



Meeting Date: January 27, 2016
AGENDA ITEM # 16

Quarterly update on transportation projects under construction and development.

CENTRAL TEXAS
Regional Mobility Authority

Strategic Plan Relevance: Regional Mobility
Department: Engineering
Contact: Justin Word, P.E., Director of Engineering
Associated Costs: N/A
Funding Source: N/A
Action Requested: Briefing and Board Discussion Only

Summary:

The Director of Engineering will provide a summary of project activities from October 2015 through December 2015 for the following projects:

- MoPac South Environmental Study
- 183 North Environmental Study
- Oak Hill Parkway
- SH 71 Express

Backup provided: Quarterly Activities Reports



**CENTRAL TEXAS
Regional Mobility Authority**

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES

**Quarterly
Progress
Report**

January 2016

OAK HILL PARKWAY

MOPAC SOUTH ENVIRONMENTAL STUDY

MOPAC INTERSECTIONS ENVIRONMENTAL STUDY

183 NORTH MOBILITY PROJECT



Oak Hill Parkway

INTRODUCTION

This report documents and describes the Oak Hill Parkway Project for the period through December 31, 2015. This Project is currently in the environmental clearance phase of development which requires the completion of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), consistent with the regulations contained in the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA). The Project is currently being developed jointly by the Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority and the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) Austin District.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Project encompasses the area surrounding the existing “Y at Oak Hill” intersection of US 290 and SH 71. It includes the study of US 290 West from FM 1826 to Loop 1 and SH 71 West from Silvermine Drive to US 290 West. A transition may be necessary through Circle Drive to ensure adequate and safe operations of the facility.

In 2012, TxDOT and the Mobility Authority initiated a new environmental study of US 290 and SH 71, called the Oak Hill Parkway. Together, TxDOT, the Mobility Authority, their consultants, partner agencies, and the public developed mobility improvement concepts and a methodology for screening the concepts. The concepts represented the range of reasonable alternatives required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The preliminary concepts were presented to the public during numerous public involvement activities.



The iterative process involved initial scoping discussions, collaboration regarding concepts to be evaluated and the project’s purpose and need, evaluation of the concepts through a screening process, and carrying forward for further study the concepts that best meet the project purpose and need. As of January 2015, the remaining build concepts are being further developed as Alternative A and Alternative C. The No Build, or “Do Nothing,” Alternative is also being carried forward and will serve as a baseline for analysis. These alternatives will be evaluated in detail during the Draft EIS process, resulting in the identification of a preferred alternative.

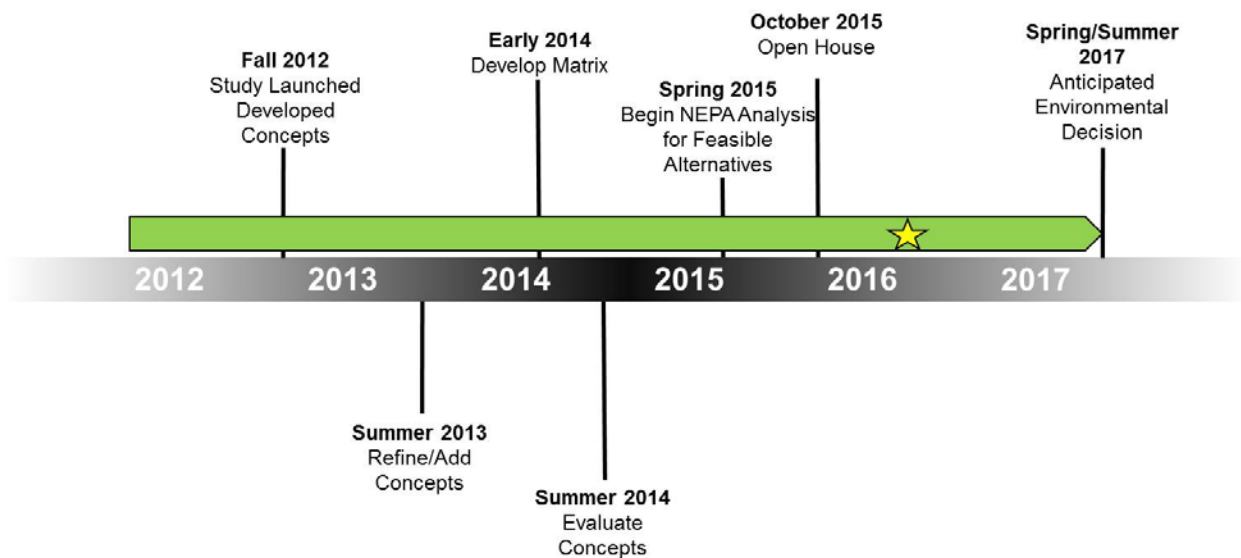
The EIS document is currently being prepared by a consultant team led by Rodriguez Transportation Group, Inc. (RTG) under a professional services agreement with the TxDOT Austin District. The Mobility Authority, supported by Atkins under their General Engineering Consultant contract, is coordinating closely with both TxDOT and RTG as the document is being developed.

RECENT ACTIVITIES

- Significant outreach to stakeholders occurred in the fall and winter of 2015. The team continues to contact and meet with stakeholders with concerns regarding right-of-way acquisition and other project-related issues. Multiple meetings have been held with OHAN leadership, including on October 19.
- On Thursday, October 29, 2015, TxDOT and the Mobility Authority held the sixth open house for the Oak Hill Parkway project. More than 155 members of the public attended to learn more about and provide comments on: an updated look at the design of Alternatives A and C, including artistic renderings of key intersections; the draft matrix for this third phase of evaluation; an update on designs and ideas for Context Sensitive Solutions including bicycle/pedestrian improvements and intersection aesthetics; and information provided at the recent Water Quality Workshop including off-site water detention.
- Efforts with TxDOT and the City of Austin continue for potential off-site water detention facilities.
- The design level schematics for both Alternatives A and C are being refined as the engineering aspects are reviewed and as a result of public comment from the sixth open house.
- The environmental study team has begun the robust analysis of Alternatives A, C, and the No Build Alternative against the phase three evaluation criteria. The results of this analysis will indicate the preferred alternative. We anticipate the evaluation results as well as the full Draft Environmental Impact Statement being made available for public review and comment in 2017.
- The public involvement team will continue to work with the community during 2016 on landscaping, tree re-location possibilities, context sensitive design of structures, Williamson Creek enhancements, funding, and noise. A public hearing is anticipated to be held in the first quarter of 2017.

SCHEDULE

The Environmental Impact Statement process is into its fourth year of development and is now anticipated to take approximately five years to complete.





DEVELOPING THE PROJECT WITH THE COMMUNITY

AVOID MEETING FATIGUE – GO ONLINE!
We build informed consent through a host of different online methods, including: lots and lots of online surveys, newsy e-newsletters, e-blasts with a thorough 'what we heard from you' recap after events, an online chat with the project team, promoted twitter campaigns, a mobile-friendly website, and a robust context sensitive solutions online survey through MetroQuest.

DIG DEEPER INTO PUBLIC INTERESTS!
We've held 12 facilitated, issue-specific workshops that feature interactive exercises and dig deeper into community concerns like tolling, water quality, and project aesthetics.

HUMANIZE THE PROJECT'S VOICE!
We quickly respond to all public inquiries with a personal email or phone call, and we meet face-to-face with stakeholders early and often. At our big open houses, they know our names and know we care.

BE ROBUST WITHOUT BUSTING YOUR BUDGET!
With two agencies involved, we manage in-house personnel and consultants to best meet all of our needs, as well as use the agencies' web-based resources. We make strategic choices when to spend the big bucks (i.e. 19k direct mail pieces, oh my!) and when to conserve (i.e. have a project table at another project's open house).

BE STRATEGIC WHEN AND HOW YOU PUT ON A PUBLIC MEETING!
We use the tools in our tool box strategically; a tailored approach instead of 'checking the box' public involvement. We spend the \$\$\$ and the effort on large open house-style public meetings at key milestones when the community can meaningfully make an impact on the project.

DON'T LOSE SIGHT OF STRATEGY!
Our team consists of two transportation agencies and a whole slew of consultants. We all meet quarterly to discuss how our outreach strategy and implementation meets the Bleiker Method. This ensures that we're speaking with one strategic voice!

WHAT IS THE OAK HILL PARKWAY?
Nestled in the Texas Hill Country is the intersection of US 290 and SH 71. For decades, the community has faced one of the most infamous congestion snarls in Austin at the "Y" in Oak Hill. We are in year four of a five year Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process for the Oak Hill Parkway Project. This proposed upgrade of a four lane roadway to a six lane toll facility, includes improved and expanded non-tolled travel lanes; new direct connections at the interchange of US 290 and SH 71; and new bicycle facilities and roadway aesthetics through context sensitive solutions.

OBJECTIVES ARE THE "TRUNK" OF THE PROJECT
OUR STRATEGY IS FOCUSED ON OBJECTIVES, NOT TECHNIQUES:
1. See the project through our stakeholders' eyes
2. Bring the public along with us in our decision-making
3. Articulate and clarify key issues
4. Ensure the public has ownership in the project
5. Depolarize opposition
6. Build informed consent

OAK HILL PARKWAY TIMELINE

- **1980s:** Studies on how to fix the problem at US 290 and SH 71 begin, followed by a series of stops/starts
- **2007:** The most recent study is stopped by public controversy and lack of funding
- **2012:** The project is rebooted as "Oak Hill Parkway" – a name chosen as part of a community "envisioning" process
- **2016:** We continue to build informed consent, now focusing on concerns about toll financing, tree preservation, and elevated structures
- **The future:** As the Draft EIS is prepared, we work to meet our objectives in advance of the public hearing in 2017

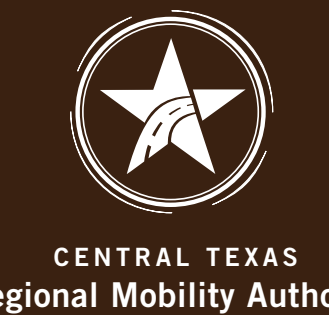
ROOTED IN COMMUNITY CONSENT USING THE BLEIKER INFORMED CONSENT METHOD*

*LEARN MORE ABOUT THE BLEIKER INFORMED CONSENT METHOD at www.IPMP.com

WE USE EACH OF THESE FOUR POINTS IN EVERYTHING WE DO:

1. We're solving a serious problem that has to be addressed.
2. We're the right agency to be addressing the problem; it would be irresponsible for us not to!
3. Our approach is reasonable, sensible, and responsible.
4. We are listening and we do care.

VISIT US ONLINE AT OAKHILLPARKWAY.com

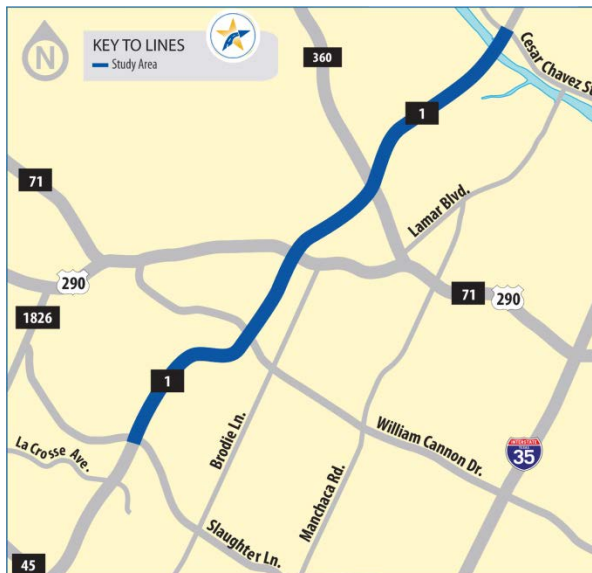




MoPac South Environmental Study

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

MoPac Expressway south of Cesar Chavez Street is a vital transportation artery for Austin. Initial construction started in 1973 and various sections have been under construction for the past 40 years. Currently, this eight-mile section is a four- to six-lane freeway which attracts as many as 130,000 cars and trucks per day on the north end. Over time, growth in the corridor – residential, retail and commercial – led to increased congestion and reduced mobility. Funding for an environmental study along with preliminary and final design was allocated to the project under Rider 42 of the General Appropriations Act (2011, HB 1, 82nd Legislature, Regular to the Session). Rider 42 funds are state funds from Proposition 12 set aside to study the most congested roadways in Texas.



The Mobility Authority, supported by HNTB under their General Engineering Consultant contract, is leading the environmental study and community outreach program which launched in April 2014 in partnership with the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT).

The environmental study will thoroughly analyze the corridor from Cesar Chavez Street to Slaughter Lane and determine the best alternative for improving mobility. The result will be documented in an Environmental Assessment that will consider “build” and “no build” options. Over the course of the study, a full range of alternatives will be developed that will take into account the needs of drivers,

transit riders, bicyclists and pedestrians as well as surrounding businesses, neighborhoods and the environment. Through extensive analysis of the engineering feasibility, social, economic and environmental impacts of each alternative, as well as consideration of public input, the study team will recommend a solution.

RECENT ACTIVITIES

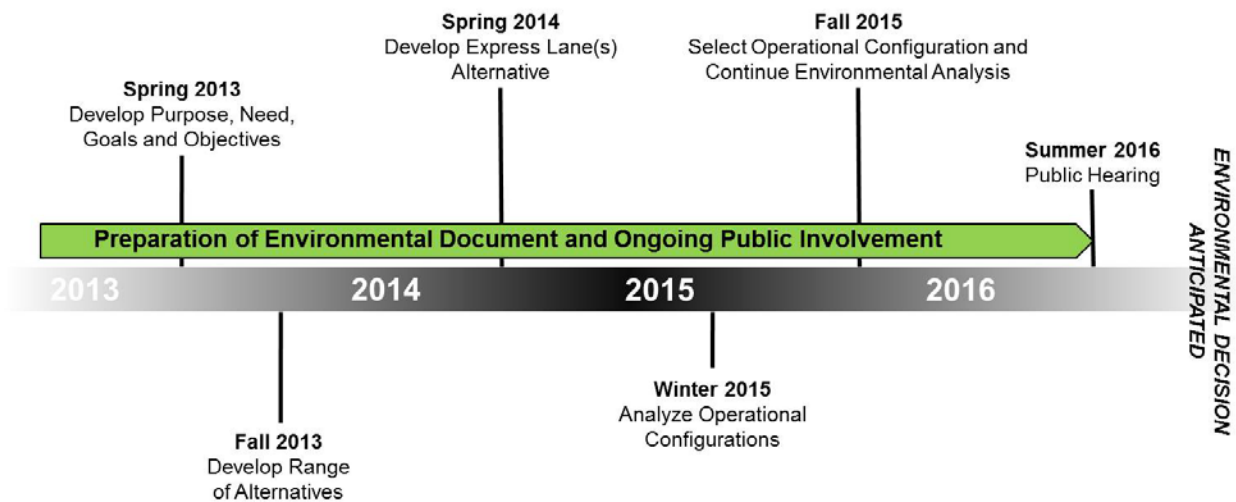
- The project team finalized preparations for the November 10th Open House and Virtual Open House, including the development of a series of informational videos that explained the benefits and drawbacks of each configuration, provided information on the project’s potential to impact downtown traffic, and depicted the operational configurations of the configurations using VISSIM and CORSIM analysis tools.
- Stakeholder meetings/workshops designed to share information and receive feedback were held with the City of Austin Parks Department and the City of Rollingwood on October 19, with the Sierra

Club on October 27, with Austin High School and Cesar Chavez Street stakeholders on November 5, and with parks stakeholders on November 19.

- The project team began work to update traffic projections to be based upon the 2040 CAMPO travel demand model.
- More than 1,500 written comments from the November 10 public meeting were received, and will be analyzed and incorporated into the Environmental Study where possible. In addition, responses to each comment will be generated and released in an Open House Summary and Analysis document. This document will later become a part of the Environmental Assessment.
- The project team is utilizing the input received from the November 10 public meeting, along with the study's Purpose, Need, Goals and Objectives to prepare a framework for the evaluation and selection of a preferred configuration for the Express Lanes Alternative.

SCHEDULE

The high-level schedule below has been updated to reflect the extension of the environmental process launched in early 2013.



MoPac Intersections Environmental Study

PROJECT DESCRIPTION



The Mobility Authority, supported by HNTB under their General Engineering Consultant contract, and in coordination with the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), prepared an environmental study document for proposed operational and safety improvements including grade separation of the MoPac mainlanes under Slaughter Lane and La Crosse Avenue. The environmental study launched in May of 2013. If the proposed improvements are environmentally cleared, the project will be turned over to TxDOT to design, construct, and maintain.

RECENT ACTIVITIES

- A Public Hearing was held on July 30, 2015 at Bowie High School. More than 120 people attended. The project team received more than 300 official comments.
- The project team analyzed the comments, developed responses and resubmitted the EA to TxDOT.
- TxDOT's Environmental Division approved the draft Environmental Assessment (EA) as satisfactory for further processing. The document is available for public review on the project website.

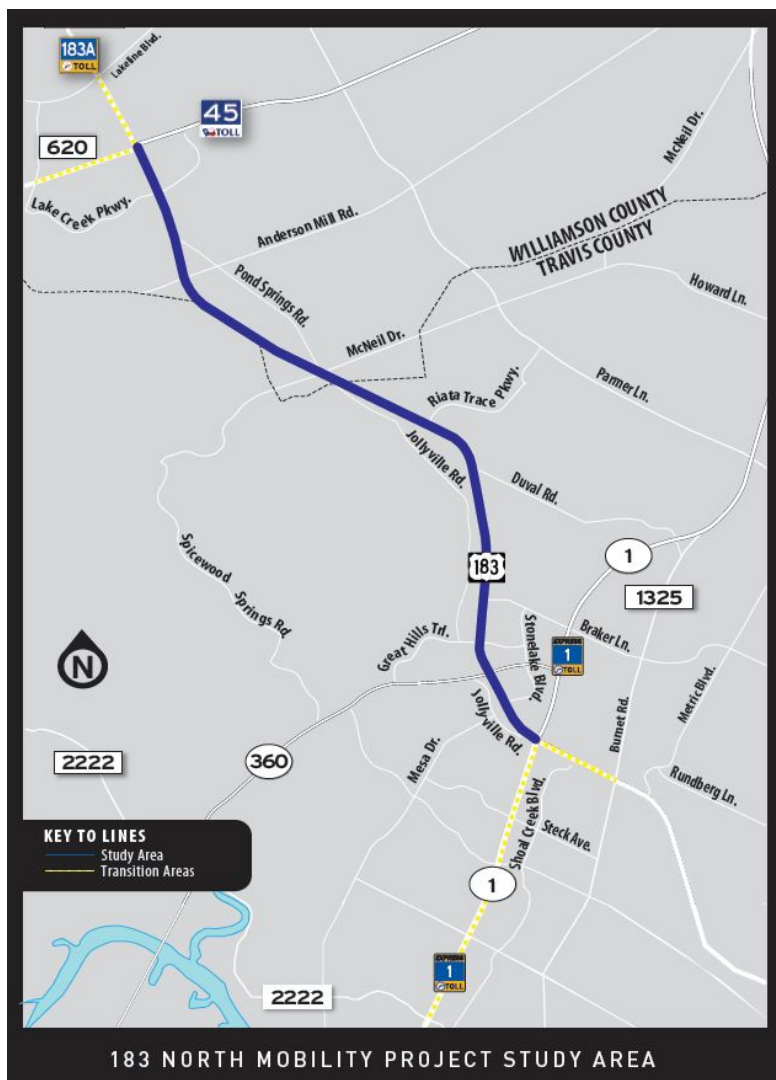
SCHEDULE

An environmental decision was received on December 22, 2015. Now that the project is environmentally cleared, TxDOT will assume responsibility for final design, construction, and public communication.

183 NORTH MOBILITY PROJECT

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

In August 2013, the Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority (Mobility Authority), supported by HNTB under their General Engineering Consultant contract, and the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) launched the 183 North Mobility Project. This environmental study, nearing completion, thoroughly analyzed an eight-mile segment of US 183 between SH 45 North and MoPac to determine the best options for managing congestion, as well as improving transit reliability and emergency response times. The study will also look at ways to connect mobility improvements on 183 North to the MoPac corridor.



The 183 North Mobility Project was selected as one of the recipients of the CAMPO Surface Transportation Program – Metropolitan Mobility (STP-MM) funding program. Proposed improvements include the addition of two lanes in each direction in the median of the existing US 183 North (from SH 45 North to MoPac), as well as direct connectors at the US 183/ SH 45 interchange and at the US 183/MoPac interchange. In addition, inclusion of a fourth general purpose lane is proposed in both directions to provide four continuous general purpose lanes south of McNeil Drive. In summer 2014, the team announced that the alternatives being carried forward for further study are Express Lanes and the No Build alternative. A decision on which will be implemented is expected in early 2016.

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

- The draft environmental document, including all technical memoranda and social, economic, and environmental impact evaluations, was made publicly available on October 12, 2015.
- The 100% schematic design is pending resolution of design exception comments and signage updates; review and approval of the design exceptions are being coordinated with TxDOT.
- A CAMPO 2040 Plan amendment has been proposed to revise the 183 North project description to include an extension of the fourth general lane and revise the total project cost to \$650 million. The plan amendment will be an action item at the February Transportation Policy Board meeting.
- Opportunities for transit expansion are currently being evaluated and coordinated with Capital Metro.
- The fourth Technical Working Group meeting was held October 28, 2015.
- Public Hearing was held on November 12, 2015. The opportunity to review and receive public comment on the draft environmental document concluded on November 22, 2015. The draft Public Hearing Summary and Response report was submitted to TxDOT for review on December 18, 2015.
- The complete list of public hearing comments was posted to the project website on January 8, 2015.
- The project team provided a project update to the City of Austin Council on November 18, 2015.
- A stakeholder meeting with City of Austin, Travis County, and bicycle advocacy groups was held on November 19, 2015. The project team presented to the Bicycle Advisory Council on December 18, 2015. A technical meeting with Bicycle Advisory Council is planned for February 17, 2016.

SCHEDULE

An environmental finding from TxDOT’s environmental division is expected in early 2016.

