Austin

MEMORANDUM

To:	Mayor and City Council
Through:	Mike Rogers, Assistant City Manager MR
From:	Shay Ralls Roalson, P.E., Austin Water Director SMR
Date:	November 12, 2026
Subject:	**Circle C Metropolitan Park Trail - Staff Update (Resolution 20260812-018)**

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide an update on City Council Resolution 20260812-018, which directed the City Manager to create a trail connecting Circle C Metropolitan Park to the Hielscher Tract Greenbelt. The resolution directed the City Manager to ensure that the trail connection includes necessary improvements, avoids trees and karst features, minimizes the acreage of City-owned land required to complete the connection, and engages community partners in its development, operation, and maintenance. Since adoption of the resolution, City staff have made significant progress in evaluating opportunities, constraints, and stakeholder considerations to advance this important trail connection while supporting environmental stewardship and community interests.

Assessment of Sensitive Environmental Features

Austin Water staff have evaluated the history of trail use in this area, identified potential risks and impacts to adjacent sensitive City of Austin-owned Water Quality Protection Lands, and reviewed past trail suitability assessments, including an evaluation completed by the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center in 2009. That assessment identified the southeast corner of adjacent Water Quality Protection Lands as having low suitability for trail development due to the proximity of sensitive environmental features.

To further evaluate this area, Austin Water and Austin Watershed Protection staff completed a field assessment of an approximately 0.9-acre area of the adjacent Water Quality Protection Lands in September 2026. That assessment sought to identify visible karst features, drainage characteristics, vegetation and general site conditions, existing disturbance, and other site characteristics relevant to potential public trail construction and access. While the assessment did not identify potential impacts to a known karst feature or unique biological resource, it highlighted the potential for environmental impacts relating to changes in surface drainage, erosion, and hydrologic connectivity.

Engagement with Community Partners
Austin Water staff conducted a site visit with representatives of the adjacent neighborhood in September 2026. The site visit sought to identify historic impacts of trail use in this area, trail maintenance considerations, and other stakeholder interests and priorities. Trespass outside of the existing social trail corridor near private yards was identified as a primary concern.

Next Steps
Based on evaluation of environmental features and stakeholder engagement, Austin Water staff are developing several trail connection options for review with City departments and external stakeholders. Further engagement and refinement are planned through the remainder of calendar year 2026. Once a preferred alignment is determined, work will begin to finalize construction design, identify funding, and develop any necessary partnerships. Austin Water staff will provide an update in January 2027.

Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact Justin Bates, Environmental Conservation Division Manager of Austin Water at Justin.Bates@austintexas.gov or 512-972-1663.

cc: T.C. Broadnax, City Manager
Erika Brady, City Clerk
Jason Hadavi, City Auditor
Mary Jane Grubb, Municipal Court Clerk
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CMO Executive Team
Department Directors