

**APRIL 27, 2011 CTRMA BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
Summary Sheet**

AGENDA ITEM # 16

Quarterly briefing on the MoPac Improvement Project

Department: Engineering

Associated Costs: None

Funding Source: N/A

Board Action Required: No

Description of Matter: The report is an account of the activities on the MoPac Improvement Project for March, 2011.

Attached documentation for reference:

GEC Activities Report

Contact for further information:

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PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The 11-mile stretch of MoPac between Parmer Lane and Cesar Chavez Street is one of Austin's most important arteries, serving as a key route to downtown and points beyond. As a primary alternative to Interstate 35, MoPac moves more than 180,000 cars and trucks each day. This stretch of MoPac is currently seeing high levels of congestion and unreliable operations. At the urging of local and state leaders, the Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority (Mobility Authority), the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), the City of Austin and Capital Metro (CapMetro) have teamed up to develop a reasonable solution to the mobility problem in this corridor that takes into account the needs of drivers, transit riders and the concerns of surrounding neighbors.

Any proposed improvements would require approval from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). TxDOT and the Mobility Authority are currently working together to complete preliminary schematic design and environmental studies following the requirements set by the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (also known as "NEPA"). The preliminary design and environmental phase is scheduled to be completed by the summer of 2012. If the approved Project has a toll component, the Mobility Authority will take responsibility for the financing, design, construction, operations, and maintenance of the facility.

This report describes the status of the MoPac Improvement Project and document the activities accomplished in the first quarter of 2011.



ACTIVITIES

The following activities have been accomplished by TxDOT, the Mobility Authority, and their consultants during the reporting period.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (EA) AND SCHEMATIC DESIGN

- **Environmental Process Schedule:** The environmental process is on schedule. An environmental finding from FHWA is anticipated in the fall of 2012
- **EA Document Status:** TxDOT's consultant, AECOM, submitted a draft EA for Mobility Authority and TxDOT review on February 28. The Mobility Authority returned comments to TxDOT on March 21 and attended a comment resolution meeting on April 4. The TxDOT Environmental Division is also reviewing the EA and is expected to return comments by mid April. The various comments are being addressed by AECOM and a revised environmental document will be resubmitted to TxDOT in anticipation of submittal to FHWA.
- **Schematic Design:** The draft project schematic, preliminary drainage report, and traffic phasing plan were also submitted by AECOM to be reviewed by the Mobility Authority. Comments were submitted to TxDOT on March 30.
- **Design Exceptions:** In order to avoid significant acquisition of right of way on the southern portion of the Project, the design of the recommended preferred alternative requires several design exceptions for reduced lane and shoulder widths as well as vertical clearances at Duval Road, Braker Lane, Capital of Texas Highway, Hancock Drive, and Anderson Lane. These exceptions will need approval from FHWA. There is ongoing coordination between the Project Team and the federal agency in order to obtain this approval.
- **Sound Wall Workshops:** The planning of seven (7) sound wall workshops to be held in June, July, and August is underway. At these workshops, property owners that are adjacent to the proposed sound walls will be given the chance to vote on whether or not they want the wall as well as give comment on the proposed aesthetic design for the sound walls.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Context Sensitive Design (CSD)

- **Project Aesthetics:** Utilizing the Aesthetics Advisory Committee recommendations from 2007, the Mobility Authority team members are developing context sensitive aesthetic components to create constructible, maintainable, and cost effective solutions within the MoPac corridor. These aesthetic components may be incorporated into the final design of the Project's sound walls, bridge structures, retaining walls, intersections, signage, lighting, and landscape areas. The Mobility Authority, TxDOT, and City of Austin held a workshop on March 9 to kick off the development of the context sensitive design package.
- **Context Sensitive Design Advisory Committee:** The Project Team have invited the original 2007 Aesthetics Advisory Committee members and recruited additional members to form a Context Sensitive Design Advisory Committee (CSDAC). These members include representatives from the Texas Historical Commission, MoNAC Neighborhood Association, Deep Eddy Neighborhood Association, Highland Park West Neighborhood Association, Old Enfield Neighborhood Association, Allendale Neighborhood Association, Northwest Austin

Civic Association, Old West Austin Neighborhood Association, Brykerwoods Neighborhood Association, Balcones West Neighborhood Association, Highland Park West Balconies Area Neighborhood Association, and Austin State School. Using the original Aesthetic Advisory Committee’s work as a guideline, the CSDAC will help review and discuss the context sensitive concepts that are being developed by the Mobility Authority. The CSDAC met on March 24 and April 25, and the group will continue to meet through the summer and fall as the concepts are refined.

- **Bike/Pedestrian Mobility:** The Project Team is also working with the bike/pedestrian mobility community, City of Austin, CAMPO, and FHWA on potential improvements to the bike and pedestrian facilities along and across the MoPac Corridor.

Messaging, Information, and Meetings

- **Stakeholder Meetings:** There is continued coordination with stakeholders. Various stakeholder meetings held in the first quarter of this year include:
 - Neighborhood Associations including: Old Enfield Neighborhood Association, MONAC, and OWANA
 - University of Texas
 - Camp Mabry
 - Bike/pedestrian mobility representatives from CAMPO, FHWA, and the City of Austin
- **Upcoming Open House:** Planning for a Public Open House on May 26 has been initiated. This open house will present the aesthetic design concepts that are under development, show results of bike and pedestrian mobility coordination, and provide an update on the EA status.
- **Project Updates:** The Mobility Authority sends Project Updates via e-mail on a bi-weekly basis to several key stakeholders. These Project Updates provide a short summary of the progress achieved on the Project over the previous weeks.
- **E-Newsletter:** An e-Newsletter has been drafted for distribution in May.
- **Informational Workshops:** Informational Workshops are anticipated for late this year with the purpose of providing general information to key stakeholders on managed lanes and dynamic pricing.
- **Texas Transportation Institute Participation:** The Mobility Authority has engaged the Texas Transportation Institute (TTI) to potentially conduct focus group studies on signage, marking, and operations for Express Lanes if the recommended preferred alternative is approved by FHWA. TTI will also provide technical support for the informational workshops.

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT/ DESIGN-BUILDER PROCUREMENT

- **Union Pacific Railroad Coordination:** In March, the Mobility Authority met with Union Pacific Railroad representatives at their headquarters in Omaha, Nebraska, to discuss the Project and the possible use of some UPRR right of way to allow for construction of refuge bays in the median for the recommended preferred alternative. UPRR representatives gained a better understanding of the Project, and both entities were able to improve upon already good working relationships
- **Comprehensive Development Agreement (CDA):** Previous lessons learned, success measures for this Project, and risk assessments have all been documented. Over the next

several months, draft documents will be prepared and supporting reference documents, designs, and agreements will be developed.

- **Utilities:** TxDOT and the Mobility Authority are starting discussions with major utilities along the corridor. The Team's goal is to reduce the number of relocations and start long lead time efforts to reduce impact to the construction schedule.
- **Cost Estimates:** The development of an estimate of probable construction cost is underway. This estimate will be used in determining the feasibility of the Project and financing plan.
- **Access Locations:** Currently, the identified access locations for the proposed design include: northbound travelers could enter at Lady Bird Lake, downtown at Cesar Chavez, or RM 2222; and exit at RM 2222, a ramp before Parmer Lane, and after Parmer Lane. Southbound travelers could enter before Parmer Lane or at RM 2222; and exit at RM 2222, downtown at Cesar Chavez, or at Lady Bird Lake. These locations are subject to change. Coordination with TxDOT, City of Austin, and University of Texas' Center for Transportation Research (CTR) continues for analysis and incorporation of the Connections to Downtown into the project.

FUNDING/ AGREEMENTS

- **TIFIA Program:** The Mobility Authority submitted a Letter of Interest to the TIFIA Program, requesting an \$82 million loan that would enhance the Project funding package and would leverage these funds for the future construction of the Project.
- **City of Austin Prop 1:** Discussions are ongoing with City of Austin on the Prop 1 Bond package of \$100k for MoPac Corridor with a matching \$200k federal grant.
- **City of Austin 2012 Bond Election:** The City of Austin may consider potential funding opportunities for the Project in the 2012 Bond Election.
- **T&R Studies:** A Level 2 Traffic and Revenue (T&R) Study has been completed and a draft report was submitted. Results are being reviewed by the Mobility Authority and TTI is conducting a Peer Review of the traffic model and assumptions. An Investment Grade (Level 3) Study will be initiated later this year.

SCHEDULE

The overall Project remains on schedule. An environmental finding from FHWA is anticipated by the fall of 2012. If the recommended preferred alternative is approved by FHWA, the bond sale would occur in early 2013 followed by an anticipated start of design and construction. It is anticipated that, following this schedule, a facility could potentially be open to traffic in 2015.

SCHEDULE RISK ASSESSMENT



Environmental Process / TxDOT & FHWA Coordination



Resolution on Design Exceptions by FHWA



Public and Political Opinion



Coordination with UPRR / City of Austin / CapMetro



Traffic and Revenue - Financing

UPCOMING MILESTONES

- Re-submittal of Draft EA to TxDOT
- Context Sensitive Design Advisory Committee Meetings in May/June
- Public Open House on May 26
- Sound Wall Workshops in June, July, and August
- Resolution of Design Exceptions by August

MILESTONES MATRIX

Milestone	Date	Status
Restart Environmental Study and Public Involvement	Summer 2010	Complete
Market Valuation / Exercise Primacy	Fall 2010	Complete
Develop and Refine Preliminary Alternatives	Fall 2010	Complete
Conduct Open House Meetings (Round 1 & 2)	Fall 2010	Complete
Reasonable Alternatives Refinement	Winter 2010/ 2011	Complete
Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) and Schematic Complete - Initiate Review Process	February 2011	Complete
TxDOT Austin District EA Review Begins	February 2011	Complete
Restart Aesthetics Committee	March 2011	Complete
Complete Level 2 Traffic and Revenue (T&R)	May 2011	On Schedule
Context Sensitive Design Advisory Committee Meetings	March-May 2011	On Schedule
TxDOT Environmental Division EA Review	Spring 2011	On Schedule
Conduct Open House Meeting (Round 3)	May 2011	On Schedule
Conduct Sound Wall Workshops	Summer 2011	On Schedule
FHWA Resolution on Design Exceptions	Summer 2011	
FHWA Begins EA Review	Summer 2011	
FHWA Begin Schematic Review	Summer 2011	
Conduct Open House Meetings (Round 4)	Summer 2011	
FHWA Approval of Schematic Design	Fall 2011	
EA is deemed "Satisfactory for Further Processing" by FHWA	Winter 2011/2012	
Start Design/Build Procurement	Winter 2011/2012	
Conduct Community Open Houses and Public Hearings on the Draft EA	Spring 2012	
Submittal of Final EA to TxDOT/FHWA	Spring 2012	
Environmental Finding from FHWA	Summer 2012	
Complete Investment Grade T&R	Fall 2012	
Complete Design/Build Procurement	Winter 2012/2013	
Bond Sale; Groundbreaking	Spring 2013	