



MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and Council

FROM: Jackie Sargent, General Manager, Austin Energy
Robert Spillar, P. E. Director, Austin Transportation Department
Richard Mendoza, Director, Public Works Department
Joseph Chacon, Chief of Police, Austin Police Department
Dianna Grey, Homeless Strategy Officer

DATE: January 27, 2022

SUBJECT: West Campus Lighting Status Update

The purpose of this memo is to provide City Council a comprehensive update of West Campus Lighting activities, as significant progressions have been made since the January 31st, 2019 memorandum to Council regarding lighting strategy recommendations for West Campus.

Background:

On May 18, 2017, the Austin City Council passed Resolution No. 20170518-043 directing the City Manager to complete a lighting study of the West Campus neighborhood and to make recommendations for lighting strategies to improve pedestrian safety.

The West Campus Lighting Study was conducted by Stanley Consultants in 2018. The study included recommendations for potential improvements, and these results were communicated in a memo to Mayor and Council Members on January 31, 2019 (the “2019 Memo”). In the 2019 Memo, lighting study findings were summarized, and Action Items were provided in terms of *Short-term Response*, *Mid-term Response*, and *Long-term Response* with an estimated action item completion due date of five years.

During the FY 2022 Budget process, City Council directed the City Manager to expedite the West Campus Lighting project as feasible, including considering the option of expediting right of way permits or otherwise accelerating the timeline. Based upon Council’s direction and the importance of the improvements, Austin Energy and other departments revised the estimated completion date to the end of 2022.

Multiple departments including Austin Energy, Austin Transportation, Public Works, Austin Police, and other public health related offices at the City are collaborating on a holistic approach to improve lighting and related safety impacts in the West Campus area.

Below is a summary of the status of action items identified in the 2019 memo.

Responsive Actions – Identified in the 2019 Memo:

- **Action #1 – *Short Term Recommendation:*** Repair of non-functioning lighting fixtures and trimming of vegetation obstructing existing lighting.

Response: Austin Energy (AE) completed lighting fixture repair in 2019. Additionally, the Vegetation trimming was also completed in 2019 by the Austin Energy Vegetation management group. Where applicable, the City has sent notification letters to property owners with issues affecting lighting. Public Works Department Forestry team has also continued to work with and educate homeowners about private tree maintenance responsibilities.

Fixture repair and maintenance is an ongoing and a year-round recurring activity. In support of personnel and public safety, Austin Energy performs enhanced maintenance during school holiday/seasonal breaks when maintenance activity is safer due to reduced vehicle and pedestrian traffic.

- **Action #2 - *Mid Term Recommendation:*** The 2019 Memo stated that the City will allocate funding in its 5-year Capital Spending Plan for 2019-2023 and Fiscal Year 2019 Operating Budget, for new lighting in the West Campus study area. It stated that this work would be done in a phased approach, prioritizing improvements at locations based on the degree of lighting deficiencies identified in the study, followed by locations with crime and crash history, and location identified by the community as part of this study's community outreach efforts.

Response: The original 2019 estimate for a 5-year completion (2019 to 2024) was expedited with the goal of completing this work by the end of 2022. Enhanced Austin Energy budget allocations for 2021/2022 are in place based upon projected expenditures. Additional budget dollars may be required once detailed electrical designs for all phases of the project are complete.

The Austin Energy Design Group completed an update to the lighting study in 2020 with an emphasis on new commercial developments.

In support of immediate lighting improvements, the following actions have been completed:

439 “Cobra” head style streetlights have been upgraded to LED lighting, providing enhanced illumination as compared to the previous non-LED lighting technology.

Developing an accelerated LED re-lamping schedule for all city lighting on streets in West Campus. LED lights can improve the amount and quality of light in the West Campus area.

511 Decorative Streetlights have been identified for retrofit with LED inserts in 2022.

Austin Police Department (APD) and University of Texas Police Department (UTPD) have open lines of communications and regularly discuss campus-area safety. To supplement the recommended lighting improvements in West Campus, APD, UTPD and DPS will continue to build on existing partnerships related to information sharing and community outreach, enhancing the combined law enforcement presence in West Campus and improving safety for pedestrians in the neighborhood. With the partnership, all three agencies often respond to calls for service when they border UT property. APD has increased directed patrols utilizing patrol units, ATVs and foot patrol – these are done randomly throughout different times of the day.

- **Action #3 - Long-Term Recommendation:** The 2019 Memo recommended a larger, city-wide evaluation of lighting policies and infrastructure, rather than taking a piecemeal approach to the issue. The lighting study recommended that the City undertake a comprehensive Citywide Lighting Plan to identify a holistic and sustainable strategy to improve lighting throughout Austin.

Response: Austin Energy and Austin Transportation Department staff have been holding quarterly coordination meetings for the past two years to identify process improvements between the two departments with respect to street lighting and roadway safety in Austin. This enhanced level of coordination has led to several new collaborations between the departments, including streamlining lighting maintenance requests identified by ATD from a traffic safety perspective and new safety lighting projects funded through transportation safety grants with project designs by Austin Energy staff.

To expedite the implementation of the long-term recommendation in the West Campus Lighting Study to holistically address street lighting needs citywide, ATD and Austin Energy staff are expanding the scope and cadence of its ongoing meetings. The meetings will add other City departmental stakeholders, including but not limited to APD, Austin Code, and Public Works staff. This interdepartmental lighting working group will define next steps on COA departmental lighting needs (including pedestrian and trail lighting), define roles and responsibilities and develop a scope and cost estimates for a citywide lighting study. The collaborative team will develop a recommendation on options and timeline to deliver a citywide lighting study. This interdepartmental group will begin meeting in February 2022 and will provide a progress report back to Council in Fall 2022 with recommended next steps. The collaborative group will present ongoing actions from the 2019 memo and provide recommendations for lighting improvements across the city.

- **Action #4 Strategy for Homeless Efforts:** In addition to the lighting study the Assistant City Manager Hayden-Howard assigned the Homeless Strategy Officer to review the homeless issue in the West Campus area and has taken the following action that is ongoing.

Response: The City's Homeless Outreach Street Team (HOST) is comprised of representatives from Travis County Emergency Medical Services (EMS), the Austin Police Department (APD), Downtown Austin Community Court (DACC) and Integral Care. The HOST Team makes regular visits in the West Campus area and continues their efforts in performing outreach and engagement with the individuals experiencing homelessness in the West Campus area. The HOST team will also continue working with individuals experiencing homelessness in this area to connect them to the services they need.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Elton Richards, VP Electric System Field Operations, at 512-505-7950 or elton.richards@austinenergy.com.

cc: Spencer Cronk, City Manager
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