised about serving our community. She raised the question for disabilities. But, you know, even if you arrive at the airport, you know, at 2:00 A.M., you're much more likely to be able to get a cab than some other options. And traditionally, to be able to schedule something like that, traditionally, they've been much more reliable in that regard. And so I want to make sure we're not reducing the kinds of services we're providing or requiring, and I'm hearing that that won't happen, according to what you're saying. But I'm not totally understanding why then anyone -- you know, why if we're switching this, anyone's signing up as an operating authority taxicab as opposed to something else. So that may be a second piece of

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it, is some of the variation across the licenses that you're giving for these mobility services to demarcate still that space of service that we've come to rely on from the cabs. >> Ellis: Council member kitchen? >> Kitchen: All right, yes. I just wanted to ask about another point that a speaker raised that -- I don't think it's a component of this. So it may be a misunderstanding. So I just want to understand. If I heard correctly, I think there was a concern that was raised about this replacing the existing system with one entity, that all the drivers would have to go through. Maybe I heard that wrong. Or did you all hear that as one of the concerns that was raised?

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And can you speak to it? >> Yeah, it was a concern from one of the speakers that perhaps a single company would be able to perhaps contract with the airport. I believe that was the concern that I heard. I do not think that's a possibility, and though I do not -- you know, really have any oversight of the airport operations at all, just the city operations. >> Kitchen: So there's nothing about this change that -- simply a change in the form of contract. It doesn't change the number of contracts, right? >> Correct. It would be simply the mechanism by which they're licensed. Right now, any franchise in the city is governed by article 11 of city charter. And --

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>> Kitchen: We've got -- I'm sorry, finish your thought. >> No, please. >> Kitchen: With regard to the airport, the airport could contract with one vendor now, if they wanted to, if I'm understanding correctly. That's -- >> I'm not familiar with the airport's operational abilities. >> Kitchen: Okay. But this doesn't change their authority. >> Correct. It would not change anything except the mechanism by which they're permitted. >> And if I could -- this is rob spiller again, the director. I do want to point out,

you know, that staff follows the policy two council enacts. And so even right now, the franchises fall under the transportation department and are operated by a single department, the transportation department. But we obviously operate under the rules and directions that you all set through policy. And that would be the same thing as we go into an operating sort of environment, if there are certain parameters or rules from

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a policy perspective, you know, for instance, no more than X number of operating authorities or standards in terms of how many drivers we're seeking to put into the market. Those are certainly policy items that we would want to have discussions with you all about and get your direction on. So, again, I don't think that there's a change in that sort of operating environment, if you would. >> Kitchen: Okay, thank you. >> Ellis: Thank you for that question. I see the mayor -- former mayor pro tem, council member harper-madison. I'm going to have to get used to that. Sorry, y'all. >> Harper-madison: Thank you, I appreciate the recognition. So, I want to make sure that I understand correctly that we're the only major metro in Texas whose operations are like that? Did I understand that correctly? >> Yeah, that is correct. We're the only city in Texas that licenses taxicabs as a

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franchise system. All of the other cities in Texas are essentially an operating authority, though some may not call it an operating authority. It's a simple license that is issued upon the completion of prerequisite criteria. So, Houston, for example, Austin. Now, they do have other operational differences. In Austin, you don't have to have 25 cabs to operate -- to start a cab business. But that would be a standard that we would maintain just as Houston maintains that as well. >> Harper-madison: I'd be curious to just learn more about the industry in general. You know, for the sake of full disclosure, much to the chair's point, I don't think I know enough to weigh in substantively. But I do have this question. Have we taken a look at how those companies and those drivers are faring in those other Texas cities that use the operating model instead of

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franchising? Are they driving? Struggling? Do we know why or why not? Those are -- and you don't have to answer it today, to the chair's point. We still have two items to cover. But I do look forward to the conversations in the future, answering those kinds of questions, and some of the others that were raised by my colleagues today. >> Ellis: Thank you for those comments. I agree. I think we need a little bit more information about this. This has been informative, but I think we've still got a couple of questions and want to understand how this affects the drivers and the companies and what the pros

and cons are. So I implore the individuals who did sign up to speak to please email us and you can just do all of mayor and council since at a future point it's going to be on all of our radars and we'll need to discuss it together as a dais. So we really appreciate you signing up and speaking today and we look forward to the comments that you can send to us. And with that, we will move on to the next item, which is going to be our update from the urban transportation commission chair. Is Mr. Champion on?

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>> Hi, I'm here. Thanks for having me. >> Thanks for joining. >> I'm currently the chair of the urban transportation commission. I've been asked to give an update on several of our last meetings going all the way back to September 27th of last year, where we did take up this exact item. I think the strongest arguments that swayed the transportation commission were removing the concept of the taxi companies as a public utility rather than as a private company. And the argument that all of the other vehicle for hire systems within our city and essentially every other major city in Texas do not use the franchise model, they use operating authority model. So it does -- you know, if there's to be some wisdom of the crowds, perhaps, lots of people have looked at this issue and have settled on the operating

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authority model. That was a pretty strong argument along with the fact that it started as an operating authority model and has been, for a long time, a franchise model. But it has not always been a franchise model. That's how that decision came about, if I remember it correctly. We discussed approving a recommendation that yellow cab change its name, which was mentioned a little bit. But an example of where the franchise model holds things up. So this was back in September. It's now been, I guess, whatever that is, four or five months. And yellow cab is still not Z trip because it has to go through council and a process that's a little more rigorous or laborious, depending on how you want to look at it. Those are a couple of issues that we looked at. I'm going to move this pretty quickly. I know we're getting pretty close. So please stop me if you need to dig in deeper on anything.

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In October and November of last year, we had more updates. Nothing really material that we I think needed to discuss here. We did spend a bunch of time in December on the blue line bridge project, which is how the blue line, as part of project connect, crosses town lake. There was discussion -- quite a bit of discussion on whether or not the city should even consider putting buses on that bridge. That's the sum of it. There are good reasons to do it and good reasons to not do it. Atd was very open about not having thought about that, because it just has not come up. They didn't seem to say it was too late, but I

think many people felt that they were on the verge of saying it's too late to even think about it, and I think there was some pushback from utc to say, well, as they go to the design stages, and we're not really there yet, can

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we talk about it. Is it worth considering. Atd is going to represent to us, to utc, I believe next month. They wanted to gather data. Not whether buses should be on there, but whether buses should be considered to be on there, because we'll have to look at the full design stage. That was a very good decision. It will be followed up on your discussion today. That is an important concern. It has a lot of impact on -- yes, potentially a lot of impact on how project connect gets used, and who uses it. The one other item worth mentioning was the presentation we got from farm and city, which as you all know is a 501c3 that talks about transportation and data modeling. It raised a lot of conversation about how campos kind of regional use growth standard

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modeling happens. And whether or not we look back at campo projections which determines how it gets spent if they've been accurate. And therefore should the current models that they use be continued to be accepted. Farm and city has an opinion. I think it's a very good analysis, because you can always look backwards. Is that worth doing forward. There's another additional element in there about where growth has been and where representation is on campo. It's a good presentation. It's available on the utc site in the backup. I recommend looking through it. There's a lot of good data. Again, the non-profit is called farm and city, if you're not familiar with them. And that is a very quick update of what we've been doing for the last four months. >> Ellis: Really appreciate you being able to join us.

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Thank you for those updates. I see council member kitchen's hand is up. >> Kitchen: Just a quick comment. Thank you for that update and thank you all for thinking about and discussing the questions related to project connect. I appreciate that. I want -- chair, I just wanted to let everyone know that in perhaps the update from our acm will cover this, but there are discussions occurring right now about pulling together the three boards, the cap metro, atp, and city council at some point in the not too distant future to give everyone a heads-up about the issues that will be coming forward, you know, over this next year, actually, not the whole year, even, through the summer and maybe early fall, the kinds of issues that will need to be discussed and decided as a community. And so it will be important to daylight those issues in one

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place for all of us to be aware of them, and also to be done in a public way so that the public understands. I know that the utc -- the utc needs to continue to get that kind of information so that we can get the input from them. So I just wanted to give you a heads-up. Some of you may already know this, but I don't think the date's been set yet. >> All right. Thank you very much for that information. >> Ellis: Thank you for that. That's a very good point, and I always look forward to those conversations. They can get very complex, but it's important work. It's a momentous occasion to be able to implement project connect. And so we always look forward to those joint meetings that we get to have. If there's no more questions, thank you, chair champion, for your update, and we will now call out assistant city manager fiandaca just to present our last item. >> Thank you, chair. Pleasure to be here. I have posted the monthly

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mobility outcome report for your considers, and I'm here if there are any questions. We look forward to scheduling that date with our policymakers and the atp board and the capital metro board. We know it's been a while since we've had an opportunity to have this conversation with staff on some of the program elements that we'd like to have an opportunity for our policymakers to discuss with staff. >> Ellis: Thank you so much for providing this update. Just very quickly, it is posted in backup, but it talks about the atx walk bike roll opportunity for input, the Austin marathon preparations, the pleasant valley road over longhorn dam mobility project named as a top five best new bikeways of 2021. So, congrats on that. Virgin atlantic airways announces new service Austin to London heathrow. And the airport fuel storage project, which is a conversation that a few of -- quite a few folks have reached out to us about that conversation, and the

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broadmore station groundbreaking, as well as a couple of links to resources that the community may find really helpful. I had one brief question, and that is on the Mccallough station update, the improvements for 2016, 2018, and 2020. I thought I remember project connect had mentioned some of that. Is that the 2020 bond dollars that's expected to be used right now as part of the red line is to do that through project connect funding? >> Yes, council member, chair. >> Ellis: Okay. That's fantastic. That's very exciting. I know I've been able to make it to a couple soccer games and look up to Austin fc kicking off again, and look forward to continued games and continued mobility improvements in that area. Are there any other questions for the assistant city manager from the committee members? It

does not appear so. Thank you for that update. The last item is just going to be to identify future items. I will just mention briefly some of the things that are already on our radar, so some of the

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items that the committee members may have already suggested might be on this list for the upcoming meetings. In February, we are tentatively talking about the blue line bridge, the Orange line design on Guadeloupe, atx walk bike roll as is presented in the assistant city manager's update, and then February or March might be the strategic mobility plan amendments, because we know there's some input being gathered currently. Updates on the living streets program, the I-35 capital express central, project connect equity tool potentially, and other future items. Vice chair Kelly has mentioned some Williamson county road bond projects. Since there are people who live in the city of Austin and in Williamson county, and emerging industry panel for businesses and concepts that are being developed that operate in the right of way and how we can be good community partners and encourage innovation and

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advancement of technologies and also make sure that our shared public spaces are being used responsibly. So that's a panel that we're interested in, but just haven't been able to get the timing together. And on that, I will say thank you to everyone involved in this meeting. I know we usually take on a lot of items. Chris parks is our staff liaison, always here to help me in chambers, and Julian, my staff, always does a good job of getting all of our ducks in a row and making sure we can have these productive conversations, because mobility is one of the biggest things that everybody is thinking about these days, and there's a lot of good projects happening in various phases. So, on that note, I will adjourn this meeting at 3:04 P.M. Take care, everyone!