



## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Mayor and Council

**CC:** Marc A. Ott, City Manager  
Robert Goode, P.E., Assistant City Manager

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

**DATE:** May 17, 2016

**SUBJECT:** Pursuit of the USDOT Smart Cities, Beyond Traffic Grant

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The City of Austin, in coordination with a number of mobility partners, is actively pursuing the US Department of Transportation's (USDOT) 2016 Smart Cities, Beyond Traffic grant. As you may know, Austin was selected as one of seven cities from a field of over seventy to compete for grant funding. The Smart Cities grant is a unique opportunity:

- In mid-June, the grant will be awarded to a single community
- \$40 Million in grant proceeds will be provided by the USDOT
- \$10 Million in grant proceeds will be provided by Vulcan
- Additional funding provided by industry partners.

The purpose of the grant is to address community challenges such as the lack of access to ladders of opportunities, defined as access to employment options, affordable housing, health care, education, economic prosperity, and access to emerging technologies. The USDOT has indicated that they are looking to applicants to demonstrate how improved access, using emerging mobility technologies and services, might address or resolve historic barriers to opportunity within our community.

The City has assembled a team of regional experts, and academic and industry leaders to assist staff in developing a winning proposal. The USDOT has stressed that they encourage and expect the winning proposal to consist of both public and private companies in partnership, all gathered to focus on the identified needs of the community. Should we be selected, the Transportation Department will bring these partnerships as part of our grant award to Council for approval.

The City's proposal will result in an innovations platform to demonstrate a range of new technological innovations in mobility services. The proposed pilot projects are

designed to resolve current mobility challenges within our community while at the same time building technical and managerial expertise in this region to solve problems emerging in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Specific pilot projects include:

- **Management Innovations Center (MIC):** the MIC will be formed by a partnership with the Texas Research Triangle, a combined effort by the Universities of Texas and Texas A&M, and the Southwest Research Institute of San Antonio; and, area mobility providers (City of Austin, Texas Department of Transportation, Capital Metro, Travis County and Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority). The MIC will assure an open data portal for all information generated by the effort. It will create a regional operations management center (ROMC) that will seek to operate our regional transportation system from a “one system” perspective. The MIC will also support the geographically dispersed pilot demonstration projects.
- **Connected Traveler:** this demonstration project will focus on collaboration and coordination of information with the users of the system. Special attention is being paid to creating access for communities that might be disconnected because of poverty or lack of access to the digital technologies.
- **Packaged Mobility:** this demonstration effort will result in a smart phone application that would allow the traveler to plan, purchase, and schedule a trip chain from residential origin to destination, across multiple modes of travel. For example, a traveler would be able to arrange and pay for travel that might include a car share trip to a transit center followed by a public or private transit trip to another location where the traveler picks up a bike share or other shared economy option to reach their final destination. Attention is being paid to assure there is a non-smart phone option for those that might lack access to devices.
- **Smart Corridors and Transit Stations:** a series of transit stations are being planned within Austin’s Eastern Crescent, including stations planned for the end of the Riverside Corridor near ABIA, a station demonstration along the Capital Metro Red Line at the MLK or Highland Station, a station in Pflugerville, and a station in the Rundberg neighborhood. Each station will be equipped with technologies that allow users to access a range of travel options.

At the Riverside Station, and connecting to the terminal at ABIA, an autonomous transit system will be launched on the airport roadway system. The system will carry passengers from the land-side terminal to locations on the airport property as well as connecting to the transit station. Between the station and downtown, the Riverside Corridor will be instrumented as a

Smart Corridor to improve safety, transit on-time performance, and signal performance. In coordination with Capital Metro and several private partners, we are pursuing electric buses to operate a new bus rapid transit (EBRT) system in the corridor. The Smart Station near ABIA, and all other transit stations, will employ community representatives as local ambassadors to assist residents in accessing and using the new technologies.

The remaining stations are each designed to test and demonstrate a solution to an existing/future mobility challenge. Pflugerville, for example, lies outside the jurisdictional boundaries of Capital Metro and therefore receives no service. The Pflugerville station will explore ways to use the new shared economy models to provide transit connections to the central business employment centers. Similarly, the stations on the Red Line and in the Rundberg neighborhood will seek to test unique solutions to local needs using new technologies or services.

Many of the proposed investments such as the MIC, Packaged Mobility and Connected Traveler pilots are designed to provide sustainable benefits to the entire city. The location specific pilots will target historic barriers to ladders of success within the region's Eastern Crescent neighborhoods and communities:

- Improved mobility in the Riverside Corridor will provide direct access between low income neighborhoods and jobs and educational opportunities.
- Demonstration of automated transit will provide valuable insight into how this technology can be deployed to serve first and last mile gaps in the transit system and allow the lessons learned to be transferred to communities in need of improved mobility connections.
- Improved mobility to the Red Line will improve connectivity between the surrounding community and regional services such as grocery stores and rail service to downtown.
- The Rundberg pilot will empower immigrant and low-income households in this neighborhood with the tools and access points to take advantage of new digital market solutions.
- The Pflugerville pilot will connect suburban communities of color, outside the jurisdictional reach of Capital Metro, to jobs in Central Austin using a variety of transit modes and technological tools.

### **Next Steps**

- The final proposal is due on May 24<sup>th</sup>.
- A 3-minute video about Austin's proposal is due on June 7
- Live interviews will be held June 8 and 9 in Washington, D.C.
- The Smart City Mayors are scheduled to make a public pitch on June 9 in Washington, D.C.
- The winning city will be announced by USDOT on-location on or around June 22<sup>nd</sup>.