



MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and Council Members

FROM: Interim Chief Tom Dodds, Austin Fire Department
Robert Spillar, P.E., Director, Austin Transportation Department

CC: Spencer Cronk, City Manager
Rey Arellano, Assistant City Manager, Public Safety
Robert Goode, P.E., Assistant City Manager, Infrastructure

DATE: November 8, 2018

SUBJECT: Update on 2015 International Fire Code Local Amendments – Ordinance No. 20171207-098: Street Design, Safety, and Public Process

This memorandum is an update on the public process to gather information on local amendments to the 2015 International Fire Code, Sections 503.2.1 and 503.2.2 (Ordinance No. 20171207-098). Additionally, this memo provides updates on progress related to street design and fire access in specific developments—as well as next steps for identifying strategies around fire response and transportation safety—consistent with the missions of the Austin Fire Department, the Austin Transportation Department, and Council-adopted policies related to public safety and street design.

Background

On November 27, 2017, AFD provided a [memo](#) to Council outlining steps forward to the December 7, 2017, adoption of the 2015 International Fire Code and local amendments. These steps included postponement of changes to the local amendment language to allow for further consultation with stakeholders. On December 7, 2017, Council conducted a public hearing and voted to approve [Ordinance No. 20171207-098](#) adopting the 2015 International Fire Code and local amendments, which kept Sections 503.2.1 (*Dimensions*) and 503.2.2 (*Authority*) as they existed in City Code. Per the November 27, 2017, memo, staff moved forward with two action items: 1) bring an ordinance to Council by June 30, 2018, that incorporates any recommended changes to these sections of the Fire Code and 2) conduct a stakeholder input process to assist with consideration of further amendments to those sections of the Fire Code.

In preparation for the June 2018 report back to Council, Austin Fire and Austin Transportation staff formed a working group in January 2018 and adopted the following purpose for the working group:

Find the optimal balance of protection for multimodal traffic and fire emergencies that results in the fewest total deaths from all causes.

The working group provided an [update memorandum](#) to Council on June 15, 2018. The memorandum stated three points: 1) no further amendments to the Fire Code are recommended, 2) ongoing work will be conducted by the working group to identify short, medium and long-term strategies to align various regulations, policies, and operations related to street design and fire access, and 3) a public meeting would be held in summer 2018 to inform a final report to Council in October 2018.

Status – Ongoing Work

Collaborative Strategy Development

A [public meeting](#) was held September 17, 2018, at the Cepeda Branch Library. Staff received multiple questions from the community which have been answered, organized by theme, and will be placed on AustinTexas.gov/StreetDesign on or before November 9th. The public input can be summarized as falling into categories that pertain to: fire apparatus and response times; street design and connectivity; data on injuries and fatalities; Emergency Medical Services and non-fire calls; code, criteria manuals, and development review; and general statements.

Austin Fire and Austin Transportation are currently reviewing the input as we work to draft recommended short, medium, and long-term strategies to “find the optimal balance of protection for multimodal traffic and fire emergencies that results in the fewest total deaths from all causes.”

Concurrent to the departmental working group, Austin Transportation is collaborating with Austin Fire and other relevant departments to update the Transportation Criteria Manual. The Transportation Criteria Manual update will memorialize modernized regulations based on agreed-upon methodologies to address street design and fire access needs.

Public-Private Partnerships (Mueller and Colony Park); Private Development; Local Area Traffic Management Projects

Fire developed a Request for Modification or Alternative Method of Compliance that is being used to address street design and operational situations that do not meet current Fire Code requirements. This case-by-case approach is currently being used to document solutions to street design and fire access for both public and private projects. This administrative Alternative Method of Compliance process reflects input from Economic Development Department, Fire, Transportation, the Development Services and Law departments, and the Corridor Program Office, and continues to be refined as needed.

Economic Development has been working with Austin Fire to develop and appropriately document ways to achieve Alternative Method of Compliance that honor approved and previously accepted street designs at Mueller and Colony Park. The Transportation Criteria Manual update that is currently underway may provide the best opportunity to appropriately document accepted standards for future street designs, as well as the previously accepted street designs for Mueller and Colony Park. Because street design impacts multiple departments, the Transportation Criteria Manual update is a multi-departmental effort with representatives from Austin Fire included. There will be an opportunity for the public to review and provide feedback on the Transportation Criteria Manual prior to a rules posting process to formalize the standards.

Next Steps

The interdepartmental group requests an extension of the October 2018 deadline to February 2019 for a final report on strategies aimed to optimize a shared vision for public safety. The working group has concluded its work and has produced sufficient information to develop short, medium, and long-range strategies. However, because the public meeting was not held until late summer 2018, staff needs additional time to ensure the recommendations account for the public input.