



TRAFFIC JAM: A MOBILITY SOLUTIONS WORKSHOP FOR CENTRAL TEXANS

ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY - AT A GLANCE



Approximately **230 people** attended the event

29

The number of **home zip codes represented** by the participants at the event



11 partner agencies and initiatives attended to provide information about their services and projects



30 participants indicated their **top thought was related to travel choice** at the Thought Wall



Affordability, Travel Choice and Health & Safety were ranked the "top priority" 19 times each out of 89 total Priority Pyramids



Economic Prosperity was the **least reported priority** at the Thought Wall and Priority Pyramid



60 cross-sections were developed at the Street Builder station.



Multi-story buildings, transit amenity, bus-only lanes and wide sidewalks were the **most used street feature**

TRAFFIC JAM: ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

Background

The City of Austin Transportation Department, in partnership with Capital Metro, hosted the Traffic Jam: A Mobility Solutions Workshop for Central Texans to educate and engage the Central Texas community on Project Connect and the Austin Strategic Mobility Plan (ASMP). The event was held Saturday, March 4, at the Bullock Texas State History Museum. The purpose of the event was to educate Central Texas residents about the ASMP and Project Connect processes, and to encourage and collect participation in both efforts.

Activity Summaries and Key Takeaways

Event attendees had opportunities to participate in five activities for the ASMP, four activities for Project Connect, two panel discussions representing both initiatives and stations representing some of the agencies and initiatives the City and Capital Metro frequently work with. Approximately 230 individuals attended the event. Spanish-language materials were provided and Spanish translation services were available to those who needed it. *This summary focuses on feedback received at the ASMP activity stations.*

Activity 1: Priority Pyramid

Participants were invited to review descriptions of eight “Mobility Considerations” and prioritize their top six considerations into a pyramid template, with their personal top priority or consideration at the top of the pyramid. Requiring participants to think through which two of the considerations isn’t a priority for them allows people feel the constraints City planners must work within, and contemplate the tradeoffs of lowering the priority of a certain mobility consideration.

The mobility considerations guiding the ASMP are:

- Affordability – lower the cost of living, working and traveling in Austin
- Innovation – draw inspiration from forward-looking cities around the world, change the way we think about what’s possible, and set an example for the rest of the country

- Health & Safety – Protect Austinites by lowering the risk of travel-related injury and promoting public health
- Commuter delay – reduce the amount of time workers spend traveling between home and work
- Placemaking – build a transportation network that encourages social interaction through quality urban design, and connects users to the many places that make Austin unique
- Economic Prosperity – promote future growth through strategic investments in transportation networks that meet the needs of the 21st century
- Travel choice – promote a balanced transportation network and the ability to make informed choices based on personal needs and preferences
- Sustainability – promote integrated designs and quality additions to the built environment while reducing impacts and promoting efficient use of public resources



A total of 89 Priority Pyramids were completed at the event. Traffic Jam participants ranked Affordability as their top priority (19 people ranked number 1, and 38 people ranked number 2), and Travel Choice was close behind (19 people ranked number 1, and 34 people ranked number 2). According to participants, Economic Prosperity was the lowest ranked mobility consideration (4 people ranked number one, and 11 ranked number 2).

This confirms that participants are in line with what the City generally hears from the community the most: we have limited choices to efficiently get around our community, and the cost of living and cost of

commuting are of grave concern. Additionally, it was not surprising to hear that residents feel less concerned about our region’s economic prosperity, as Austin has been rapidly growing for decades. However, from staff’s perspective, helping the community understand that our region’s limited travel choices and growing cost of living could impact our economic success in the future is critical; all these considerations are connect and impact one another.

Another interesting takeaway was that Health and Safety was the third top rated priority (19 people ranked number 1, and 23 ranked number 2), above Commuter Delay. The results may show that participants understand “getting there faster” might not be as important as getting there safely. This is an important message the Austin Transportation Department has been working to communicate through a variety of policies and programs in recent years.

		Tier 1 Priority	Tier 2 Priority	Tier 3 Priority	Score based on weighting of tiers*
1	Affordability	19	38	23	133.29
2	Travel Choice	19	34	28	125.35
3	Health & Safety	19	23	35	103.45
4	Commuter Delay	13	22	24	83.41
5	Sustainability	5	29	38	73.53
6	Placemaking	5	14	41	43.68
7	Innovation	5	11	28	37.64
8	Economic Prosperity	4	11	32	34.68

** The ASMP project team weighted Tier 1 higher than Tier 2, and Tier 2 higher than Tier 3, then added the weighted scores up and divided the sum by the number of completed Priority Pyramids.*

Activity 2: Thought Wall

After completing the Priority Pyramid participants were given five colored index cards, one bright orange and four green and asked to put some more detailed thought into their priorities. On the bright orange card attendees wrote their number one transportation thought/concern/priority/wish/adoration and on the green cards they wrote four other thoughts also personally important to them. They then taped their thoughts under the Mobility Consideration it most applied to. For example, an individual might have said, “I want more bus service in my neighborhood”; they could have then placed that thought under the “Travel Choice” Mobility Consideration.

The key point to this effort was not requiring participants to limit or broaden their thought in any way, and minimally assisting participants with assigning their thoughts to a Mobility Consideration. In other words, in the same example above about neighborhood bus service, the individual could have just as likely been more specific about which route and which neighborhood, and considered their thought a priority because they are concerned about health and safety or affordability rather than travel choice.

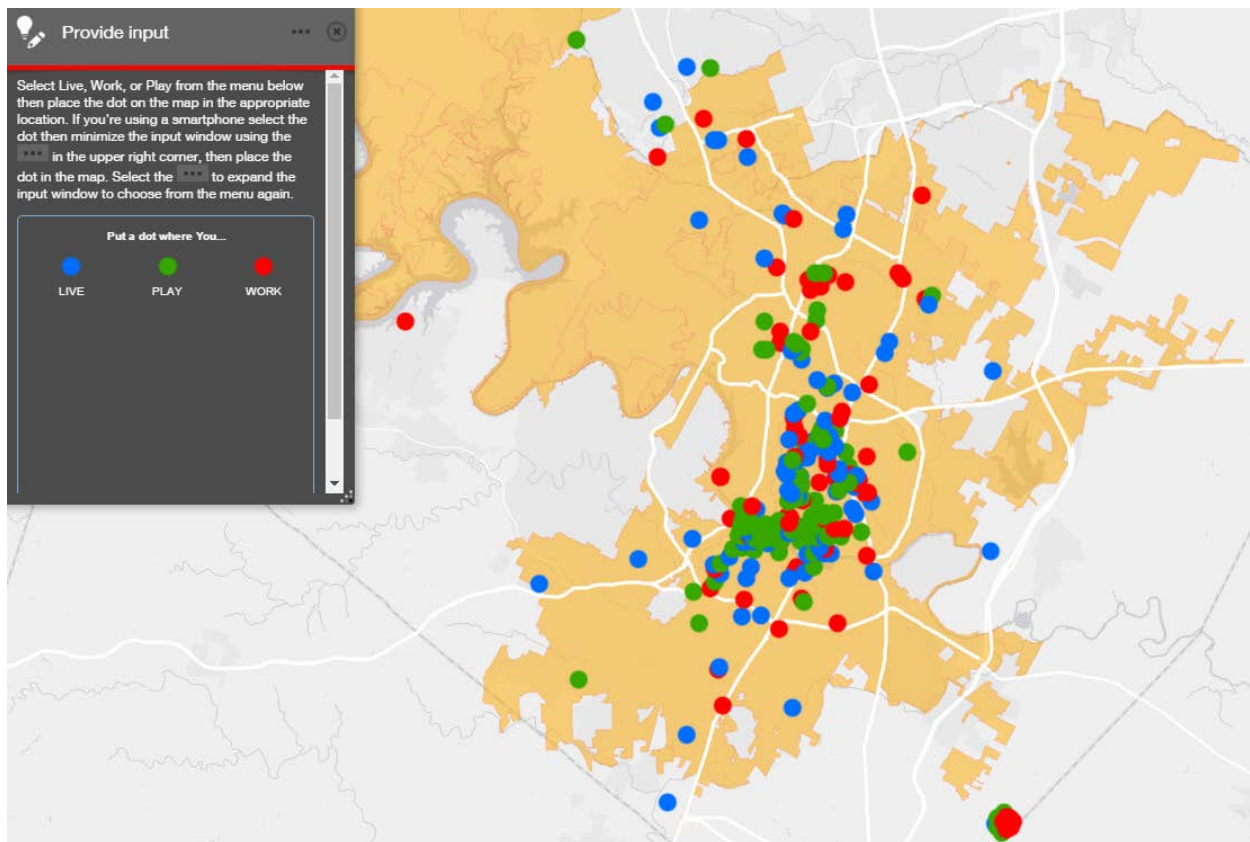
Staff received 291 individual thoughts on the Thought Wall. Of 291 thoughts, 91 were placed under Travel Choice, the clear majority (30 priority thoughts and 61 general thoughts). Unlike the Priority Pyramid, Commuter Delay came in second (13 priority thoughts and 39 general).

Many of the themes were cross referenced in the thoughts. For example, Innovation and Placemaking included a lot of discussion about transit and travel choice. Comments ranged in broad-ness from “I ♥ CARTS [Capital Area Rural Transportation System]” to more specific comments such as “Transit Center and pedestrian hybrid beacon Manchaca and Lightsey”. There was also a lot of discussion about equity and/or equitable distribution of resources such as sidewalks and how we pay for transportation improvements.

Activity 3: Live Work Play Mapping

Participants were asked to place colored dots on a map for where they live, work, and play. This activity is primarily useful for staff for determining where participants live, work and plan, and, maybe more importantly, what areas of Austin weren’t represented at the Traffic Jam.

Out of 230 participants, approximately 85 people participated in the mapping activity. Fortunately, as participants entered the Traffic Jam they were asked to provide their residential zip code so we have additional information to supplement the Live Work Play map.



The yellow shaded area represents the Capital Metro Service Area.

Based on the Live Work Play Mapping, the largest work area for participants is, not surprisingly, City Council District 9 which includes Austin’s Central Business District and major employers such as area universities and State of Texas agencies and departments. The second largest work response was City Council District 7. Again, this area includes major employer and employment zones such as The Domain, medical centers and industrial employers.

The play mapping was similarly predictable. Out of 104 dots, 31 were in City Council District 9, 19 were in District 3, and 13 were in District 5. Again, the downtown area includes a lot of entertainment options (university level sports, bars and restaurants, and entertainment venues such as the Frank Erwin Center), District 3 includes a lot of bars, restaurants and parks, and District 5 includes the greenbelt and Zilker Park.

Also on the map were dots just outside the City limits near District 2. After cross checking the sign-in sheet, we believe people intended to note they work and play at the Circuit of the Americas Track and misidentified its location on the map.

Activity 4: Street Builder

The final station for the ASMP allowed participants to build their desired street using puzzle pieces with different streetscape elements on them. There were no parameters or constraints within which to design the road, and participants could design a fictional street or reimagine a real street in Austin as they wish it would appear. People were also asked to give their road a name.

The purpose of the event was to see what elements people want to see, or don’t want to see, in a road. Following the event, staff identified how many times each roadway element was used to see where people’s priorities are.

The top-used amenity was “Multi-Story Building”, which was used in 50 percent of designed streets. Wide sidewalks was the second most-used feature, appearing on 45 percent of roads, and transit facilities, such as dedicated bus lanes and transit shelters, were used on 42 percent of roads. The majority of roads included facilities for cars, showing people recognize a need to balance Austin’s primary mode of transportation with transit, biking and walking, which can carry more people or enhance safety and system reliability. In total, 60 roads were designed.



Event Promotion

Capital Metro led the majority of promotion and marketing of the event, and the Austin Transportation Department's Public Information Team supported and assisted Capital Metro where possible. The team invested in advertisements and materials in multiple languages, and across multiple platforms including social media, paid media (i.e., radio spots and ads in print publications), earned media, press releases, community calendar notifications, media availabilities, ads at transit stops and on transit vehicles, both the ASMP and Project Connect websites and e-list invites. Additionally, stakeholders were notified about the event during stakeholder briefings (i.e., City Council Mobility Committee, neighborhood association meetings, advocacy group briefings, etc.). Staff also reached out individually to community leaders asking for assistance with promoting the event and provided those leaders with materials.

Future Opportunities

While staff considers the event successful, there will always be room to improve. For example, despite advertising in Spanish and English and promoting the available translation services, no event participant needed the translation services. Staff will review when and where we advertised, and how the event was messaged to see what to adjust for similar events in the future.

Additionally, 230 participants does not represent all of Austin or our region by any means; the ASMP Public Engagement Plan outlines multiple engagement activities meant to work together with the Traffic Jam event for a more complete public engagement effort. Staff can do more to engage people with this initiative; strategies included in the ASMP Public Engagement Plan will address this gap and do more to meet people where they already are, rather than ask them to come to a City-sponsored event.

Successes

Despite conflicting community events, such as It's My Park Day, and rainy/cold weather, more than 200 people attended the event. Participants expressed appreciation for the City and Capital Metro hosting an event together and stressing the need for a united front to face our region's transportation challenges. The activities also received positive praise; many community leaders enjoyed the event and asked for it to be repeated at other more localized events such as City Council District Town Halls.

Additionally, there were several participants with mobility impairments and many people brought their children – showing the event broke down a barriers to public participation for some: childcare and access.

Next Steps

The input collected at the Traffic Jam will serve to validate the ASMP team's analysis of what the City has heard from the community in past planning processes such as Mobility Talks. The prioritization of

Mobility Considerations, and identifications of concerns and opportunities, will directly impact the next step of the ASMP process: the transportation scenario planning, during which, transportation scenarios will be built around the prioritized mobility considerations. Each set of scenarios is a selection of capital improvement projects and policies which will be measured against their outcomes and how well they meet the mobility considerations, leading to a preferred transportation scenario.

Staff will wrap up this phase of engagement at the end of May 2017, at which point scenario planning based on the community priorities will begin. Before the end of this phase, the Traffic Jam will “go on the road” to smaller community events, such as the Northwest Austin Coalition Meeting on March 27 and multiple council member town hall meetings, to continue collecting feedback and validating past processes. The ASMP will continue partnering with the Project Connect team at community events to inform both processes.

More information about how to get involved in the ASMP process is available on the ASMP website: AustinTexas.gov/ASMP.