



NEPA TECHNICAL WORK GROUP - MEETING #2

MOPAC SOUTH ENVIRONMENTAL STUDY
 CESAR CHAVEZ STREET TO SLAUGHTER LANE
 December 3, 2014, 2:00 PM – 4:00 PM
 Mobility Authority Board Room

FINAL MEETING SUMMARY

<u>Agency Representatives Present</u>	
Name	Organization
Brian Smith	Barton Springs Edwards Aquifer Conservation District
David Johns	City of Austin
Ed Peacock	City of Austin
Jorge Morales	City of Austin
Mike Personett	City of Austin
Robert Brennes	City of Austin
Robert Spillar	City of Austin
Amy Pattillo	City of Rollingwood
Robert Wood	City of West Lake Hills
Justin Ham	Federal Highway Administration
Linda Henderson	Texas Historical Commission
Sue Reilly	Texas Parks and Wildlife Department
Heather Ashley-Nguyen	TxDOT – Austin District
John Geiselbrecht	TxDOT – Austin District
Rose Marie Klee	TxDOT – Austin District
Shirley Nichols	TxDOT – Austin District
Marc Brown	TxDOT – ENV
Michelle Lueck	TxDOT – ENV
Sandra Chipley	TxDOT – ENV
Lisa McClain Mitchell	TxDOT – ENV
Doug Booher	TxDOT – ENV
Doise Miers	TxDOT – Office of Public Involvement
Chandler Peter	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
<u>Agencies/Organizations Invited but not Present</u>	
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency – Region 6	
U.S. Department of the Interior – Office of Environmental Policy and Compliance	
U.S. Department of Agriculture – Natural Resources Conservation Service	
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	
Texas Commission on Environmental Quality	
Lower Colorado River Authority	
City of Sunset Valley	
Capital Metro	

Travis County	
LBJ Wildflower Center	
Project Sponsors and Staff in Attendance	
Name	Organization
Sean Beal	Mobility Authority
Melissa Hurst	Mobility Authority
Loretta Schietinger	HNTB
Abby Tomlinson	HNTB
Eric Holsten	HNTB
Jimmy Robertson	Jacobs
Tricia Bruck	Jacobs
Stephanie Messerli	Jacobs
Terri Asendorf	Jacobs
Lynda Rife	Rifeline
Crispin Ruiz	GSRJW
Roberta Jackson	GSRJW

Attendees were greeted, asked to sign-in and provided the following handouts:

- Agenda with topics and statement of meeting purpose (including a list of invited agencies)
- Re-cap from TWG #1 (April 16, 2014)
- What We've Heard from the Public
- Purpose & Need Supporting Data
- Evaluation of Preliminary Alternatives
- Evaluation of Reasonable Alternatives
- Conclusions
- Preliminary Schematic Review
- Next Steps

All handouts and sign-in sheets are attached to this summary.

Welcome and Introductions (*Sean Beal, Mobility Authority*)

Mr. Beal welcomed everyone to the National Environmental Policy Act Technical Work Group (NEPA-TWG) Meeting for the MoPac South Environmental Study on behalf of the Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority (Mobility Authority). Attendees introduced themselves.

Purpose of the NEPA TWG (*Jimmy Robertson, Jacobs*)

Mr. Robertson explained that the MoPac South NEPA-TWG provides a forum for the project team to engage resource and regulatory agencies in a collaborative, interactive and constructive manner.

Project Overview (*Jimmy Robertson, Jacobs*)

Mr. Robertson presented a project overview that included information about the Environmental Assessment (EA) under preparation of the MoPac South corridor from Cesar Chavez Street to Slaughter

Lane and the Environmental Assessment (EA) for the intersections of MoPac with Slaughter Lane and La Crosse Avenue. Comments/Questions/Responses:

- Who is the lead federal agency? How will NEPA assignment affect FHWA's involvement? (*Texas Historical Commission*)

Response: *Currently FHWA is the lead federal agency. Under NEPA assignment, TxDOT will carry out the environmental review, consultation, and other actions required by applicable Federal environmental laws for this project.*

Re-cap TWG Meeting #1 (April 16, 2014) (Jimmy Robertson, Jacobs)

Mr. Robertson summarized the items discussed at the last TWG meeting and the suggestions provided by TWG members.

What we've heard from the public (Tricia Bruck, Jacobs)

Ms. Bruck described the public input that was received through two open houses and associated community surveys (fall 2013 and spring 2014). Key topics brought up through these efforts include: protection of the environment, specifically water quality; desire for transit opportunities in the MoPac South corridor; desire for bike and pedestrian facilities; and agreement with the alternatives evaluation criteria.

Purpose & Need Supporting Data; Evaluation of Preliminary Alternatives; Evaluation of Reasonable Alternatives; and Conclusions (Jimmy Robertson, Jacobs)

Mr. Robertson walked the TWG members through the handouts relating to purpose and need and the evaluation of alternatives. The Express Lane(s) Alternative was recommended for further evaluation in the EA along with the No Build Alternative. Comments/Questions/Responses:

Purpose and Need

- What does reliable mean? What are the metrics? These questions matter for an Individual Permit but not Nationwide Permit. It would be really helpful to receive preliminary information on waters of the U.S. earlier rather than later. (*USACE*)

Response: *The term reliability refers to the ability of travelers, including emergency responders and transit vehicles, to be able to travel through the corridor in a timely fashion, with dependable travel times, regardless of the time of day. The Mobility Authority and TxDOT intend to initiate additional coordination and communication with the USACE to avoid any late process surprises or hindrances.*

Evaluation of Preliminary Alternatives

- Would single occupant vehicles be allowed to travel in Express Lanes? (*City of Austin*)
Response: *Yes.*
- Table 6 – Does CapMetro currently operate service along MoPac South? (*City of Austin*)
Response: *Yes, several bus routes currently use MoPac South (Oak Hill Flyer, South MoPac Flyer, and AMD/Lantana Campus).*
- Do you have commitments from CapMetro? (*City of Austin*)

Response: *CapMetro would like to have a park-and-ride facility toward the southern end of the corridor. Several alternatives would provide an opportunity for improved transit travel times.*

- We want more than to just allow buses to operate in the express lanes. *(City of Austin)*

Response: *Comment noted.*

Evaluation of Reasonable Alternatives

Consistency with local and regional plans

- Table 7 – Could we use the word “compatible” with plans? *(Texas Historical Commission)*

Response: *TxDOT indicated that it was important to use the word “consistent” with these plans. FHWA agreed and added that these build alternatives may require a plan amendment. There was an agreement to add a footnote to disclose this possibility.*

- Table 7 – There was a suggestion to use a check mark under HOV Lane(s) and Transit Only Lane(s) to define consistency with the City of Austin 2014 Strategic Mobility Plan and Imagine Austin Comprehensive plan. *(City of Austin)*

Response: *We will make that change to Table 7.*

Reduce congestion delay and provide travel time savings for all roadway users

- Table 9 – What is the difference between delay and travel time? *(City of Austin)*

Response: *Delay is the difference between a free flow condition and peak hour travel time.*

- Table 11 – Tolling may lower the number of workers served by Express Lane(s). *(City of Austin)*

Response: *All vehicles (single-occupancy, high-occupancy, vanpools, buses) have the opportunity to utilize the Express Lane(s).*

Avoid and minimize impacts to water quality

- Would you treat additional pavement? Will you improve existing conditions? *(City of Austin)*

Response: *The water quality and drainage analysis is underway.*

- How are you assessing current water quality? We have some data that may be helpful. *(City of Austin)*

Response: *We are currently performing TSS calculations. Any data and/or collaboration you can provide would be appreciated.*

- Table 14 – The No Build Alternative should have an “x” under water quality. *(City of Austin)*

Response: *We will make that change to Table 14.*

Build Alternatives

- Is there a hybrid alternative? Will TSM/TDM be carried forward as part of other alternatives? *(City of Austin)*

Response: *TSM improvements can be incorporated into the recommended alternative.*

Preliminary Schematic Review (Stephanie Messerli, Jacobs)

Ms. Messerli walked the TWG members through a preliminary version of the schematic showing the recommended build alternative, Express Lane(s). Comments/Questions/Responses:

- What is envisioned at Lady Bird Lake? *(City of Austin)*
Response: *The existing bridge would be widened on both sides, and a new structure would be built to provide direct connector ramps to and from Cesar Chavez Street.*
- How high will the new structure be over the existing Lady Bird Lake Bridge, including the light poles? *(Texas Historical Commission)*
Response: *The new structure would be approximately 30 feet above the current structure. The height of the light poles has not yet been determined.*
- What will be the impact on the Capitol View Corridor? Is any right-of-way needed in the Zilker Park Historic District or at the American Legion? *(Texas Historical Commission)*
Response: *No right of way is needed from either the Historic District or the American Legion. The preliminary schematic shows only three locations where small slivers of right-of-way are needed – two areas near US 290 and one area along Cesar Chavez Street, east of the interchange with MoPac – for a total of about 0.32 acres. The proposed improvements are expected to be below the Capital View Corridor.*
- Could a direct connection at Bee Cave Road be added? *(City of Austin)*
Response: *We can take a look at that option, although it may require additional right-of-way.*
- We are interested in a direct connector to Bee Cave Road. We have safety concerns regarding the current Bee Caves Road exit due to sight distance. *(City of Rollingwood)*
Response: *We can take a look at that option, although it may require additional right-of-way.*
- Has a weaving analysis been performed for northbound MoPac in the vicinity of Spyglass Drive and Bee Cave Road? *(City of Austin)*
Response: *A detailed operational analysis has not yet been performed, but will be as part of the schematic development process.*
- Are the Express Lanes near Loop 360 at grade? *(Texas Parks and Wildlife Department)*
Response: *The preliminary design places the Express Lanes adjacent to and on the inside of the existing MoPac northbound mainlanes at approximately the same elevation. Some excavation in this area would be needed.*
- Do you know that a cave is located within the existing right-of-way of the US 290/MoPac interchange? *(City of Austin)*
Response: *We are aware of Gaines Sink and the preliminary design calls for spanning it.*
- Suggest shading express lanes on schematic. *(City of West Lake Hills)*
Response: *Good suggestion. We are developing a public friendly version of the preliminary schematic for the upcoming Open House.*
- Is the public participation on this project in line with what you expected? *(City of Austin)*

Response: *Yes. We have utilized several other tools besides open houses to engage the public and stakeholders.*

Wrap Up and Next Steps

Members were encouraged to attend the February 26th open house; the next TWG meeting is tentatively planned for spring/summer 2015.

Meeting Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at approximately 3:30 p.m.

National Environmental Policy Act Technical Work Group (NEPA TWG)

Meeting #2

Wednesday, December 3, 2014
1:30 – 3:30 PM, Mobility Authority Board Room

Agenda Topics

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|-------------------------------------|---|
| 1. Welcome and Introductions | 6. Evaluation of Preliminary Alternatives |
| 2. Agenda Review | 7. Evaluation of Reasonable Alternatives |
| 3. Re-cap TWG Meeting #1 (4/16/14) | 8. Conclusions |
| 4. What We've Heard from the Public | 9. Preliminary Schematic |
| 5. Purpose & Need Supporting Data | 10. Next Steps |

NEPA TWG Purpose

The MoPac South NEPA TWG provides a forum for the project team to engage resource and regulatory agencies in a collaborative, interactive and constructive manner. Coordination points include development of the purpose and need for the project; screening and development of alternatives; collaboration on methodologies to define impacts; identification of the preferred alternative; and completion of the Environmental Assessment.

NEPA TWG Invited Participants

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| • City of Austin | • Texas Department of Transportation |
| • City of Rollingwood | • Texas Parks and Wildlife Department |
| • City of Sunset Valley | • Texas Commission on Environmental Quality |
| • City of Westlake Hills | • Texas Historical Commission |
| • Capital Metro | • Federal Highway Administration |
| • CAMPO | • U.S. Army Corps of Engineers |
| • Travis County | • U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service |
| • Lower Colorado River Authority | • U.S. Department of the Interior |
| • Barton Springs/Edwards Aquifer Conservation District | • U.S. Environmental Protection Agency |
| | • U.S. Department of Agriculture |