




MEMORANDUM

TO: Members of the Citizen Task Force on Transportation

CC: Mayor and Council
Marc A. Ott, City Manager
Robert Goode, Assistant City Manager
Howard Lazarus, Acting Assistant City Manager

FROM: Robert Spillar, P.E., Director, Austin Transportation Department

DATE: July 9, 2010 

SUBJECT: 2010 Bond package update and options for modification

On June 24, 2010, the City Manager published a proposed transportation bond package totaling just under \$85 million (\$84,845,000). Following that initial publication, staff has met with members of the community at the June 17th public forum and with members of the Citizen Task Force (CTF) at their June 28th and July 7th meetings. At these meetings, staff received a number of specific comments from task force members, citizen representatives of various organizations, and the general public. Additionally, staff has received numerous online comments from citizens regarding the bond proposal. For comments on specific projects, staff has responded directly to the person or organization making the comments to demonstrate how their project is being accommodated within our overall Strategic Mobility Plan.

Four recurring issues have been voiced by members of the CTF that pertain to the composition of the overall bond proposal. These relate to investments in targeted congestion relief projects – primarily at intersections; the Boardwalk project; a desire to foster partnerships with the County and other agencies; and the concerns about the sufficiency of funding.

The purpose of this memorandum is to suggest an alternative proposal to respond to the comments and issues raised by the Citizen Task Force. Specific issues received by staff are identified below with a summary response to each of the four key recurring issues. Detailed recommendations on modifications are provided subsequently and in the attached proposed revised bond package worksheets.

Summary of CTF Questions/Concerns with Staff Responses:

1. CTF Question/Concern: Can more monies be targeted towards congestion relief projects on IH 35 and other key congestion points such as intersections? Can the current bond proposal be expanded beyond \$85 million?

Council Resolution No. 20100325-050 directs staff to develop a proposed bond package “comprised of road, sidewalk, bicycle infrastructure, trail and other transportation-related investments for possible consideration by Austin voters in 2010”. Further, the resolution directs the City Manager to prepare this bond such that it is “consistent with the City’s financial policies, with a total not to exceed one-half of projected total debt capacity within the City’s current tax rate”.

Staff believes that the original draft proposal largely responds to Council’s direction as stated above. In review of that proposal, the Budget Office has identified the opportunity to add another \$5 million in capacity to the proposed bond package. The revised maximum bonding capacity, based on the direction of Council to not exceed one half of the city’s current bonding capacity, is \$90 million and not the originally forecast \$85 million on which the preliminary staff proposal was based. Given that the needs within the community for mobility improvements are great, staff believes it is prudent to add this additional \$5 million in capacity to the bond proposal, assigning it to congestion reduction related projects, including projects within the IH 35 corridor. This would respond to desires by members of the CTF to invest more of the bond proposal in congestion related projects. Monies from the additional capacity can also be invested into the Arterial Program specifically to address intersection needs. Specific project and program investments responding to this need are identified below under Proposed Revisions. Also, in the attached bond worksheets, staff has separated out that portion of the bond investments going to intersection related improvements to provide better definition of how the monies are intended to be invested.

2. CTF Question/Concern: The boardwalk project is a desirable project, but can its proportion of the overall bond be reduced and can it be phased to take advantage of Trail Foundation contributions? Are trails eligible for bond funding through a transportation bond package?

In review of the Boardwalk Project, staff believes this connection is important to improving the east-west connections across IH 35 and will retain the project as part of the bond proposal to Council. However, we do recommend that the project be funded in the 2010 Bond package in two separate phases. The first phase of the project connecting the trail to just east of IH 35 will be fully funded under the bond proposal. The second phase that completes the trail to the east of IH 35 will not include full funding. So, in order to build the second phase the pledged \$3 million contribution from the Trail Foundation must come to fruition.

Staff believes that the ability to include this project as part of a mobility bond proposal was fully contemplated by Council with their original direction to staff. Council will receive advice from legal council on the entirety of the program included in the proposed 2010 bond package prior to voting on the bond language. Council will make the final decision on how to package individual projects as part of the 2010 bond program offered to the public for consideration. Specific recommendations related to this item are identified below under Proposed Revisions.

3. CTF Question/Concern: Are there opportunities to partner with Travis County and other organizations to further leverage the City's investments in the regional transportation system?

Parallel to the CTF and bond development process, City staff has been facilitating on-going conversations with our regional transportation partners about opportunities to leverage funding between agencies. This includes partnerships with the Texas Department of Transportation, Capital Metro, and Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority. Travis County represents an additional partnership opportunity that was not reflected in the original staff proposal. Travis County has presented four roadway projects for which they would like to partner with the City of Austin. These projects typically lie within the Austin Extra Territorial Jurisdiction (ETJ). Simultaneously, Travis County has indicated a willingness to partner on bicycle and trail projects of interest to the City that also lie within the Austin ETJ such as the Manor Rails to Trails project proposed by staff as part of the original bond proposal. Staff believes that projects that lie within the ETJ should be deployed in partnership with County participation. Staff believes that the funds identified for implementation of the Manor Trail project could be leveraged to potentially meet a wider range of projects in partnership with Travis County. Specific recommendations related to the Manor Rails to Trails project and several roadway related partnership opportunities with Travis County are identified below under Proposed Revisions.

4. Are the projects sufficiently funded to complete the anticipated scope of work?

Project estimates developed during design are developed on the basis of current contract pricing as well as forecasts of future costs. Recent experience has indicated that projects in the City of Austin are being delivered within budget. Where project partnerships are envisioned, City staff is already laying the ground work to assure that those commitments are achieved.

Staff Proposed Revisions to City Manager's Recommended 2010 Bond Package

- 1) Staff recommends retaining the Boardwalks Project (Project Number 2075) as part of bond proposal but phasing it to take advantage of the partnership with the Trails Foundation as follows:
 - Boardwalk Phase 1: provide connection from the current terminus of the Lady Bird Lake Trail to just east of IH 35; delay funding for the Blunn Creek connection until real estate issues for that connection have been resolved. Cost of Boardwalk Phase 1 (without additional connection) is \$9 million. Money for the additional Blunn Creek connection will be incorporated into the Pedestrian Program funding category. **Recommend funding \$9 million via 2010 Mobility Bond.**
 - Boardwalk Phase 2: complete connection from the interim terminus east of IH 35 to Lake Shore Drive; offset cost of Phase 2 with the pledged Trail Foundation contribution of \$3 million. Cost of Boardwalk Phase 2 is \$7.9 million (less \$3M in Trail Foundation contribution = \$4.9 million). **Recommend funding \$4.9 million to complete the Boardwalk project using 2010 Mobility Bond. Phasing allows Trails Foundation investment to be made as part of Phase 2.**
 - Pedestrian Program Funding: **Recommend moving \$500,000 from the Boardwalk Project to the pedestrian program fund to allow for funding of Blunn Creek connection to Boardwalk once real estate issues have been resolved.**
 - Sabine/6th Street/ and Waller Creek Trail improvements (Project Number 5979): Design funds for the Sabine/6th Street and Waller Creek Trail improvements were previously included with the Boardwalk project. We are reallocating that funding to these specific projects. **Recommend moving \$1 million in funds from Boardwalk project and adding \$0.7 million from expanded funding to the Sabine/6th Street and Waller Creek project** (Note: the \$1 million moved from the Boardwalk was previously always intended for use in the Sabine/6th Street project).

- 2) IH 35 at 51st Street Interchange – part of the IH 35 improvement project (Project Number 592). This project element of the IH 35 improvement project would implement proposed improvements to ramping in the identified interchange. These improvements have been identified by TxDOT as viable early implementation type projects to improve access and reduce congestion through the interchange and do not affect flow in downtown Austin. Cost for improvements in the 51st Street Interchange is estimated at \$2.3 million and were previously not provided for in the staff recommendation. **Recommend allocating \$2.3 million from increased available bond capacity.**
- 3) IH 35 Corridor Preliminary Engineering (Traffic Engineering) – part of the IH 35 improvement project (Project Number 592). Funding for this corridor design project was not recommended in the previous staff proposal because of the potential non-engineering elements of the proposed effort. However, at least \$1 million of this effort is directly related to traffic engineering that will lead to potential immediate improvements within the corridor. Likewise, there is a potential use of TxDOT reimbursement funds from the City’s pass-through funding agreement at MoPac/US 290 that can be applied to address the more long-term preliminary design efforts on IH 35. **Recommend allocating \$1 million from increased available bond capacity to be used on preliminary engineering.**
- 4) Arterial Intersections/Neighborhood Street Intersections/ and Pedestrian Program Funds: **Staff Recommends Increasing program budgets for Arterial (Intersection) Programs by \$1.2 million; Neighborhood Street (Intersection) Program by \$1.2 million; and General Pedestrian/Trail Program Funds by 355,000 (total of \$2.7 million increase in program funding from increased available bond capacity).**

Travis County has requested that the City partner with them on a number of projects. These projects are typically within the City’s ETJ and serve developing communities that will one day likely be annexed into the City of Austin. In addition one of the projects identified by staff for funding (Manor Rails to Trails bike trail) has been found to be outside the City’s city limits and within the ETJ, thus eligible for a similar partnership with Travis County.

- 5) Austin to Manor Trail (Project Number 1734). Staff had proposed that the City of Austin would fully pay for the design and construction of this trail (\$4 million) in partnership with Capital Metro which owns the rail right-of-way in this corridor. A partnership with Travis County was not being sought in our previous proposal. **Recommend not funding this project as a stand alone City of Austin project.** (Recommendation 5 and 6 are related).

6) Travis County Partnership Program. **Staff proposes the creation of a County Partnership Program of \$4 million (achieved through recommendation 5 above) to include the following projects in order of priority:**

- Extension of Slaughter Lane (East) (Project Number 1812)
Proposed cost to City \$2 million; County participation \$6.24 million from County 2005 Bond.
- Wild Horse Connector (FM 973 to Future Parmer Lane) (Project Number 1834)
Proposed cost to City \$1 million; County participation \$10.2 million, contingent on 2011 County bond proposal.
- Austin to Manor Trail (Project Number 1734)
Proposed cost to City \$1 million; request County participation of \$3 million through future 2011 County bond proposal.

Additional partnerships requested by County that could be funded should savings on other projects allow, include:

- Arterial A (Project Number 1836)
Proposed cost to City \$1 million for design. County participation \$750,000. Construction funding \$10.2 million unfunded.
- Tuscany Way South (Project Number 1840)
Proposed cost to City \$2.8 million for ROW acquisition and construction; County contribution \$3 million.

Travis County has indicated their willingness to participate in the proposed Travis County Partnership Program. The ability to leverage city funds was identified as a priority by Council.

All other recommendations made as part of the Preliminary 2010 Mobility Bond recommendation by staff are included by reference in this memorandum. A revised line-by-line listing of the proposed projects and programs and a revised dashboard summary of the bond proposal are attached with this memorandum.

Recommended 2010 Transportation Bond Package Dash Board Summary




7/9/2010

Question:

How are the proposed 2010 Bond Projects and Programs distributed throughout the community?

Answer:

Projects and Programs proposed for funding as part of the 2010 Bond Program are geographically distributed as shown below:

 Austin Community	Total Estimated Project Dollars by Location	Geographic Distribution by Percent Proposed Spending
Northwest Austin	\$8,699,976	10%
Northeast Austin	\$12,864,940	14%
Southwest Austin	\$11,910,084	13%
Southeast Austin	\$17,914,994	20%
Central/CBD	\$19,804,976	22%
Regional	\$18,805,030	21%
Total Proposed Bond Program	\$90,000,000	100%

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Note: Regional projects represent projects that are of a regional nature and can't be defined as belonging to a unique segment of the Austin Community. Regional projects include: projects serving the central waterfront (Boardwalk); projects on IH 35, US 183, and MoPac Loop 1.

Question:

How are the proposed 2010 Bond Projects and Programs distributed by mode of investment?

Answer:

Projects and Programs proposed for funding as part of the 2010 Bond Program are approximately distributed by mode as shown below:

 Investment Mode	Total Estimated Project Dollars by Investment Mode	Distribution by Investment Mode
Arterial	\$22,265,000	25%
Intersection	\$9,315,000	10%
Highway	\$3,400,000	4%
Neighborhood Street	\$16,350,000	18%
Subtotal: Roadway	\$51,330,000	57%
Pedestrian & Sidewalk	\$16,377,500	18%
Bike	\$4,192,500	5%
Mobility Trail	\$1,700,000	2%
Boardwalk	\$14,400,000	16%
Transit	\$2,000,000	2%
Subtotal: Multi-Modal	\$38,670,000	43%
Total Proposed Bond Program	\$90,000,000	100%

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Note: Some categories may overlap. For example, Intersection category overlaps with the Arterial and Highway categories. Similarly, many of the arterial projects benefit transit by virtue of the fact that transit operates on the Austin arterial network. Many pedestrian projects are beneficial to transit but are totaled in the Pedestrian/Bike/Trail category. Some Pedestrian/Bike/Trail projects may be considered as Neighborhood Street improvements. The Boardwalk project is called out separately as a mode because of the size of the proposed funding and to provide greater clarity on the modal distribution of projects.

Question:

What is the distribution of the proposed 2010 Bond Funded Projects and Programs by phase of delivery?

Answer:

Projects and Programs proposed for funding as part of the 2010 Bond Program are approximately distributed by phase of delivery as shown below:

 Investment Mode	Total Estimated Project Dollars by Phase of Delivery	Distribution by Phase of Delivery
Preliminary Engineering	\$7,040,000	8%
Design	\$13,202,600	15%
Implementation	\$69,757,400	78%
Total Proposed Bond Program	\$90,000,000	100%

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Note: Some projects included in the proposed 2010 Bond Program include design as well as construction. These projects are typically more simple projects. These projects are identified as part of the implementation projects as are projects that are fully ready for construction as part of the 2010 Bond Program. More complex projects or projects that are not yet ready for construction are accounted for in either the preliminary engineering or design phases of the above table. These projects are being prepared for future funding of their construction costs.