

July 25, 2018 AGENDA ITEM **#2**3

Executive Director Board Report

Strategic Plan Relevance:	Regional Mobility
Department:	Executive
Contact:	Mike Heiligenstein, Executive Director
Associated Costs:	N/A
Funding Source:	N/A
Action Requested:	Briefing and Board Discussion Only

Executive Director Board Report

- A. Projects under development
- B. Local government highlights
- C. Park and Ride
- D. Austin Memorial Park landscaping coordination
- E. Texas Senate Committee on Transportation Hearing August 27, 2018

Backup Provided: Backup for 23.D.



July 25, 2018 AGENDA ITEM **#**23 D

Executive Director Board Report MoPac Improvement Project (MIP) Austin Memorial Park landscaping coordination

Strategic Plan Relevance:	Deliver Responsible Mobility Solutions that Respect the Communities We Serve
Department:	Executive
Contact:	Mike Heiligenstein, Executive Director Jeff Dailey, Deputy Executive Director
Associated Costs:	N/A
Funding Source:	N/A
Action Requested:	Information Only

Summary:

The City of Austin, Texas Historical Commission, TxDOT, and the Mobility Authority are in the process of considering alternative landscaping options for the Austin Memorial Cemetery. The area of concern involves proposed tree plantings in the TxDOT right of way along the northbound RM 2222 exit ramp adjacent to the Austin Memorial Park Cemetery. The City of Austin owns the cemetery, and maintains both the cemetery and TxDOT right-of-way in this area.

Landscaping commitments were included in the MoPac Improvement Project (MIP) Environmental Assessment, an Interlocal agreement with the City of Austin, and included in the MIP design build contract. The current plan proposes to plant 55 trees with 37 trees to be located along the narrow strip of TxDOT right-of-way, immediately adjacent to the cemetery and gravesites. Due to new information and further consideration, implementation of the original plan is problematic. Some the reasons are as follows:

- MoPac retaining wall footers that conflict with planting locations.
- Austin Energy maintenance requirements.
- Need for an archeological survey for every planting location.
- Long-term viability of the trees.

The City of Austin sent a letter dated May 16, 2018 expressing concern over the current plan, and recommended that no tree planting in the area immediately adjacent to the cemetery and gravesite.

In addition to the above reasons, the current plan represents a significant risk to the project and Mobility Authority in both project cost and schedule. It is for these reasons that alternative plans are under consideration. We are working to develop a plan that respects all parties involved through the environmental process and meets the requirements of the jurisdictional agencies.

During the public comment at the June 2018 Board meeting, Sharon Blythe expressed concern over the possible change in plans. Ms. Blythe represents AustinRAMP (Rescue Austin Memorial Park), which is a group that have an interest in the cemetery. TxDOT also classifies them as a consulting party for this project. Input from a consulting party is advisory in nature and, as compared to typical public and neighborhood outreach effort, provides input that is more direct. The agencies with jurisdiction (TxDOT, City of Austin, and Texas Historic Commission, hereafter "jurisdictional agencies") receive input from many stakeholders, including designated consulting parties, and consider that input as they develop their environmental decisions. TxDOT will make the final decision.

It is normal practice for changes in design details to address new and more detailed project information as it becomes available. Mobility Authority staff are working closely with the jurisdictional agencies, as required by the Environmental document, to develop and implement a plan meeting their intent and direction. We expect TxDOT will make a determination as to the most appropriate alternative within the next few weeks.

Finally, for your information, we provide the following background documents:

- May 16, 2018 letter from the City of Austin to CTRMA.
- Excerpt from the MoPac Improvement Project Environmental Assessment referencing landscaping requirements.
- Photo of RM 2222 northbound ramp and Austin Memorial Cemetery.
- Landscape Enhancements exhibit depicting the current plan.

Backup provided: Austin Memorial Cemetery Background Information



May 16, 2018

Mr. Mike Heiligenstein Executive Director Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority 3300 North IH-35, Suite 300 Austin, Texas 78705

Dear Mr. Heiligenstein: Muke

This letter is to convey the City of Austin's position on landscape elements to be installed in right of way owned by the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) adjacent to Austin Memorial Park Cemetery as part of the Mobility Authority's MoPac Express project. First, I want to thank you for the time the Mobility Authority staff have put into coordination with the City on this topic. The Mobility Authority and TxDOT are under no obligation to honor the City's position on this matter, but have nonetheless have been active partners and listened to City staff's valid concerns. I appreciate that effort and hope that you will do your best to accommodate our recommendations.

As you know, Austin residents and City staff are very passionate and protective of Austin's urban forest and certainly support initiatives that help enhance this vital resource. Additionally, the Austin community is very passionate about honoring their ancestry and about the care and maintenance of cemeteries. This project is a cross section of two very important subjects. Having reviewed the proposed planting schedule, several items of concern were raised by the Parks and Recreation's Forestry Unit, Cemetery Division and Austin Energy's Distribution Process. Due to spacing concerns, growth patterns and proximity to grave sites, the City recommends against the proposed plan presented by Mr. Lloyd Chance in his April 26, 2018 letter to the City. We recommend no plantings in this area adjacent to Sound Wall 3 and the Austin Memorial Park Cemetery.

Concerns associated with the proposal include:

• Monterrey and Live Oaks may have negative impacts if planted. The mature height, crown and root system on these trees would not accommodate the space available between existing gravesites, the highway and the wall of the off-ramp. This species does not meet planting standards set forth by Austin Energy regarding transmission lines or transmission line poles, and is not compatible with Austin Tree and Planting Species near utility lines and easements.

Mr. Mike Heiligenstein Page 2 May 16, 2018

- Maintenance around the trees may be a challenging, as it will require hand mowing, which will require added time to maintain the area.
- These proposed plantings do not meet City Code or the City's planting standards that are designed to ensure the long-term health of trees on parkland and reduce conflicts. Austin's Tree Planting standards include being at least five feet from driveways or curbs. The current tree planting plan has the center of trees two to seven feet from a solid concrete footer for the highway. While the State is not subject to City Code, these regulations are in place to enhance the viability of the trees.
- The Interlocal Agreement between the Mobility Authority and the City signed on September 13, 2012, states that "the final landscaping design approved by the Mobility Authority after coordinating with the City, TxDOT and the Historic Commission regarding the type of trees, spacing and planting requirements necessary to prevent an adverse impact on character-defining landscape features that contribute to the significance of the Austin Memorial Park." The City believes this current plan will have adverse impacts to Austin Memorial Park.
- The Mobility Authority Exhibit B has the center of the trees two feet from the concrete road footer in several places. This will not allow for root spread and will likely cause these trees to fail. Typically, a tree's root system extends as much as two to three times the distance to the dripline. This limited ability for root spread could create a public safety hazard as failing trees could lose limbs or fall over.
- Gravesites limit access to the proposed plantings, as such, the City cannot support longterm care of these plantings as required by the Interlocal Agreement between the Mobility Authority and the City signed on September 13, 2012. Access through the Cemetery by vehicle or other equipment given the sensitive surroundings is not possible. To meet best pruning practices and have a clear safe work zone, the highway off-ramp would need traffic mitigation. In addition, this would require a team of certified arborists with the ability and knowledge to climb the trees given the equipment access limitations. This also means no quick access for tree emergencies.
- Parkland may be negatively impacted by plantings as gravesites are extremely close to the tree locations.

Again, the City understands that TxDOT and the Mobility Authority are not bound to recommendations put forth by the City. We strongly recommend that the trees not be installed. The City is not in a position to adequately care for them, the trees would not thrive in this setting and the Cemetery would likely be negatively impacted by the root system.

If the Mobility Authority moves forward with these plantings, the City requests that the Mobility Authority follow the City's planting standards by fully funding and installing an irrigation system, as well as work with the City to review how maintenance might occur given limited access from the roadway and no access for equipment through the cemetery. In addition, we would recommend the installation of Texas Red Bud or Mexican Red Bud trees rather than other species. These are both included on the City's list of tree and plant species appropriate near utility lines and easements. These trees are not fruit bearing and are less likely to be multi-stem. This may reduce impacts to gravesite headstones. The City would remain concerned over the Mr. Mike Heiligenstein Page 3 May 16, 2018

trees' long-term care and potential impacts to road infrastructure and gravesites, and would request additional spacing to allow these trees to grow to maturity. As the trees grow, they will require substantial maintenance including regular pruning to ensure reduced impact. Additionally, the City recommends an archeological assessment to ensure there is no disturbance to unmarked grave sites.

Thank you again for your time and thoughtful consideration of the City's concerns. We appreciate the ongoing coordination happening between the City and the Mobility Authority and your efforts to maximize benefit to your project while minimizing negative impacts to the City's interests. If we can be of further assistance, please let me know.

Sincerely,

Sara Hensley Unterim Assistant City Manager

cc: Spencer Cronk, City Manager
Robert Goode, Assistant City Manager
Richard Mendoza, Director, Public Works Department
Kimberly McNeeley, Acting Director, Parks and Recreation Department
Terry McCoy, TxDOT Austin District Engineer
Jeff Dailey, Deputy Executive Director, Mobility Authority

R26: Austin Memorial Park Cemetery Sound Wall

Based upon the modeling of the Austin Memorial Park Cemetery (R26), a sound wall north of Hancock Drive along the northbound MoPac mainline was evaluated. However, a preliminary evaluation of engineering feasibility identified constructability and utility constraints. There is an existing retaining wall along the exit ramp, which reaches 17 feet at its highest point. The existing retaining wall is to be maintained with no proposed improvements needed. In order to provide a sound wall it would have to be built next to the existing retaining wall, which would reach 26 feet at its highest point. An existing Austin Energy transmission monopole foundation, drainage inlet, and overhead sign bridge foundation sit within three to five feet of the existing retaining wall. No fence separates the TxDOT ROW from the cemetery ROW and existing headstones lie within three to ten feet of the various drainage inlets and utility foundations. A temporary construction easement would be necessary; however, there is no access available through the cemetery and no space for construction equipment. Construction of the wall is possible from the top of the existing retaining wall by closing down the exit ramp. However, removing the spoils dug from the wall drill shafts would be very difficult due to limited access, limited ROW, and close proximity of headstones.) Prior to Loop 1 construction, the cemetery ROW abutted the UPRR ROW. As a result, there is potential to encounter unmarked graves within the TxDOT ROW that would require extensive archeological work. Public input has indicated that construction of the wall is not desirable and landscape enhancements are preferred. Landscape enhancements will include the planting of trees adjacent to the cemetery to provide a visual barrier between the cemetery and the road. Design of the landscape enhancements will be coordinated with the Texas Historical Commission, the City of Austin, and TxDOT during final design.

R34: Camp Mabry Sound Wall

Based upon the modeling of Camp Mabry (R34), traffic noise impacts are anticipated at distances up to 400 feet from the TxDOT ROW. A sound wall north of 35th Street along the southbound MoPac mainline was evaluated. Based upon preliminary calculations, a wall 1,333 feet in length and varying from 8 to 10 feet in height would reduce noise levels by at least five dBA for Camp Mabry.

Because Camp Mabry is a Category C land use (see **Table 4-7.1**), a land area calculation was used to determine the equivalent number of receivers. The impacted area within Camp Mabry is approximately 12.7 acres, or 50 receivers. Total cost of the wall is \$203,867, or \$4,077 per benefitted receiver.

Although the sound wall evaluated at Camp Mabry would be feasible and cost effective, coordination with officials from Camp Mabry indicated opposition to construction of a sound wall at this location. Therefore, this wall is not proposed for incorporation into the project.

Sound Wall Site 9: Great Oaks Neighborhood

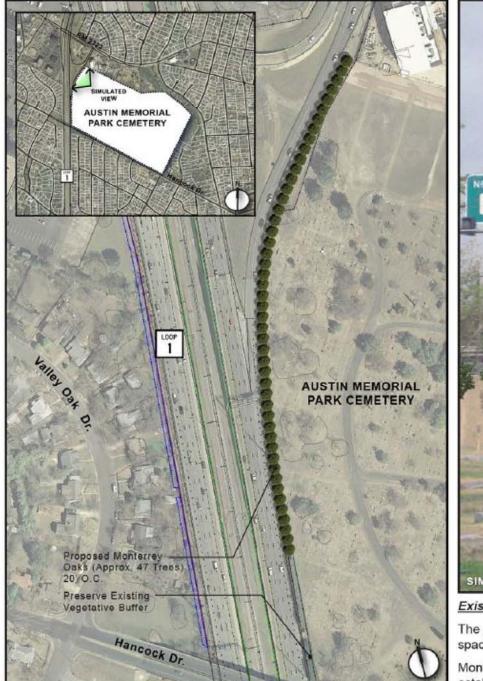
Based upon the modeling of representative receiver R33, there is a traffic noise impact at the Westminster Manor healthcare/nursing home complex. However, a preliminary evaluation of engineering feasibility identified constructability and utility constraints. There is a 42 inch water line located underneath the proposed outside shoulder with high power transmission poles located between the edge of pavement and the ROW.



MoPac Aesthetic Guidelines

MOPAC IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

PAGE 39





Existing conditions show little screening of MoPac's retaining wall and vehicular travel.

The *simulated tree plantings* represent approximately **ten** years of plant growth after installation. To maximize their screening effect, a spacing of approximately 20 ft. is recommended.

Monterrey Oaks average 30-40 ft. in size depending on growing conditions. They are long lived, fast growing, resistant to oak wilt and once established are quite drought tolerant. They hold their leaves for a long time and are semi-evergreen in Austin's climate.

