

Mobility Committee (MOBC) Meeting Transcript – 10/1/2026

Title: ATXN-1 (24hr)

Channel: 1 - ATXN-1

Recorded On: 10/1/2026 6:00:00AM

Original Air Date: 10/1/2026

Transcript Generated by SnapStream

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[1:03:34 PM]

Good afternoon, everybody. This is the October 1st mobility committee meeting, and we're going to call it to order. At 1:03 P.M. We are hosting the meeting here in city hall, city council chambers. We have all four members of the committee present on the dais, and we will start with public communication. We have three minutes each. I believe there are only three speakers.

[1:04:01 PM]

>> Yes, chairwoman. There's three speakers. Katy Kim, Adam Greenfield and Andrew Clemens.

[1:04:09 PM]

>> Welcome.

[1:04:27 PM]

>> Hi. I'm Katie. I'm speaking in opposition of the current proposed design of east 51st street by Mueller, because it does not comply with the Austin mobility plan. Best practices for the safe systems vision zero design approach, or the vision for creating a pedestrian oriented corridor that brings Mueller and

Windsor park together. The city's plan for east 51st street is extremely disappointing, and the design needs to change to create a better, safer, multimodal street. For background, I have a master's and phd in civil engineering specializing in transportation and about 30 years of experience in planning and engineering, including overseeing roadway, roundabout and traffic analysis projects. First, I want to highlight the failures in the process. Despite the Mueller neighborhood association and Mueller requesting an opportunity to review the design last year before it made it to 90%, the transportation and public works staff refused to go to the Mueller park or neighbor association to provide an update. City staff pushed through the 90% design despite requests by the public to have a say. City staff presented the 90% to the public in June of this year as informational only.

[1:05:32 PM]

This is not okay. Here's what is wrong with the city's proposed redesign. It continues business as usual for the corridor. Two car lanes in each direction. Signalized intersections, crashes and speeding occur along this road and is not a pleasant place to walk along. The current proposed roadway design is outdated and not compliance with the Austin strategic mobility plan, which seeks to increase mode split of non-car modes to 50% and integrate mobility modes like low speed electric vehicles, which is encouraged. On page one, 36 of the Austin strategic mobility plan, the only change is to provide wider facilities for walking and biking and to prohibit left turns along some parts of the corridor. Additionally, the design would remove established shade trees that provide continuous shade and much needed relief from the hot sun. This is a project that will cost millions and be in place for decades. We have to get this project right and not rush into a poor design. Here's what needs to change about the east 51st street redesign. All intersections should be one Laine roundabouts. No excuses. Roundabouts significantly reduce crashes. Injuries and fatalities significantly reduce roadway operations. Maintenance and emergency response costs, provide traffic calming and provide a safer environment.

[1:06:46 PM]

They're ideal for this corridor because the vision for this corridor. The previous traffic modeling looked at two Laine roundabouts. That is not the appropriate size when it comes to traffic modeling. The point is to determine how to get to the vision, not to succumb to decades old thinking that we must keep accommodating an unstopped growth and conventional car travel. Additionally, more people, including myself and other residents of Mueller and adjacent neighborhoods, are using low speed electric vehicles, golf carts and e-trikes to get around. The revised east 51st street cross section should have one Laine in each direction, separate off street paths for bikes and low speed vehicles and wide sidewalks, while also maintaining the existing shade trees. When looking at the cost of redesign, those are quickly recovered. By designing a roadway that is safer and more efficient. Thank you.

[1:07:34 PM]

>> Thank you. The gentlemen are debating who's going to go next.

[1:07:40 PM]

>> I'll go. Adam Greenfield, safe streets, Austin, nice to see you. All. Council members. Also speaking about 51st street between Cameron and Berkman. We strongly thank staff for all the work that's been done on this project. This is a really critical area of town and if done right, could really help stitch these communities together in a way that the current roadway configuration does not. The question really, we think, is what are we solving for? And in the 2012 east 51st street vision plan, the community was very clear that they would like a main street here. What we what we're seeing in the current designs is more of a highway configuration with, you know, four lanes, certainly an improvement over what we have today. But we do think that we need more time to get this right, even with the four lane configuration, with a median and improved bike lanes and other improvements, we still think that this isn't going to be a place that really, the community would embrace as much as they could. And we are seeing a lot of collected support from about 20 local businesses and organizations for kind of a slower, narrower, calmer, more main street approach. This has been done before, of course, Barton springs road, you know, similar traffic levels. We can, you know, perhaps say, well, this is different, but Barton springs road was moving the needle forward significantly.

[1:09:22 PM]

Cameron diesel was moving the needle forward significantly. We think that this wouldn't be moving the needle more any more forward than those projects. And and we would really be having a wonderful outcome at the end that the community would really embrace. So even if it takes longer to, to get a good design for 51st street, the community could be with this. This could be with the community for 80 years, a century, a century of improved safety, economic development. We think it's worth it. This is we've got to think long term here. So thank you very much and looking forward to the discussion today. Thank you.

[1:10:02 PM]

>> Thank you. I appreciate your comments. And to Mr. Clements.

[1:10:07 PM]

>> Hello, Andrew Clements, I'm actually commissioner council member Zo Qadri, wrong room appointee to the Mueller commission. And I am probably the main voice that was asking for updates for the east 51st project for probably a year or two, and not being responded to until a presentation in February that didn't present the design and the 90% design finally being presented at a June 14th public hearing. But east 51st street between I-35 and Berkman. This project area is a straddler, both a street and a road not doing either particularly well, but mainly a road emphasizing traffic throughput and maneuverability. The 90% design that has been presented shows this remaining road, with some nice new flourishes and nods to other mobility needs. The vision of the project to calm traffic and bring together the Windsor Park and Mueller neighborhoods, of which I'm the chair of the neighborhood association, isn't achieved in the 90% design presented and never will. With four lanes of traffic in an arterial setting, I drive the stretch of east 51st. Often I see people going 50-60 miles an hour racing each other to the next light because there's two lanes to weave in and out of. I see people using the center turn lane to pass traffic that they're unhappy with the speed of. Now, granted, dividing it with an island will help solve that problem, but I don't believe two lanes of traffic in either direction is going to change the driving habits. The city goals of 50/50 travel mode split and progress against climate change won't be furthered by the automobile first planning basis for this project. Reducing lanes and installing roundabouts will achieve the original vision.

[1:12:12 PM]

Road diets have been successful all around Austin. With our new emphasis and understanding of them. Barton Springs was mentioned, but all around the perimeter of Mueller east 51st street, itself east of Berkman and west of I-35, have been reduced. Manor road has been reduced, Springdale road has been reduced, lanes taken out. I question why that wouldn't work here. A three year delay to get it right, an altered road design that staff is going to present to you with the backup that's part of this agenda item is the right thing to do. A year or two can be chalked up to not communicating. The design project changes as requested, and a road diet strategy could actually reduce construction costs conceivably, and those costs could be moved to redesign. Thank you.

[1:13:10 PM]

>> All right. Thank you very much for your comments and thanks for being here today.

[1:13:14 PM]

>> Thank you.

[1:13:19 PM]

>> We've got a note that our item number one is being withdrawn just so it can be reposted. So we're going to skip that one. One and two.

[1:13:34 PM]

>> One is the approved the last meeting's minutes. Item two is the corrected minutes. Two doesn't have minutes uploaded. One does. But if they're wrong and you want to pull them chair that's your prerogative.

[1:13:51 PM]

>> So September 3rd meeting minutes are ready to go. But item two was a different meeting.

[1:13:57 PM]

>> Yes that's correct.

[1:13:58 PM]

>> Okay. Sounds good. Well, let's get a motion on the table for item number one to approve those. Vice chair zo qadri makes the motion seconded by council member Laine. All in favor, say aye. Okay. Unanimous on the dais and item number two will be withdrawn. And we'll see that at another meeting. Perfect. Item number three briefing regarding vertical takeoff and landing aircraft, which use electric motors and rotors to take off and land vertically, hover and fly horizontally. And their potential uses. I will point people to the post the full posting language, because that's not even half of it. But I'm so eager to get to talk about this topic. And so we've got a handful of great experts here to come and brief us on this today.

[1:14:41 PM]

>> Thank you so much. Good afternoon, madam chair. Vice chair, council members, I am Mike Rogers, assistant city manager, and I have here with us today Louis Leff, who's assistant director for transportation and public works. And we have Christopher Lester, who is the division chief at a cems. It's a mouthful there, sir. Okay. Well, what I wanted to do is provide you with an update as I presented a high level overview of electric vertical takeoff and landing or ev tolls a few months back. There's been a lot of progress that has happened in this in this field over the last few months. And so that's where I wanted to go, is really start to talk about what has happened since the last time I was here speaking on this topic. There's been a lot of progress in Texas. We're going to talk about that. Infrastructure developments, the current barriers, challenges. Er, first pilot project that we're looking at.

[1:15:46 PM]

And then we want to summarize and give some of the next steps that we see. The last time I was here, basically we had renderings of what these ev tolls may look like. And I just want to say ev tolls are synonymous with advanced air mobility. They're also sometimes called air taxis. And so what you see before you is one of them that is actually in in production. And if you can see it has says team usa on there. And that was and I mentioned this last time in our last meeting, this is a part of one of the vehicles that will be used for the olympics in 2028. As the olympics has struck a deal with ev tolls to deliver athletes and others to their venues. As you. If you've been out in the la area, you know the traffic is horrendous.

[1:16:51 PM]

And so they're looking at alternative means to get people in and out of those venues, there are traditionally four major players in this in this industry. There's others, but the major ones are joby archer, beater and whisk. And just to let you know that this is this is happening, this is happening quickly. And why I wanted to, to to have this picture up here is because agreements have already been made for 2028. There's also agreements that have been made with certain airports already. We don't even have these vehicles certified yet. And that is why I wanted to present this is because there is a huge push at the federal level to get these vehicles certified as quickly as possible. And that's where last meeting I also talked about, there was a pilot project that the federal government had put out. We did submit there. But let me let me talk a little bit about that.

[1:18:02 PM]

That pilot project and this is administered by the federal aviation administration. It is to test air taxis, really the short range ev tolls and looking at some of the impacts that they may have, including noise. And so all of these are tests to help, whether it's the federal government, state government, local governments to help us to develop future policies around these technologies. Also, within this pilot project that the federal government put out, they're looking at long range fixed wing flights, just trying to get a longer range out there with the aircraft that are out there, cargo, looking at cargo and the delivery of goods, which we'll talk about a little bit today as well. Logistics and supplies. This is I'm going to focus in here is the medical transport. And you will hear more about that today as we are looking at entering into that particular arena. And then finally, this whole pilot project that the federal government is doing is looking at automation. And I do want to emphasize that with these flying taxis, they are going to start with pilots, even though the technology is being tested, as with automation, with autonomously as well. So as a part of this program, this pilot project, eight areas were awarded the opportunity to be a part of the pilot. And our application, unfortunately, from the city of Austin was not accepted. But txdot was. So Texas is a part of this process.

[1:19:53 PM]

And with that, just wanted to give you an idea of what, you know, the first flight looked like September 10th. We had the first flight under this new agreement and this new pilot. We just have a little bit of video. Can we play that.

[1:20:14 PM]

>> As he taxiing right now? See how smoothly the controls and this is. He's not taxiing with his feet. And those of you who are pilots know that on the ground, you actually move the flight controls with your feet. It's actually the flight control systems. And as he turns, you'll watch, watch, you'll see one of the propulsion units will start to tilt to help them make the turn. He's taxiing out here. He's going to tax out. You can see where the person there is with the vest. He's going to taxi over in that direction, and then he's going to lift off in a hover. So here we are. This is the loudest you will hear. That's it. He's now he's in a hover taxi. And now he's putting the pedal to the metal watch.

[1:21:08 PM]

>> Well, and I didn't want to play the whole thing, but just wanted to give you an idea how these may be a little bit different, you know, from your traditional helicopters. First of all, the sound that is that is at alliance airport in in Fort Worth, that's an active runway, active airport. And that was about as loud as as these vehicles are. Also the other differential from this to helicopters is these are electric. So it's a bit different. And so on September 10th, when this inaugural flight took place, it was a really big deal. And it

remains a big deal as we have the secretary of transportation. You have our U.S. Senator, you have txdot head, you have faasa leader, and you have Ross Perot from alliance. This is something that is transformative. And that's why I believe this is such an important topic for us to really start to get in front of.

[1:22:15 PM]

And so from a standpoint of Texas, what is this pilot doing? It's going to be doing all those things I talked about earlier, but they've actually labeled the project as project nexus, and it's building the interstate system for advanced air mobility. And I find that very, very interesting because if you if you may recall, in my last presentation, I talked about paradigm shifts. And when the transportation network, when the national highway system was initially built, we saw a paradigm. And where that paradigm came was in land use. And so now here we have the next and the newest thing in technology, in transportation, we will be seeing a new paradigm that is occurring. So once again, this was the first evtol flight as a part of what this this pilot project. And you will see even within this picture, these ev tolls are different. They can be different. This is not the same one that you saw in the earlier picture. This is a two seater here. So they vary in in in size. This is another manufacturer here that is doing this particular item. And so I want to talk a little bit or have our team talk a little bit about, you know, what is what's happening, what will we see.

[1:23:46 PM]

And so I'm going to turn this over right now to our assistant director.

[1:23:53 PM]

>> Appreciate it. Acn so Lewis left assistant director of transportation, public works. And as acn Rogers mentioned, you know, project nexus really is trying to create a system of systems. They're going to try to integrate advanced air mobility into that national airspace system. It's going to be across Texas, Oklahoma, Louisiana, and the choctaw nation. And so they're really trying with the initiative to, to focus on validating immediate use cases for advanced air mobility, including medical cargo and regional transport. They want to have this be a scalable template that can be used for interstate regulatory harmonization, so that we have a federalized system for regulation. And they want to use these pilots across the nation to better define what those rules and regulations might be. This will also be a phased operational strategy. They want to start by using existing airplanes, helicopters, making test flights along some of those air travel routes to ensure that those are valid routes before getting into the evtols, into those spaces. And the second phase would be more about testing medical and cargo transportation between the rural facilities and medical centers in this Texas triangle.

[1:24:57 PM]

The last phase would be more about the evtol kind of air taxi flights across the entire Texas triangle. So we've learned from txdot staff who are engaged with project nexus at the federal level with the ipe, is that they really are going to start in the Houston space, and they're going to be looking at that connection to other medical centers, regional hubs, and then understanding what that cargo impact might look like as well. And then getting into that transportation element in the later phase of this project. So what does it mean for Austin moving forward? There is this conversation that's already been happening as acm. Rogers mentioned, one of the applications that was not selected at the federal level was with lift aircraft. They've got a presence here in Austin over at the long center and a team from city of Austin working with them. And so concurrently as that federal pilot is happening, I think there is a desire to have an air first consortium team to really start to define what it looks like here in Austin. As the project nexus txdot led project and pilot at that federal level continues to move forward as well. Oh, I think they're okay. Do you want to.

[1:26:07 PM]

>> Before we before we get into a little bit of what we wanted to test, though, I do want to mention that and I and I said earlier, the first flight, if we can go back here, the first flight within this test, within this pilot has taken place. However, the first flights in this city have taken place long ago. And we're going to talk about if you look at the background of this of this shot right here, you know where that is. That's right here. That's Austin. And if you can see the vehicle in the background, that's lift, which has been here at south by southwest doing flights for many, many years. And we do have the the representatives from Lyft are here today. This is an Austin company that we are looking at being a part of this pilot. And that's where we want to talk about next. You want to go ahead and talk a little bit about what we're ultimately trying to do.

[1:27:16 PM]

>> Good afternoon. Chris Lester, division chief with Austin Travis county ems. You know, we've been talking with lift for several years now before even the ipe stuff had started to become a thing throughout the country and the nation, just because of this unique aircraft in its footprint, allows you to get to places very quickly, bypassing the traffic issues that we have here in Austin. This we have some ideas of particular calls we might be able to go to or use it as special events and working through a, a plan of work. Where can this benefit us as a city and a department so we can continue to provide the high level of care that we've been known to provide in the city as we move forward. As you all know, not every answer to a solution is an ambulance. Right? So we have very specialized teams with chip and

integrated health that help navigate the city for our most vulnerable people. We still have these high incident cases of cardiac arrest, blood adminis, shootings and things like that. We even noticed that the other day when Texas and Ohio state were playing in Texas, one with a great comeback, downtown was locked down and a lot of 911 calls came in, and even our folks on utvs could not get to the patients. If we had video, you could see people just dragging stretchers down the road to be able to get to patients, right? That's another case where this might be able to be very beneficial for us.

[1:28:43 PM]

Getting a skilled paramedic with a particular piece of equipment to that scene and begin to stabilize the patient before the ambulance gets there, or a UTV or whatever it may be that's going to be transporting. This is not for transport by any means. It doesn't take the place of starflight. It doesn't take the place of ambulances. Right. It's an adjunct to just like we have motorcycles. So we're really excited about what this could do to help augment our response to our 901 system already and are very, very pleased with being in the forefront of this as a city and a state.

[1:29:22 PM]

>> And so I think as we've gotten to that next level of detail, beyond just the conceptual and looking at what's actually happening on the ground in other places here in Texas and across the nation with this federal pilot, we've started to really dig deeper into what to consider at the local level. What does it mean for Austin moving forward? We know that once we get into airspace, there's different levels of control that we have up to certain altitudes. And so being able to understand what those regulatory powers and authority might look like at the local level, all of these rely on some type of takeoff and landing location. Vertiports are typically what they're called and where will those be located? What does that look like for land use and zoning, building code changes that might be needed to consider where these flight corridors are going to be established, where they'll be used, what kind of facility impacts that might look like on existing buildings or looking forward into the the new developments we know similar to autonomous vehicles, you know, these are going to be all electric. So what does the charging infrastructure look like and how will we permit that activity? Understanding that while there's limited and less noise involved with these types of, of equipment relative to existing, like helicopters and things like that, there still will be some noise associated with it. And how is that going to impact, you know, local ordinances that we already have today? And then just making sure that we are constantly communicating out with the community so that they know what's going on with the development of this technology, what's going on with Austin's role in that, and what does that look like moving forward for our community?

[1:30:53 PM]

>> You know, in summary, I think this is a an opportunity for us to either utilize some of our committees that we do have, such as our utc or develop a, a another special committee of some sort to really start to, to look at and have these conversations to help us to develop these, these future policies alongside with these tests, whether it's at the federal level or whether it's the local level with these these pilot projects that are that are taking place. And we're going to need to get ahead of this. This isn't something that is coming. This is something that is here. And we are and I hate to say this, but we're a bit behind and we need to ensure that we have the discussion with our community and start with the development alongside with these pilots that are taking place, the development of the policy that will help us to have a sustainable community for in perpetuity. So with that, I want to leave it at that and welcome any type of questions that you all may have.

[1:32:06 PM]

>> Thank you. I have one very high level question. Before I kick it over to the rest of the committee members, what kind of speeds are we talking about here? Because I was thinking they would be perfect for, you know, medical transport, you know, between cities depending on need. But it sounds like that's not really the the need right now at the time to replace star flight or anything like that. How fast do these things go? And is there a future where they would be used for medical transport?

[1:32:32 PM]

>> That particular aircraft that we were we've been discussing about max speed is 60 miles an hour and cruising speed is 50. Since it's designed to not it's obviously not a fixed wing. It's not made for the super long distance, right. Because everything's running off of batteries. It's more for the. You have a place to go and get back from and get something there and back very quickly.

[1:32:55 PM]

>> Okay, interesting. I see vice chair zo qadri has his hand up. Why don't you get it started?

[1:33:00 PM]

>> Sure. I appreciate the presentation. I kept thinking of the jetsons during this presentation. Show came out way before I was born, but I've seen it, I.

[1:33:10 PM]

>> Are you calling us old?

[1:33:12 PM]

>> No, no, I was looking it up just now. It came out in the 60s, but I did have some questions, and I'm just gonna ask them as I was kind of jotting them down. I mean, one of the questions Charles asked was about speed, but my question was how? How would it be? Right? Like, where would they be in relation to like a helicopter versus this versus, you know, like passenger aircraft?

[1:33:36 PM]

>> And those are, those are the things that when we talk about FAA, those are the types of things that the FAA will be regulating. And there will be certain strata for your, your drones that people are just, you know, can purchase off off a retailer. They'll be or there already are different stratus for helicopters. And then you have your general aviation and commercial. But those will be items that along with these tests is FAA will develop all of the the rules that are associated with that. And that's where we wanted to hit upon those corridors, even though they will have that final say in what strata they're going to have, I think we have to then start to focus on the corridors that come down to wherever those vertiports may be, and look at any type of policy or strategy, zoning that's associated with the land use that's associated with that.

[1:34:42 PM]

But yeah, the specifics I can get from the FAA, I don't have that with me right now, though.

[1:34:49 PM]

>> And then I was gonna, I mean, it's we saw the example, I guess at south by and saw the video, but where would take off and landing normally take place? I mean, I assume if I asked for one, and that's another question I have is how would a person like, would it be is it similar to when you get a waymo,

you download an app, you request, it picks you up, drops you off, but I assume it doesn't pick me up right in front of city hall and drops me in front of my front door.

[1:35:16 PM]

>> Yeah, and there's different levels here. So with and I want to differentiate with what we're looking at as a pilot that will work with EMS is different. It's different. Even though they fly. It has it operates off of different rules and regulations. And you heard 60 miles an hour. These air taxis, the bigger ones that you saw different speeds, speeds that can go up to 200 miles an hour. And they have ranges of up to 200 miles. So those are going to be very different. But when you're starting to talk about in that category right there, the air taxis, that's where we want to get you just hit upon the questions that we need to start answering. And this is where the location of vertiports is going to be extremely important, because we want to ensure that there's multi-modal facilities that are there. We also and just talking with the industry, obviously they start at airports.

[1:36:17 PM]

And so they have agreements. And matter of fact, some of them are even owned by the airlines. So it's they don't consider it competition with the airlines. But once you land off a plane, then you potentially get on one of these. And where do they want to come downtown's. They've also mentioned like UT major generators, maybe the domain. They mentioned circuits of America, areas like that. And so even though they have the ability to land anywhere, that's where we need to get in front of that, knowing where the industry wants to be and ensuring that that works for the cities as well, and ensuring that we have, say, for instance, if they land on land, on top of a high rise building, then we need to ensure that there's going to be some type of multi-modal at the base of that building to have people complete their journeys.

[1:37:17 PM]

So those are some of the things that we need to be able to, to, to really have some, some really. Hard discussions. Or they may not be hard, but we just need to have those discussions as we start to move forward. And that's where working with the industry, understanding what they want to do, seeing, does that align with where we want to be as a city as well?

[1:37:39 PM]

>> Yeah. Three more questions on this and it'll be pretty quick with with waymo and a lot of the other avs, when they first came into town, they were kind of geo fenced in the the downtown area. How would it work for, for, for something like this?

[1:37:52 PM]

>> This is a very similar, very similar because these, these are also going to be working through FAA rules as well. So, you know, we're talking air traffic control as well that that would be associated with many of these these items as well. So we have to this is a new new game here. Totally new.

[1:38:13 PM]

>> Two more questions. The first one, the first one doesn't really have to do with with this per se, but there's something that I saw called zipline. I don't know if you're familiar. Yeah.

[1:38:24 PM]

>> Yeah. I we're happy to talk about that as well. And so when it comes to advanced air mobility, there's a lot of things that are happening in this arena right now. So we've been talking about the different these are different modes. We're when you're talking about air taxis or you're talking about what we're looking at, trying to develop a mou for, for medical transport. These are separate categories. Zipline is also in the category. For those who don't know what a zipline is, prime air is also in this arena as well. These are smaller drones that will be delivering goods to people. So we saw a category of like cargo. So what these drones do is they will pick up. I'll just use medicine as an example. They pick up medicine, whether it's at the pharmacy, and they will end up delivering it to your house. And what, how they operate is there's a tether that comes from the drone that drops down into wherever it's trying to be delivered, and that's how you would receive your, your, your goods or your cargo, whatever that may be.

[1:39:44 PM]

This is that technology. When I said is here it is here we have those companies are in for permits right now. And so we really do need to have conversations about this. And because we're going to see, we're going to see deliveries of of goods, which that's going to be the first thing and a few other things. But we haven't really had the, the really in-depth conversation. The technology is just comes so fast that we

need to take our time. And that's why we really wanted to continue to be here because these we, we have to start understanding how this technology is going to work. So we, we don't get caught flat footed and what to do if one, if one were to fall out of the sky, what do we do? Who do we call? How does ems get involved?

[1:40:43 PM]

How does public safety get involved? We don't have answers.

[1:40:46 PM]

>> To that. I mean, if one falls out of the sky, people are probably dead. And if one falls out of the sky and hits a residential building or.

[1:40:54 PM]

>> The delivery drones, they're very.

[1:40:55 PM]

>> Light talking about, I'm talking about the larger the whatever the.

[1:40:59 PM]

>> And I was talking about just the delivery, just the the delivery drones are extremely light.

[1:41:05 PM]

>> Sure. Yeah. I mean, I think my big concern and I'm thankful for having this conversation. I look forward to many conversations. Same. It's the same concern I've had with, you know, the avs is the lack of regulation that we, you know, lack of authority we have as a city government. So I'm hoping we're

we're going to be ahead of many of those conversations with these companies as they come into town. I'm hoping we're going to be able to talk to folks at the state and the federal level, work with, you know, you know, our allies over there because, you know, ultimately, I want to make sure people are safe and I want to make sure that the hiccups that we've seen with these avs in Austin on our roads, we don't see things like that happen with these, you know, flying taxis.

[1:41:49 PM]

>> To to add to that, sir, the zipline in particular, that one, we we have spoken with them since they've working and getting in Austin and they are equipped with a parachute. So if it does have a malfunction, a parachute deploys and so does the evtol that we came to speak to you about. It also has a parachute that deploys so that those concerns are are limited, much less great.

[1:42:13 PM]

>> Well thank you. Yeah. Like I said, my main concern is human safety. But I appreciate the presentation and taking all my questions.

[1:42:21 PM]

>> I'll jump in here before taking questions from other folks, because I'm sure there are some on his point about the geofencing, you know, having new technologies come in to downtown Austin and to work with the limited footprint before they ever get on a highway. I'm curious about geofencing or FAA regulations around height. I know that most people who operate a drone for camera footage or whatnot, they've got a certain height they need to stay under. What does it look like when you're dealing with this middle ground of you're going to have camera drones at one level, you're going to have people in drones at another level, and then you're going to have your major aircraft carriers. What does that look like? I mean, I know that drones are regulated by the FAA. So I think those I have confidence somewhat that those rules will be handled appropriately. But I'm curious about the regulatory aspect, especially if air traffic controllers are a part of this conversation, because we know there's not enough air traffic controllers across this country. What kind of guardrails already exist in place for that, that mid level of stay out of the planes way and also stay out of the lower the lower level camera footage drones.

[1:43:27 PM]

>> I think the geofencing is, is the, the one guardrail that's out there where there's certain areas that certain drones cannot fly within their, within those particular areas like airports, different stadium and things of that nature. But this is why and it's why it's important to understand that not all of those answers have been determined yet. And that's why the federal government, the state, are really in this pilot in these pilots throughout the country, is to be able to start answering many of those questions that that I'm sure everybody across this country has at this particular time. And how is it all going to be regulated? Because most of it, especially in the air, is not going to be regulated by local government. It's going to be FAA or, and or the states that are going to be involved with that. So that's why I believe it is extremely important for us as a city to utilize our committee structure or develop other means in which we can start to ask those questions to the appropriate people who are conducting these pilot projects right now with F, a, a or txdot so, yeah, it's unfortunate that it can't answer all of those questions at this particular time, but that's what a lot of the pilots are here to do, to look at, to evaluate, to assess what's going what, what can take place, what can't take place, how, what kind of regulation do we need? And that's why we as a city, want to be and need to be involved in these discussions that are going to be happening at the federal and state level, because we can, at the local level. And within this process, you know, they've talked about and Louis talked about Austin, San Antonio, Houston, and and Fort Worth. We all need to be at that table because this is going to have such an impact, a main, main impact in our cities across, across the nation. And so we I'm glad we are a part of this, but we need to continue to be a part of it. And it needs to, to grow to have bigger conversations with bigger groups within our cities.

[1:45:55 PM]

>> Yeah, I appreciate that. I feel like it's probably going to lend itself to a conversation where the state will now find itself feeling like what the city of Austin feels like, where we're always saying we've got new technology. It's fine if you want to be the one to regulate it. We just need some consistency across the state, and now they're going to be in a position to say, you know, what Texas thinks they need out of their airspace might be very different than what other states feel. So I think that conversation is going to be very interesting moving forward. I'll kick it over to council member Laine.

[1:46:23 PM]

>> Thanks. So yeah, you bullet pointed out all the areas that my questions were in, which is great, but I want to zero in on as fast as this technology is moving, as quickly as it sounds like the timeline will be to get to agreements and regulation once. Once we know more. Our land development code is not exactly known for moving at the at light speed at lightning speeds, so I know that'll be a challenge. And I also think while the FAA regulates flight, it's also not quite such a simple division because buildings go quite high and we regulate that airspace through, you know, our height restrictions. And I can really see how the landing where people can land rooftops being an obvious solution for people to be exploring. I just kind of want to raise that issue of air rights. And it's maybe not entirely a land development code at this

point, because we're we're going to need to be able to move quickly. And there is regulatory space for us in there. So that's going to be a challenge for us, it seems.

[1:47:45 PM]

There's no question there unless you just want to comment.

[1:47:49 PM]

>> But I think, councilmember, you're bringing up a point that we've been discussing too, is that this is one of those interesting areas where it's going to go across probably 15 or 20 city departments, right? When you think about the legal implications of those kind of questions, who's who's got the air rights up to what level? We've got to have our airport involved. They're very familiar with FAA regulations. They can kind of navigate through some of that. We've got our public safety folks at the table transportation folks, so it's going to be one of those areas where it's going to take a lot of different kind of lenses to, and perspectives to the challenges that we're facing with this new technology coming around, which again, is an exciting time to be around for this. At this point.

[1:48:26 PM]

>> Can I add on to what they were saying, ma'am? They the FAA is they're trying to build, you know, in other words, a highway highway system in the skies, right? So what what operates in what sections from 0 to 400, what, 500 to 1000ft? And they're trying to, you know, build that out. There's not going to be roads, obviously, but conceptually that's what they're trying to do. And as you all brought up, you know, those different elevations work differently in some cities than others. We have pretty tall buildings here in Austin. And you know, something that 400ft in Austin is a lot different than 400ft in Round Rock. So that's I think that's a big challenge that the FAA is working with and working through. And that's kind of where we come in as well and helped give guidance for this particular city and what works best for us here.

[1:49:14 PM]

>> Great. Thanks. I was the other question that I have is just noise level of these versus, say, helicopters. And its impact, of course, will depend on what flight, what height it's flying at. But I'm just curious. Gross.

[1:49:31 PM]

>> We have an expert that's sitting right over there that actually manufactures these. There's a big difference. So as you heard in that video, it wasn't loud. It was not loud at all. And that's something that I think people will see even with the, the, the small units that, that have been out here at, at palmer convention center for the last few years, I think in a lot of people have taken test flights already. They can attest they've, they've actually gone up in one. They've heard it. And it's not that loud, but I would I never been in one. So but it didn't sound very loud to me. Let's just put it that way.

[1:50:22 PM]

>> Okay. Thanks.

[1:50:26 PM]

>> Any further questions? It does not appear. So let's keep the conversation going. Sounds like there's still a lot to talk about, but certainly want to, you know, appreciate sometimes there's new technology and we have to adapt and figure out what our game plan is going to be to help make sure that the general public is safe. As we see these out out there in the world.

[1:50:46 PM]

>> Thank you for your time today.

[1:50:47 PM]

>> Yeah, thank you so much. And we'll we'll provide general updates as we move forward with our pilot project. And we developed the mou and start looking at this from an emergency response standpoint. And I do want to emphasize, I think it's important that we look at this from a standpoint of how can we do the most good with this technology? And if we can start looking at ways in which we can get to victims of of heart attacks, car crashes, or whatever incident that much quicker, where then we can have our first responders be there, do the initial defibrillation or whatever it may be, we can start to

potentially save lives with the potential technology and have all the tools necessary for our ems. So thank you so much for taking the time, and we will be back with further updates.

[1:51:41 PM]

>> All right. Thank you. Our next item I'll call up will be item number four updates on the east 51st street mobility project, which improves safety for pedestrians, cyclists and drivers on the section of east 51st street from Berkman drive to Cameron road. And I believe we have director Mendoza here. Assistant director martin.

[1:52:01 PM]

>> Yes. Thank you. And now for a more grounded conversation. I'm sorry, I couldn't resist. I'm Richard Mendoza, director for transportation and public works. I'm joined by assistant director of transportation engineering, miss Anna martin. I want to thank the committee for the opportunity to come provide a short update on the east 51st street revitalization project. Okay. Go to slide two. Do I have. Okay. Right here. Okay. All right. So again, I'm here today to provide an update on the east 51st street revitalization project. This project has a long history, but I will cover some of the background, current status and our next steps. The improvements for the east 51st street corridor date back to 2012 as the Mueller redevelopment was underway, the vision plan was developed that called for a coordinated, multi-modal corridor that calms traffic, supports walking and biking, and strengthens connections between Windsor park, Mueller and nearby parks and trails. Okay. Slide three. Oh, is that it? Okay, I can do that. Green one there. Okay. So as I mentioned, this project is a long time coming. The vision plan was completed in 2012. An early review of roundabout concepts that were previously mentioned by public speakers were completed that same year, and voters approved partial construction funding via a 2012 bond. The preliminary engineering was completed in 2015, and that was followed by initiation of design in 2017.

[1:54:05 PM]

And so we admittedly have been through some challenges in that design, and we've had a significant change in floodplain requirements with the atlas 14 floodplain revisions that prompted redesign and led to some of the extension of the timeline and the design phase. We also had some challenges with the design consultant, and we onboarded a new design consultant in late 2024, and now our team is working very hard to deliver this project. Much anticipated project to our community to get to construction in 2027.

[1:54:51 PM]

>> Okay.

[1:54:52 PM]

>> So as this project has a long history, I want to discuss how the current design has evolved to meet the new city of Austin criteria, while still meeting the intent of the 2012 vision plan. The vision plan recommended that the city explore the feasibility of roundabouts. This analysis was completed back in 2012, and roundabouts were not recommended at that time. Therefore, it was not advanced in the current design. The current design does include, however, landscape medians consistent with the vision plan. The vision plan also recommended on street parking bays, which were not ultimately included due to the increase in impervious cover and the aforementioned atlas 14 floodplain requirements. The vision plan recommended TRE lined sidewalks, and this has been included wherever feasible, along the current design. That increase in impervious cover we discovered during the design phase would trigger additional drainage and water quality mitigation that were in excess and beyond. The current project funding and scope. On slide five. On the right side is a screen clip of the proposed protected intersection at east 51st and Berkman east 51st, and Berkman was an intersection that was originally called out to evaluate the potential for a roundabout. And don't get me wrong, I am not against roundabouts. I really like them. The one on 51st street close to I-35. I navigate all the time. They work really well. However, in an already built urban environment, they can be challenging with existing utilities, right of way constraints. And now the new imposed atlas 14 drainage requirements. So you may note on the right side that this is a fully signalized intersection with protected phases for bikes, cyclists, separated bike and pedestrian facilities are within our existing right of way, and there's decreased pedestrian crossing distances due to tighter curb radii and a relocation of the bike path behind the curb. So a little bit more history about the roundabout. And we did hear some additional commentary at the at the recent June open house regarding our final design for the project. And assistant director martin will share that with you momentarily.

[1:57:44 PM]

But I first wanted to explain the traffic analysis for this intersection called for a two Laine roundabout based on the existing and expected travel volumes. So the vision plan called for the city to explore this feasibility. The consultant evaluated and again recommended two Laine. The design would have required right of way acquisition, including parkland impacts. And as we all know, that would trigger chapter 26 mitigation costs and reviews. So we've recently analyzed and we concur with that prior previous assessment. And the protected intersection proposed as a replacement for that roundabout that I showed on the prior slide. So to include the roundabout at this stage, I think I stated already some of the the challenges with that, we would anticipate the following. The right of way impacts would potentially require the acquisition of on at least no less than four parcels. Potential impacts to existing

access for some of those businesses, potential impacts to parkland and an acquisition. If we had to go to condemnation of a minimum of two additional years. Also, there's Austin energy distribution line relocations that would be triggered. And of course, the aforementioned increase in impervious cover, which would trigger major drainage improvement requirements and mitigation of water quality. We did hear, as I stated during the summer, some feedback regarding our current 100% design. I'm going to ask assistant director martin to share the content of what we heard.

[1:59:37 PM]

>> Thanks, Richard. We were. We held a public open house at the Austin energy facility back in June. Had about, I don't know, 60 to 70 attendees got some really detailed feedback. You could tell the folks that came that day are really invested. Neighbors traveled through their lot and had some nuanced feedback for us. We heard a lot about the request for to relook at roundabouts. I think Richard director Mendoza has covered that in his talking points. We also got some very detailed feedback about the proposed bike ped paths as proposed at 51st and Berkman. Our previous 90% plan had some, maybe some non-ideal bike paths through the intersection, and looking at that feedback, we'd be able to straighten those out and really focus in on visibility of pedestrians and cyclists as they're waiting at that traffic signal. We also heard feedback about desires for additional traffic signal at Lancaster. As part of this project, we're going to be installing all the underground conduit so that when the development comes in at that corner, that signal can be installed efficiently. We also got some comments about the desire for a ph be pedestrian hybrid beacon at tilly. So tilly is just outside our project boundaries, but a really important connection for the kids that go to school in Mueller. While not part of this project, we were able to identify additional funding. So we're going to be advancing that pedestrian crossing separately. And that's a good summary. Thank you.

[2:01:20 PM]

>> Martin. So finally, our schedule, our current design schedule has us on track to make our final resubmittal for permitting. In early 2027. We would advertise for bid early next year after receiving that construction permit, and I expect construction would begin in late 2027. After going through the bidding letting phase and construction would take about two years. Again, I just want to close and I do appreciate the community feedback on the project. Also included on this sign is the impacts and delay. If we were to have to

[2:02:00 PM]

>> To revisit the design for some of those intersections as stated. So with that, that's our presentation. We're open for any questions you might have.

[2:02:09 PM]

>> All right. Questions from the committee members. Let's start with vice chair qadri or.

[2:02:14 PM]

>> Whoever you me to start.

[2:02:16 PM]

>> Go for it.

[2:02:17 PM]

>> Thank you for the presentation. Again, this is a project I've been following for a long, long time. Let me start with a very kind of practical question. 2000. This is a 2012 bond funded project. How much money? There's a lot of older bond funded projects that are scraping for dollars to actually achieve what the original bond intended to achieve. How much wiggle room do we have in terms of financial wiggle room left for the the in terms of the bond money?

[2:02:55 PM]

>> Council member that's a very fair question. This project did sit idle for a number of years when I assumed my present position and transportation. Seeking additional construction funding. It was only partially funded in 2012. As a design progressed and cost escalations incurred, especially post pandemic, we actually had a funding gap that we were searching the cushions, for lack of a better term, to find. So there's really no it's really a tight budget at this point.

[2:03:32 PM]

>> Well, and I appreciate that. And my and I'm, I'm an optimist. I, I, I, you know, want to always kind of emphasize the positive. But let me kind of change gears here a little bit and start with my fears. One is that redesign, you know, additional changes are going to raise the cost. And then we don't ultimately have a funded project to move forward. In other words, I'd rather have take half a loaf than a full loaf. And you know, I'll take it every single time. But right now it's not a good street in, in terms of the, the there's a lot of high speeds. The pedestrian experience is not very good. The, you know, bicycle, there are bicycle paths, but they're not protected. And they're, they're, you know, a lot of people would not feel comfortable riding on them. And then, you know, my other fear and again, thinking about the, the going from four lanes down to the two Lane with the turning Lane. No. And actually, I thought Mr. Tucker Ferguson, here it txdot is about to redo the way I-35 access road kind of feeds into this entire part of town. And my concern and I'll. This is the concern that has been conveyed to me from a lot of people, particularly in winter park, is that they don't want traffic. They want traffic staying on 51st and not cutting through east west traffic, cutting through the the Windsor park so that I have to put that out there also as as I want to be very cautious about the redesign, given future major changes that are going to be coming down the road. With that. And again, I appreciate staff has been very aggressive on the road diets. Cameron, I think that was a great project. We're we're getting near the end of.

[2:05:35 PM]

Cameron and again, that I think is just a tremendous project. We have not seen additional traffic delays. I think about Barton springs. I think about north loop. Multiple streets in district four that I can think of where we've been able to do that road diet, and it's been tremendously successful given staff's history and being aggressive in terms of going after these projects and committing to those road diets, it gives me pause that y'all don't want to do the the, you know, go from four to to two lanes in a turning Lane here. What is the thinking there in terms of, you know, how busy does the street have to be? The traffic counts where we're going to say like, this is not appropriate for a two Lane.

[2:06:17 PM]

>> Council member. I'm going to ask assistant director martin to address the the traffic modeling. But before that, I do want to speak to your half loaf versus full loaf analogy. Our staff feels very confident that this design will affect the desired improvements in terms of multimodal safety for our community. Would a roundabout be nice? Yes, it would have been very nice. However, it's not. That's not the only. You know, way to affect these much needed safety improvements. And we do when we do evaluate roadways, we do the requisite traffic modeling. And to ensure we maintain a balance across all modes of transportation to include vehicular modes. But with that, Anna, if you.

[2:07:11 PM]

>> Want, and a real quick comment on the roundabout at 51st and Berkman in particular, I'm also a fan of that. We've got the parkfield and Rutland roundabout that just went out. No, it's on this coming agenda, right? Yeah. And again, I think that's going to be a solid design. I will say from my personal experience and from what bicyclists in particular have communicated to me about the 51st and I-35 roundabout, a little tricky. I think it works for vehicles very well, a little tricky for I think, bicyclists in particular. That also gives me pause about a 51st at Berkman, because that's a very busy intersection with a lot of traffic flowing in a lot of different directions. And again, I think about the pedestrian experience. I'm not sure how that plays. If we were to go to a roundabout there, but sorry.

[2:07:56 PM]

>> I'll speak quickly to the Laine conversion question. It's come up a lot. We are a city of Austin is a leader in repurposing lanes for to serve all modes and to do so safely. We are also incredibly careful because we know that one project that doesn't work and has impacts on the community will might be our last for a while. So this one really gave us pause. A lot to do with what's happening in I-35. And we've seen a history of traffic volumes in that area approaching 30,000 to 35,000, which is very high. You probably know that east of Berkman, traffic volumes significantly die down, and we have successfully converted that to a two Laine section. So we we have very smart traffic engineers. We're very careful about where we use that tool. And we feel like we can meet our city goals with the plan we have for 51st street. It safely accommodates all modes.

[2:08:50 PM]

>> And do you have a sense of what's that maximum number of traffic volume where you feel comfortable going from a four to, you know, two Laine plus a turning Laine? And where are you uncomfortable?

[2:09:00 PM]

>> Yeah. I don't want to necessarily state a maximum number. It really depends on the number of intersections you have in the middle, the number of traffic signals, what the turning movements look like. If I had to give a range, I would say in the 20 to 25,000 range is the highest that we've done historically.

[2:09:17 PM]

>> And I appreciate that. And the other thing that that I think about and the kind of concerns me, is that we have a, a huge block that is right now empty on 51st and Cameron between 51st and 52nd and Cameron and Lancaster. And that's probably going to have, I mean, hopefully like 1500 units, you know, eventually there will be a large mixed use project there with a grocery store. So again, as we kind of think about traffic volumes, I know that that's going to change at that corner there of of 51st and Cameron quite a bit. I again appreciate all of the, the, the, the work that has gone into it. I would say, again, given I know a lot of folks are very much pushing for that, that, you know, two Laine, the four Laine to two Laine conversion. It would be helpful. Again, I there is some urgency. Obviously, we want to move forward on the project, but it would it would be great to kind of just really understand that. And again, I don't want to unnecessarily delay anything by any means, but perhaps a memo, you know, something like that that could discuss maybe some of those themes for, for both for council and for the general public. And I'll leave it there. Thank you.

[2:10:34 PM]

>> Thank you.

[2:10:35 PM]

>> Vice chair zo qadri.

[2:10:38 PM]

>> Want to thank you all for the presentation. I also want to thank all the designers who came out in this weather. I don't know if it's still raining. I don't have my glasses, but it's raining a lot the next few days. So thank you all for coming on out. You know, I've been hearing about this both as a both as a council member, but also a resident near the area living in the Miller neighborhood. So very much want to get as many answers as possible and get clarity from the community. But one of the goals stated in the presentation was parallel parking options on the street. And I know our goals are always to have safer streets and calmer traffic. So my first question is, can you tell us more about the expectations of the crash reductions, speed reductions, etc. Expected as a result of the street design? And could you tell us more about the metrics that we should expect?

[2:11:30 PM]

>> For this particular design? Kahn council member, I can only share that our experience on similar intersection safety improvements, of which this project will provide us with our vision zero program. We've we've done quite a few intersection improvement projects around the city and at those intersections with similar type treatments, we're seeing between 30 and 37% reduction in fatalities and serious injuries. And we do track our vision zero metrics on a monthly basis. And we're continuing to see improvement in those. On the decline that I feel it's a product not just of the infrastructure improvements we're making, but also in just the attitudes of our public, the education that we're doing, the campaigning to be more aware of vulnerable uses of our right of way. So I would not expect anything different results from this improvement project.

[2:12:41 PM]

>> Great. And then what was was it convertible outside Laine explored as part of non-peak operations to have parallel parking on the street and reduce speeding?

[2:12:51 PM]

>> Yeah.

[2:12:53 PM]

>> It has not been explored to date. That something we could certainly keep in mind in the future. I'd say right now there's not necessarily the front facing retail that really drives that on street parking demand. But if that changes in the future, that's something that could be looked at.

[2:13:10 PM]

>> Okay, great. Thank you. And then the community has concerns about the need for two lanes in each direction. I think we've heard that, you know, today, and I've heard that throughout. According to safe streets, the last recorded average daily traffic count, which is from 2015 on Barton springs road, before that street was converted from 4 to 2 lanes, was just over 24,000. The 2025 annual traffic on 51st street was just under 25,000. So if we. So if we could go from 4 to 2 lanes in Barton springs road, why not on 51st street?

[2:13:46 PM]

>> Yeah, that's a that's a fair question. I don't have all the detailed traffic analysis in front of me, but I'll say it's not a one size fits all. A 42 conversion is not a one size fits all approach. It really depends on the turning movements on and off the street, how many intersections there are, how much right of way you have, and if that. The Barton springs pilot was in response to a terrible crash. Right. And we didn't have another way to calm the street. We didn't have another way to provide protected bike lanes for a really high use area. This project is different. This is a long term cip project that is consistent with the a smp. This is a level three street. We're able to provide protected bike lanes and pedestrian paths on both sides of the street. Access management, all the elements that we want to see in an ideal corridor. So I would say it's not a one size fits all approach, but this will be a vast improvement for 51st street.

[2:14:42 PM]

>> Great. And then one question. It's more out of curiosity. It's not a it's not a technical question. It's not a policy question. But could you speak on why this has taken so long? And I I've done some digging on my own. I've requested some information. And it seems like there's, there's been, you know, poor consultant performance. It seems like there's been mismanagement of the, of the project to a degree by former supervisors who are no longer with the city of Austin, who have been fired. Could you elaborate why, what the mess is?

[2:15:20 PM]

>> Okay, council member, I'll take that. And I've been I was originally hired in Austin as the public works director in 2017. At that time I was over the capital delivery division, which had the project manager over this project. You know, this project is is not unlike some of the other corridor projects we've had challenges with, namely, and we've taken lessons learned, namely, we funded it only partially for construction without a morally fully baked preliminary engineering report to understand what we're going to be, all the constraints that we were going to encounter once we moved into final design and construction. You know, this was an already very busy roadway. If we had to look back, we likely would have not funded the construction at some point and set expectations until we had a clear picture of what all of the obstacles we were going to encounter for this much needed improvement project, namely in right of way drainage, utilities in, you know, in retrospect, could we have done better? Of course, we commit to doing better going forward.

[2:16:48 PM]

When I did switch roles into the transportation director, the project was dormant and seeking additional funding. I was able to locate some capital fund accounts that were that were not encumbered. I applied them to this miss martin. Her team has have taken that baton and and move forward with with haste on the project.

[2:17:18 PM]

>> Great. Thank you.

[2:17:21 PM]

>> Got a question about street trees. Some folks have been talking about just some of the conflicts with utilities and other things that exist in the right of way. Can you talk us through what the expectations are, what the plan is to, in theory, have a corridor that looks the same on both sides that would be welcoming.

[2:17:43 PM]

>> Yeah. Great question. We received that comment a lot from the community. Our plan today includes a lot of new street trees on the south side of 51st street, as well as in the median on the north side, there's existing Austin energy lines, as well as some underground utilities that make it challenging to have the same amount of trees on the north as we see on the south. So we're planting what we call utility compatible trees wherever we're able to on the north side as well.

[2:18:11 PM]

>> Okay. Any idea roughly, is it like a twice as many on the south and as on the north end?

[2:18:19 PM]

>> I could not say. I'm happy to follow up. Okay.

[2:18:22 PM]

>> Yeah. Additionally, councilmember, you're aware of the green infrastructure initiative. We've been working very closely with our utility partners to gain allowances, if you will, clearance allowances to affect more public street trees. And they've been very cooperative. And we look forward to continuing that partnership going forward.

[2:18:45 PM]

>> I appreciate that hearing. That is the infrastructure right now. Are the energy lines above ground or are they buried? They're above ground.

[2:18:52 PM]

>> Yes, they're above ground.

[2:18:54 PM]

>> And they're buried on the other side. Are they all above ground?

[2:18:58 PM]

>> Yeah. We also have below ground utilities on the north side as well. So squeezing trees in between the above ground and below ground was very challenging. If our requirements are separation requirements change in the future, it's something we could revisit.

[2:19:12 PM]

>> Okay, I know we've had a whole lot of conversations in different parts of town, just what it looks like to be able to do street trees and permitting and not interfere with utilities as the roots grow, or having to have more TRE trimming for vegetative reasons with Austin energy lines. So I appreciate that. Did you

have other questions? All right. We will in a couple minutes, need to move to the other item, but I want to make sure that we're getting all our questions heard. So how about councilmember Laine and then mayor pro tem vela will close us out.

[2:19:41 PM]

>> Okay, great. Thank you. So there are some pretty significant cost drivers that, you know, that have increased significantly. And we have heard from even hear the community talking about how much are we moving the needle through this project versus some of the other projects. Which leads me to ask, I mean, from 2012 to now, plus add on watershed and drainage and all of this, it leads me to ask, if we weren't trying to search under the couch cushions and find the money and, and deliver something which I very much appreciate the efforts to do that. But if we weren't trying to do that, what would be like the next thing that would get added back that is a community priority or the next couple of things.

[2:20:31 PM]

>> Can you do you mean additions to this project or other city priorities?

[2:20:36 PM]

>> So yes, I can clarify. Absolutely. So we've kept this project where we can afford it. Right. And we're making significant improvements in a way that's affordable. We're not acquiring right of way. We're not. I mean, there have been a lot of different we're not doing various things, but we've also heard from our community that they're not as happy with how far, how much of an improvement we're making. And so I'm wondering, like, how much did the need to cost keep costs down, impact the solution where there are other things that we might be seeing if there were more funds available?

[2:21:11 PM]

>> Yeah, I think I understand your question now. We're we are proposing a project that is fully compliant with the transportation criteria manual, a project that I'm really excited, excited about and proud of. That really is a model for other corridors. So I don't think anything has been cut from the scope that is necessary to advance our goals on this corridor.

[2:21:33 PM]

>> Okay, great. And then one more follow up on the on the street trees. I know that is a more new initiative. And is there, is there perhaps any space where variances could help accomplish a little bit more of what the community is looking for?

[2:21:48 PM]

>> I can go back to the team with that. I think we've been really aggressive in getting a TRE everywhere we can, and we're we continue to push the needle there and we'll talk again to the team.

[2:21:58 PM]

>> Thank you.

[2:22:01 PM]

>> Mayor pro tem for.

[2:22:02 PM]

>> The quick comment. I'm sorry, assistant city manager Richards, I know you joined us.

[2:22:06 PM]

>> And yeah, thank you so much. And thank you for allowing me the opportunity to just jump in. And there's been a couple of of questions related to bond projects and being that, you know, this was a 12 project and we all know there's still 16 projects that are out there. I do want it. And I wanted to jump in because we, we have to acknowledge and we do as city staff that there were mistakes that were done at that particular time. But I think it's important to understand that we have assessed and reassessed and looked at all of those issues that we've had in the past, and I do truly believe with the creation of capital delivery services through the work that has been done to look at projects in the initial phase. Now

understanding the true cost and, and working with our, our bond advisory committee, we have addressed many of those issues that we had. And that's why you are now seeing a lot of these projects that have been stalled for a long time actually coming to fruition. And many of these projects that we've gotten back on schedule are coming in on time and on budget. So I do want to acknowledge that there were there were issues then, and we have really taken a lot of time and effort and heard our community to try to address those issues, to get these projects delivered as quickly as possible now. So I just wanted to say that.

[2:23:52 PM]

>> Thank you. Assistant city manager Rogers. I, I, I agree with that. I, when I came in in 22, there were a bunch of things stalled. I don't want to say all of them. I can't, you know, but virtually all of them that I can think of when I think of in my head of the the stalled transportation projects from a district four perspective are either being executed or about to be executed. And again, I appreciate that very much. A couple of quick that entire block, again, between Lancaster and Cameron. I know that there's utilities underneath the sidewalk under the street right there. And. But there are. And we'll let them get to site plan and all that kind of stuff. But there's an opportunity to plant trees on private property there, too, that that would effectively grow up and over the, the bike lane. And so I just wanted to put that out there as, as that property starts to, to get ready to go through the development process, I think there's some, some possibilities there. Finally, last question, I the golf carts was was mentioned and I've seen them not necessarily in, in my district so much, but I've seen them a lot just south of 51st there in the in the Mueller neighborhood legal. You know what, what are the role of, of, of golf carts there? You know, what's going on with the golf cart situation. Sorry. I know that's a little out of left field.

[2:25:19 PM]

>> But I don't think we have a pd here. But I know from my work there is a threshold by which those vehicles need to be licensed and registered within the state of Texas. So we can probably find that answer offline.

[2:25:32 PM]

>> Great answer, chair. Thank you.

[2:25:36 PM]

>> All right. If there are no other questions, let's move on to item number five. Updates on the equitable, equitable transit oriented development implementation or etod. And thank you for not printing the entire posting language on your first slide, because it would have been really tiny font.

[2:26:03 PM]

>> Good afternoon, chair and committee members. And yes, it's quite a mouthful. Equitable transit oriented development or etod. We sometimes run into character limits, which is why we have a handy acronym. My name is Warner Cook. I'm a principal planner with Austin planning, and I lead our system wide etod work program. We coordinate with folks in departments and agencies across the community to reach the etod goals. So I am by no means the only person that works on this. Just here to give you an overview today. Oak. Great. I'm happy to highlight some of what we've accomplished so far, as well as show you what's underway currently and what's coming next. So for folks that may be newer to our community, I wanted to go through what etod is. It builds upon traditional transit oriented development which focuses on placing jobs, housing and opportunities within walking and biking, distance of transit. The primary objective of etod, however, is to go beyond that so that members of our community who could most benefit from these new transit investments, are able to remain in their communities and take full advantage of that new opportunity afforded to them.

[2:27:28 PM]

We're looking beyond just simple displacement prevention, which itself is already a difficult thing to achieve, but really trying to create those additional opportunities and bring new people or people who may have moved out of the neighborhood back so that they can enjoy our project connect investment. Multiple partners at the city of Austin and capmetro, our transit authority, as well as Austin transit partnership, the light rail implementer, our working all aligned and making decisions towards reaching this goal. Our shared framework is documented in the policy plan that council accepted in March of 2023. So I'm here today, a little bit over three years later, to kind of share what significant progress we've already made towards these goals. It's kind of very silly to put all of these things, each their own massive effort on one slide.

[2:28:32 PM]

Since 2023, we've eliminated parking minimums and we're still the largest community to date to have done so citywide in the United States. We've updated our land development code in multiple areas to increase housing options and increase density and affordability near our transit corridors. We've also done parking reform downtown, created multiple station area vision plans near our capmetro transit centers. And on the programmatic side, we've also worked to implement our \$300 million of anti-

displacement funding that was approved by the voters with project connect through projects like community initiated solutions, as well as land acquisitions and development assistance that our housing department manages, our public health and economic development staff have been hard at work to increase small business opportunities through things like the play space enhancement program and support our workers with tools like the infrastructure academy, as well as childcare grants. So that's three years in less than three minutes. Even with all of this success, we know there's much more work to do to reach our etod goals. And we're continuing with the momentum. A number of impactful projects are already underway or coming in the future across many partner agencies and departments. So the memo that we published in July goes into much greater detail on all of the things underway and in progress. So I'm just going to focus today on what Austin planning is leading or coordinating on. But again, this is only a snapshot. At our biggest scale. From a planning perspective, we have our comprehensive plan. Imagine Austin, it's currently undergoing an update. One of the focuses there is to understand what our future growth should look like around transit, and to integrate the stationary content Kahn into a new place types map. I wanted to highlight that we have a series of open houses coming up at the end of this month for in-person and a virtual one.

[2:30:47 PM]

We're. Our community can learn more about these kind of future land use and place type options that we're thinking about right now. We're considering council adoption in early 2028, and we've kicked off the community working group as well as technical advisory group. We also just earlier today published a memo on the transfer of development rights program. This is a study that a historic preservation office has been leading transfer of development rights, or tdr, our market based tool where you basically can sell the air rights to a property next door, kind of the opposite of some of the E V Toles stuff we were talking about earlier. This would remain for historic properties to kind of keep their scale while still offering an incentive for that property owner to want to preserve the building because they would have new access to rehabilitation funding, as well as potential tax abatements and other tools. This tool is still in study. It's part of a comprehensive historic incentive package update that we're working on, and we'll be developing that in 2027.

[2:32:02 PM]

Earlier this year, our teams published a mixed use and missing middle zoning study report, and shortly after, council initiated code amendments to create these new transit supportive base Zones. They complement other recent regulatory reforms, such as home and site plan light, as well as single stair reform. And these new Zones would allow for more opportunities for folks to live in more types of housing near transit. So right now, we're anticipating those first set of proposed mixed use Zones would be for council consideration in early 2027. Potentially most of relevant right now to the mobility committee is several parking studies that are underway. Council asked staff to look at two different

parking topics to consider back in March. And so Austin planning is leading one of those studies where we're looking at soft parking maximums, basically an amount of limited off street parking.

[2:33:08 PM]

Right now, folks can build as much as fits on their site and meets their impervious cover requirements. Et-cetera. So this would be a potential look at soft caps outside of downtown. That's the only place that they currently exist. There would still be exceptions for projects to exceed those parking maximums with specific criteria, so that's why we don't call them a hard cap. We're also working really closely with staff in Austin, transportation and public works who are studying and leading on parking unbundling consideration. They're working with the local urban land institute to host a technical advisory panel here coming up at the end of this month as well. And unbundling is a practice of requiring that leased leases are separated from the cost of parking so that tenants have the choice of whether they would like to purchase parking or not. We're expecting those to be completed in December of this year. At this point, they would just be recommendations and we would be doing additional outreach with the community if we decided to move forward with either either soft parking caps or unbundling in larger areas. We're also working on station area and district planning. Our northeast district plan has just kind of finished soliciting members for the community advisory committee, and those applications are going to be considered by the working group. This is in partnership with Travis county and covers jurisdiction for both entities. There are multiple green line stations as well as rapid bus stations, including the expo line. That is already a project connect project that has been implemented by capmetro, and this community advisory committee will kick off by the end of the year to really shape the vision for the northeast district. We're also working on the east Riverside corridor planning initiative along east Riverside corridor. This area has both a vision plan and a regulating plan, but those were created prior to our current phase one light rail project.

[2:35:24 PM]

Going through its design process, we've already hosted two successful rounds of community engagement, the last one at the end of August. We've been partnering on that as well with Austin financial services on the grove Riverside site redevelopment, the former Tokyo electron site that the city purchased. We will have another round of engagement on east Riverside later this fall, and we're anticipating council adoption consideration in spring of next year. And then last one, but it's really. Three, we're working on the central city district plan, which is a district plan for the downtown area, the south central waterfront area, and the university area near the university of Texas. This will be setting the vision for the short and medium term, kind of the next ten years of growth in this urban core. The team just hosted a successful series of open houses in mid September for the central city planning effort, and we're currently updating two of the major implementation tools in our urban core. One of them is the downtown density bonus program, which allows additional height downtown in exchange for affordable housing and other urban design and community benefits. And then the last one is the

great streets plan, update and standards work that our urban design team is working on, which will ultimately feed into a transportation criteria manual update. And all of these projects are ongoing as well.

[2:37:02 PM]

As you saw, that's a lot of stuff that's going on in the next one and a half years or so. So the question is maybe what comes next? Staff would be launching new station area or district plans in additional transit corridors. We have a prioritization framework in the policy plan that helps us, you know, look at which areas may be next. We have already been directed by council to update the existing three TOD plans that are along our existing red line, and we will also continue working on coordinating and providing updates on the various policy tools in the toolkit. So like I said, I appreciate it. Many folks in this room have contributed to this work, and with that, I'm happy to answer any questions.

[2:37:52 PM]

>> All right. Do we have questions from the committee members? Let's go with Krista Laine. You want to go last?

[2:37:59 PM]

>> I'll make a quick.

[2:38:00 PM]

>> Okay. Mayor pro tem, you kick it off.

[2:38:03 PM]

>> I appreciate the update. Love to see the mention of single stair in there. That always warms my heart. I'm so excited to see the first ever single stair building in Austin, but we'll get there hopefully sooner than later. And I also just wanted to give a shout out. We've got a lot of transportation royalty in the audience today. Rudy Metayer is here. The chairman of the capital area, MPO, along with Tucker

Ferguson and Heather from txdot, is. So everybody comes and watches the Austin transportation committee.

[2:38:33 PM]

>> And they're all dying to get on the microphone. I can tell. I'm just kidding, I'm just kidding. Let's go with council member Laine.

[2:38:43 PM]

>> Thank you. So first of all, thank you for this. Great. No pressure having council member metayer in the audience at all. Okay. Thank you, first of all for this great overview. Super helpful. I just have a couple questions. So last year our office met with capmetro to discuss improved coordination with private landowners, builders, developers, and such that can support transit facilities specifically at these red line stations that are existing. I'm just wondering to what extent the city has already been involved with this effort or is becoming involved now?

[2:39:20 PM]

>> Yeah, our partners at capmetro have been working on a project that they call their transit development guidelines. Up to this point, they've really worked on kind of a one off basis with various developers who are interested in integrating transit infrastructure, like bike share or additional kind of bus bays and things into their project, but they didn't have a standard set of knowing what they needed to ask for necessarily. So they've worked a lot internally to figure out what kind of dimensions that they're looking for, what the costs of that kind of tend to be. And then on the city side, we've been helping them understand where that's possible to fit into our development review process or bonus programs to try to see where we can find alignment there.

[2:40:02 PM]

>> That's great. Thank you. I also want to thank you as it relates to the community engagement. So happy to see deer park middle school in Williamson county where it can be tough to access that transit. So really appreciate the ability of those community members to engage. And as you work through some of those considerations, one thing that has struck me in the eaten work, and you've probably heard me say it before, perhaps, but, you know, there's we, we prioritize areas that have a high displacement risk,

but inadvertently, that driver prioritizes transit opportunities that have a lot of vacant land because there's zero displacement risk. And so I wonder if you're looking into how, what your thoughts are on that and the extent to which that type of consideration might be considered in this typology update that you're working on.

[2:41:00 PM]

>> Yeah, definitely. We I'd have to go back and look at the exact prioritization method, but one of the things we did consider is the amount of vacant or underutilized land, the likelihood that land would be redeveloping and kind of what that acreage was in various areas. We also looked at the amount of publicly owned land, even if it wasn't the city of Austin's land, but one of our school districts or county, the state, just trying to understand because a lot of that can be repositioned into transit, supportive, mixed use neighborhoods. So that's definitely something that we looked at in the initial typologies and prioritization. But our intent is to update that roughly every five years or so, because obviously land is redeveloping or not. All around us, things are aging and looking to to redevelop as well.

[2:41:49 PM]

>> People are moving. It's hard to keep up with population shifts. Yeah. So I, I also think this is a great moment for that, Justin, just for the opportunity to work with more stakeholders and through the work that our economic development team has been doing as well. In addition, want to acknowledge acm Rogers's comments on the reforms to the way that projects are being delivered. All of that together is a great opportunity. And so I love to see that all happening. Along with this update, I feel like I might have one more question. Oh yes, this is a good one. And then I'll stop. Okay. Do you? Sorry, I am a little bit nerding out over here by myself. You guys might need to bring me closer to you next time. Okay, so I'm wondering. I know it's hard. This is the former appraiser of me. Okay. Do you anticipate itod station areas may allow some of the highest intensity zoning so that no future up zoning near transit, you know, will be necessary or may end up being inconsistent with the comprehensive plan. Like, how do those pieces of the puzzle fit together?

[2:42:57 PM]

>> Yeah. So our comprehensive plan doesn't directly impact specific zoning decisions, but it provides kind of the framework for which Zones might be appropriate in different areas. And that's really what the place types map will start to form up in the next year or so, as I imagine Austin continues updating as far as from a station area kind of specific perspective, what we've been expecting is after a vision plan might be adopted, like the north Lamar transit center or south congress transit center plans and additional next step that the city could undertake is to initiate rezoning into supportive base Zones. You

know, so that one thing that we have been holding for is those new mixed use and missing middle base Zones. However, we would- really like those to be options in our toolbox before we go out and try to talk to the community about what rezoning may be appropriate near their station area, but we wouldn't want the rezoning to get ahead of some of the focused geographic work with the community.

[2:43:58 PM]

>> That makes sense is important. I'm just going to throw one more little tidbit out there, which is, you know, when the red line stops initially opened, a lot of pods came into existence around them. And, you know, there's an opportunity to work in collaboration in a, in a new way to restructure some of the pods and the preliminary zoning that was put into place so that it reflects all these lessons learned. And I guess I just look forward to working on that. I guess with you, I know your plate is pretty full, but thank you.

[2:44:34 PM]

>> Perfect. Well, that's a great segue. I'm thinking about the timelines that you presented, particularly around the mixed use districts, and hoping we can get those back earlier. So maybe we can just chat offline because I know that as we've talked about some of the land use planning in, in the other committee, looking at some sort of Gantt chart of like, what is your team tasked with and what is a realistic expectation for getting these done? But I've, I've had folks that, you know, work in land use on the outside saying, how can they be helpful in getting this particular initiative wrapped up before the end of the year? So I'd love if you have thoughts now you can share them or we can connect.

[2:45:12 PM]

>> I believe the housing and planning committee meeting is coming up maybe next week even, and the Gantt chart has been updated. So all, all of those things we're working on, but we're also working on things like data centers. And, you know, there's other things on kind of Austin plannings plates. So we're working with our commissioners and kind of council scheduling looking at next year and the rest of this year to. See how that timing could work out.

[2:45:35 PM]

>> Perfect. And then I was just reminded about we were trying to build some sort of improved development around Ryan drive, which is on the red line. And so just trying to understand, is that one still in the mix or do we need to start from square one? I'm failing on the details of why that one didn't work out, but I think it just, you know, either didn't get through the bid phase or didn't get through assigned, you know, plan moving forward with a partner or.

[2:45:58 PM]

>> Austin housing finance corporation has a development partner on board. They've been going through the site plan process, I think currently. So there is a development on the way. I've seen some preliminary discussions and they're working with the public projects team and development services on that.

[2:46:12 PM]

>> Perfect way to stay on it. Mayor pro tem vela, do you have one more thought?

[2:46:16 PM]

>> Just I appreciate the comment about the new mu and rolling that into the mix. Before we go to the public and asking, I think that it's an interesting new zoning. I think there's a lot of opportunity there anyway, I just I think that's a great suggestion.

[2:46:33 PM]

>> Sounds good. If there's no other questions on this item, we will move to item number six, which I colloquially referred to as the director's report.

[2:46:51 PM]

>> Thank you, committee members. Number six. All right. So the October 2026 city of Austin mobility director's report includes the highlights. First is to announce the launch of Katy go. And there's some activity going on in the foyer here in about, oh, I don't know, 15 minutes. We're going to formally announce the much anticipated launch of the go app. And just real quickly, the Katy go app is a

collaborative effort from multiple agencies across our Austin region to share construction project information, and so that we can collect that in one convenient place for our traveling public to access and then appropriately plan their commute for that day or in the next week or so on, and even plan alternative modes, most importantly, of travel to mitigate the impacts of what we all know is an upcoming construction armageddon for our region. We've got the I-35 construction project, we've got project connect, atp rail line, got the convention center expansion C tia M a has construction projects in the planning phases. And so we're very excited. This has been a long term effort for us to collaborate together multi-agency. So looking forward to that. Also included in the report, as acm Rogers alluded to, you're seeing a lot of activity in prior bond mobility funded projects come to completion. We're excited to announce three ribbon cuttings on active mobility projects last month, the first being Burrell drive, also Mcneal drive, and then finally the shoal creek trail. And there's going to be more to come between here and next year.

[2:48:55 PM]

Additionally, we're announcing applications for the living streets program. This is the program that this committee was very supportive of, and we're able to implement across our community to make some of our local residential, low volume streets more accessible safely for the community to connect and enjoy for purposes other than just driving, driving on. And then in closing, our Austin airport continues to be bustling. We experienced two record breaking months in terms of boardings and boardings in the months of this past June and July, over 2.1 million in each one of those months. So that's amazing. They're able to do this while still maintaining high levels of customer satisfaction ratings, and also mitigating the ongoing expansion construction for Austin airport. Additionally, they're planning in early November, two open house events for information airline lounge for southwest airlines. So our airports definitely climbing up there and competing with the big boys in the industry. So that completes my report.

[2:50:04 PM]

>> All right. Any comments or questions on this one? Mayor pro tem.

[2:50:08 PM]

>> I saw the girl drive bike Laine. I gotta I gotta give you all a pat on the back. That project came out really well. Burl drive runs right by Wooton park and Wooten elementary. Wooten elementary has doubled its student capacity. It's now fully dual language. And Riley elementary, I think, moved over to a Wooten. So it's just a great time. I think the with that photo was great. And I mean, we had, what, you know, 100 people out there at the.

[2:50:38 PM]

>> It was well attended. Yeah.

[2:50:40 PM]

>> Very well attended. We did a little bike ride around Wooten neighborhood. It was just a wonderful event. I just wanted to thank yourself and all of your staff that did a great job on that project.

[2:50:50 PM]

>> Thank you councilman.

[2:50:52 PM]

>> All right. Any further questions?

[2:50:55 PM]

>> Thank you for the Mcneil drive. A lot of positive input on that. And I know that was underway before I came around, but very excited about it. Thank you.

[2:51:07 PM]

>> Lots of good information. I think that's why we love having the report is we know there's things that don't get air time at the committee that staff is working on so hard every single day. So we really appreciate all the advancements that are taking place in our community. And that takes us to we have an item seven briefing by memo for the third quarter financial report. Are there any questions or comments on this one? I have a few, but I'll I'll ask them offline so we can get a little more detail about them. And then there's a list of previously distributed memos to mayor and council. If anyone had any other questions on those. Otherwise, item eight is identify items to be discussed at future meetings. We

already have 2 or 3 items for November and 1 or 2 for December, and then a list of about 15 more. So if you have others that you want to put in the hopper, feel free to reach out to me or my team, and we'll try to get those scheduled over the next couple of weeks. All right, on that note, we will adjourn at 2:52 P.M.