



# **I-35 Capital Express Scoping Overview**

Austin Transportation Department Presentation to  
Urban Transportation Department 12/2/2020



# I-35 Capital Express Project Overview

- I-35 EIS Timeline and Scoping Considerations
- TxDOT Design Alternatives
- City of Austin Goals – Participating Agency
- Timeline and Needs for Scoping Deliverables
- Questions

Blue highlighted graphics are reprinted from the TxDOT I-35 Capital Express Scoping documents.



# Mobility35 Program

Three stand-alone projects from SH 45 North to SH 45 SE – North, **Central** and South.

- North and South projects Construction ~ 2022
- I-35 Capital Express **Central** project Construction ~ 2025

## PROGRAM LIMITS



### LEGEND

-  I-35 North Project Limits
-  I-35 Central Project Limits
-  I-35 South Project Limits



# I-35 Capital Express Plans

## Project:

- Add two, non-tolled managed lanes (HOV) in each direction along I-35 from US 290 East to SH 71/Ben White Blvd.
- Flyovers at I-35 and US 290 E
- Various operational and safety enhancements, enhancing bicycle and pedestrian paths.

## Project Limits:

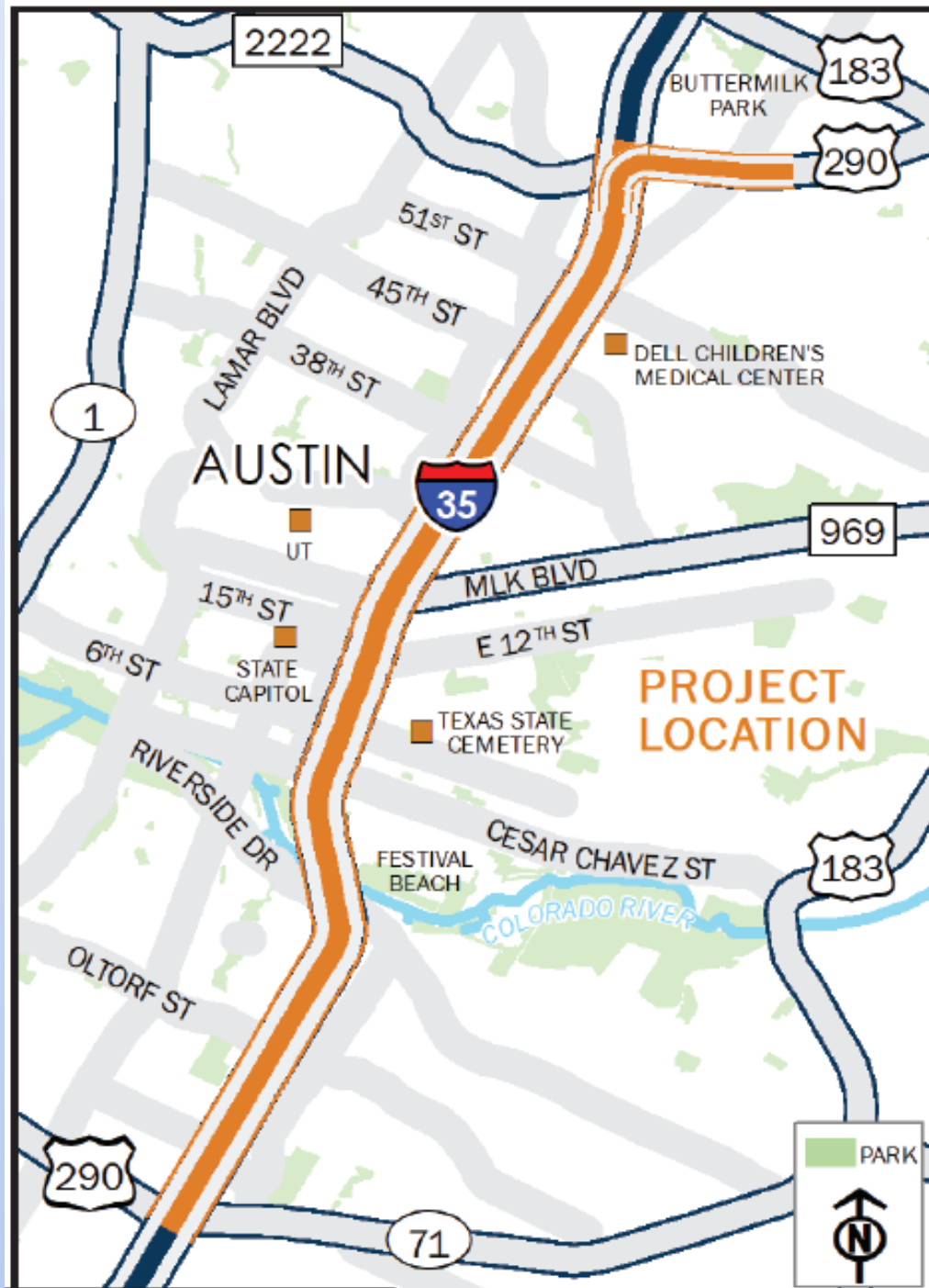
- I-35 from US 290 East to US 290 West/SH 71, approx. 8 mile

Project Cost: \$4.9

Scoping Timeframe: Nov 12 – Dec. 12, 2020

## Freeway Lids:

- TxDOT has indicated that lidding is a project “betterment” or a separate project that could be funded locally
- Freeway structural consideration for future lids are being considered for inclusion in the base design of the I-35 project
- Lids are not included in the current NEPA process





# Environmental Impact Statement -Scoping Process will evaluate impacts to the human and natural environment, including:



**WATER  
RESOURCES**



**AIR QUALITY**



**TRAFFIC NOISE**



**COMMUNITY  
IMPACTS**



**VEGETATION &  
WILDLIFE**



**THREATENED &  
ENDANGERED  
SPECIES**



**INDIRECT &  
CUMULATIVE  
IMPACTS**



**HISTORICAL &  
ARCHEOLOGICAL  
RESOURCES**



**HAZARDOUS  
MATERIAL SITES**

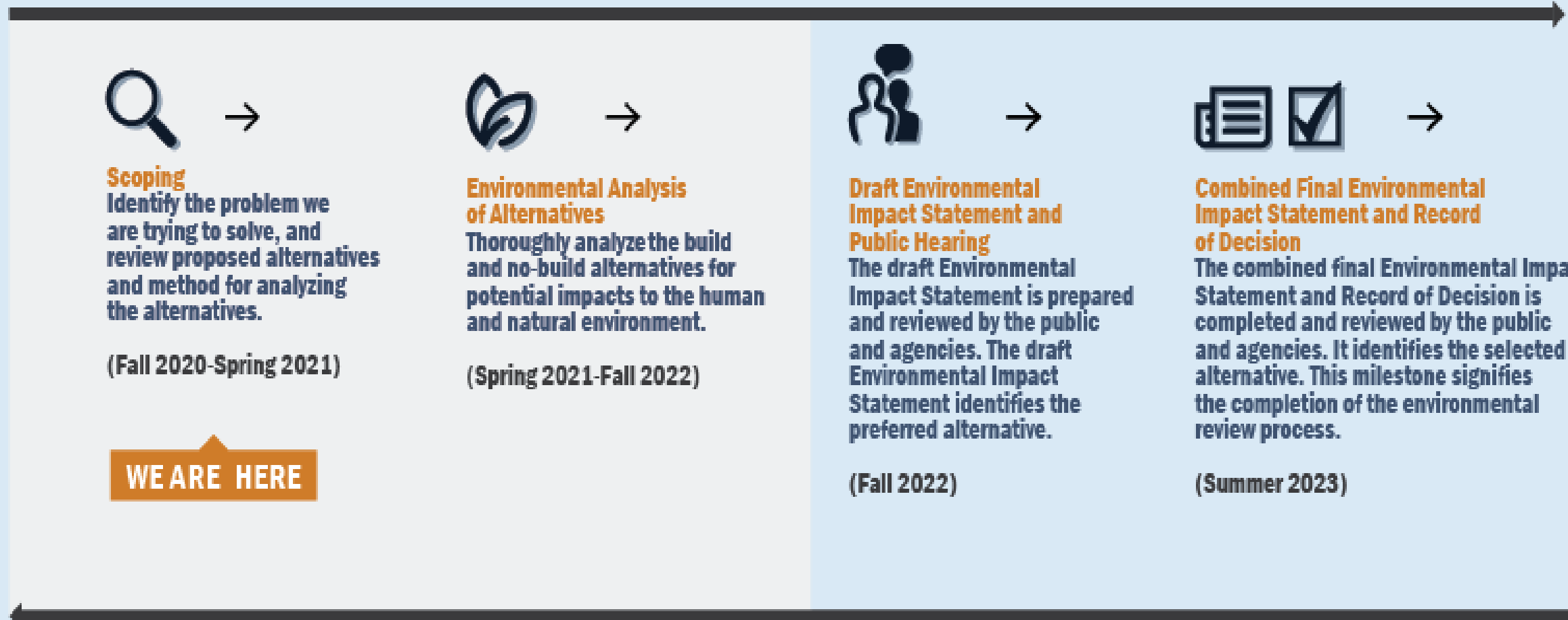


**LAND USE &  
PARKLAND**



# I-35 EIS Project Timeframe

## ENVIRONMENTAL PROCESS



### Scoping

Identify the problem we are trying to solve, and review proposed alternatives and method for analyzing the alternatives.

(Fall 2020-Spring 2021)

**WE ARE HERE**



### Environmental Analysis of Alternatives

Thoroughly analyze the build and no-build alternatives for potential impacts to the human and natural environment.

(Spring 2021-Fall 2022)



### Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Public Hearing

The draft Environmental Impact Statement is prepared and reviewed by the public and agencies. The draft Environmental Impact Statement identifies the preferred alternative.

(Fall 2022)



### Combined Final Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision

The combined final Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision is completed and reviewed by the public and agencies. It identifies the selected alternative. This milestone signifies the completion of the environmental review process.

(Summer 2023)

STAKEHOLDER AND PUBLIC OUTREACH



# I-35 Capital Express “Purpose & Need”

- The proposed project is needed to improve I-35 between US 290 East and US 290 West/SH 71 to meet current design standards and current and future travel demand. The existing roadway does not meet current federal and state design standards, which has resulted in operational deficiencies and longer travel times for all users, including emergency response vehicles and transit, particularly during peak hours. The proposed project is also needed to improve bicycle and pedestrian paths within the project limits.
- The purpose of the proposed project is to improve this critical regional, national, and international thoroughfare by enhancing safety, managing congestion, improving operational efficiency, and creating a more dependable and consistent route for the traveling public, including bicyclists and pedestrians, emergency responders, and transit.



# Project Need: Travel Demand and Operational Deficiencies

Annual **AVERAGE TRAFFIC** along I-35 from US 290 East to SH 71/Ben White Boulevard is **MORE THAN 200,000 VEHICLES PER DAY**. **BY 2045**, it is expected to reach **MORE THAN 300,000 VEHICLES PER DAY**, an **INCREASE OF MORE THAN 45%**.

## DID YOU KNOW?

**86% OF THE VEHICLES** on I-35 are **LOCAL TRAVELERS**



Source: Texas A&M Transportation Institute, Incentives for Truck Use of SH 130 (2015)

Slide Source: TxDOT Virtual Agency Scoping Meeting PPT 11-12-20





# Project Need: Bicyclist and Pedestrian Safety

To improve safety for bicyclists and pedestrians, there is a need to upgrade bicycle and pedestrian accommodations.

Approximately **75% OF THE STREETS THAT CROSS I-35** in the project area have been identified as being in the City of Austin's **BICYCLE PRIORITY NETWORK**.



Source: City of Austin's 2014 Bicycle Plan, updated in 2019 with the Austin Strategic Mobility Plan

Slide Source: TxDOT Virtual Agency Scoping Meeting PPT 11-12-20



# Range of Alternatives

TxDOT has identified three preliminary build alternatives based on known corridor constraints. The environmental process also includes a “no-build” alternative.

<b>Alternative</b>	<b>Description</b>
No build	Standard, routine maintenance.
Build Alternative 1 Managed Lanes Tunnel Section	Two tunneled managed lanes* and lowered mainlanes in each direction, with additional flyovers at I-35 and US 290 East.  Tunnel = two levels below frontage roads and cross streets and one level below mainlanes. *only northbound managed lanes tunneled through downtown.
Build Alternative 2 Managed Lanes Lowered Section	Two lowered managed lanes and lowered mainlanes in each direction, with additional flyovers at I-35 and US 290 East.  Lowered = one level below frontage roads and cross streets and same level as mainlanes.
Build Alternative 3 Managed Lanes Lowered Section (Modified at Airport Boulevard and Woodland Avenue)	Two lowered managed lanes and lowered mainlanes in each direction, with additional flyovers at I-35 and US 290 East. Managed lanes overpasses at Airport Boulevard and Woodland Avenue.

Note: TxDOT is seeking feedback on these alternatives. Based on public and agency feedback, these alternatives will be refined and further analyzed as part of the environmental study.



# Range of Alternatives

- All build alternatives would include:
  - Removing the upper deck in each direction from Airport Boulevard to Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard.
  - Reconstructing the bridge across Lady Bird Lake.
  - Improving bicycle and pedestrian accommodations.
  - Accommodating current and future CapMetro routes.
  - On-site and off-site drainage facilities.
  - Potentially accommodating a deck plaza in the downtown area funded by others.

# Downtown Austin Alliance Proposed Local Enhancements



- The I-35 Capital Express Central project proposes to improve safety and mobility on I-35 but does not include a deck plaza.
- The independent, separately funded OurFuture35 initiative is being proposed by the Downtown Austin Alliance.
- The Downtown Austin Alliance began coordinating with TxDOT in fall 2019, and coordination efforts between the Downtown Austin Alliance, the City of Austin and TxDOT are ongoing.
- The Austin Transportation Department (ATD) has funded a \$500,000 contract with a consultant to develop engineering requirements for the lid concept.
- ATD is coordinating directly with the DAA to develop the design parameters necessary to communicate to TxDOT so that a future lid might be accommodated.

# City of Austin Goals for I-35 Corridor & NEPA Process



- **Make I-35 best possible project for accessibility and multi-modal mobility**
  - Focus on moving people, goods and services vs. vehicle prioritization
    - Improve access to central core/DT
    - Improve Transit access to facility
    - Improve Pedestrian and Bicycle access
    - Focus on both N/S and E/W mobility
  - Avoid and minimize impacts to the community and natural environment
  - Mitigate unavoidable impacts (parks, drainage, environmental justice, noise, etc.)
  - Address the historical impacts created by the facility
- **Reconnect East/West/Central Austin**
  - Support depressed highway option, wide bridges and lidding
- **Consider future lid and other structures as an option to mitigate impacts within the corridor**
  - Include as part of base construction and NEPA process, those portions of a proposed east-west connective structure that allows direct in-corridor mitigation
    - Parks impacts
    - Noise impacts from new capacity
    - East-west pedestrian, bike, and general mobility access
    - Historical contextualization
- **One Voice** from COA departments



# I-35 NEPA Deadlines

- Comments must be received by 12/31/2020, to be included in the public scoping documentation regarding:
  - Purpose and Need
  - Range of Alternatives
- Visit the I-35 Capital Express Project at:  
<http://www.mobility35openhouse.com>
- Individual residents are encouraged to communicate their thoughts via the TxDOT public website:  
<https://my35capex.com/contact/> before Dec. 31, 2020
- TxDOT has committed to additional public scoping meetings on range of issues to be considered (early 2021)