STASSNEY LANE FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



Why is the City proposing changes on Stassney Lane now?

The Austin Transportation Department routinely evaluates streets for opportunities to improve safety, comfort, and connectivity, and travel choices for everyone as called for by multiple council adopted policies: the Austin Strategic Mobility Plan (ASMP), Austin Vision Zero, Complete Streets Policy, and the 2014 Bicycle Plan. The ASMP and 2014 Bicycle Plan call for protected bicycle lanes on Stassney Lane, which is included in the All Ages and Abilities Bicycle Network and ASMP's Bicycle Priority Network. Austin Vision Zero policy calls for the end of traffic related deaths and serious injuries, and the Austin Complete Streets policy calls for all streets to offer multimodal options for people of all ages and abilities. Stassney Lane west of Menchaca Road lacks bicycle facilities and the existing painted buffered bicycle lanes between Menchaca Road and South Congress Avenue do not serve people of all ages and abilities. Stassney Lane east of Menchaca Road is on the Austin High-Injury Network (HIN). The combined HIN includes just 8% of the city's street network but contains nearly 70% of all serious injury or fatal crashes for all modes.

Due to feasible and cost effective options to implement these policies, safety and multimodal improvements to Stassney Lane have been identified as a high priority.

What changes are proposed on the section between Stassney Lane between West Gate Boulevard and Menchaca Road?

The width of the street in this section is not sufficient to keep both lanes in each direction and provide even a painted bicycle lane, let alone a protected bicycle lane that would align with City of Austin policies. By reducing to a single lane in each direction while keeping additional lanes and optimizing operations at the signalized intersections of West Gate Boulevard and Menchaca Road, it is possible to reduce the overall motor vehicle delay, provide protected bicycle lanes, improve bus operations and add higher visibility pedestrian crossings. Changing to a lane

in each direction is also expected to reduce high-risk speeding by bringing speeds closer to the posted speed limit and improving the safety of the roadway.

What changes are proposed on the section of Stassney Lane between Menchaca Road and West Gate Boulevard?

Changes proposed to Stassney Lane between Menchaca Road and West Gate Boulevard include upgrading the existing painted bicycle lane to a physical protected lane to offer higher comfort and safety for people bicycling as well as people walking. The proposal also includes improved and additional pedestrian crossings in multiple locations. An estimated 2,200 people get on or off a bus along this section of Stassney Lane on any given weekday, providing an opportunity to improve pedestrian crossings to help people get to and from bus stops and to other destinations along the street. Bus stops are proposed to be consolidated and coupled with safe pedestrian crossings to improve the speed, reliability and safety of transit services.

How is it possible to change Stassney Lane from West Gate Boulevard to Menchaca road from two lanes in each direction to one lane in each direction without significantly impacting motor vehicle operations?

The capacity of the street is generally determined by the operations at the signalized and stop-controlled intersections on the street, not by the number of lanes mid-block on the street. This section of Stassney Lane has two signalized intersections at Menchaca Road and West Gate Boulevard. The proposed changes would have three times as many lanes at these intersections as the mid-block of Stassney Lane, which maintains the existing vehicle capacity. Additional delay reductions are achieved through signal upgrades and timing changes to optimize operations at the signals for safety and capacity. Based on the volume of motor vehicle traffic on this section of Stassney Lane and the proposed improvements to the signalized intersections of West Gate Boulevard and Menchaca Road, overall motor vehicle operations and safety is expected to improve.

What data and analysis support the determination that motor vehicle operations and safety on Stassney Lane between West Gate Boulevard and Menchaca Road would not be negatively impacted?

Data on the number of vehicles that use Stassney Lane every day, as well as the turning movements made at the signalized intersections during the AM and PM peak periods, or the time when the most motor vehicle traffic is using the street, was collected and analyzed as part of this project.

Because of their significant safety benefits, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) recommends considering reconfiguration to 3 lanes on streets with less than 20,000 vehicles per day. There are approximately 8,000 vehicles per day traveling on Stassney Lane between Menchaca Road and West Gate Boulevard, well below the FHWA's recommended threshold. For more information about the guidance on lane reconfigurations of this type, see the <u>FHWA's FAQ</u>.

On this section of Stassney Lane, the highest hourly volume is between 350-490 in either direction. The Highway Capacity Manual 6th edition lists the capacity of a single travel lane to be 1,900 vehicle/hour/lane, meaning the proposed mid-block condition on Stassney Lane in this section is approximately at 25% capacity.

The detailed turning movement counts during the AM and PM peak periods were used in traffic simulation software to test proposed changes at the West Gate Boulevard and Menchaca Road intersections to determine that delay reductions are expected.

How would the intersection changes at West Gate Boulevard and Menchaca Road improve motor vehicle operations and safety?

At Menchaca Road and Stassney Lane, the proposal includes adding flashing yellow arrows to all four approaches which requires signal upgrades. Currently, left turns can only be made on the green arrow light. By adding flashing yellow arrows as part of this project, people wishing to turn left will have more time available to do so when there is a safe gap, improving overall intersection operations.

At the West Gate Boulevard/Stassney Lane/Cherry Creek Drive intersection, current signal phasing assigns right-of-way through the intersection to eastbound and westbound travelers in sequence – or one at a time. The proposal modifies the existing dual left turn lanes on westbound Stassney Lane to a single left turn lane and single through lane, which will allow for eastbound and westbound drivers to safely perform left turns at the same time, thus achieving more efficiency with the time allowed for those left turns. The existing right turn lane on westbound Stassney Lane would remain unchanged. The eastbound approach at this intersection includes adding a left turn bay and making a through-right lane which will make the intersection more predictable for everyone.

Why does Stassney Lane between Westgate Boulevard and Menchaca need bicycle facilities?

The Austin Strategic Mobility Plan calls for a connected network of all ages and abilities bikeways that offer low-stress options for people choosing to get to their destination by bicycle. This level of comfort and safety for people on bicycles does not currently exist on Stassney Lane, despite its function as an east-west access for a number of neighborhoods, schools, parks, bus stops and commercial areas. A statistically valid city-wide phone survey, collected as part of the 2014 Bicycle Plan, shows that 55% of Austin's population would be interested in riding a bicycle on busy streets if the bicycle lane was physically protected from motor vehicle traffic.

How much do the proposed changes cost and where does this funding come from?

While this project is under public review and comment, the full scope of the changes have not been fully determined and a no-build scenario remains an option. If the project were to move forward, the base cost of the proposal is estimated to cost between \$100,000 and \$150,000, depending on the final scope of the project, with additional costs related to bus stop consolidation. Funding for these improvements, should the project move forward, would likely come from the 2016 Mobility Bond Bikeways and Safe Routes to School programs, the 2018 Bond Pedestrian Crossing program and Capital Metro.