

RESOLUTION NO.

WHEREAS, the Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority (CTRMA) is conducting the MoPac South Environmental Study, which is part of the required federal review process under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for a highway project; and

WHEREAS, CTRMA is currently seeking input on their Recommended Build Alternative for the MoPac South Project and will close the comment period on December 29, 2024; and

WHEREAS, the MoPac South Project Purpose states in part “Create a dependable and consistent route for transit” and the Project Goals and Objectives states in part “Increase opportunities for transit, ridesharing, pedestrians, and bicyclists” and “Provide consistency with local and regional plans”; and

WHEREAS, it has been over 11 years since CTRMA held the initial scoping meeting for the MoPac South Environmental Study in 2013; and

WHEREAS, throughout the original environmental review process, Austin residents submitted hundreds of comments expressing concerns about the proposed highway widening; and

WHEREAS, on November 10, 2015, CTRMA selected a preliminary recommended build alternative to widen MoPac South, from Slaughter Lane to Cesar Chavez, with up to four new tolled express lanes, as well as additional general-purpose lanes and auxiliary lanes in certain locations; and

WHEREAS, the current Recommended Build Alternative for the MoPac South Project has not changed substantially in size or capacity from the preliminary recommended build alternative chosen in 2015; and

25 **WHEREAS**, a decade of smart-growth planning has changed Travis
26 County's and Austin's future, which should help guide transportation and planning
27 decisions; and

28 **WHEREAS**, on November 3, 2020, Austin voters approved Project
29 Connect, electing to create a dedicated source of local funding to build and operate
30 a robust, citywide, high-capacity transit system, with the express intent to offer
31 commuters mobility options that are not reliant upon driving personal vehicles; and

32 **WHEREAS**, complementing the public's vote to transform the
33 transportation network, the City has transformed its land use regulations,
34 embracing density within the urban core of the City and along transit corridors; and

35 **WHEREAS**, since 2015, the City has approved numerous plans embracing
36 transit and reducing reliance on single-occupancy vehicles, including the Austin
37 Strategic Mobility Plan, an update to the Urban Trails Plan, and the Austin Climate
38 Equity Plan; and

39 **WHEREAS**, since 2015, the City has set an ambitious goal for 50% of trips
40 to be non-drive alone by 2039, encouraging the use of multimodal transportation
41 options such as buses, light rail, rideshares, carpooling, biking, and walking, as
42 well as telework; and

43 **WHEREAS**, based on concerns about environmental health risks associated
44 with PM 2.5 (fine particulate matter), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
45 has strengthened the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for PM
46 2.5; and

47 **WHEREAS**, PM 2.5 measurements in Travis County currently exceed the
48 threshold of 9.0 micrograms per cubic meter considered safe for human health by

49 the EPA, which could result in Travis County receiving a “nonattainment”
50 designation if air quality does not improve; and

51 **WHEREAS**, the MoPac South project is anticipated to significantly
52 increase the volume of vehicles traveling within the airshed of Austin High School,
53 thereby potentially raising the exposure of school-aged children with developing
54 lungs to harmful air toxins and car emissions; and

55 **WHEREAS**, on August 8, 2019, City Council declared a climate
56 emergency; and

57 **WHEREAS**, transportation is responsible for the largest share of carbon
58 emissions in Travis County; and

59 **WHEREAS**, the entire stretch of the MoPac South project traverses through
60 the Edwards Aquifer Recharge Zone and encroaches upon sensitive karst features
61 and caves, which are known to be the habitat to several threatened and endangered
62 species; and

63 **WHEREAS**, construction related to MoPac South, including excavation,
64 will encroach upon and be built across several creeks and the Recharge Zone
65 which flow to Barton Springs, a federally protected endangered species habitat for
66 the Austin Blind Salamander and the Barton Springs Salamander, which the City is
67 responsible for protecting under an established habitat protection plan; and

68 **WHEREAS**, construction of the MoPac South project will significantly
69 impact the public parkland located within Zilker Park and along Lady Bird Lake;
70 and

71 **WHEREAS**, the City desires to work with CTRMA, Capital Area
72 Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO), the Texas Department of
73 Transportation (TxDOT), Travis County, CapMetro, and other regional

74 transportation and governmental entities on major highway projects to ensure
75 consistency with the City's environmental and mobility goals and to promote mode
76 shift away from single-occupancy vehicles; and

77 **WHEREAS**, the City is interested in ensuring that whatever changes are
78 made to MoPac South are consistent with the City's mobility goals and receives a
79 full environmental review that considers alternatives to avoid environmental harms
80 and promotes mode shift away from single-occupancy vehicles; and

81 **WHEREAS**, the City is committed to sustainable growth, reducing
82 greenhouse gas emissions, and promoting multimodal transportation options to
83 improve the quality of life for all residents; and

84 **WHEREAS**, highway expansion projects have typically led to
85 developmental sprawl and increased traffic, air pollution, and carbon emissions,
86 which contradict the City's sustainability and smart-growth objectives; and

87 **WHEREAS**, the City has set ambitious goals to reduce reliance on single-
88 occupancy vehicles and to shift towards more sustainable transportation modes,
89 including public transit, biking, and walking; and

90 **WHEREAS**, expanding highway capacity may undermine these goals by
91 encouraging more car travel, increasing vehicle miles traveled (VMT), and
92 exacerbating environmental and public health issues; and

93 **WHEREAS**, the proximity of MoPac South to environmentally sensitive
94 areas, such as Barton Springs and the Barton Springs Edwards Aquifer Recharge
95 Zone, raises significant concerns about the potential negative impacts on federally
96 protected endangered species and the overall ecological health of these areas; and

97 **WHEREAS**, the City recognizes the importance of working collaboratively
98 with regional partners to develop transportation solutions that align with the

99 community's values and long-term vision for a sustainable and resilient future;

100 **NOW, THEREFORE,**

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

102 The City Manager is directed to work with CTRMA to refine the proposal
103 for the MoPac South project to align with the goals and intent of the Austin
104 Strategic Mobility Plan, including the Urban Trails Plan, the Austin Climate Equity
105 Plan, the Watershed Protection Strategic Plan, and the Project Connect System
106 Plan. Per the goals of these plans, the refined MoPac South proposal should
107 support express transit service to a park and ride facility, provide continuous, safe
108 pedestrian/bicycle trails and crossings, reduce or ~~minimize increases~~not increase in
109 vehicle miles traveled and greenhouse gas emissions, reduce or minimize increases
110 in impervious cover, minimize the loss of tree canopy, and minimize the widening
111 of the existing roadway.

112 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:**

113 The City Manager is directed to invite CTRMA, CapMetro, CAMPO, the
114 Texas Department of Transportation, Austin Community College, and any other
115 necessary agencies or parties to meet at the earliest possible opportunity to create
116 an action plan for delivering the Southwest Austin elements of the Project Connect
117 System Plan approved by the voters in November 2020 and included as Exhibit A
118 to Council Resolution No. 20200807-003, the Proposition A Contract with the
119 Voters. These elements include new Express bus service on MoPac South to a new
120 park and ride facility south of William Cannon, new Rapid bus service on US 290
121 to the existing Pinnacle Park & Ride facility in Oak Hill, and new Pickup
122 neighborhood circulators.

123 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:**

124 The most urgent priority of this interagency collaboration shall be to identify
125 a location for the new park and ride facility on MoPac South to be served by
126 Express bus, per the Project Connect System Plan and in fulfillment of the MoPac
127 South Project Purpose and Project Goals and Objectives. The new park and ride
128 facility location should preferably utilize existing impervious cover, such as
129 through a shared parking agreement. This work should be undertaken with utmost
130 haste to ensure the final design of MoPac South can be as transit-supportive as
131 possible, ideally including the park and ride as part of CTRMA's project.

132 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:**

133 The City Manager is directed to ensure official staff comments for the
134 MoPac South Open House #6 align with this Resolution and are submitted by the
135 December 29, 2024, deadline. The Manager shall also submit a copy of this
136 Resolution as official comments from Council by the deadline.

137 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:**

138 The City Manager is directed to deliver a written update to Council on the
139 Project Connect Southwest Austin action plan no later than May 6, 2025.

140
141
142 **ADOPTED:** _____, 2024

ATTEST: _____

Myrna Rios
City Clerk