



AUSTIN TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT

MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and Council Members

CC: Spencer Cronk, City Manager
Gina Fiandaca, Assistant City Manager

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

DATE: September 18, 2019

SUBJECT: Speed Management Program Development Update

This memo serves as an update to the June briefings to the individual Council offices and the [June 24, 2019, memo](#) on the new draft framework for a Speed Management Program. Austin Transportation Department (ATD) staff continue to make progress on developing a holistic approach to speed management that aligns with the policy goals stated in the Austin Strategic Mobility Plan. ATD staff performed analysis on prior program data and are in the process of developing a model which will identify statistically significant street characteristics correlated to higher speeds. This model will be applied systematically to identify priority locations in conjunction with other program measures. This will lead to further detailed analysis and identification of the top tier of projects to be included in the new program. This data-driven approach will ultimately lead to identifying the areas of highest need across the city.

Funding

While the program will coordinate with other City programs to the greatest extent possible, the department's Fiscal Year 2020 Budget includes resources needed to implement the new program: a program manager, operating funds to implement the various strategies within the program (recognizing that the number of projects that can be implemented – particularly with engineering solutions - will be dependent on available budget), and funding to perform speed studies as needed.

Public Engagement

From July to mid-August, ATD staff hosted three open houses, attended seven public meetings (Boards and Commissions and Advisory Councils), and created an online survey that received over 1,100 responses. Those conversations and survey provided valuable feedback as we determine the final measures and criteria to use for the new program framework.

The high-level summary points from the public meetings are as follows:

- The program's prioritization process should consider including a method for resident input to be received and incorporate equity upfront.

- In addition to what is currently proposed, prioritization measures could also include proximity to entertainment districts and the presence of people walking, biking, or on any form of mobility device.
- The program should consider narrower lanes, alternative speed signs, low-cost pilot treatments, and safe crossings for streets with one sidewalk as strategies.
- Evaluation of completed projects could include analyzing induced demand by measuring increased pedestrian activity when possible, and enforcement should be increased to deter speeding drivers.

The high-level summary points from the survey are as follows:

- When ranking which categories of factors to use, crash history received the highest weighted score for importance, followed by risk characteristics and then speed profile.
 - When looking at crash history, respondents ranked the severity of the crash as the highest consideration, followed by crashes involving vulnerable users.
 - When looking at risk characteristics, proximity to special destinations like schools, parks, and transit stops ranked highest, followed by presence of sidewalks and street widths.
 - When looking at the observed speeds of streets, survey respondents ranked egregious speeding (the percentage and the number of drivers going well above the posted and/or target speed limit) highest.
- The highest-ranking strategies on Level 1 & 2 streets were targeted enforcement, pedestrian refuge islands and crosswalks, and speed humps/cushions. The highest-ranking strategies on Level 3 & 4 streets were full corridor/major intersection improvements, pedestrian refuge islands and crosswalks, and targeted enforcement.
- Over 70% of respondents agreed that 25 MPH or less was an appropriate speed for neighborhood streets (Level 1 and/or 2 streets).
- Common themes that emerged from the hundreds of open-ended comments received include: broad support for a speed management program, specific requests for particular streets, the need for more enforcement as well as sustained enforcement over time, vulnerable user safety, the need to address other driver behaviors (cut-through traffic, aggressive driving and red light running), and a desire for ways for residents to have a toolkit of options they could do themselves.

Next Steps

ATD staff are developing the final program details, including the measures and weighting to be used, so that the program can be launched upon hiring a program manager. Staff will finalize the initial modeling and data analysis for the citywide program, applying the program measures and finally collecting speed data on top potential project locations. As engagement occurs with residents in the chosen project areas, cost estimates will be developed and finalized for the strategies selected. With a new program manager, we would aim to have a preliminary list of potential project streets ready to begin in January 2020.

In the meantime, a first package of speed limit changes is planned for the September 19, 2019 City Council agenda. This package includes street segments on our key corridors as well as streets included on the High-Injury Network. ATD staff are available to discuss other approaches to speed limits on specific street types or targeted geographic locations as needed.