





MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and City Council

FROM: Richard Mendoza, P.E., Interim Director 
Transportation and Public Works

THROUGH: Robert Goode, P.E., Assistant City Manager 

DATE: June 6, 2023

SUBJECT: **Staff update on Resolution No. 20221201-037 - Hays County Transportation Plan Coordination**

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide an update on Resolution No. [20221201-037](#) relating to the need for interlocal collaboration to address potential impacts of Hays County's Transportation Plan on the City of Austin's Water Quality Protection Lands.

The resolution approved in December 2022 referred to three roadway projects included in the Hays County Transportation Plan, adopted in July 2021. Two proposed roadway projects, referred to as RC 5 and RC 6 in their plan, are shown to traverse City of Austin Barton Springs Water Quality Protection Lands and the Barton Springs Edwards Aquifer recharge and contributing zones. There has been no activity on these proposed roadways since the adoption of their plan. The City of Austin will continue to seek collaboration with Hays County to remove these proposed roadways from their plan. The next opportunity to have this discussion may be during the development of the 2050 CAMPO Regional Transportation Plan, to be adopted by May 2025, if they are submitted in the draft plan. All proposed roadways submitted by one jurisdiction that cross jurisdictional boundaries require concurrence from the appropriate jurisdiction.

The third roadway in their plan, referred to as RC 7, is a proposed extension of State Highway 45 Southwest. The proposed roadway would connect to the existing segments of SH 45 between FM 1626 and IH-35. The Hays County Commissioners Court approved \$2.5M for the study with the intent of environmentally clearing the project. Since the approval of the resolution requesting Hays County to place the study on hold, they have entered an Interlocal Agreement with the City of Buda to cost participate in the study in February 2023 and the study has continued to advance. Hays County has reached out to the City of Austin to identify a Single Point of Contact for their study and Interim Assistant City Manager Robert Goode will be acting in that capacity.

City staff will continue to seek cooperative efforts with Hays County, offering support to find ways to improve transportation connections, between the city, Travis County, and Hays County that do not threaten harm to the Edwards Aquifer watershed or to lands overlying the Edwards Aquifer that have been dedicated to permanent watershed and wildlife habitat protection. Updates to City Council will be provided accordingly.

Attachment: (1) SH 45 Gap Study

Cc: Jesús Garza, Interim City Manager
Jorge Morales, Director, Watershed Protection Department

MEMO

To: Robert Goode and Anna Kullmar, City of Austin

From: The SH 45 Study Team on behalf of Hays County, Project Manager Stacey Benningfield, STV (formerly CP&Y)

Date: May 23, 2023

Re: SH 45 Gap Study

Hays County, in partnership with the City of Buda, is conducting a study to explore the feasibility of constructing SH 45 between I-35 and RM 1626. The “SH 45 Gap” study is a pre-National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) planning-level study.

The SH 45 Gap Study includes: collecting traffic data and conducting traffic studies; identifying environmental constraints; coordination with potentially affected property owners and community members, regional and local partners, and other stakeholders; public meetings to share information and receive feedback; and identifying potential route options, right of way needs, and cost estimates.

The “SH 45 Gap” study will not result in project approval nor construction authorization. Instead, the study is simply designed to objectivize the characteristics and implications of adding this highway segment to the regional transportation network and to identify an alternative (or alternatives) which could be studied further during future phases of project development.

If the results of the feasibility study are deemed to be sufficiently positive and the decision is made to continue project development through established vetting processes, the intent is for the findings/recommendations from the feasibility study to serve as the starting point for future environmental studies and NEPA documentation. To date, only the feasibility study phase of project development is funded. Funding has not been approved for NEPA, design, right of way acquisition, or construction nor has a timeline for those activities been established.

The Study began in the fall of 2022 and is anticipated to take two to three years to complete. To date the consultant team has developed a study area map and a constraints map, met with several potentially affected property owners in the study area, and collected traffic data. The County is hosting the first public open house meeting on June 15, 2023, from 4:30 to 7:30 p.m. at the Sunfield Station Event Center, 2610 Main St., Buda, TX 78610.

More information is available online: www.sh45gap.com