



BOARD/COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

Urban Transportation Commission

Recommendation Number 20190318-04C: Austin Strategic Mobility Plan

WHEREAS, the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 2012 as a vision for Austin's future, focusing on sustainability, social equity, economic opportunity; and,

WHEREAS, Imagine Austin identified preserving livability, expanding transportation choices, tackling the ethnic divide, protecting our natural resources, promoting prosperity for all, and collaborating regionally as key challenges and opportunities; and,

WHEREAS, codified racial inequity, housing affordability, and transportation and traffic concerns are among the foremost issues for the City's citizens; and,

WHEREAS, Imagine Austin had as one of its key actions to create a mobility plan; and,

WHEREAS, the City of Austin's Land Development Code is likely to be updated in the next 12 months, building on the CodeNEXT process, which identified that the existing code lacks the tools our city needs to effectively shape and manage growth, and has exacerbated our congestion, displacement, and segregation issues; and,

WHEREAS, the Austin Strategic Mobility Plan will guide future growth of the city's transportation network; and,

WHEREAS, the Austin Strategic Mobility Plan is a comprehensive multimodal transportation plan that integrates the recommendations from previous transportation plans dedicated to specific modes, such as our Sidewalk, Bicycle, and Urban Trails plans, into one comprehensive document to align them into complementary systems; and,

WHEREAS, the City of Austin and the Central Texas region will not build its way out of congestion and transportation issues with current growth patterns and transportation priorities; and,

WHEREAS, the Urban Transportation Commission, via Recommendation 20181113-04B, indicated its support for the Project Connect vision; and,

WHEREAS, the Urban Transportation Commission issues its complete support for the motion related to the Austin Strategic Mobility Plan passed on March 4, 2019 by the Pedestrian Advisory Council;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Urban Transportation Commission recommends that the approved Austin Strategic Mobility Plan should include the following to reflect the values in Imagine Austin and best practices for addressing the City's most pressing transportation issues:

Prioritizing Our Safety

- Change the language in Policy 1 from "Manage for safe speeds" to "Design and manage for safe speeds" as a City of Austin value statement.

- Require a transportation safety analysis for every infrastructure and development project that reflects existing infrastructure and collision problems, as well as induced demand and actual travel speeds, and truly prioritizes transportation safety with respect to design decisions and transportation funding (Consistent with Action Item 158 – Health Impact Assessments).
- Update Action Item 9 to state: “Develop a comprehensive data-driven approach to speed management to evaluate systemwide speeds and make recommendations for reforming speed setting methodology, implementing countermeasures to address streets with documented speeding concerns, and adopting street design guidelines that help achieve targeted operating speeds systemwide, with no design speed to exceed 35 MPH. This action item will be prioritized and implemented as soon as possible.”
- Car-Free Zones – Add an Action Item for determining a process to consider whether / how a right of way might be converted to a car-free space (e.g. Speedway on UT Campus)

Managing Our Demand

- With respect to Action Item 21, update the Land Development Code related to housing and transit-supportive density to:
 - Increase density not just on identified transit-friendly corridors but within ¼ mile of those corridors to further shift mode choice away from single-occupancy vehicles; transition zones from corridor should reflect Imagine Austin and extend one to four blocks on either side of the corridor;
 - Increase residential zoning to more ably address the housing affordability crisis and provide more options (including “missing middle” housing);
 - Incentivize shared driveways for all types of development to both reduce impervious cover and better manage access points along roadways.
- With respect to Action Item 21, update the Land Development Code related to parking to:
 - Eliminate parking minimums in all land use categories throughout the City, particularly in areas that are supported by high-frequency transit and/or identified as Imagine Austin Activity Corridors, as a means to achieving mode split and climate change goals (Consistent with Action Item 164 – Reduce Impacts of Global Warming);
 - Support any opportunity for sites to reduce parking requirements.
- Insert new action item after Action Item 22 to state: “Plan for downtown growth. Plan and zone for the downtown and the university to grow in both residential and employment density as fast as the region’s growth or faster.” Downtown is a special part of the transportation network as the one part of the city that can reach and be reached by public transportation to and from anywhere in the city that is on public transportation. The existence of the downtown housing and job cluster makes it much easier for job movers and two-earner households to find transit-supportive residential and job locations.
- Update Action Item 26 to include new bullets:

- “Eliminate the exemption of above-grade parking facilities from FAR.” This exemption acts as a form of a parking subsidy.
- “Replace existing parking opt-out incentives with other incentives.” Current land development code in certain zoning areas (e.g. VMU, UNO, etc.) allows developers to provide less parking by providing affordable housing and other community benefits; other incentives will need to be provided.
- With respect to Action Items 27, 28, and 32, empower staff to set and adjust parking rates as necessary to achieve average occupancy rates no greater than 85 percent per blockface, reflecting a main implementation item in the Downtown Austin Parking Strategy document.
- Update Action Item 28 to state: “Identify and implement geographical Parking and Transportation Management Districts as the preferred method of managing parking demand in excess of on-street parking supply in coordination with local business and neighborhood districts.”
- With respect to Action Item 32, develop a detailed curb management plan that allows staff to identify issues and address through a number of options, including flexible designations.
- Develop priorities for locating dockless vehicle parking (including bicycles) within the curb-to-curb spaces (including existing on-street parking spaces) to not reduce available sidewalk space as part of Action Items 32 and 61.
- Amend Policy 1 (“Promote transit-supportive densities along the Transit Priority Network”) to direct that all land use processes and decisions adopt minimum targets of transit-supportive densities along the High-Capacity Transit Network appropriate for the transit mode planned. Average densities for the lines should achieve a “High” rating for the immediate portion of the High-Capacity Transit Network and a “Medium-High” rating for the evolving portion of the network, and be based on the recommended density levels in the Puget Sound Transit-Supportive Densities and Land Uses study.
- An action item should be created to create and adopt a comprehensive transit-oriented development strategy for new planning along the entire High Capacity Transit Network, and an indicator showing the progress towards completing those plans. The plan should include developing pedestrian-friendly infrastructure to support walkable neighborhoods near transit.
- Make conforming changes throughout the ASMP.
- Establish indicators and targets for the amount of parking per-capita within ½ mile of the High Capacity Transit Network and Transit Priority Network. Develop targets in cooperation with Capital Metro to advantage parking metrics in Federal Transit Administration grant applications. Create an action item to work with Planning and Zoning Department to develop parking requirements as part of the Land Development Code re-write to achieve targets.

Supplying Our Infrastructure

- Update Action Item 65 to state: “Ensure Council Strategic Direction 2023 calls for the construction of all sidewalk segments and address ADA barriers and gaps in the sidewalk system according to the Sidewalk Plan/ADA Transition Plan.”

- Update Action Item 72 to state: “Develop a prioritization process for the design and construction of new roadway connections and capacity projects. New roadway capacity projects shall be built only to places entitled or built to transit-supportive densities. New connectivity projects shall include multimodal connectivity. New connections should have a projected decrease in system Vehicle-Miles Traveled (VMT).”
- Revise the text of Action Plan Item 73 to “Develop projects that increase person capacity on our roadway system at strategic locations to manage congestion, facilitate emergency response, and provide connectivity, but not at the expense of achieving mode share goals. Lane additions and roadway widening along the Transit Priority Network and Bicycle Priority Network must first dedicate space to building that segment of the networks.”
- Where right-of-way is constrained, prioritize bicycle and transit improvements over roadway improvements for private automobiles.
- Update the bicycle supply goals to be as ambitious as the Austin Bicycle Master Plan.
- Commit to the proposed Bus Rapid Transit network proposed as part of the Project Connect plan
- Update text regarding Emerging Mobility Solutions (page 128) to state: “Emerging technologies include new modes of vehicular travel, like scooters, connected and automated vehicles, neighborhood electric vehicles, and pedicabs. They also include innovation in operating our transportation network, such as sensors and communication systems.” Reflect these changes in Action Items 115-124.
- Establish per-capita VMT as an indicator and develop periodic targets to hit to achieve the 50/50 mode split by the conclusion of the ASMP term.
- Apply indicator/target throughout the ASMP as appropriate.
- Amend Policy 4 (“Increase the person-carrying capacity of the highway system”) to state that it is the policy of the City of Austin that all highway improvements that correspond with the Commuter Transit Service should have access for buses that is separate from traffic (e.g. as part of an HOV lane, tolled lane, etc.), that highway entrances and exits be configured to allow the smooth and efficient entrance and exit of Commuter Transit Service near stations, and that this is a top priority when dealing with regional and state transportation agencies.
- Amend Policy 1 (“Give public transportation priority”) to give the city traffic engineer authority to initiate a process to dedicate lanes to transit whenever the lane dedication would substantially improve the efficiency of moving people through a corridor. The traffic engineer shall give notice to City Council on the proposed dedication and give Council 90 days to overrule the dedication, and may otherwise move forward with the dedication. (This process is similar to the bike lane dedication process.)
- Develop an action item to create the framework and metrics for periodic review of corridors on the High Capacity Transit Network and initiation of lane dedication.
- Amend Policy 4 (“Invest in a high-capacity transit system”) to state that it is the City of Austin’s policy to pursue any and all funding opportunities to make effective investments in high-capacity transit systems.

- Add an action item for ATD to work with Capital Metro to determine the investment required to achieve mode split goals by the conclusion of the ASMP term.
- Amend Policy 4 (“Invest in a high-capacity transit system”) and the Public Transportation System Map (pg. A16) to designate the “Dedicated Transit Pathway” network as the “High Capacity Transit Network (immediate)” and incorporate the “BRT-lite” network into the High Capacity Transit Network as the “High Capacity Transit Network (evolving)”. While the immediate part of the network is the highest priority for investments and planning, the evolving part of the network is also a high priority.
- State that it is city policy that the High Capacity Transit Network (Evolving) lines be transitioned to full dedicated-pathway status with high service-level Bus Rapid Transit by the completion of the ASMP term (2039). This policy should guide actions to identify opportunities both immediate (e.g. re-striping lanes downtown to be dedicated transit pathways) and longer-term (e.g. future bond issues or federal funding applications). Land use planning should also anticipate the future complete High Capacity Transit Network and plan transit-supportive development appropriate to a Bus Rapid Transit along the network corridors.
- Make conforming changes throughout the ASMP.

Operating Our Transportation Network

- Update Action Item 132 to state: “Develop guidance, evaluate, and implement pedestrian crossing improvements, including leading pedestrian intervals and pedestrian scrambles at signalized intersections with high pedestrian volumes and signalized crossings at areas with high potential for pedestrian crossings.”

Protecting Our Health and Environment

- Move away from “level of service” language in Action Item 159 – Walkability and Bikeability Evaluations. Focus on separate evaluations for roadway segments and for intersections treatments.
- Update Action Item 164 from “Reduce impacts of global warming” to “Require compliance with the Austin Climate Protection Plan.” Description should include “Require and enforce policy and planning as necessary to reach the outcomes and objectives of the Austin Climate Protection Plan.”
- Remove SH45SW highway improvements, the MoPac South Express Lanes, the expansion of Escarpment Blvd, and the extension of South Bay Lane.

Supporting Our Community

- Before Action Item 207, insert a new accessibility action item that states: “Complete Accessibility: Accessibility in transportation shall include all modes at all hours of the day and night.”

Implementing Our Plan

- As part of Action Item 234, require that the updated Transportation Criteria Manual reflect the following goals:

- Transportation Impact Analyses should focus less on peak 15-minute period traffic congestion and more on aligning with larger plans and goals, such as the ASMP, Vision Zero, active transportation plans and goals, and Capital Metro operating and capital plans;
 - Specifically, remove intersection level of service (LOS) as a metric and include VMT per person-trip and target mode share as replacements to better align analyses with the City's goals;
 - Change the language of these analyses to reflect person trips and not vehicle trips;
 - Create and/or adopt a person trip generation model specific to the City of Austin that includes the specific context of the development and location and has as its major output person trip generation by mode;
 - In the event that any parking requirements are maintained, create a parking generation model specific to the City of Austin that includes the specific context of the development and location;
 - Incentivize low VMT per person-trip and high non-SOV mode share developments;
 - Re-examine the Rough Proportionality and cost-sharing requirements to more directly reflect the impact of the development and not the cost of historical infrastructure;
 - Focus on Transportation Demand Management (TDM) strategies rather than supply-side improvements (LOS analysis);
 - Develop TDM standards for development that focus on the inclusion of TDM elements rather than trip reduction results;
 - Develop a TDM model specific to the City of Austin that predicts the impacts of TDM strategies.
- Expedite development review for projects strongly align with Austin Strategic Mobility Plan goals.

Date of Approval: March 18, 2019

Record of the vote: 7-0-1 with Commissioner Davis abstaining and Commissioners Blume and Reyna absent.

Attest:



Jim Dale, Executive Staff Liaison