



CENTRAL TEXAS REGIONAL
MOBILITY AUTHORITY

THE STORY OF MOPAC AND EXPRESS LANES *In Central Texas*

A SOLUTION FOR RELIABLE TRAVEL



IT'S TIME TO GET CENTRAL TEXAS MOVING

The Central Texas region has evolved as one of our nation's strongest economies. With all the amenities and opportunities available, it's no surprise that our beloved capital city is attracting large numbers of college graduates, families, and others pursuing the prospect of a better future. In fact, Austin was ranked America's fastest-growing city in 2016 by Forbes, and population is expected to double by 2040. **Growing demand for our already overburdened transportation network means we must implement innovative mobility solutions to preserve our high quality of life.** In addition to navigating today's traffic jams, the Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority (Mobility Authority) is planning for the needs of tomorrow to ensure our region remains livable and accessible for years to come.

» MoPac is one of the most notoriously congested corridors in our region

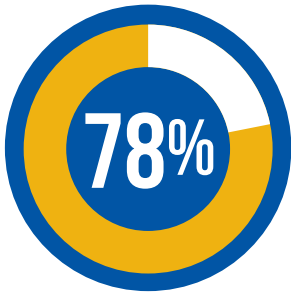
Our latest effort to bring our vision of greater mobility to life is the MoPac Improvement Project, developed to address congestion on one of Austin's oldest and most important arteries. **Running right through the center of the city, MoPac serves as a key route to downtown and points beyond.** As a primary alternative to Interstate 35, MoPac carries more than 180,000 cars and trucks each day—a level projected to reach 220,000 by 2035. Unpredictable travel times along this corridor come at a high cost to travelers—in terms of fuel consumption, time lost and diminished quality of life.

» If we did nothing, congestion would increase with no viable solution in sight

MoPac was originally opened to traffic in 1975, and no improvements have been made south of RM 2222 since. Many studies considering improvements began and were halted due to lack of funding. **In the late 2000's, the Mobility Authority and TxDOT were charged by the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization to build a viable congestion relief solution that was not elevated and would not take significant property from the many adjacent homes and businesses.** With extensive residential areas on either side and the Union Pacific railway line in the center median, our options were limited and there was only room to build one additional lane in each direction.

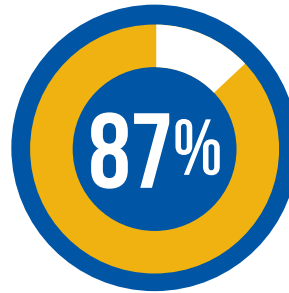
WE BELIEVE IT'S TIME TO GET MOVING

We recently conducted extensive research on how transportation impacts quality of life and found the two are linked more closely than you might think.



78% OF CENTRAL TEXANS

believe more time would improve their quality of life.



87% OF CENTRAL TEXANS

believe less time stuck in traffic would improve their quality of life.

You spoke, we listened; you value time. We are committed to keep you moving as safely and quickly as possible, because we know there are other things you would prefer to do with your time.

MOPAC IMPROVEMENT PROJECT ENVIRONMENTAL STUDY

In compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, TxDOT and the Mobility Authority launched an Environmental Assessment for the MoPac corridor from Cesar Chavez Street to Parmer Lane in July 2010. The study considered a full range of alternatives and found that express lanes with variable pricing were the preferred alternative for addressing long-term mobility issues in the corridor.

The purpose of the proposed project was to:

- Improve mobility and operational efficiency by accommodating the movement of people and goods
- Facilitate congestion management
- Provide a reliable route for transit that would reduce travel times
- Facilitate reliable emergency response
- Maximize use of the facility without reducing reliability

Public involvement is a critical element of the environmental study process. The team conducted more than 30 open houses, public meetings, and neighborhood presentations where various alternatives were discussed and community feedback was gathered. Public input was then combined with technical analyses to identify the best option for improving MoPac. The recommended alternative was then subjected to additional public review and scrutiny, ultimately leading to the selection of express lanes as the preferred alternative. A final public hearing on the environmental study and the proposed express lanes was held on May 23, 2012 and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) approved this preferred alternative for implementation in August 2012.

» Express lanes bring the congestion relief we really need in this corridor

Working within the constraints of a tight urban corridor, we knew there was no silver bullet for MoPac. We had to think outside the box to develop a solution that would provide the most relief. Building an additional general purpose lane would not alleviate congestion because that lane would soon reach capacity, perpetuating the congestion problem. High-occupancy vehicle, or HOV, lanes were also out of consideration due to demonstrated poor performance in other regions across the country. **Express Lanes are an innovative congestion management tool that allow drivers to bypass congestion when they need a reliable alternative while also offering Capital Metro buses and registered van pools a toll-free route to their destination.**

» Variable priced tolling ensures reliable travel times

Instead of fixed tolls, the MoPac Express Lane charges a variable priced toll that increases when traffic is heavy, and decreases when it is light to either encourage or discourage use. It leverages supply and demand principles to manage the number of vehicles entering the Lane while ensuring traffic remains free-flowing.

» Express lanes have been implemented around the United States—and they work

While express lanes are new to the Austin area, they have been successful in other areas of Texas and around the U.S. Agencies across the nation turn to express lanes as an optimal choice to manage congestion, and we have leveraged their best practices to provide relief for MoPac commuters.

We build more than just roads; we build **mobility solutions** that help preserve our **quality of life**. It's our job to **connect** you to everything you love about this region.

» Sound walls

We're delivering on the decades-old promise of **noise abatement for residents along the corridor**. Our project will construct seven miles of new painted sound walls in 19 locations along the corridor. When MoPac was constructed decades ago, the community was promised sound walls that were never delivered. When our noise mitigation studies indicated that the corridor met the federal requirements for sound walls in certain locations, we were excited to provide the noise relief the community has long demanded.

A total of seven sound wall workshops were held, where adjacent property owners had the opportunity to learn more about the walls and vote on which wall segments should be constructed. A Context Sensitive Design Advisory Committee consisting of neighborhood, Texas Historical Commission, City of Austin, and TxDOT representatives helped develop the look and feel of the planned walls. Sound wall heights vary between 8' and 20' tall depending on topography and location. In some residential locations where analyses determined that sound walls would not provide sufficient noise reduction benefits, we are building aesthetically similar neighborhood walls to replace city-maintained wooden fences.

Unfortunately, sound wall construction has been met with many challenges, utility conflicts, and delays. We regret that adjacent property owners have been inconvenienced by this for years. But we're sure that when the sound walls are complete in 2018, residents will enjoy the benefits of reduced roadway noise and added privacy.

» Moving more people with transit

Public transit buses, registered van pools and emergency vehicles get non-tolled access to the MoPac Express Lane. This not only makes transit a more attractive option for people who might otherwise ride solo, **it allows for greater efficiency in moving greater numbers of people**.

» You speak, we listen

No one is happy about the noise, dust, detours, traffic delays, or schedule delays that are necessary during the construction process. Unfortunately, some level of disturbance is inevitable, so we are committed to doing our part. That's why we took as many steps as possible to mitigate disruption such as **completing most of the work at night and limiting peak time lane closures**.

WHY US?

The Mobility Authority is the driving force behind **preserving and enhancing quality of life**. We are an independent government agency created in 2002 to improve the transportation system in Williamson and Travis counties. Our mission is to implement innovative, multi-modal transportation solutions that reduce congestion and enhance economic vitality. We build more than just roads; we build mobility solutions that help preserve our quality of life. It's our job to connect you to everything you love about this region.

MOPAC EXPRESS LANE BY THE NUMBERS



Analysis shows that Express Lane drivers are **traveling at speeds generally above 50 mph**, which was the intended goal when this project was designed. Further demonstrating that the Lane is having the desired effect, our data shows:



Travel times for Express Lane drivers are **reduced by an average of 15 minutes** during the afternoon rush hour.

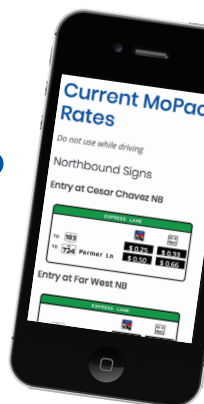


Express Lane drivers **travel an average of 27 mph faster** than those in the general purpose lanes during rush hour

DID YOU KNOW?

Real time toll rates for the MoPac Express Lane are available on our website at www.mobilityauthority.com/pay-your-toll/rates

Do not access the website while driving.



Our commitment

We are committed to being a good neighbor during construction. We commit to communicating transparently and frequently, to treat concerns as if they were our own, and to prioritize public safety. Our methods include multiple platforms for public information (including in-person, printed, and digital), robust stakeholder outreach, and prompt attention to community concerns.

Our outreach program

We established a project website at MoPacExpress.com with comprehensive project information. In addition, drivers, residents and business owners can receive construction updates via email, Twitter, text messaging, and through our mobile application. Regular updates

MOPAC EXPRESS LANE CONSTRUCTION

When we broke ground in October 2013 and planned to open to traffic in September 2015, we didn't anticipate some of the challenges that lay ahead. We, along with the community, have struggled as the project faced significant construction delays due to unmarked utilities, harder than expected bedrock, and a worker shortage. With the traveling public eagerly awaiting relief, **we used every tool in our toolbox to overcome these obstacles.** In October 2016, we opened one of four total Express Lane segments: the northbound north end segment. In October 2017, we opened the northbound south end segment. Weeks later, the full southbound lane opened, **marking a significant milestone for the project and the community.** We've implemented valuable lessons learned from this project on our other projects under construction.

are also provided to traffic reporting services and the news media. **Residents can submit inquiries via our online contact form or through the 24/7 phone hotline.** The project team fields approximately 100 inquiries per month.

What's Next?

All Along the Learning Curve

We know that new traffic patterns can be confusing for drivers who are used to making the same movements on the roadways they travel daily. **The new MoPac Express Lane is already reducing congestion, but we're still working through a learning curve.** The community is also adjusting to the concept of variable tolling. To ensure reliability, there is no cap on the toll rate; it is tied solely to congestion levels. In the week following opening of the full northbound lane, the price of a full-length trip exceeded \$8. As such, we encourage drivers to consider the price before entering the lane to determine whether that trip is worth the price.

Planning for the Future

- **Keeping toll revenue local:** The project was financed through a unique partnership with CAMPO and TxDOT; the agencies have approved grants totaling \$199.5 million to fund the construction. As part of the partnership arrangement, the Mobility Authority will repay \$230 million to a Regional Infrastructure Fund over the next 25 years. CAMPO can then allocate money from that fund to other transportation projects in the region.
- **Building a network:** The Mobility Authority and TxDOT are developing a regional express lane network:
 - Express lanes have been proposed along US 183 from MoPac northward to SH 45/RM 620, which will connect to the MoPac Express Lane.
 - The Mobility Authority is conducting the MoPac South Environmental study, which is considering an extension of the MoPac Express Lane southward to Slaughter Lane.
 - TxDOT is considering building express lanes along the I-35 corridor in Central Texas as part of Mobility35.



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