

# City Council Work Session Transcript – 10/20/2026

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[9:00:53 AM]

>> Now I will call the order of the Austin city council for this work session. It's 9:01 A.M. On October 20th, 2026. We have a quorum of the city council president. We're meeting in the city council chambers located at city hall at 301 west second street in Austin, Texas. Members. We have two items on the agenda. Both are briefings and we will take them up in the order they appear on the agenda. But before we begin, we have one person that has signed up to speak, and I'll turn to the city clerk's office and ask that they call the name of this person.

[9:01:57 AM]

>> Thank you. Thank you. Mayor. We have one speaker on item B, one. Camille Haygood, are you here?

[9:02:08 AM]

>> Camille Haygood, Camille Haygood. All right. Doesn't look like they're here today. So what we will do is we will go to our first item, which is a briefing on the community wildfire protection plan, and I'll recognize the city manager.

[9:02:23 AM]

>> Thank you, mayor, and good evening, mayor and council members. Today we are presenting the updated 2026 Austin Travis county community wildfire protection plan, developed through the collaboration among the city of Austin, Travis county, the wildfire coalition, and regional partners. The plan provides updated wildfire risk assessments and 71 recommendations to strengthen wildfire preparedness, mitigation response, and community resilience. It serves as a non-regulatory framework to guide future coordination, prioritize, prioritize risk reduction, and support implementation across our region. Thank you for the opportunity for staff to present this important work this morning. I'll turn it over to Jim Reddick, director of emergency management, and Chris graves, wildfire mitigation manager and chief vocke. As necessary. Jim.

[9:03:18 AM]

>> Thank you, Mr. Manager. Mr. Mayor, mayor pro tem, members of council. It's my honor to serve as the director of Austin emergency management, and it's an honor to be here before you today to talk about the community wildfire protection plan. As you'll recall, last month, I believe it was the ninth. You all had adopted the revision to our all hazards mitigation plan. The plan is intended to identify the threats and hazards which face our community. And in doing so, with community input to develop recommendations to minimize or eliminate the threats as best we can. There are no requirements, only recommendations. And the cw Erp is very much, very much the same. Of course, rather than being all hazard, it focuses on the high probability, high impact threat of wildfire and is laser focused on that. So again, with community input in partnership with AFD and the Austin Travis county wildfire coalition, these recommendations were also developed to help us get to where we need to be. Again, without recommendations. But just like the mitigation plan, this allows us to be eligible for grant funding. So with that, I'm happy to say that we were able to to host Chris graves in our in our shop to work through this process. He did a fantastic job, and I will turn it over to him for his presentation.

[9:04:42 AM]

>> Thank you. Thank you.

[9:04:44 AM]

>> Thank you, Mr. Mayor, council members and Mr. Manager for the 2026 Austin Travis county community wildfire protection plan. We have. I'm proud to say that it is complete. But looking forward, what is a community wildfire protection plan? It comes from the healthy forest restoration act of 2003, where it's a collaborative non-regulatory bought a plan developed with residents, land managers, property owners and set forward priorities and recommendations to reduce wildfire risk within the community. Key things, though, is that it's not a regulation or a mandate. It's not a single department

work plan, parcel level, risk rating or insurance tool, or a commitment of funding by any staff or any one agency as part of the fra. It has to be agreed to by three parties. And that's the local fire authority, which for the city of Austin would be Austin fire. We also have Travis county fire marshal that is involved. Since this is a regional plan. It's for the county of Travis county and city of Austin. It also has to be agreed to by the state forestry agency, which is Texas A and M forest service, and then also the local governing bodies, which is why we are bringing this forward to you as director. Reddick stated that a cw, a current cw P also allows us to apply for grant funding and is necessary for many numerous grants. Again, cw Erp is complete and our next steps are towards implementation. But prior to that, we need a local level adoption on November 6th.

[9:06:36 AM]

We have our implementation kickoff and this is where we actually put people to work, align our priorities and start moving forward. We have a number of tools that we'll be engaging with the public and in between departments, and the big ask is to help sustain this movement forward. One thing that we're looking forward to is assigning and recognition event on December 7th. Why does the cw, P or community wildfire protection plan matter now? Well, it's a regional problem, and we recognize this and that. Within Travis county, we have 8000 wildfire incidents recorded since 1998. This shows the growing problem within Travis county. In 2011, we had some significant events the steiner ranch fires and spicewood fires within Travis county alone. Destroyed numerous homes, but we also had a regional impact in which we had seven other fires occurring during that time, which strapped resources. Our population is growing. We've gone from 1.3 million in 2020 to 1.4 million people, and 9 in 10 fires within Texas are caused by humans, which means outreach and public education are primarily important. With that growth in population, our exposure is growing. We're having to build more homes into those places where wildland fuels occur. Our conditions are intensifying with climate change and longer periods of drought and low fuel moisture.

[9:08:21 AM]

When then we've also recognized through fires around the nation and also locally, is that they have cascading impacts. When we have a wildland fire, it affects numerous other community resources such as communications infrastructure, power, water quality and watershed stabilization. And they necessitate recovery resources. Since the 2011 fires, the joint wildfire task force was created after that event, this joint wildfire task force then evolved into the Austin Travis county wildfire coalition, and the joint wildfire task force initiated the initial cw Erp in 2014. This was the foundation plan. Our current update builds upon that plan. It doesn't make any changes. It just augments what the findings of that initial plan. In 2023, the coalition recognized that there was the ten year window for our grant eligibility was waning, so they sought through Austin fire department a grant through Texas A&M forest service and the usda to update the cw P P with that in July. And we started in 2025 and again, looking towards implementation in 2026. The progress that we've documented since 2014 was that

we've had 26,000 acres of fuel management reported, with 6000 plus acres treated with prescribed fire, 80,000 plus linear feet is shaded. Fuel breaks and adoption of the wildland urban interface code by the city of Austin. So one of the things that we're adding within the 2025 update is that we've updated our county wide risk assessments and field assessments. These tools help us to be able to prioritize projects. We've also added a watershed risk analysis, looked at utility, public health and post-fire intersects within the wildfire risk arena, and also adopted some public tools and shared project tracking.

[9:10:36 AM]

Dashboards that can actually show our our efforts forward. There's some gaps moving forward is that, you know, homeowner participation in mitigation projects remains low. And we didn't have centralized project tracking or publicly viewable project tracking, which could be utilized to inform the public. So we launched in 2025 and throughout the summer and fall, we built a foundation in the risk. And that meant reviewing our updates and our data base maps and our risk assessments. During this time, we also saw that there was there was a community motivation towards wildland fire. And we captured on that in which we did our first public meeting, which was a virtual event, which we brought in a local fire managers and experts, excuse me, into engaging with the public to help also communicate that the plan was in development, that we were working forward and wanted their involvement.

[9:11:50 AM]

We turned that also into a a set of strategies and recommendations, and also engaged through a public survey, two public meetings, one on the west side of Travis county, one on the east side, and then a month long public comment period on the plan. We finalized that plan with the approval of Texas forest service. And again, we're here in front of you for adoption and implementation phase. So what did we find? We had 377 survey participants, which 77% of them are concerned, very concerned about wildland fire. And 9 in 10 say they share responsibility, but also the local government and local fire departments share that responsibility as well. 45% are unsure of how to evacuate safely. 28% are not sure what their insurance would cover after a wildfire, and 32% named cost as their largest obstacle to home hardening and defensible space practices. 88% would consider a participating in a cost share program or tool share program as well. The other things that we find is that no single wildfire exists.

[9:13:13 AM]

Wildfire problem exists within Travis county. We have three distinct ecoregions. We also have three different places where wildfire has different effects. On the west side of Austin, in the hill country and Travis county. We have the woodlands and canyon fuels, steep slopes and limited access and egress problems. Within central Austin. We have the green belts and parks and preserves, which are part of our

cultural ethos here. But they present problems. They take a have a specific site planning needs that need to be thought of, especially during drought in the east and southeast. We have other highest concentration of modeled risk. Part of the problem there is that we have continuous grass fuels and and shrub fuels that support rapid fire growth. But we also have some social vulnerability issues there in which we need to overcome through outreach, education, and also projects.

[9:14:17 AM]

One of the things I want to emphasize with this map is please don't take the red as an absolute risk rating. The only way to calculate risk is to have an on site assessment at a local property. That's a key tool. This is a planning level model in which our efforts in those areas that are distinctly dark red are. Efforts there would probably have the most benefit, the most impact towards the community. And I wanted to emphasize that. So it it doesn't get framed in the wrong way. So we came out with through the work through the wildfire coalition, 71 recommendations built around the national cohesive strategies, three goals of resilient landscapes, outreach and structural stability and fire response capability. Additionally, we had added the watershed protection and recovery components to this update, along with code review updates. One of the tools that we have to communicate on our work towards the recommendations is our cw Erp hub. That's the public facing front door to the plan, where we can show maps and our updates, has a story map, which is in plain language and able to be viewed by the public so they can get understanding of wildfire risk within the community. We have web maps for planning level risk and supporting layers and our project tracker, so we can track statuses and outcomes of our projects. We also have a fuels mitigation project analyzer to help support departments in their project scoping and funding, and then community planning up templates which allow communities to align with the cw P in their wildfire mitigation efforts.

[9:16:13 AM]

Things that we're going to be measuring each year are acres treated. The number of homes assessed through size evaluations and home hardening actions. Our outreach efforts and then any code or policy changes. So again, implementation is shared across the region. The austin-travis county wildfire coalition is the meaningful platform for this. It is composed of an executive committee, which is a. Involved with departments, the city, the county and partner representatives who have direct fire responsibilities within city of Austin and Travis county. The wildfire coalition at large is developed from our. Our experts. This is where the. The body comes together to create our actions towards the recommendations. They organize expertise and then. Action follows each partner's authority within their own organization. We have nine implementation task groups that do the work. Moving forward. November 6th we have the coalition implementation kickoff at Austin energy headquarters. Here we're going to be reviewing the final plan and deliverables, demonstrating the project tracker analyzer and data update process for project tracking, and then also aligning task groups, chairs, members missing in finding the missing seats at the table, bringing those people in who can help us moving forward with working on the

recommendations and then setting and prioritizing those actions, data needs, and reporting cadence to the executive committee. So what we're asking of council and commissioners court is to understand that the cw P is a regional framework.

[9:18:14 AM]

It's a living document. It's no longer meant to be set on a shelf and only brought up every ten years. It's something that is going to need to be annually reviewed and looked at, and then updated every five years as one of the recommendations within the plan. The wristbands are planning level tools and are not partial level risk determinations. Again, those require a site specific, specific determination that cannot be found through spatial data. The recommendations guide coordination. They don't. They don't override an agency's authority support. We're asking for your support, especially in alignment with task groups, community resources, etc. And we also ask that you consider the cw P P priorities in any future grant or hazard mitigation project decisions. And then we also ask you to point your constituents towards the cw P P hub to help them prepare for wildfire risk and mitigate their risk and planning actions. So we would appreciate the opportunity for you to adopt the cw P P join us in the December 7th. Planning and signing and recognition event and champion our wildfire resilience and constituent constituents and partners.

[9:19:48 AM]

Thank you.

[9:19:49 AM]

>> Great. Thank you, councilmembers. Questions. Councilmember duchen.

[9:19:54 AM]

>> Thank you mayor. I've got a couple of questions, but first, I just want to thank our professional staff for their tremendous work over this over the last year. And that includes our consultants, which is swca. I really feel like this is a key update. Like Chris said, we've really due for an update. And you know, the world of wildfire prevention preparedness has evolved over the last decade. And so I think this plan incorporates a lot of those changes, as does the code that we passed last year. And given our substantial risk factors here, I think it's important that we continue to stay current on this work. And so one

question I've got is you mentioned a moment ago that the hope is that there's an annual review. What is the process for having that review?

[9:20:45 AM]

>> That review process would come through the wildfire coalition.

[9:20:49 AM]

>> Is it one of the task groups that's on there?

[9:20:51 AM]

>> It would be through the executive committee. Okay. They would initiate that and through the the organization of the wildfire coalition, they would meet quarterly to get task group updates and then have an annual report.

[9:21:09 AM]

>> Got it. Thank you. So I recognize this is a lengthy plan. I would encourage you guys, if you haven't already, to share it with communities and neighborhoods and homeowners and landlords that may be interested in it. I know that I'm looking forward to new tools that are listed here that can help us measure progress on implementing the key provisions of the plan. That said, I also know that we've got we've had significant community engagement to ensure that we are capturing the survey and the feedback from people as that have built this plan and helped reflect the community safety needs. I'm also aware of some folks that are in the home building community that have raised some concerns about a couple of provisions of the plan, such as the separation distance between structures. So I was hoping that the chief could help us understand the status of those concerns or what conversations have been shared to try and resolve those that tension, if possible.

[9:22:06 AM]

>> Thank you, council member Tom Vocke Austin. Fire. We continue to meet with the home builders association and other groups, looking over all the concerns about the WUI code. All the recommendations that are in this document are just that their recommendations. And so of the 18 that are related to development, you know, we've implemented a portion of probably ten of the 18 already in the city of Austin. So some of these are, you know, specifically maybe targeted more at the county than they are us. But we continue to have those conversations. We get to decide how we implement our risk reduction in the city of Austin. And so working through the code adoption process and working with our home builders and everybody else through that process, we decide how this is implemented. And so there's no action directly from this document, but it does provide great guidance and some outside, outside perspective on the things that we really need to work on. And so we take it serious, but we also make sure that we customize it for what meets our needs in the city of Austin as well. So again, the board and some of the other board of realtors and some of the other groups, we've had great discussions with them.

[9:23:15 AM]

We're reviewing some private studies that they've done currently. You know, we're seeing if there's adjustments we can make to make, you know, we want to make sure that we're reducing risk, but we also want to make sure that we're able to do the development that we need to do in the city. So we think there's a balance. We recognize that balance, but we always to the side of safety from the public safety side.

[9:23:34 AM]

>> Okay. Thank you.

[9:23:35 AM]

>> Thank you for sharing that, chief. And that's all I've got. Mayor.

[9:23:39 AM]

>> Thank you. Thank you. Councilmember Mayor Pro Tem Vela and followed by councilmember Lang.

[9:23:45 AM]

>> Thank you mayor. A couple of things jump out in the report. One of them, again, speaking to a lot of the the costs associated with some of the recommendations on page, I believe. 115 the cr5 establish a minimum 50 foot separation between structures, including accessory dwelling units. And it says all jurisdictions. That would essentially eliminate ads, duplexes, any type of missing middle housing. Again, I mean, in vast swaths of Austin, we've been going in the opposite direction, you know, going to like five foot setbacks, very small setbacks to allow for smaller lots and to allow for affordability. This seems to go in the exact opposite direction. I just was wondering what your thoughts on that were.

[9:24:35 AM]

>> I mean, the 50 foot separation distance across the city, like Austin doesn't make sense at all. But what does make sense is maybe against those very high risk areas where we're directly within 50ft of a wildland area, it may make sense to have that separation distance. And we would only be talking about the wui areas as well. So a majority of of the city does fall into some portion of the wui. But in that high risk areas where we would probably function or focus that overall, I do think that, you know, 5050 foot separation distance doesn't make sense for us as a city, but there may be places where it does make sense. And that's where we can dig into the code on, on the, on a more finite level to get where we need.

[9:25:17 AM]

>> I mean, I completely agree, and that's why I just wanted to highlight that because that that's not, to me, a realistic approach to wildfire mitigation is to have everybody live, you know, at least 50ft apart. I mean, that that's, you know, 90% of Austin is probably, you know, within that 50 foot distance. And then there's a handful of other recommendations that I'm looking at, the code in particular, the, you know, requiring noncombustible or class a, ignition resistant materials for decking and skirting on manufactured homes. The, the, the wildlife wildfire, resilient landscaping standards, housing hardening housing units, hardening portions. Has there been any analysis of other affordability impacts of some of these. You know, what is going to be the average cost to a structure? Again, let's assume that it doesn't apply to all the structures. And let's assume it applies to just a certain western Travis county, for example, the highest areas of wildfire risk. How much is that going to cost? You know.

[9:26:14 AM]

>> I mean, obviously it depends on what type of structure they're building and where they are. And so there's the 0 to 50 foot range where it's more significant, where they do have to have ignition. Existing ignition resistant construction, you know, on a majority of the structure. But once you get outside that 50 foot range, we back off of it a little bit. And just for, for, I guess, a little bit of perspective, most of the homes that we're building now in the city of Austin are built with, you know, hardiplank and, and class a roofs. That's the that's the industry standard. So in most places, when we're talking about changing the roofing structure, all we're talking about is adding some vent structures and some things like that. So what we're really trying to concentrate on is making the standards that that and make, make the standards make sense with a lot of the things that we're already doing. And so that's where the coordination with the builders. But we do look at what the cost is. And we recognize that in some areas there is some significant costs, but overall, we try to figure out that's part of the balance. Try to figure out where we balance the the cost with the risk. And so we work really hard on that.

[9:27:18 AM]

And we work we work with the builders on that and work with everyone in the community to try to figure out how we can get to where we need to with the ignition resistant construction, because we know that's the primary way we prevent structural loss down the road.

[9:27:31 AM]

>> And again, appreciate that. And I really think, again, moving forward as we amend our wildfire regulations, we just have to understand the affordability impacts. I would just ask you both, you know, the.

[9:27:46 AM]

>> What I would also add is that as we go through the code adoption process, where, where these changes would would happen is that we do affordability impact statements, and we do all the things that we do with code adoption. We have bring everybody to the table and we talk about these things. And so it's an entire process. It's not this document doesn't do anything different than that other than give us some guidance when we're working through our code process in the future, which will include addressing all of the items and all of the concerns you have.

[9:28:12 AM]

>> Again, I agree and just want to be very conscious. I know we had a similar and this was a while back, honestly, I think before my time on council, but with regard to energy efficiency and there have been a handful of very, I think, well-meaning, well-intended regulations that have come forward. There was a visitability ordinance. I remember there was some energy impacts where there were significant cost impacts for adopting those. And again, not a I think they're they're great ideas, but we just have to be conscious of, of the affordability impacts, especially now that we've managed to, to kind of ratchet down some of the, the extremely high home prices. I just want to make sure that we're very conscious of the affordability. Thank you very much, chief.

[9:28:58 AM]

>> Thank you. Mayor pro tem councilmember Laine.

[9:29:01 AM]

>> Thank you. First of all, I want to thank you for your work on this. And I really do see I understand it's a living document, and I really do see the progress over time in it. And so I appreciate that very much. I have a couple of specific questions on page five. You're talking about shaded fuel breaks, and I'm just wondering if I could understand a little bit better the criteria for where we are going to implement work towards implementing fuel breaks versus not.

[9:29:36 AM]

>> I'm going to have our wildfire division chief, Scott, come up and talk about shaded fuel breaks.

[9:29:43 AM]

>> So David gowan, interim assistant chief over specialty branch with Austin fire. Shaded fuel breaks. So as far as the criteria on that, we rely on our land management partners. So Austin water, Austin parks and rec, Austin energy who actually complete those projects. So within the scope of the, the one of the major benefits in my mind, at least of the cpp is it talks about the recommendations as far as coordinating, working with the Austin Travis county coalition on wildfire or wildfire coalition is coordinating all of that work. And so getting our land management partners in the room, working together so that we have a like a comprehensive plan where the shaded fuel breaks are actually working

together versus each independent entity kind of doing their own thing to manage their land. We can look at it from a, from a whole county wide perspective.

[9:30:48 AM]

>> Okay, if I can draw your attention to the map on page eight and where we see this boundary between district six and ten, which is darker red than certainly anything else in district six. And much of what we see inside of city limits, it appears to me that that boundary is following the canyon along bull creek, an area in which the city of Austin is a pretty significant landowner, largely under wildlands and therefore under Austin water, as you just described. But an issue here is that we really do have a lot of homes that are that are within that area. And then we have a lot of Austin owned land as well. And while there have been. Some contracts that we've seen that have looked at those wildland areas, I haven't seen them look in this part of the wildlands area. And while we have done surveys of part, the extent to which our parks owned properties parcels are have been hardened against fire, those are really small pieces surrounded by this wildlands and with homes directly like forming, forming that boundary.

[9:32:12 AM]

And so I say all that to say that I hope that the next time we come around to this presentation, I'd love to see a little bit more fleshing out of how we are working with water and wildlands and other city owned property besides just the park, the part owned parcels and and have some explanation of that in the next briefing that we get. I love to see that.

[9:32:39 AM]

>> I appreciate the concern and the question. So one of the things that I really am excited about with the dwp and all the work being done on, is that project tracking piece on it. And so I'm I'm looking very forward to having very comprehensive tracking of not only what we're doing, but also what the county partners are doing, and to be able to paint that entire big picture of how we're mitigating wildfire risk county wide. So I look forward to providing that that information in our next briefing, for sure.

[9:33:10 AM]

>> Thank you. And speaking of along some of those lines, like one of the gaps that was identified was homeowner uptake of the size inspections. And do you think it's realistic that within the next year, we'll start to see some visualization of where those gaps are?

[9:33:30 AM]

>> I do. So that's something that we're certainly looking at within the wildfire division with Austin fire. And then, you know, as Chris talked about getting these task groups up and running with the wildfire coalition, that is definitely one of those things that we really want to want to strengthen is our tracking of that work being done. So I'm, like I said, I'm looking forward to with the tools that we have with the dwp, being able to present that information in a comprehensive. This is all of the work that's being done by both Austin fire, Austin water, Austin parks, the city agencies, but also our county, county partners, Travis county fire marshal's office, all the esds and so forth. So I do think we we're going to be able to provide a much better picture of all the wildfire mitigation risk work that's being done within the county.

[9:34:25 AM]

>> Very much appreciate that. And I know that I understand the work has begun already, and I appreciate that. Another thing that I'll note on page eight is, I think in a previous presentation, the Williamson county area was blacked out. And now I'm seeing data there. Love that. Thank you very much. When I turn to page 181716, page 16 is the list of partners. And you've mentioned some of the partners while we were talking just now. Can you help me? Williamson county has seven, 7.5% of the city. Can you help me understand the extent to which they are at the table as a partner currently, and if not fully, where we're going with that?

[9:35:08 AM]

>> Chris.

[9:35:10 AM]

>> Chris, Chris Austin, emergency management, I can speak to that in that we within our distribution list, we are communicating with the folks in Williamson county, particularly with jollyville, the cedarville overlay there, and Leander overlay in those areas. So we are communicating with them. Their

participation again is is voluntary. So, you know, they are welcome to the table. We appreciate their input and.

[9:35:39 AM]

>> Okay. Thank you again. Happy to hear about the progress in that direction. I'm wondering about large private landowners. So sorry to keep flipping back and forth between those two pages. The map on page eight, Robinson ranch is a is a huge landowner. It is a grassy area. It's not popping up in here as a particularly significant concern, which is great. But I also heard what you said about the propensity for these fires to spread quickly across grasslands, and also noted where it really gets dark red in the southeast. And the northeast is where it transitions into county land, where we have these large, often private landowners. And so to what extent have you engaged with the largest landowners of grasslands? Are you concerned about that? Not concerned about it.

[9:36:41 AM]

>> So we are concerned about it. And we have the wildfire division has tried to reach out to various different landowners, and we've had varying degrees of success. But as you're aware, council member and and, you know, we've we've talked about this at length. We can only make limited inroads with private landowners. And we and we do our best to reach out to them where we can and provide education and recommendations and so forth. But it's a large part of why the wildfire division and our our county partners focus a lot of our efforts on that home hardening. And we talk about the code and why it's so important is that private landowners, while that that fuels mitigation risk is is super important. That's only one piece of the puzzle. And the science talks or really speaks to that home hardening as being the most bang for the buck, so to speak. So that's why that that tends to be, as you know, as you're aware, most of our message and where we find certainly the most return on investment in terms of our outreach messaging is getting that home hardening piece in.

[9:37:58 AM]

And so that's typically where we focus our efforts.

[9:38:01 AM]

>> Okay. I guess what I'm thinking in terms of we've got the home hardening messaging, but then also grass or other vegetation management best practices might, might also be a useful component.

[9:38:12 AM]

>> Absolutely. And we do have, you know, our fuels, sorry, our fire resilient landscapes team does do that outreach work. I can't speak to detail specifically as far as who they've reached out to most recently. But but we do reach out to those those partners and. We do have efforts working on that sort of thing for, for that fuels mitigation work.

[9:38:35 AM]

>> Thank you very much. I appreciate you have a really a challenge going across all these different jurisdictions and ownership situations and all. And I appreciate the work you've done to move forward, especially at the boundaries of our city. Thank you.

[9:38:48 AM]

>> Thank you, council member. Those are all the council members that I think want to speak on this item. Thank you all very, very much. Manager, you want to add anything? Good deal. We really appreciate the work you're doing. Thank you. All. That will take us to our next agenda item and manager. I'll recognize you on that that briefing as well.

[9:39:06 AM]

>> Thank you mayor. And today's briefing on the state of capital delivery services will be shared by the director of Austin capital delivery services, Adriana Castaneda, along with assistant directors Jeanette Landry and Marcus hammer. I'll turn it over to you, Adriana.

[9:39:38 AM]

>> Welcome.

[9:39:44 AM]

>> So good morning, mayor and city council. Mr. City manager Adriana Castaneda, capital delivery services director. And this morning with me is Jenny Landry and Marcus hammer, our assistant directors within capital delivery services for today's presentation. It is an opportunity for us to provide you with an update on the state of capital delivery services with our purpose, accomplishments, and path forward. This is an opportunity for us to reintroduce the department, and I want to start by grounding us, by defining who we are, what we do, and why our work matters. Capital delivery services is responsible for turning the city's capital investment into public infrastructure that Austin residents, businesses and visitors rely on every day, from planning and design through construction and inspection. Our team works across the full project lifecycle to deliver safe, high quality and sustainable public projects for our community. It is important to note that cds does not deliver these projects alone. Our success depends on how well we work as one city and one team with our community, city departments, consultants, contractors and other departments. That collaboration is what allows us to navigate complexity, solve problems and ultimately deliver better outcomes for Austin. Today, I would like to take a step back and look at cds through three lenses where we are today, what we have accomplished and where we are headed next. This is an opportunity not only to recognize the work our team has delivered, but also to reaffirm our commitment to improving who we are, how we deliver capital projects by being more strategic, transparent, collaborative, and more responsive to the needs of our growing city. With that said, as our foundation Janet Landry will walk us through a closer look at what cds does and the role we play in delivering for Austin.

[9:41:39 AM]

>> Thank you. Adriana. Building on what Adriana just shared at cds, we accomplish our work through three core responsibilities. The first is project management. This is where our teams do the hands on work of moving the city's capital projects from planning and design, through construction and closeout. Our project teams coordinate across departments, consultants, contractors, and stakeholders to keep these projects moving. The second is delivery support. This is where we create standards, processes and governance that drives consistency citywide. We reinforce this through our comprehensive procedures manual and a robust training program that keeps our teams aligned and ready to execute. And the third is project controls. This is where we independently measure and transparently report out on project performance, so that we have reliable information on scope, schedule, cost and risks, and can identify project issues early enough to act on them.

[9:42:42 AM]

You've seen this through our bond dashboard and our quarterly reports. So in simple terms, we deliver projects. We establish the framework for how they're delivered, and we measure how they are

performing the value of having those functions together in one department is that it creates stronger accountability and earlier visibility into project issues. At cds, we see ourselves as experts in navigating the city's processes to turn a project from a concept in a sponsoring department's capital plan into a completed public asset. So we start by serving as the owner's representative during design and construction, allowing our sponsoring departments to focus on managing their assets and providing services to the community. Our project managers bring technical and delivery expertise needed to navigate complex city processes, and they're supported by our construction inspectors, who serve as the city's eyes and ears in the field, making sure projects are built safely according to plans and specs, and that we only pay for work completed. Cds also provides contract administration and payment processing for the city's entire capital program.

[9:43:56 AM]

We also have in-house engineering and surveying expertise, along with quality assurance services that help identify issues before they become costly construction changes, and we support early project planning, permitting, bond planning and portfolio reporting. So the common thread among all these services is that cds brings the expertise and coordination needed to navigate complex delivery environments and turn capital plans into completed public assets. Cds manages an exceptionally large and complex portfolio, 467 projects with a combined budget of \$10 billion. Our largest partner is Austin water, where we deliver a variety of projects from treatment plant upgrades to water, wastewater pipeline renewals and everything in between. Our next largest partner is tpw, where we deliver road, trail and bridge projects that keep austinites moving. We also support watershed protection on 64 projects that keep streams healthy and reduce flood risk.

[9:45:01 AM]

What's important here is the scale and the diversity of the portfolio. We're delivering across 17 departments, from critical utility plants to roads, bridges, public safety and community facilities. Since our inception in 2023, cds has made significant progress delivering the capital program. Cds has advanced in that time, 225 projects into construction and completed construction on 233. Over that same period, we've spent \$2.3 billion in capital improvement funds. That's a substantial investment in Austin's infrastructure. The photo here is an example of that investment, and it's from the ribbon cutting for the breaker Laine extension project, which we delivered with tp. This project created a new roadway connection with sidewalks, bicycle facilities and safer crossings near pioneer crossing elementary and required close coordination with private development so that both the development and the roadway could open concurrently. It's a great example of public private coordination that cds manages every day, and delivering meaningful improvements for our community. So this slide highlights a few of the projects that cds has recently delivered across the city.

[9:46:22 AM]

Starting at the top left is the Mexican American cultural center, which was an expansion and renovation project and was completed in February of this year. The little walnut creek flood risk reduction project was completed in March and reduced flood risk to homes and roadways between Merrick boulevard and Rutland drive in north Austin. The dove springs public health center was completed in 2024 and provided a new community health facility in southeast Austin. The Roig Guerrero parks channel stabilization project addressed significant erosion and flooding along country club creek. This project was the largest erosion control effort in Austin's history and received a 2025 Texas apwa project of the year award. The walnut creek confluence project was designed and constructed in collaboration with the Waterloo greenway. Cds managed the project in construction through construction completion in early 2026, and finally, the wishbone bridge reached substantial completion at the end of 2025. It was recently recognized as a 2026 roads and bridges top ten honoree, and has received national recognition for its design and delivery. This slide highlights a few projects among the 3.5 billion that we currently have in construction. Slaughter Lane is adding roadway capacity, bicycle and pedestrian improvements, and drainage and water quality improvements between Brodie and mopac. Construction is expected to be complete in 2027. Oldland passes dam includes the replacement of the spillway and improvements to a downstream channel, and is scheduled for completion in early 27. The country club creek trail fills an important trail gap between oltorf and Elmo drive, while also providing significant channel stabilization improvements. It's expected to reach substantial completion early next year. The Mcneal drive water transmission main is constructing a 72 inch transmission main to increase capacity from the hancocks water treatment plant.

[9:48:39 AM]

Construction is scheduled to end in early 2028 at the convention center. Mass excavation is complete and foundation work is underway. Structural steel is arriving on the site daily. The project team remains on track for substantial completion by the end of 28, and an opening before south by southwest in 29. And finally, the walnut creek wastewater treatment plant expansion is a major multi-phase capacity and rehabilitation project being delivered through eight gaps, with the final gap scheduled for completion in 2032. Now, I'll turn it over to Marcus Hamer, who will discuss some key initiatives that cds is currently working on.

[9:49:23 AM]

>> Thank you Jenny. On this slide, I want to highlight several key initiatives underway that are focused on strengthening the foundation that will support how Austin plans, prioritizes, and delivers its capital investments. First, our team has been deeply engaged in leading a planning and development process for the proposed 2026 bond program. This includes coordinating with departments across the city to

refine project scopes, identify funding needs, and ensure that each potential project aligns with community priorities and organizational capacity. We also launched the Austin bond dashboard, providing greater visibility into our bond investments and how those investments are progressing. This dashboard is a major step forward in transparency and communication with the public. Alongside that, we have developed the Austin bond program's quarterly report to establish a consistent and transparent way to communicate progress, performance, and outcomes. Together, these initiatives are about more than just reporting. They're about strengthening accountability, improving decision making, and giving our leadership and community a clearer view of how we are delivering on Austin's capital investments. Building on that foundation, our next steps are focused on moving from visibility and planning to continuous improvement and stronger project delivery. We will continue to optimize project delivery with an emphasis on improving how we plan, manage and execute projects across the full capital delivery life cycle.

[9:50:45 AM]

We've released the quarterly bond program report and will continue advancing phase two of the Austin bond dashboard, expanding transparency and strengthening the information available to decision makers and the community. We will also begin planning for an Austin capital dashboard, which will include all non-bond funded projects managed by capital delivery services, creating a broader view of the city's capital portfolio beyond bond programs. I'm also pleased to state that cds laid the foundation for developing a consistent strategic process to deliver a bond program as part of the 2026 bond development effort. Guided by this established framework, the city is poised to prepare future focused 2028 bond program, one that leverages a proven delivery model to address emerging needs, strengthen public confidence, and invest in Austin's future with purpose and clarity. In closing, our path forward is clear. It's about connecting planning, delivery, transparency, and accountability into one continuous cycle so that Austin can make informed investments, deliver projects more effectively, and create lasting value for our community. Cds looks forward to continuing our commitment to effectively delivering capital projects for the city of Austin. And with that, we're happy to answer any questions that you may have.

[9:51:54 AM]

>> We appreciate it. Thank you very much. Members. Anybody got questions they want to bring up? Councilmember duchen.

[9:52:00 AM]

>> Thank you, mayor. I had a couple of questions and first of all, appreciate that the briefing and the update, one of them is just based on, I think, my lack of understanding. You know, half of the projects you laid out are Austin water projects. In terms of the portfolio. How is it that we approach all of the Austin. Well, maybe ask a different question. Do you do you does cds work on any Austin energy projects? And is there a reason that they're not that that in terms of our utilities, water is where a lot of your energy is here and not not energy that they do their own, that they do their own capital projects themselves.

[9:52:42 AM]

>> Thank you for the question, councilmember duchen. So we have a very few projects that we coordinate with Austin energy, but Jenny will talk a little bit about those projects. But as a note, I did meet with the general manager of Austin energy last week and we had a conversation about project delivery, but I'll turn it over to Jenny.

[9:53:00 AM]

>> Thank you. Adriana. Jenny Landry delivery services. Yes, we we do work on Austin energy projects. Those are primarily duct bank projects. Actually, we have one under construction right now along lady bird lake. And so typically those are projects that are within the right of way are not on a facility. Although historically we have worked on other types of projects for Austin energy as well.

[9:53:26 AM]

>> Can I, can I you said they're primarily what I didn't understand what you said.

[9:53:30 AM]

>> Within the right of way.

[9:53:33 AM]

>> Okay.

[9:53:33 AM]

>> Duct bank is what I heard. Is that right? Yes.

[9:53:36 AM]

>> Say it again.

[9:53:37 AM]

>> Duct bank project.

[9:53:38 AM]

>> Yeah. Okay. That's what that was. What I didn't hear. Okay. Thank you.

[9:53:41 AM]

>> And is there a is there sort of an efficiency or is there a value for greater cooperation with Austin energy on projects?

[9:53:50 AM]

>> Yes, certainly. Our goal and objective is certainly to be the provider of of delivery services for the city of Austin. And so we are working through those relationships. And yes.

[9:54:06 AM]

>> Last question on this topic is sort of how do we get to this place where you manage all? It sounds like all or the majority of Austin water projects, but other than the duct bank projects, almost none of the Austin energy projects.

[9:54:19 AM]

>> So that was the the intent of last week's meeting with the general manager of council member duchen. And I do know that he is present. So I think more conversations are to come.

[9:54:29 AM]

>> Okay. I would just be curious in the history of how that shook out, and I'm glad you guys are working on trying to figure out how to. It sounds like collaborate going forward.

[9:54:37 AM]

>> I do understand that they have very specific needs and specialties and how they deliver their projects. So we want to make sure that we don't cross over into something that will not be beneficial for the city.

[9:54:47 AM]

>> Got it. Okay. Thank you. The other question I had was, I understand that we're at least in prior briefings, we're on track at some point in 2027 to deliver 90% of the spend on all of the prior bond dollars that we've got going back to 2016 or before that. Are we still on track there? Do you know when in 2027 we're going to achieve that milestone? Can you speak a little bit to that? An update there.

[9:55:14 AM]

>> Good morning, councilman duchen Marcus haam assistant director of delivery services. You're correct. And that's also we are on track to to have that spend by that time. And the bond quarterly report is also a new tool that will be utilizing to help share that information out on a quarterly basis to keep council and community updated on, on where we're at with the Spann plans.

[9:55:34 AM]

>> Do you know currently when we are estimated to reach that, what part of next year?

[9:55:41 AM]

>> Not off the top of my head, but we can look into the report and we could give you that information.

[9:55:46 AM]

>> Okay. But it sounds like we're on track and that you all are confident that that that there is no hiccups in the process or there's no outstanding projects that would interfere with our ability to deliver the majority of those projects or 90% of those projects at that time.

[9:55:59 AM]

>> That's correct.

[9:56:00 AM]

>> Okay. Thank you.

[9:56:02 AM]

>> Thanks, councilmember. Councilmember Laine.

[9:56:05 AM]

>> I primarily just want to say how much I appreciate the work that's been done here. This dashboard is extremely helpful and a big step forward. And I know it's not an easy thing to put together because it has a lot of features, and it also has a lot of information that needs to be accurate and put together well. So I appreciate that. I really appreciated councilmember duChen line of questioning about utility coordination, and that is absolutely, really important for being able to make the best use of tax dollars. I am actually we've done a lot of talking offline as I've been in office, and I'll continue to do that, as I know you're continuing to work on this, but I didn't want to miss the chance to say how useful I find this and how appreciative, appreciative our office is. Thank you.

[9:56:53 AM]

>> Thank you, councilmember mayor pro tem.

[9:56:55 AM]

>> Thank you. Mayor, I just wanted to say also that I appreciate the work. When I came on to council and we talked about this a little bit at mobility committee, but when I came on to council, there were a lot of projects, capital projects that were stuck. And I think all of the all of the projects that were stuck are moving or either finished now or are moving forward. And I've personally seen the, the efforts and the initiative to, to get those projects moving. So I just wanted to say thank you all and looking forward to getting you some more projects to work on.

[9:57:34 AM]

>> As a follow up to that, the slide that shows since 23. Well, it says it all in a lot of ways. So we're very appreciative of that. And, and, and some of you are relatively new to the position, but we're appreciative of it continuing. And that obviously is the goal of the department. So thank you. Anything else? Manager? You have anything you want to say good night. Okay. Very good. Thank you all very much. Appreciate it. Members. That concludes the agenda for this work session of the Austin city council. So without objection, we will adjourn the city council work session. It is 9:58 A.M. On October 20th and we are adjourned. Thanks, everybody.