



MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and City Council

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

DATE: April 6, 2021

SUBJECT: Update on the Healthy Streets Initiative (Resolution No. 20200507-062)

The purpose of the memorandum is to provide an update on the progress of the Healthy Streets Initiative ([Resolution 20200507-062](#)). This resolution supports the community's need for mental and physical wellness during the pandemic by creating street space to maintain social distancing, as recommended in the Austin-Travis County [COVID-19 Risk-Based Guidelines](#). Currently, the City of Austin is at Stage 3.

Current Initiative Status

The Healthy Streets Initiative has been in place for 10 months. An initial reduction of this program began in October 2020 when the City had reached Stage 3. However, with the surge in cases and hospitalizations in late 2020 and early 2021, Austin Transportation (ATD) paused the reduction efforts, preserving the current five miles of designated streets.

With a return to Stage 3 and evidence that greater numbers of people are now returning to their daily pre-pandemic travel patterns, ATD will resume the slow wind down of the original program. This is necessary to balance staff capacity needed to effectively maintain Healthy Streets safety elements and devices that separate these street areas with the ongoing work to build permanent critical infrastructure. The temporary routes on Riverside Drive (Lee Barton Drive to traffic circle), Garden Villa Lane (Banister Lane to Barton Skyway) and the northern section of Comal Street (Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard to Rosewood Street) are in the process of being removed. Approximately 4 miles of temporary Healthy Street routes will remain in place, including Comal Street (Rosewood Avenue to Nash Hernandez Drive), Avenue G, Bouldin Avenue, and South 3rd Street.

In addition to regular monitoring and maintenance of the remaining temporary routes, staff are currently focusing on replacing the referenced rented safety devices (such as structural dividers) using a new vendor. This replacement process is expected to be done segment by segment. Staff will continue to evaluate and adjust plans and equipment as needed. The overall timeline for maintaining the existing temporary Healthy Streets safety elements and devices is currently budgeted through September 2021. Risk status, motor vehicle volumes and overall street operations, including pedestrian and bicycle demand, will continue to be monitored closely as conditions change.

Transition to Permanent Infrastructure

With direction from Council to establish a more permanent program, staff from the Public Works and Transportation departments have launched a permanent Healthy Streets pilot program through the Sidewalk/Pedestrian, Urban Trails and Bikeways plan update. The first step in the planning process is to develop criteria for where permanent Healthy Street infrastructure may be most equitably offered. Staff have initiated this effort. Staff are also actively working to transition the current Healthy Street on Pleasant Valley Road over the Longhorn Dam to a more permanent infrastructure configuration, which will include Pedestrian Hybrid Beacons (PHB), a shared use pathway as well as overall safety improvements for everyone using this street. For more information, visit the [project page](#).

For questions please contact Anna Martin, Assistant Director, at anna.martin@austintexas.gov.

CC: Spencer Cronk, City Manager
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