

RESOLUTION NO. 20221201-037

WHEREAS, the Hays County Commissioners Court adopted an updated Hays County Transportation Plan in July 2021 that includes at least two major road projects that conflict with the recently updated Austin Strategic Mobility Plan, the Imagine Austin Plan, and Travis County's Land Water and Transportation Plan; and

WHEREAS, one of these proposed projects, labeled RC 5 and RC 6, would build a new highway across City of Austin Barton Springs water quality protection lands and the Barton Springs Edwards Aquifer recharge and contributing zones, and would connect to the southern end of Mopac and/or the southern end of Escarpment, with a spur connection to RM 1826, while extending almost 10 miles to the south to FM 150, as shown on the adopted Hays County Transportation Plan Map, Exhibit A; and

WHEREAS, this road project labelled RC 5 and RC 6 and sometimes referred to as the Rutherford Ranch bypass, has not been supported with any kind of documentation demonstrating a transportation need for the proposed road; and

WHEREAS, if built this road could cause serious harm to both the City owned Water Quality Protection Lands as well as to privately owned lands protected by City of Austin Water Quality Protection Lands conservation easements; and

WHEREAS, the other road project, labeled RC 7 in Exhibit A, would, if built, connect SH 45 to Interstate 35; and

WHEREAS, this second road project would, if built, have the effect of converting Mopac serving primarily as a local commuter highway for residents of Travis, Hays, and Williamson counties into a partially tolled interstate freeway alternative to Interstate 35, serving interregional and interstate car and truck traffic; and

WHEREAS, this proposed extension of SH 45 SW was specifically excluded from inclusion in both the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO) 2045 Long-Range Plan and the 2022 Austin Strategic Mobility Plan; and

WHEREAS, due to its location over the Edwards Aquifer recharge zone as well as crossing the surface catchment area and footprint of Flint Ridge cave, the proposed SH 45 SW segment threatens to pollute Barton Springs and the Barton Springs Edwards Aquifer; and

WHEREAS, early environmental studies indicated that recharge from the proposed route would take three years to reach Barton Springs, but more recent environmental studies indicate that recharge may reach Barton Springs in fewer than three days; and

WHEREAS, the City and Travis County jointly hold the Balcones Canyonlands Conservation Plan (BCCP) regional permit with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife service under the Endangered Species Act, which requires that the City and Travis County preserve the environmental integrity of Flint Ridge Cave and protect the species within it, including two species of concern; and

WHEREAS, preservation of the environmental integrity of Flint Ridge Cave requires protection of surface and subsurface catchment areas of the cave; and

WHEREAS, the City, Travis County, and other partners have substantial financial investments (more than \$47 million by the City alone) used to purchase Balcones Canyonlands Preserve (BCP) land under the BCCP permit with the total value of improvements to land enabled by BCCP, has been assessed at more than \$6 billion; and

WHEREAS, Austin voters, through six bond elections, have invested \$238.4 million to purchase water quality protection lands to benefit Barton Springs; and

WHEREAS, if built, this conversion of Mopac from a local commuter highway into an alternative for Interstate 35 interregional and interstate traffic would harm local commuters residing in Hays, Travis, and Williamson counties and would not align with our approved regional CAMPO plan; and

WHEREAS, the City and Travis County need a clear understanding of any direct and indirect costs, including costs associated with jeopardizing the investment in BCCP preserve land, a potential amendment to the BCCP, possible complications for future development, and increased congestion on MoPac; and

WHEREAS, in RESOLUTION NO. 20140515-063 the City reaffirmed its position that SH45 SW will not be part of the transportation plan for Austin and affirmed its opposition to SH45 SW and; **NOW, THEREFORE**,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF AUSTIN:

City Council reaffirms its support for full compliance with the requirements of the BCCP and the Endangered Species Act, including protection of Flint Ridge Cave, the Barton Springs salamander, the Austin Blind salamander, and listed endangered species and species of concern protected by the BCCP, and including but not limited to the protection of water quality and quantity in the Barton Springs Zone of the Edwards Aquifer in the construction and operation of all new highway projects.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED

The City Council hereby makes a formal request to the Honorable Hays County Judge Ruben Becerra and the Hays County Commissioners Court to take prompt action to remove the two proposed road projects, RC 5 and RC 6, from their county plan.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED

The City Council hereby makes a formal request to the Honorable Hays County Judge Ruben Becerra and the Hays County Commissioners Court to place its recently approved study and preliminary design work for the RC 7 connection of SH 45 SW to Interstate 35 on hold.

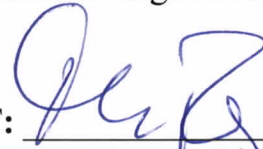
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED

The City Council hereby makes a formal request to the Hays County Commissioners Court, and directs the City Manager to invite Hays County to initiate cooperative efforts with the City, to improve transportation connections, potentially including regional transit solutions and watershed protections, between

the City, Travis County, and Hays County that do not threaten harm to the Edwards Aquifer watershed or to lands overlying the Edwards Aquifer that have been dedicated to permanent watershed and wildlife habitat protection by the City, Travis County, Hays County, or private landowners and that do not undermine or jeopardize the City and Travis County's BCCP obligations; and to continue to seek ways to expand lands dedicated to aquifer watershed and wildlife habitat protection in areas lying over and upstream of the Edwards Aquifer recharge zone.

ADOPTED: December 1, 2022

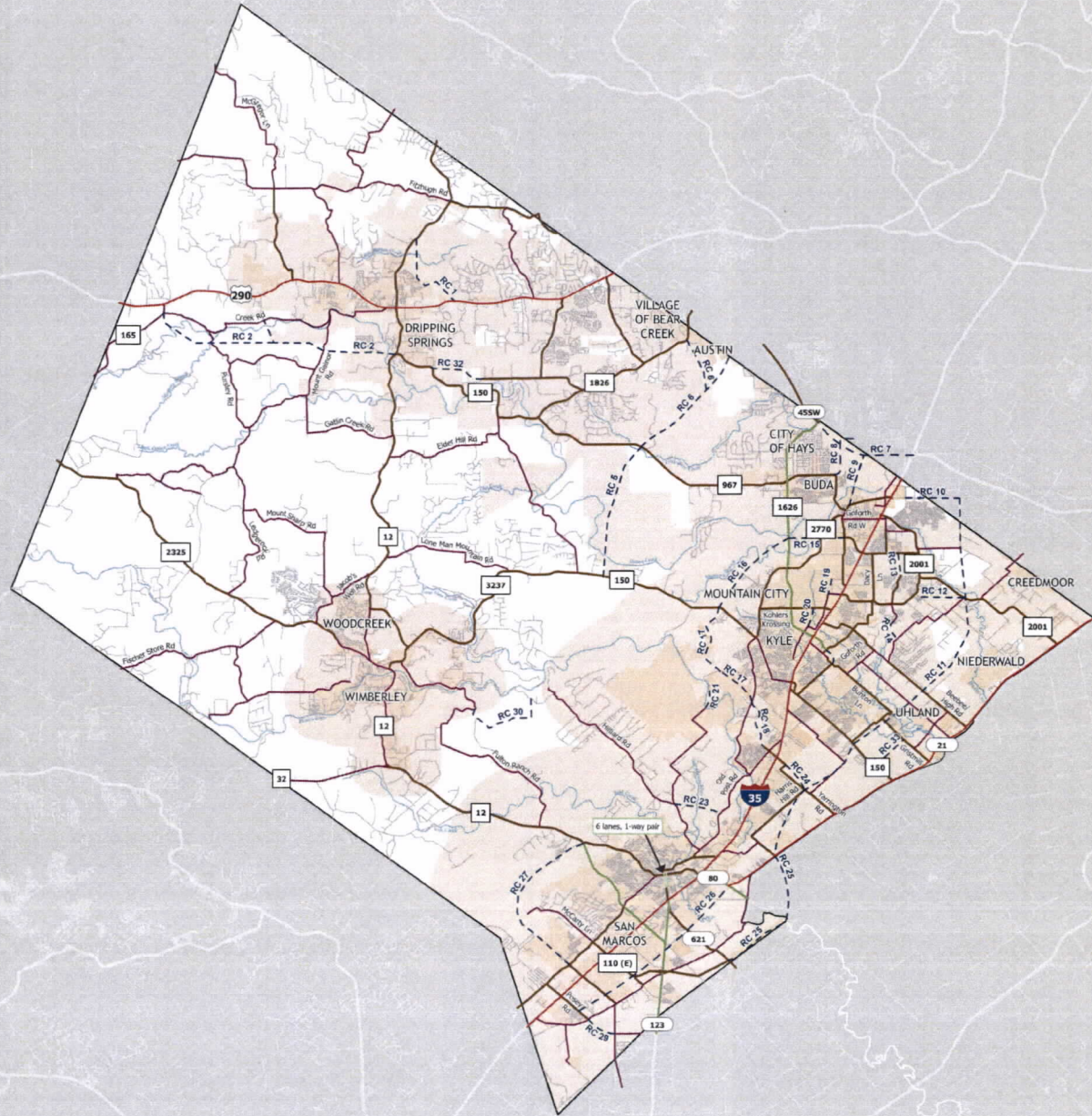
ATTEST:



Myrna Rios
City Clerk

EXHIBIT A

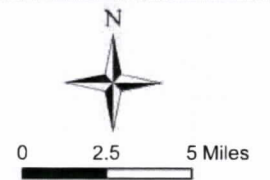
Document Path: X:\Projects\0718 Hays County Land Review\GIS\Map Data\0718_HCTP_Nacovina.aprx



Legend

- Local road
- 2-lane
- 4-lane
- 6-lane
- - - Recommended Connections
- Major TxDOT Projects
- ETJ
- City Limits

Hays County Transportation Plan Thoroughfare Plan



Date: 5/25/2021



HAYS COUNTY

**K·FRIESE
+ ASSOCIATES**
PUBLIC PROJECT ENGINEERING

FILE NO. 6535