

North Lamar Boulevard/Loop 275 Public Hearing Transcript

SLIDES 1 AND 2

- Hello. My name is Kelly Buethe, and I am the Corridor Liaison for North Lamar corridor improvements planned through the City of Austin's Corridor Construction Program. On behalf of the City of Austin, in coordination with the Texas Department of Transportation, or TxDOT, I would like to welcome you to the virtual public hearing for the North Lamar Boulevard project. Thank you all for your attendance, and we look forward to receiving your comments.
- The virtual public hearing for the proposed North Lamar project launched on Friday, May 15, 2020, at 9 a.m. and will extend through 5 p.m. on Saturday, May 30, 2020. The purpose of this public hearing is to provide an update on the project and to receive public input on the proposed improvements.

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- The format of the hearing will include a project presentation. Following the launch of the presentation, members of the public may call 512-974-9444 and provide verbal comments until the end of the comment period on Saturday, May 30, 2020, at 5 p.m.
- Additionally, members of the public may submit online comments by using the web form linked in the "Public Comments" section of [AustinTexas.gov/NorthLamarENV](https://austintexas.gov/northlamarenv). Community members can also submit comments by email to NorthLamar@AustinTexas.gov, or by mail to the City of Austin Corridor Program Office, PO Box 1088, Austin, TX 78767.
- We do want to hear from you, so please take the time to provide your input during the public comment period. Please note that per TxDOT requirements, the City of Austin is not permitted to respond to verbal comments or questions that are received during the official comment period at the previously stated number. Responses to verbal and written comments received will be available online at [AustinTexas.gov/NorthLamarENV](https://austintexas.gov/northlamarenv) once they have been prepared.
- At any time in the project development process, the public may call project staff at 512-974-2615 to ask questions about the project. Please note, discussion with project staff will not be included in the official record of this public hearing. If members of the public wish to submit a comment to be a part of the official record of this public hearing

following their discussion with the project staff, they will need to call 512-974-9444 and provide verbal comments or provide written comments via one of the methods previously identified.

SLIDE 4 AND 5

- To give some background, in 2016, Austin voters passed the 2016 Mobility Bond, which provides \$720 million for transportation improvements throughout the City of Austin. As part of the Corridor Mobility Program, a large portion of bond funds is being used to design and construct multi-modal improvements on nine major roadways.

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- The purpose of this specific project is to address safety and mobility concerns along N. Lamar Blvd. from US 183 to Howard Lane. Over 37,500 vehicles travel this major Austin roadway per day, and along the 6-mile corridor, there are no bicycle facilities. There are also significant gaps in pedestrian facilities along the roadway. Another safety concern is the number of conflicts that could occur at more than 300 access points and driveways along the corridor. Additionally, North Lamar pedestrians, bicyclists, and drivers often must travel long distances between safe roadway crossings, increasing potential accidents related to traffic crossing.
- According to crash data collected by Austin Transportation, there were over 3,900 crashes in the N. Lamar Blvd. corridor between 2015 and 2020. Those crashes resulted in 380 fatalities or injuries, and 71 of the crashes involved bicyclists or pedestrians.

SLIDES 7 AND 8

- North Lamar Boulevard between U.S. 183 and Howard Lane is one of the nine major roadways identified in the Corridor Construction Program, which is funded through the 2016 Mobility Bond and is part of the Corridor Mobility Program.
- The City of Austin conducted an environmental analysis to understand the potential impacts of the proposed mobility, safety, and connectivity improvements for the North Lamar Blvd. corridor. The analysis was conducted per the National Environmental Policy Act, or NEPA, as well as per state requirements outlined in Title 43 Part 1 of the Texas Administrative Code, or TAC.

SLIDE 9

- The existing North Lamar Blvd. corridor consists of two 11-foot travel lanes with no shoulders in each direction. The travel lanes are separated by a 12-foot center turn lane, and the travel lanes are lined by 5-foot sidewalks, which are set back from the curb at varying distances ranging from 5 to 18 feet. Though it varies by section, the existing right-of-way (ROW) width is generally 100 feet along North Lamar Blvd.

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- Proposed improvements will be funded in-part by the voter-approved 2016 Mobility Bond, and are expected to improve mobility, safety, and connectivity along the 6-mile North Lamar corridor for all users, whether they walk, bike, drive or take transit. The funded improvements include 12 traffic signal improvements with enhanced technology, 3 new traffic signals, and 3 new pedestrian hybrid beacons. Additionally, safety and multi-modal connectivity improvements will be brought to all North Lamar intersections. Plans also include 12 miles of new, shared-use paths to create continuous ADA-compliant sidewalk and bicycle facilities. 6 miles of pavement rehabilitation is expected to occur as part of the funded improvement plans, along with drainage improvements, some driveway modifications, and bus stop improvements. Intermittent raised median islands between Rundberg Lane and Braker Lane are also planned as part of the funded North Lamar Blvd corridor improvements.
- The City has also evaluated the environmental impacts of additional improvements that represent the ultimate corridor vision but are not yet funded for construction. These improvements would include enhanced and separated pedestrian and bicycle facilities, streetscape, trees, intermittently raised medians, and street lighting along the length of the corridor, between US 183 and Howard Ln/I-35.
- For the ultimate corridor vision, which includes unfunded improvements, the proposed ROW width following widening would be approximately 120 feet. It should be noted that the near-term, funded improvements would require less ROW, with ROW needs generally limited to areas with less than 100 feet of existing ROW width and at major intersections with turn lanes.

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- The next few slides show typical cross-sections, which provide a preview of what

the proposed funded and unfunded improvements would look like.

- This first typical shows planned improvements that are funded for North Lamar between US 183 and Rundberg Lane which includes mill and overlay to improve road surface conditions, road and crosswalk restriping, signal improvements, transit improvements and the addition of behind the curb bike and pedestrian facilities. Separate behind the curb bike and pedestrian paths will be included in areas with existing sidewalk and enough right of way for a separate bike path. In areas where space is constrained, a 9-foot shared use path will be installed behind the curb. Since this section is not expected to include drainage improvements, this section is expected to begin construction in the early half of 2021.
- This second typical shows planned improvements that are funded for North Lamar between Rundberg Lane and Braker Lane, which includes some road reconstruction for storm drainage infrastructure, mill and overlay to improve road surface conditions, road and crosswalk restriping, drainage improvements, signal improvements, transit improvements, Intermittent raised median islands, and the addition of a continuous 9-foot shared use path installed behind the curb. Since this section includes drainage improvements, this section is expected to begin construction in mid-2022.

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- This slide contains the typical cross-sections for the near-term funded improvements from Braker Lane to I-35.
- This third typical shows planned improvements that are funded for North Lamar between Braker Lane to Parmer Lane, which includes some road reconstruction for storm drainage infrastructure, mill and overlay to improve road surface conditions, road and crosswalk restriping, drainage improvements, signal improvements, transit improvements, and the addition of a continuous 9-foot shared use path installed behind the curb. The third section and second section are currently included in one design bid package expected to bid as one joint project with construction starting in mid-2022.
- This fourth typical shows planned improvements that are funded for North Lamar between Parmer Lane to I-35 and Howard Lane intersection. This section is to undergo mill and overlay and restriping under a separate TXDOT Project, so the Corridor Program's funded improvements will primarily focus on crosswalk restriping, minor drainage improvements, signal improvements, transit improvements, and the addition of a continuous 8-foot shared use path installed behind the curb. This section is expected to begin construction near the end of 2021.

SLIDE 13

Finally, we show here the typical cross-section of the ultimate corridor vision, which includes unfunded improvements. These improvements would include enhanced and separated pedestrian and bicycle facilities, streetscape, trees, intermittently raised medians, and street lighting along the length of the corridor, between US 183 and Howard Ln/I-35.

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- I will now review the environmental studies completed for the proposed project.
- As part of the project's compliance with NEPA, air quality, historical resources, hazardous materials, water resources, biological resources, archeological resources, and social and community impacts within the corridor were assessed. Overall, impacts to environmental resources would be minimal.
- Throughout the development of these improvements, the City worked to reduce and minimize impacts.

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- The project contains suitable habitat for 27 federally and state-listed threatened and endangered species as well as species of greatest conservation need. Early coordination with Texas Parks and Wildlife would be required.
- Previously unknown karst features or caves may be encountered during excavation. Any karst features encountered during bedrock excavation in karst zones 1, 2, and 3 will be evaluated for the presence of karst invertebrate habitat and the potential biological significance of the void to the extent feasible. If a potential karst void is encountered during excavation, work within 50 feet of the feature will cease until an evaluation is completed per current U.S. Fish and Wildlife karst survey guidelines.
- The following best management practices, or BMPs, would be implemented to minimize biological impacts per TxDOT's 2013 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Texas Parks and Wildlife: plains spotted skunk BMPs; bird BMPs; terrestrial reptile BMPs for the Texas garter snake; and vegetation BMPs.

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- No displacements are anticipated as a result of the proposed project. Some minor access changes would occur. As part of the unfunded improvement plans, the proposed project includes raised medians throughout the corridor to control left-turn movements and to improve vehicular and pedestrian comfort levels. Limited English Proficiency (LEP) populations were identified within the project area. LEP persons were given and will continue to be given the opportunity for meaningful involvement in the NEPA process for the proposed project. The project would not have any adverse effects on low-income or minority populations.
- The bike lane, sidewalks, and pedestrian hybrid beacons were included in the design to provide a safe environment for bicyclists and pedestrians. The North Lamar Blvd. project is consistent with the Capital Area Metropolitan 2040 Regional Transportation Plan, adopted in 2015.
- Overall, this project is expected to increase safety for all modes of transportation, and this project will also improve bike lane and sidewalk connectivity for cyclists and pedestrians.

SLIDE 17

- Three waters of the U.S. were located within the project limits. Permitting under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act would be required. It is anticipated that any impacts to waters of the U.S. would be authorized under Nationwide Permit 14 for Linear Transportation Projects. Impacts to the three crossings are anticipated to be less than 1/10 acre at each crossing; therefore, a Pre-Construction Notification, or PCN, to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will not be required. If the existing bridge class culverts are impacted under the corridor at Little Walnut Creek, along with the extension of bridge class culverts within the ROW, impacts may exceed the 1/10-acre threshold and may require a Pre-Construction Notification and compensatory mitigation.
- At least part of the proposed project is within the Edwards Aquifer transition zone.
- The proposed project is located within the 100-year and 500-year flood zones of Little Walnut Creek and Walnut Creek where North Lamar Boulevard crosses these streams. Coordination with the local floodplain administrator will be required.

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- We anticipate that this project will receive environmental clearance by August 2020.
- Funded improvements are undergoing final design. Construction of the improvements that would be funded by the 2016 Mobility Bond would be phased as much as possible to minimize overlap and impact.
- Plans for the unfunded improvements, which reflect the ultimate corridor vision, are not yet finalized. The final design plans and construction start dates for unfunded improvements are to be determined and are dependent upon funding availability.
- Once plans are finalized, the bulk of the project work is expected to be constructed from 2021 through 2024.
- To mitigate construction impacts, funded improvements to North Lamar will be phased and sequenced by segment within the 4-year timeframe, beginning in 2021.

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- As stated at the beginning of the presentation, all comments received, whether written or verbal, will be included in the official record of this public hearing.
- Verbal comments may be provided at 512-974-9444. Written comments may be submitted via the City of Austin webpage, by email, or by letter. The webpage, email address, and mailing address are located on this presentation.
- All comments received by Saturday, May 30, 2020, will be summarized, analyzed, and responded to in a summary report. The comments and responses will be made available to the public on the City's website.
- This concludes the virtual public hearing presentation. Thank you for attending.