Austin Strategic Mobility Plan Draft Map Release

Frequently Asked Questions

Draft Maps – November 20 Edition

Table of Contents

(click the question to jump to the answer)

1. How were these projects identified?

The draft maps represent the first opportunity for community members to see what projects may be included in the Austin Strategic Mobility Plan (ASMP). In preparation for the release of these drafts, we've been working hard to refine what is included.

First, the ASMP team identified missing connections from the roadway, bicycle, sidewalk, and urban trail systems. We added in previously identified projects and programs from adopted City plans and ongoing studies, such as the Sidewalk Plan and the Roadway Capacity Plan in development with the Street Impact Fee study. We also included proposed or ongoing projects from partner agencies, such as Capital Metro's transit system plans, the highway system managed by the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), and Travis County's draft Transportation Plan. We want people to see the universe of options – whether they are under consideration by the City or by one of our transportation partners in the region.

Next, we refined the "universe of projects" based on the context and reality of our community. For example, projects that would face challenging topography or that have already been considered and didn't move forward through past processes were removed. Projects with recent policy action were also removed.

Finally, we met with key stakeholders in person to further refine what is depicted on the map, how projects are described, and to help provide clarity on what, we acknowledge, is challenging information to communicate clearly.

It's important to note that we know there are some projects shown which you may love and others which you may want to see removed. That is exactly why we published these maps! There will be changes to the map based on your feedback, so please use the online map tool to let us know what you think.

2. What does it mean to see a project on the map? When will projects in the plan be built?

By including the universe of potential transportation projects in the maps – and ultimately the Austin Strategic Mobility Plan (ASMP) – the City better positions our community to have conversations about what projects truly make sense in the future. This also has direct implications on how we fund projects. This could be with community dollars (i.e., future bond programs), through pursuing grants, and through development mitigation.

When we talk about "projects" in the context of the ASMP, it can mean a variety of things. For example, the Corridor Program Office has been working to implement the 2016 Mobility Bond Corridor Mobility Program since voter approval in 2016. The Corridor Program Office has identified scoped projects that are at some level of design, and have funding to move further forward in the process and through construction. This is one type of project depicted in the maps that has a more immediate implication on our infrastructure. The Corridor Program Office is also working on corridor studies for future improvements that are unfunded.

In contrast, we show *new* roadway connections filling gaps in our transportation network; for example, the connections illustrated between North Lamar Boulevard and Guadalupe Street, just south of the existing development at The Triangle. This is another type of "project" that is essentially a concept for connectivity in this area. No preliminary engineering or design work exists, no funding to advance this concept into project development exists at this time, and no funding would be approved with the ASMP for this type of project. Including this type of conceptual project does not guarantee that it will be funded or constructed, but allows us to have that conversation in the future. Showing connections also provides the opportunity for redevelopment or new development to contribute to the roadway as development occurs. Removing a project from the map does not mean it could not be considered in the future as conditions change through amendments to the ASMP.

By including the universe of potential transportation projects in the ASMP, the City better positions our community to have conversations about what projects truly make sense in the future. If we don't include both real (i.e., projects actively moving through project development) and conceptual projects, we cannot include them as part of the City's development mitigation efforts. This will be especially important as the City develops a Street Impact Fee program. Concurrent with the ASMP, the City of Austin is conducting a Street Impact Fee study to develop a program that, once implemented, will serve an important role in the implementation of the roadway capacity projects recommended in the ASMP. As part of the required steps set forth in Texas Local Government Code Chapter 395, which governs the development of municipal impact fees, a draft roadway capacity plan was developed, and the projects identified are included in the ASMP's draft transportation network. Once the ASMP is adopted, staff will develop recommended policy for the Street Impact Fee program for City Council's consideration in 2019. If Council decides to adopt Street Impact Fees, new development will contribute to new capacity in the area of the development. More information about Street Impact Fees can be found at austintexas.gov/streetimpactfee.

3. What is the significance of the Priority Networks?

Priority networks are designated for the Roadway, Public Transportation, and Bicycle systems. Priority networks are intended to show where modes are prioritized to improve operations, such as on the Vehicle Priority Network and Transit Priority Network.

The focus of the Vehicle Priority Network is to improve travel time reliability and to lessen the impact of temporary right-of-way closures on mobility. Possible improvements along the Vehicle Priority Network include signal timing and synchronization, limiting closures of the street during peak travel times, and implementing emergency vehicle preemption technology.

The Transit Priority Network includes Capital Metro's high frequency service and planned expansions identified in Connections 2025 and Project Connect. These corridors would carry the largest share of transit riders.

Streets in the Bicycle Priority Network are prioritized for near-term all ages and abilities improvements.

4. How is this plan being coordinated with Capital Metro and the 2016 Mobility Bond?

The ASMP process, both technically and during engagement activities, has been coordinated with other transportation planning efforts, including Capital Metro's short- and long-range plans and the 2016 Mobility Bond implementation efforts.

The recommendations from Capital Metro's Connections 2025 short-range service plan are included in the ASMP's draft transportation network. Also reflected in the draft transportation network is the Project Connect Vision Plan, Capital Metro's long-range high-capacity transit vision. The ASMP and Project Connect planning processes have been highly coordinated with staff teams meeting biweekly and public engagement activities being conducted collaboratively over the past two years. The teams have coordinated schedules to ensure there is a feedback loop between the two processes. Staff plans to continue this coordination, specifically focusing on public engagement during the release of ASMP draft policies and draft transportation network and as the Project Connect corridors move into preliminary engineering in 2019. Capital Metro's board is expected to take action on the draft Project Connect Vision Plan at its December 17, 2018 Board meeting. Staff will make any needed updates to the ASMP recommendations based on the board decision.

The Regional Mobility projects, Corridor Construction Program, as well as a portion of the Local Mobility projects funded through the 2016 Mobility Bond are included in the ASMP's draft transportation network. Specific to the Corridor Construction Program, any projects not selected for funding are shown in the ASMP as recommended projects. The ASMP team is coordinating with the Corridor Program Office and Capital Metro on the corridors in the Corridor Construction Program that are also included in the Project Connect Vision Plan to ensure appropriate rights-of-way and transit treatments for these corridors are identified in the ASMP. Staff are meeting on a weekly or biweekly basis to coordinate the technical and public engagement aspects of these three initiatives.

5. Do these maps reflect past plans (e.g. bicycle, sidewalk, urban trails plans)?

Yes, the draft transportation network incorporates recommendations from the 2014 Bicycle Plan, 2016 Sidewalk/ADA Transition Plan, and 2014 Urban Trails Plan. Projects that have been completed since those plans were adopted are reflected in the Existing Transportation Network and additional projects that have been identified since plan adoption have also been included in the draft transportation network. Staff anticipates updates to these plans based on the ASMP recommendations.

6. How do I provide feedback?

To provide feedback on the draft ASMP maps, simply scroll to the bottom of the presentation and follow the instructions on the side panel. First, click on the map to select a project or street you'd like to provide feedback on. Click the heart icon to show you love it. If dislike the project, want to see something else, or want to tell us what you specifically like about it, click the comment icon and follow the steps to leave your feedback! The deadline for feedback on the draft transportation network is December 21.

7. Who can I contact for more help reviewing or commenting on the policies and maps?

We encourage you to leave your comments about specific projects directly on the maps. If you still have questions or need help navigating the maps, please contact the ASMP team! We're happy to help!

Check our website for opportunities to visit with us in person!
By email: ASMP@austintexas.gov
On Facebook: Facebook.com/AustinMobility
On Twitter: @AustinMobility

7. Glossary

Below are definitions of terms that are used throughout the draft policies and transportation network presentations. Staff will continue to add to this list as questions come up!

click the letters below to jump ahead

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W Z Y Z

A

All Ages and Abilities Bicycle Network: Framework for bicycle facility development where an 8-year-old or an 80-year-old should be able to navigate by bicycle comfortably and safely, including things like protected bike lanes or off-street urban trails.

Autonomous and Connected Vehicles: New motor vehicle technology that increasingly transfers responsibility from human drivers to computerized cars. There are varying levels of vehicle autonomy, ranging from features such as cruise control to the potential full automation of vehicles that do not require any human input. Connected vehicles are able to transfer important mobility data between vehicles and other infrastructure that allows the transportation network to optimize movement, deal with service interruptions, or perform important safety tasks.

B

Bicycle lanes: A bicycle lane, or a bike lane, is defined as a portion of the roadway that has been designated by striping, signage, and pavement markings for use by bicyclists and other low-speed vehicles. Bike lanes enable bicyclists to ride at their preferred speed without interference from prevailing traffic conditions and facilitate predictable behavior and interactions between bicyclists and motorists. A bike lane is distinguished from a protected bicycle lane in that it has no physical barrier (bollards, medians, raised curbs, etc.) that restrict the encroachment of motorized traffic.

Buffered bicycle lanes: Buffered bicycle lanes, like bicycle lanes, provide designated space for bicycles and other low-speed vehicles, but have an additional striping buffer to create more space between the bicyclist and motor vehicle traffic for improved safety.

C

CAMPO: The Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization is a governmental agency that provides cooperative and comprehensive transportation planning for the Central Texas region. CAMPO approves the use of federal and state transportation funds within Bastrop, Burnet, Caldwell, Hays, Travis, and Williamson counties.

Connections 2025: Capital Metro's adopted short-range transit service plan, which identifies new frequent, commuter and local bus routes. The plan focuses on creating more frequent and reliable service for riders.

Corridor Mobility: Safety and efficiency improvements along major streets and thoroughfares in Austin. Corridors are important connectors, have a high volume of people and attractors, and serve multiple modes of transportation. Examples of corridors are Airport Boulevard, Guadalupe Street, or William Cannon Drive.

D

Dedicated Transit Pathways: These pathways would be dedicated space along major corridors, above, below, or on street level where Capital Metro public transportation service would operate free from other traffic. The corridors for Dedicated Transit Pathways are being evaluated with Capital Metro's Project Connect process.

E

Emergency Vehicle Preemption: Emergency vehicles communicate with signals so that the signals turn green in anticipation of the emergency vehicle, allowing the emergency vehicle to pass through the intersection more efficiently to improve and maintain reliable response times.

F

Far-side bus stop placement: Placement of a bus stop on the "far-side" means the side of the intersection after the bus moves through it. For example, if a bus is traveling north along a street, it would pass through an intersection and then stop on the north or "far-side." This placement helps to improve the speed and reliability of transit service.

G

Grade-separated intersections: Grade-separated intersections, like those with overpasses and underpasses, eliminate traffic signals on highways and freeways where they intersect with other roads.

H

High-Capacity Transit: Public transportation that moves more people at more frequent intervals, usually because of dedicated space for public transit within the roadway. High-capacity transit is not limited to a specific mode of public transit (i.e. bus, rail, etc.).

I

Imagine Austin: The City's 30-year comprehensive plan, adopted in 2012, lays out a community vision for how the city can grow in a compact and connected way.

Imagine Austin Corridors and Centers: The areas of growth identified within the comprehensive plan to define how we will accommodate new residents, jobs, mixed use areas, open space and transportation infrastructure over the next 30 years. These areas would be developed to be compact, walkable, and provide resources and services for local residents.

Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS): Integrates advanced communication technologies into transportation infrastructure and in vehicles to increase safety, coordination, and efficiency of the transportation network for all users, including things like emergency vehicle notification systems or red light detection cameras.

L

Local Mobility: Local roads are the neighborhood streets that generally have lower speeds and serve smaller numbers of people. Local mobility projects often focus on pedestrian and bicycle improvements rather than roadway capacity.

M

Managed lanes: Managed lanes are lanes with special restrictions for use (sometimes depending on the time of day or level of congestion), which can include carpool lanes and tolled lanes on highways and freeways.

Mode Share: The different methods people use to move around, such as a car, public transit, walking, etc. The mode share considers the percent of people who use each different mode of transportation for commuting.

Mode Shift: The change in transportation habits from using one specific mode of transportation to another. For example, a mode shift occurs when someone who typically rides a bike as their primary source of transportation switches to primarily carpooling.

N

Near-Term Bicycle Improvements: A range of bicycle facility improvements that could be completed within five years. These are often simpler applications that do not require street reconstruction.

Non-radioactive hazardous materials (NRHM): Hazardous materials are substances that the U.S. Secretary of Transportation has determined to be capable of posing an unreasonable risk to health, safety, or property when transported in commerce. NRHM are materials transported by motor vehicle in types and quantities which require placarding that indicates the type of material. The different classifications of NRHM include explosives, gases, flammable liquids, flammable solids, oxidizers and organic peroxides, toxic and infectious substances, corrosive substances, and miscellaneous dangerous goods. Specific examples include gasoline, chlorine, diesel fuel, sulfuric acid, and propane. Routes for the transport of radioactive materials are designated separately from other hazardous materials due to their unique security and safety risks.

P

Peak-hour transit-only lanes: These travel lanes would be reserved for bus traffic during certain times of the day to improve speed and reliability of transit service.

Population density: This is a measure of the number of people within a specific area. Denser places have more people living in a smaller area, while less dense places have fewer people living in a larger area.

Protected bicycle lanes: Protected bicycle lanes are physically protected from motor vehicle traffic, either with a physical barrier, such as 3rd Street or Rio Grande Street, or by being separated by different grades, e.g. the bicycle lane being at the same level as the sidewalk behind the curb of the street (Barton Springs Road). Protected bicycle lanes are a tool to make high-volume or high-speed streets comfortable for users of all ages and abilities.

Publicly-owned roads: These roads are owned by the State of Texas, counties, or cities. These jurisdictions have authority over the design, construction, operation, and maintenance of the roads. In the City of Austin, there are also privately-owned streets that are owned and maintained by private properties, although they do require design approval from the City.

Q

Quiet streets: Local neighborhood streets offer bicycling routes that are inherently safer and more pleasant than busy major roads. Physical improvements to optimize designated "quiet streets" for bicyclists, and integrate them into the bicycle network, will include traffic calming devices for motor vehicles and wayfinding signage for people on bikes.

R

Regional Mobility: Major roads and highways that connect multiple jurisdictions require regional partnerships. Many people use these roadways to move into and out of Austin, and these projects require coordination between the City and our transportation partners. Examples of regional facilities include I-35, 290/71 and MoPac.

Right-of-Way (ROW): Right-of-Way has two definitions, one relating to the width of property, such as a street including sidewalks; the other relating to who has the right to proceed with their movement. More specifically, when we talk about street design, we take into account what will fit within that street's Right-of-Way to accommodate all modes, minimize cost, and efficiently manage roadway space. When we talk about moving people through an intersection, we may say, "pedestrians have the right of way in the crosswalk," meaning other modes of transportation have to yield to people walking.

Roadway capacity: A roadway's capacity is the amount of vehicular traffic it can accommodate. Improvements to roadway capacity include things like new roadways, roadway widenings, turning lanes, as well as intersection improvements, such as new signals and roundabouts.

S

Street Impact Fee Study: An ongoing process led by the Austin Transportation Department to evaluate introducing a Street Impact Fee for new growth. The fee would be a charge assessed on new development to pay for the construction or expansion of roadway facilities necessitated by the new development.

T

Tier 1 and Tier 2 Urban Trails: Tier 1 urban trails have been identified by the City of Austin's Urban Trails Plan as serving a high number of potential users. These trails are often located near a dense population, connect multiple destinations and attractions, and are often partially constructed. Tier 2 Urban Trails are other urban trails identified during the Urban Trail planning process, but are more conceptual than Tier 1 trails.

Track sidings (for MetroRail): Track sidings allow for Capital Metro's trains to operate in a parallel track in order for oncoming trains to pass, improving transit service capacity and operations.

Transit-only lanes: These travel lanes would be reserved for bus traffic to improve speed and reliability of transit service. Right-turning vehicles and bicycles would also be allowed to utilize the lanes.

Transit queue jumps: Queue jumps are a type of signal at an intersection that allows the bus to have a green light prior to the other travel lanes. These signals help to improve the speed and reliability of transit service.

Transit signal priority: Transit signal priority treatments include preemption (light turns green in anticipation of a bus or train) and holding the green light, meaning if a transit vehicle is approaching a green light, it would remain green to ensure the vehicle can make it through the intersection. These treatments are used to improve the speed and reliability of transit service.

Transportation Demand Management Programming: Different initiatives that aim to increase the efficiency of the transportation network by encouraging travelers to shift away from driving alone in their vehicles and also shift away from driving during peak congested periods. Overall these strategies work to affect how people travel and can range from encouraging employers to use flexible work schedules, increased and subsidized carpooling for commuters, or improving traffic information for travelers.

Transportation partners: Various local and regional agencies that play a role in managing our transportation network.

Transportation System Management: Techniques used to improve transportation capacity, accessibility, reliability, and safety without physically increasing the overall size of infrastructure, including things like optimizing traffic signals, improving traffic incident management, or lengthening merge lanes.

Travel Time Reliability: The ability for transportation network users to know with a reasonable degree of certainty how long it will take to move from one place to another along the transportation network under normal conditions.

TxDOT: The Texas Department of Transportation is a governmental agency responsible for overseeing the state's highway, public transportation, and aviation systems. TxDOT allocates federal transportation funds to Metropolitan Planning Organizations like CAMPO and manages the State Transportation Improvement Plan.

V

Vision Zero and Vision Zero Action Plan: Vision Zero is an international movement that aspires to reduce the number of people who die or are seriously injured in traffic crashes to zero. Austin's Vision Zero Action Plan defines a community-wide approach to reach this goal by 2025. It focuses on five core strategies: education, engineering, evaluation, enforcement, and policy. The 2016-2018 Vision Zero Action Plan was adopted by City Council in May 2016 and will be updated with the ASMP.