

**JULY 28, 2011 CTRMA BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
Summary Sheet**

AGENDA ITEM # 15

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 from April through June, 2011.

Attached documentation for reference:

GEC Quarterly Activities Report and Board Presentation

Contact for further information:

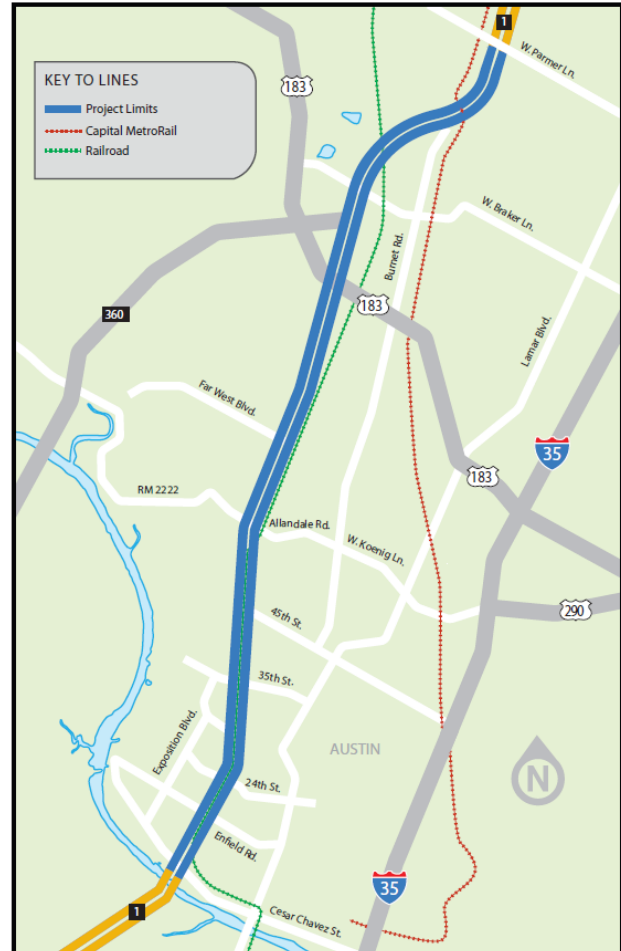
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PROJECT DESCRIPTION

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 documents the activities accomplished in the second 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:** The draft EA was revised by TxDOT's consultant to address comments received from the Mobility Authority and TxDOT's Environmental Affairs Division (ENV). After confirming Mobility Authority comments were addressed, the draft EA was re-submitted to ENV on July 1. If ENV deems that their comments were satisfactorily addressed, ENV will forward the document to FHWA for review and comment. Current schedule reflects a submittal to FHWA by September 22, 2011.
- **Schematic Design:** The draft project schematic is currently being reviewed by TxDOT's Design Division and FHWA. It is anticipated that the schematic will be finalized before the end of the year after design exceptions and alternative analysis are approved by FHWA.
- **Design Exceptions:** In order to avoid significant acquisition of right of way on the southern portion of the Project, the design of the majority of alternatives requires several design exceptions for reduced lane and shoulder widths as well as vertical clearances at some overpasses. These exceptions have been submitted to FHWA for approval. A decision is anticipated by September.
- **Sound Wall Workshops:** The seven planned Sound Wall Workshops have been underway since late June. Each workshop is targeted to a specific neighborhood and specific adjacent property owners who will be given the chance to vote on whether or not they want a sound wall. The purpose of the workshop is to update neighborhoods on the proposed sound wall locations, heights, designs, colors, and materials. The workshops for the Old West Austin, Clarksville, West Austin, Old Enfield, Pemberton Heights, and Bryker Woods neighborhoods have been held by the time of this report, and the remaining workshops are as follows: July 28 for Allandale, August 2 for Highland Park West/Balcones, and August 18 for Oakmont Heights & Westminster.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Context Sensitive Design (CSD)

- **Context Sensitive Design Advisory Committee:** The Context Sensitive Design Advisory Committee (CSDAC) met on April 25, May 16, and June 6 to continue the process of refining concepts to create a constructible, maintainable, and cost effective aesthetic solution within the MoPac corridor. The concepts were presented at the May 26 Open House and, after responding to public comment, the final results of the Committee's hard work are on display at this summer's Sound Wall Workshops.
- **Bike/Pedestrian Mobility:** The Project Team has continued to coordinate 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. An approach has been identified and is being incorporated into the draft EA. Components

include north/south improvements as well as east-west connectivity improvements where feasible. Later in the year, there will be community outreach about the progress of the inclusion of bike/pedestrian mobility components in the project design.

Messaging, Information, and Meetings

- **Stakeholder Meetings:** The Project Team continues to coordinate with stakeholders. Various stakeholder meetings held in the second quarter of this year include:
 - Old West Austin Neighborhood Association (OWANA)
 - Camp Mabry
 - Bike/pedestrian mobility representatives from CAMPO, FHWA, City of Austin, BikeTexas, League of Bicycle Voters, and Austin Metro Trails and Greenways.
 - Utility Representatives – including electric (both transmission and distribution), water, fiber optic, and cable
- **Open House Meetings:** In May, an Open House meeting was held at Gullett Elementary School to provide an opportunity for the public to view and comment on the project aesthetic concepts as well as receive an update on the status of the Environmental Study. The meeting was well attended, and an impressive amount of quality feedback was received. Another open house is planned for the fall following FHWA's review and anticipated approval of the Design Exceptions and Alternatives Analysis.
- **Informational Workshops:** Informational Workshops are anticipated for late this year with the purpose of providing general information to key stakeholders on express lanes and dynamic pricing.
- **Project Updates:** The Mobility Authority sends Project Updates via e-mail on a monthly basis to several key stakeholders. These Project Updates provide a short summary of the progress achieved on the Project over the previous weeks. Project Updates were e-mailed on April 14, May 12, and June 17.
- **E-Newsletter:** An e-Newsletter was distributed on May 13. The next e-Newsletter is planned for late August.
- **Project Focus Groups:** The Mobility Authority has engaged the Texas Transportation Institute (TTI) to conduct focus group studies on signage, marking, and operations for the Express Lanes alternative if it moves forward as the FHWA-approved recommended preferred alternative. TTI will also provide technical support for the Informational Workshops. TTI met with the Project Team during the reporting period to discuss existing and proposed Dynamic Message Signs (DMS)/ Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) infrastructure and how it can be best incorporated into the project.

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT / DESIGN-BUILDER PROCUREMENT

- **Project Aesthetics:** Utilizing the preferred aesthetic concept identified during the Context Sensitive Design process, the Project Team is developing aesthetic guidelines for the project. These guidelines will be included in the contract documents to make sure the final design and materials reflect the aesthetics selected.
- **Union Pacific Railroad Coordination:** The Project Team will begin drafting agreements which will engage the UPRR in design review, flagging services, and negotiations of possible temporary easements for construction of bridge structures and other work in and around

UPRR right of way. The UPRR did not respond favorably to the Mobility Authority's previous request to investigate shared use easements for refuge bays /access locations in the portion of the project where the UPRR is in the median.

- **Comprehensive Development Agreement (CDA):** The Project Team has been in the process of preparing draft CDA documents and developing supporting reference documents, designs, and agreements. Currently, this activity is on hold as the Project Team reviews the implications of potentially developing the project through a P3 process.
- **Cost Estimates:** The development of an updated estimate of probable construction cost has been prepared. This estimate will continue to be refined and updated as the project scope is refined and financing requirements are clear. The estimate utilizes a risk based analysis which will provide a statistical probability of a cost range.
- **Utilities:** TxDOT and the Mobility Authority are continuing discussions with major utilities along the corridor. The Team's goal is to reduce the number of utility relocations and start long lead-time efforts to reduce impact to the construction schedule.
- **Operations Analysis:** University of Texas' Center for Transportation Research (CTR) provided the results of their analysis of the downtown street system operations that is anticipated to occur after the project opens, specifically with regard to the proposed connections to Cesar Chavez/ 5th Street. The results were submitted to the Mobility Authority, TxDOT, and City of Austin traffic staff on May 31. Based on the study's assumptions, the results indicate that the MoPac project will not negatively affect downtown traffic during the morning peak period.
- **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, HNTB, 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.

FUNDING / AGREEMENTS

- **US DOT Funding Sources:** The TIFIA Program reviewed and declined the Letter of Interest submitted by the Mobility Authority which requested an \$82 million loan to enhance the Project funding package. The Project Team is reviewing the possibility of applying for funding from the upcoming TIGER III Discretionary Grant and/or the TIGER TIFIA Program.
- **City of Austin Prop 1:** Discussions are still ongoing with City of Austin on the use of the \$100K included in the Prop 1 Bond package for the MoPac project. This \$100k comes with a matching \$200k federal grant.
- **City of Austin 2012 Bond Election:** Mobility Authority staff has initiated conversation with the City of Austin for potential funding opportunities for the Project that might be included in the City's 2012 Bond Election.

SCHEDULE

The overall Project remains on schedule. An environmental finding from FHWA is anticipated by the fall of 2012. If the Express Lanes alternative moves forward as the FHWA-approved recommended preferred alternative and the project is further developed as design/build, 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. If the project moves forward as a P3, it is still anticipated that they facility could 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

- Submit Draft EA to FHWA
- Sound Wall Workshops in July and August
- FHWA Resolution of Design Exceptions and Alternatives Analysis
- Determination of Project Development approach (D/B vs. P3)

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	Complete
Context Sensitive Design Advisory Committee Meetings	March-May 2011	Complete
TxDOT Environmental Division EA Review	Spring 2011	In Progress
Conduct Open House Meeting (Round 3)	May 2011	Complete
Conduct Sound Wall Workshops	Summer 2011	In Progress
FHWA Resolution on Design Exceptions	Summer 2011	In Progress
FHWA Begin Schematic Review	Summer 2011	In Progress
FHWA Begins EA Review	Fall 2011	
FHWA Approval of Schematic Design	Fall 2011	
Conduct Open House Meetings (Round 4)	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	