

Fire Response Access and Transportation Safety Questions and Answers

The following is a list of answers to questions Austin Transportation Department (ATD) and Austin Fire Department (AFD) staff received at a [public meeting regarding fire response access and transportation safety on Sept. 17, 2018](#). Questions with similar answers have been combined and are separated by ellipses (...). Questions are organized by topic areas: Fire Apparatus and Response Times; Street Design and Connectivity; Data on Injuries and Fatalities; Emergency Medical Services (EMS)/non-fire calls; Code, Criteria Manuals and Development Review; Recommendations and Next Steps. Comments and other feedback are collected at the end of the document under General Statements and staff will take them into consideration when developing upcoming recommendations.

Fire Apparatus and Response Times

1) How much time does road calming reduce in response time?

Combined response:

Response times are not impacted by speed cushions that are spaced so that fire apparatus wheels can straddle a cushion, whereas a standard size vehicle would need to slow down to drive over the cushions. Other tools, such as traffic circles, can be maneuvered, but have a slight impact on response times. All traffic calming projects are coordinated with and approved by AFD to consider primary response routes and other impacts.

2) So a pumper cannot spray a two-story roof?

AFD response:

An AFD pumping apparatus *can* spray water—a lot of water—on a standard two-story residential roof. However, the pumping apparatus sprays water via a hose at ground level and has limitations as to how effective it can be. An aerial unit—one that comes equipped with a 100-foot ladder and a “master stream” to spray water from above—provides a water stream with more flexible focus.

3) Can we not have dynamic, context-sensitive responses where we deploy smaller apparatus whenever possible?

AFD response:

With regards to certain types of wildfires, we already do this, deploying smaller apparatus with reduced pumping and water supply capabilities. However, structure fires and wildland fires are completely different in terms of the personnel and equipment needed to fight them. AFD is currently purchasing “smaller” apparatus (shorter, not thinner), but per the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards that we follow, apparatus must be of sufficient size to carry:

- Four firefighters and their Personal Protective Equipment (e.g., jackets, pants, boots, helmets, etc.); and
- An assortment of hand tools, ladders, a large amount of hose, and a large capacity pump. During special events, crews are also deployed on golf cart-type vehicles that can navigate quickly and easily through crowds to respond to medical calls only; they have no firefighting capabilities.

4) Is it true that firefighters that are involved in a crash are penalized with time off?

AFD response:

Firefighters who are involved in a **preventable** collision can be subject to various levels of discipline depending on the situation, which could include time off. However, any discipline depends on the specifics surrounding each individual collision event and is determined on a case-by-case basis.

5) Why is an aerial deployed to a residential street?

AFD response:

It is a best practice throughout the fire service to dispatch aerial units to all structure fires as they may be needed to effectively fight the fire. It's nearly impossible to predict what resources are necessary to bring a structure fire under control, as factors change moment to moment. To ensure the proper possible resources are sent to a fire before they are needed (so there's no delay in waiting for them to arrive), AFD sends both aerials and pumpers to any reported structure fire. While pumping apparatus are significantly capable of flowing water at a fire, doing so from ground-level includes several limitations. Elevated hose streams allow firefighters to more efficiently apply water to areas impossible to reach from ground level. Aerial units also carry more hand and power tools to assist with forcible entry and rescue.

6) Can emergency vehicles drive into the sidewalks and yards in the event of a fire?

AFD response:

They can, but we don't recommend it nor endorse it. A driver who did so would certainly have to explain his/her reasons why and could be subject to discipline for doing so. Fire trucks weigh anywhere from 14 to 25 tons. Most sidewalks are not designed to support this weight; additionally, most of our fire trucks aren't designed to traverse curbs (doing so risks damaging a unit that can cost between \$500,000 and \$1 million). There's also the matter of property damage that could be done to the sidewalk, the private property, or both.

7) How does AFD respond to calls to Hyde Park with their safe narrow streets? Like Avenue G.

AFD response:

Very carefully! Narrow streets present a real challenge to our drivers; having streets of the proper size with appropriate clearances (height and width) is critical. If our apparatus are involved in a collision event, their response is typically over; another unit has to be assigned to the call, thereby increasing response times. During the meeting, it was stated that, in older neighborhoods, the fire stations are located closer to each other than in more suburban neighborhoods. This helps with response time, since units will travel slower through these narrower streets but don't have to travel as far.

8) How does motor vehicle congestion affect response time? Does AFD support "clear lanes" in congested areas to allow emergency access at expense of car capacity?

AFD response:

Traffic congestion affects our response time almost more than anything else; the more congestion we have to get through, the longer the response time. When we go to an emergency, we do so as "Code 3"

(with lights and sirens). Per the Texas Traffic Code, drivers must yield the right of way to emergency response vehicles when they are operating Code 3. But we all know that doesn't happen all the time and, even when it does, navigating through congested streets/roadways adds critical seconds—sometimes minutes—to our arriving at the emergency. In order to yield, drivers must have someplace to pull out of the way of the emergency response vehicle. When traffic congestion is severe, or when there is no improved shoulder to pull onto, it can become gridlock. And for the person waiting for us to get there, that can literally mean the difference between life and death. Assuming "Clear Lanes" refers to the Texas Clear Lanes program to reduce congestion on non-tolled roadways, the City of Austin supports legislation and funding for transportation projects and initiatives dedicated to improving regional mobility, transportation infrastructure and local transportation options. At the local level, AFD is committed to working with ATD to ensure efficient emergency response while maximizing the protection of all roadway users. AFD supports ATD and other transportation agencies' efforts to manage congestion and improve efficiencies, including expanding emergency vehicle preemption technology at intersections and strategically adding roadway capacity.

9) In an active fire, why do we worry about a private auto getting by the emergency vehicle? Why not close the street in that case and only worry about er veh (emergency vehicle)?

AFD response:

In some cases, we do close access to the street. However, when we do that, it means that the rest of the residents on that street can't get home ... or to daycare to pick up their child ... or to work. In the case of the elderly or infirm, this can create a more significant problem.

10) Has there been any equity analysis of AFD policies such as response times? Or lack of requirements on SFH which is basically a subsidy of that lifestyle option?

AFD response:

AFD policies regarding response times are administered the same way across the city, regardless of area, income levels, size of building, or other unique characteristics. To do otherwise would be discriminatory. Our goal is to have a fire unit arrive within 8 minutes of the 911 call 90 percent of the time to best serve the resident in his/her time of need.

11) So AFD needs street width wide enough two vehicles?

AFD response:

Not necessarily, as every vehicle's size is different. It really depends on the situation. If the neighborhood is well connected—like downtown and Hyde Park—there are more ways to the emergency scene and street width can be narrower. In these areas, there are multiple ways to get to an incident and the need for another vehicle to pass an apparatus is reduced. But, there are some older sections of town and some new developments that do not have a well-connected grid system for their roadways. For these areas, solutions must include the ability to get around another emergency vehicle due to positioning requirements of the apparatus already on scene or to respond to another emergency that is separate from the first but further down the street with limited or no other ways to get there.

12) AFD showed a bunch of pictures, are these from Austin or other cities?

AFD response:

Both. The intent was to show the space needed for the apparatus when being used at an emergency scene as well as how it is used. Aerial apparatus (units with a big ladder mounted on top) are typically expected to be used only at emergencies in commercial or taller buildings. However, they do have an important role in residential fires and that was illustrated by some of the pictures.

13) Has AFD also lobbied against annexations and other sprawl, which both significantly increase response time?

AFD response:

City departments are often asked to provide research or insight into a policy/project, but we do not “lobby” or provide an opinion. We only provide detailed data in response to the questions asked. Proposed annexations are reviewed by each department with regard to their ability to provide service to the area in question, and any subsequent costs. For annexations, we also factor our response time goal (8 minutes from call receipt to arrival of first fire unit 90 percent of the time) to the proposed annexation area. In addition, we review Senate Bill 1596, which speaks to the municipality providing equal or better service to the area than that which is currently provided by the Emergency Services District. There are times when we determine that we can provide the appropriate service to the area, and meet or surpass Senate Bill 1596; conversely, there are times we cannot. When that’s the case, we provide that information and recommend not annexing the area. Although the final decision is up to the City Council, they do take into account input from all the affected departments.

14) In the past 10 years how many calls was AFD unable to respond to due to streets that were too narrow?

AFD response:

We respond to all calls we are dispatched to. It may just take longer to get there when we have trouble accessing the address.

15) Instead of designing our city around the trucks we want; can we design our trucks around the city we want? Local municipalities are urbanizing. #Walkable ... Do they make more narrow pumping apparatus vehicles? ... Why did AFD go to higher apparatus? ... Why does AFD have to have apparatus of the size that it currently uses instead of smaller fire apparatus?

AFD response:

There are only a few fire apparatus manufacturers in the United States. Although we hope to see them offer additional options in the future, we are very limited in choice of chassis size now.

16) Is there a smaller aerial than what AFD is currently using that can be used?

AFD response:

We are ordering aerials now that are more agile. We are also looking at a Tiller Truck that, while longer, can actually maneuver better in tight spaces.

17) How long will it take to move back to smaller apparatus? How much will it cost?

AFD response:

We have 83 fire trucks and average replacing five to six per year. Optimistically, the transition will take between 15 and 20 years.

18) Could we get a "tour" or presentation of the smaller trucks compared to the bigger ones? I mean, apparatuses.

AFD response:

Absolutely! For tours or presentations, please contact FirePIO@ausps.org or 512-974-0130.

Street Design and Connectivity

19) What happens for neighborhoods with only one entry? What are the recs for those type of neighborhoods?

Combined response:

For existing neighborhoods with only one entry point, staff would consider the surrounding context on a case-by-case basis to determine recommendations, which could include new street connectivity, alternative fire service delivery or available alternative fire apparatus design.

20) Shouldn't this be a conversation about context -a tight gridded urban neighborhood close to stations is a very different than suburban and disconnected areas.

Combined response:

Context is an important factor in street design. Narrower street design is possible in locations with higher street connectivity and fire station density.

21) So can we at least allow for safe street design in the urban core?

Combined response:

In the urban core, more compact street design is possible due to the higher levels of street connectivity and fire station density.

22) Do minimum road and lane widths differ by roadway speed?

ATD response:

Yes, typically slower speeds are associated with narrower streets and narrower lane widths. The National Association of City Transportation Officials has published [information on the relationship between roadway width and speed](#).

Also, the surrounding context is a factor in street design and associated speeds. The [Austin Street Design Guide](#) shows how street design is determined for a given context and how speed relates to street design. The cross-sections in the design guide were developed in preparation for updating the City's

Transportation Criteria Manual, which contains standard cross-sections for new development and city street projects. Staff is actively working on the Transportation Criteria Manual update in conjunction with AFD and other City departments.

23) When is changing the default speed on roads effective/ineffective?

ATD response:

Changing speeds on streets is effective when street design reinforces the speed. If street design allows for higher speeds to be more comfortable for drivers, then lowering speed limits may not be effective, unless enforcement is in place. Unfortunately, enforcement can't be present at all times in all parts of the community.

24) Can you speak of the role of public transportation/mass transit to this topic?

ATD response:

Public transportation operations are considered in street design. Buses are similar to fire apparatuses in having larger turning radii and needing clearance from trees. However, transit operations do not require the clearance that is needed for an aerial fire apparatus with stabilizers deployed. ATD works with Capital Metro in developing street designs and standards. Capital Metro is engaged in developing the public transportation element of the Transportation Criteria Manual, which is currently being updated.

25) Who will enforce "no parking" areas because its not happening now?

ATD response:

ATD Parking Enforcement is responsible for enforcing "no parking" areas.

26) How do fire departments in older American cities, like Boston, operate in a city with narrow streets? ... what types of innovative solutions are older cities with narrower streets using for fire access? ... Why is Austin Fire Department fighting for unsafe street design?

AFD response:

We have reached out to several cities (Milwaukee, San Francisco, Portland, and Boston, to name a few) during the past year to ask about their best practices, what's worked (and what hasn't) for them, etc. What we learned is that we are all working towards the same goal: safety for multimodal transportation and emergency response. Most larger fire departments—as well as Austin's surrounding jurisdictions—have either:

- adopted the 2015 International Fire Code language ([Section 503.2.1](#)) that speaks to 20 feet for fire access,
- [adopted local amendments to the International Fire Code](#) (see page 31), which is what Austin has done,
- or are using [Appendix D](#), which has a minimum requirement of 26 feet (with some stipulations).

Since Boston was one of the cities we contacted, we've included an excerpt from their Fire Code (below) for your reference. Like us, each department we visited with is working with their local municipalities to find safe solutions for multimodal transportation. In Austin, our joint efforts have resulted in some good solutions that address the concerns of both pedestrian safety and emergency response. As Austin

develops new subdivisions that have a well-gridded street system, we are able to design streets that are only 14 feet wide (clear width). These roads have two-way traffic with friction zones (requiring one vehicle to slow down and pull over for the other to pass), which helps manage speed and promotes safety. Using accepted design strategies, we've also been able to reduce street widths in commercial areas. However, there are existing properties (in addition to new ones) with proposed development plans that are not gridded; in these cases, it is important to have response capability during an emergency, so we are working with our partners on solutions that help maintain safety without sacrificing emergency response.

Boston Fire Prevention Fire Code

Section 7.09 — Access for Fire Department Apparatus and Personnel

The following requirements shall be observed at all locations where operations involving the construction, repair, alteration, or demolition of buildings or other structures are performed:

- (a) Site fencing and the locking of gates and doors which interfere with access to fire extinguishers or the components of any fire extinguishing or fire alarm system shall be subject to approval of the Head of the Fire Department.*
- (b) Approved hard-surface, all-weather, access fire lanes, not less than 20 feet in width, for use of Fire Department apparatus, shall be provided to within 25 feet of any building or other structure at the site.*
- (c) In buildings of more than one story, at least one stairway shall be in service to any floor*

27) What about alleys? Are those options for fire access?

AFD response:

In most cases, no, as alleys are not typically designed for fire unit access. That said, we have had some recent developments where AFD has worked cooperatively with a developer and ATD in designing alleys that could be used in that way. The developer's design utilized the alleys instead of the main road to assist with accessibility. Each situation is evaluated on a case-by-case basis, and options that meet the goals of being both functional and supporting the effort toward safer streets are reviewed.

28) Thousands of blocks in central Austin don't conform to current IFC requirements - how are they safely served?

AFD response:

Many of the Central Austin streets are well gridded; areas like downtown and Hyde Park have short blocks and a very accessible grid system. There are streets that have been brought to our attention as not being accessible, and we are working with city agencies and the affected communities for solutions that meet the vision of the city.

29) Why can't Austin's streets be as safe as our peer cities of comparable size? Please let us have 20' lanes so that people will stop being afraid to walk

AFD response:

AFD has been, and continues to be, a proponent of safe streets. We live here, too, and we absolutely want to be able to walk our dogs down the street with our kids without fearing for our safety. We work very well with our partners at ATD and with various developers to find the most appropriate solutions that balance safety, multi-modal transportation, and emergency response. From our perspective, we've

helped implement designs that reduced street width and vehicle speeds, while allowing for emergency scene deployment and operations. These design ideas have resulted in clear widths that can be less than 20 feet, but each situation has to be reviewed to see what options are most suitable.

30) Why do Street widths at Mueller have to be wider when Mueller has a street grid?

AFD response:

We worked with Mueller on their designs, so we are unaware of any major changes—other than some roadside parking being removed to allow for fire department emergency operations—that have altered the original street width. Items such as building size/height, occupancy type (residential vs. commercial), and street design were reviewed after the development was completed to see what tweaking could be done to allow for better fire department access. Some minimal adjustments were made in conjunction with and with assistance from ATD to ensure that everyone’s needs were being considered and to reduce the impact on the neighborhood design.

Data on Injuries and Fatalities

31) How many deaths have there been from fires in Austin in the last 5 years? What about compared to vehicular crashes? ... For the goal: “Fewest total deaths from all causes” could be pretty broad. What deaths are attributed to things related to these policies? What assumptions? ... What aside from deaths are your recs looking at?

Combined response:

Year	Traffic Crash Fatalities	Fire Fatalities
2012	78	8
2013	75	5
2014	62	7
2015	102	6
2016	79	5
2017	76	2

In addition to deaths caused by fires and traffic crashes, staff are considering other impacts such as medical emergencies responded to by AFD (including traffic crashes), loss of property from fires, fire spread, wildfire risks, and serious injuries caused by traffic crashes.

32) Is there a cost benefit way to compare the exposure that people have in cars and as pedestrians on wide roads compared to the risk of harm from structure fire?

Combined response:

Staff has not conducted a cost/benefit analysis. Conducting an analysis is being considered as a recommendation to Council. Staff will be providing recommendations in a report to Council in February 2019 and through the Austin Strategic Mobility Plan, which is projected to be considered by Council for adoption in spring 2019.

33) Has an analysis been done between the economic impact of actual fires compared to traffic crashes that the fires department responds to?

Combined response:

Staff has not conducted an economic impact study.

34) Unsafe streets not only cause deaths from crashes but also health impacts like causing oversight by reducing active transpo. Why not use holistic HIA for this? (On the question that didn't get answered, HIA meant the process of Health Impact Assessment, and oversight was mistyping of "obesity")

ATD response:

A Health Impact Assessment has not been used for this policy analysis. However, Health Impact Assessments are being used in corridor planning and this is a practice we are recommending to continue with major mobility infrastructure projects as part of the Austin Strategic Mobility Plan recommendations.

35) Why did he say fire is top type of call when it is cardiac?

AFD response:

The reason that "fire" was mentioned as the top call type is because of the five-year cumulative totals (noted in the chart below). In this case, the five-year total for fire calls is listed at 18,559. When compared to the five-year total for cardiac arrest calls (5,066), fire calls are more than three times higher. But, AFD does have a very strong medical mission in conjunction with Austin/Travis County EMS: in Fiscal Year 2017, 67 percent of all dispatched calls were classified as medical in nature.

Table: Emergency Response Data

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	5 Year Total
AFD Total Code 3 Calls	58,697	60,362	61,620	59,649	55,591	295,919
Fire Calls	3,657	3,787	3,668	3,764	3,683	18,559
Cardiac Arrest	636	403	1,261	1,335	1,431	5,066
Chest Pain	7	257	525	2,878	4,889	8,556
Stoke	1,423	712	1,476	1,613	1,617	6,841

Emergency Medical Service (EMS)/non-fire calls

36) well EMS vehicles don't have these same issues with narrower streets? ... Does EMS require the larger width that AFD does?

Combined response:

EMS vehicles are similar to fire apparatus in having larger turning radii and needing vertical clearance from trees. However, they do not require the width needed for an aerial fire apparatus operating with stabilizers deployed.

37) Why is AFD doing EMS work?

AFD response:

In most municipal jurisdictions, medical response is handled by the fire department. Austin is a bit of an oddity when it comes to the current delivery model (third service), with both AFD and Austin/Travis County EMS responding to medical calls. All AFD firefighters are trained to at least the EMT-B level and, because of the number of AFD stations (49) located across the city—most of which are not co-located with EMS—we can typically get to a medical call faster than an ambulance, beginning basic life support and preparing the patient for transport, ensuring precious time is not lost. This practice means the person calling 911 for medical assistance gets the fastest response possible.

38) Why does AFD rescue unit do the cutting out of cars, etc., instead of police or mobility services officers?

AFD response:

AFD carries an assortment of heavy rescue equipment (cutters, spreaders, rams, etc.) on both rescue and aerial units. Firefighters assigned to these apparatus are specially trained to use this highly technical equipment—in conjunction with vehicle stabilization techniques, firefighting equipment, and their medical training—to safely and effectively remove patients from a wrecked and/or overturned vehicle. Law enforcement does not carry this equipment, are not skilled in using it, and are not trained medical providers. Personnel who can deliver this particular service have traditionally come from fire departments, where specialized rescues have long been a part of the mission.

39) Why do three fire trucks show up to a fender bender? Is AFD over funded?

AFD response:

The typical response by AFD to traffic accidents is two units; Austin/Travis County EMS sends one ambulance for advanced medical support and transport, if necessary. The first AFD unit responds directly to the collision location, providing medical care and fulfilling other duties as needed; the second unit parks on the upstream side of traffic flow to block the collision scene and help protect both first responders working the accident and the civilians involved. Of the three types of vehicles that might respond to this type of incident (police car, ambulance, and fire truck), the latter is the largest, heaviest, and the only one to offer significant protection on the roadway. Unfortunately, like most things, that isn't an absolute; according to the National Fire Protection Association, 97 firefighters have been struck and killed on roadways since 2000 when motorists failed to slow down when passing the scene of a collision; 12 of those deaths occurred in the first nine months of 2017.

40) Are most calls for AFD medical calls? If so, where is EMS in this conversation?

AFD response:

Medical calls are our primary incident type (67 percent of all dispatched calls in Fiscal Year 2017 were classified as medical in nature), so a strong medical mission is incorporated into our service delivery model. EMS is included in all plans for providing medical delivery services to the city. Our role as a first responder is to provide life-saving medical skills to those experiencing critical medical emergencies. As we mentioned before, we can often arrive quicker and begin medical treatment sooner than the closest EMS unit. In medical emergencies, seconds matter!

While EMS units are shorter than fire trucks, they are quite similar in their width requirements to gain access to emergency scenes efficiently.

Our colleagues at Austin/Travis County EMS are involved in all plans for providing medical delivery services to the city. Our two agencies work together in coordinating the placement of stations so that we can meet all response considerations. Roadway issues impact both agencies, but, since we have larger apparatus than EMS, it is assumed that an ambulance will be able to navigate anything a fire truck can.

41) Since EMS has come up in the conversation, is AFD helping EMS with a more substantial contract with the City to respond to more medical calls?

AFD response:

AFD and Austin/Travis County EMS work together consistently to search for cost-effective models in delivering the services the community deserves and expects. There is continuous discussion on the best practices in delivering high-quality emergency medical response. Both agencies are funded by the City's General Fund and are not contracted. Our joint goal is to maximize the usefulness of all the resources available to effectively provide emergency services. However, keep in mind that our two agencies are stand-alone, separate departments; we each work under labor agreements that are independently negotiated with City management.

42) How many traffic crashes does AFD respond to? ... How many car crashes do you respond to?

*AFD response:**

2017	2016	2015
12,960	13,790	13,123

*City of Austin service area

Vehicle-related calls: Traffic Accident, Traffic Injury, RESQV – Vehicle Rescue

43) responses for medical, non-fire emergencies can use much smaller "apparatus" right?

AFD response:

In Austin's current response model, AFD is the first responder to the more serious medical calls. We respond from either the fire station or while driving back to the station from the incident. If we were to respond in an alternative unit, we would not be able to quickly respond to fires or other calls while out of the station on the medical call. Utilizing the fire truck allows us to respond to all incidents no matter where we are located.

Code, Criteria Manuals and Development Review

44) Has AFD considered banning "that sprawl design"? ... Can we make sure no new cul du sac neighborhoods are ever built again in the city and ETJ?

Combined response:

AFD has not proposed regulations banning sprawl design. ATD proposed amendments to the Land Development Code through the CodeNEXT process that addressed additional street connectivity requirements, including prohibiting dead-end streets and shortening block lengths, which support congestion management and improved traffic operations and public safety access. Staff intends to propose these changes if and when a Land Development Code update process is initiated.

45) If the need for wide streets was created with 80's design, why are we still requiring wide streets if new requirements include max block size and connectivity?

Combined response:

The Transportation Criteria Manual is currently being updated to reflect modern street designs. ATD staff are working with AFD to identify solutions for current developments on a case-by-case basis while standards are being finalized. Some of the street requirements in the Land Development Code are outdated and don't require the level of street connectivity needed. Staff intends to propose these changes if and when a Land Development Code update process is initiated.

46) What is being done to work with the Development Services Department on ensuring timely and complete implementation of plans you come up with? ... When DSD becomes an enterprise operation on 10/1, will the new positions include fire access reviewers. If not on 10/1, when might that happen?

Combined response:

In general, the Development Services Department (DSD) does not review fire code requirements. AFD completes reviews for fire access and code requirements in the subdivision, site plan, and building permit process. The new positions at DSD will not include dedicated fire access reviewers. As with all review partners, DSD continues to look for opportunities to improve the effectiveness of the review process. Staff will recommend any needed review process improvements in its report to Council in February 2019.

47) DSD & PC OK'd a subdivision plan after being informed that it is problematic for fire emergency access. Nothing has been built. Is there anything further to do?

Combined response:

Staff does not have enough information to answer the question about the specific case referenced.

48) Are you now requiring sprinkler systems in single family homes where roads are narrower?

AFD response:

Requiring sprinkler systems in new construction of single-family homes is an issue the Legislature has heard several times through the years, but, so far, they have not passed any legal requirements for them. However, if a subdivision's design is such that it does not meet the code (20 feet or 25 feet, depending on the situation), that would necessitate either an adjustment by the developer to meet the code or a proposal for an Alternate Method of Compliance, which could include the installation of sprinklers. Any alternate design is evaluated, along with proposals from the developer, to see if the adjustments meet the intent of the code.

49) What is the affect on housing costs and how will it affect affordability if sprinkler systems are required on narrower streets.

Combined response:

Generally speaking, requiring sprinkler systems in residential developments may have a cost impact on developing housing, the costs of which could be passed down to the home buyer or renter or could be offset by changing other elements of the development. Narrower streets could also allow for additional housing units to be built. Staff will address the potential impacts in its report to Council in February 2019.

50) Is changing the default speed for local city streets part of this conversation?

ATD response:

Yes. However, this is an issue that requires changes to state law. The City is proposing to include this item in the City's legislative agenda for the upcoming legislative session in 2019.

51) can we encourage more of those rolled curbs in the new TCM?

ATD response:

Yes, use of rolled curb designs will be included in the Transportation Criteria Manual update.

52) Can AFD speak to the health and safety need for a compact and connected city? Can they promote those tenants as we work to rewrite the Land Development Code?

AFD response:

We have always been, and will continue to be, a committed partner in the process of designing a safe city. Each situation/development has unique elements specific to that project that must be evaluated. To date, we've been able to find cooperative solutions to meet the compact and connected vision for Austin while supporting emergency response. Those include street-side parking, speed humps, medians to protect pedestrian/bicycle traffic, and narrow residential roads that have emergency response zones (no parking) that are long enough to set up the unit and handle fire and ground operations. These examples keep multimodal transportation and safety in mind and are done cooperatively between AFD and ATD.

53) Can someone working on a new development reasonably expect to work with AFD to solve these problems with variances to the design details?

AFD response:

Absolutely. In fact, with the developments we've looked at during the past year, we've had success working together with those involved and our other partners for safe solutions we can all agree on. The best model for success is the inclusion of all agencies at the beginning of the process and working cooperatively throughout it to identify designs that best meet the compact and connected design plan for Austin. These discussions and collaborations have resulted in functional and safe streets that are less than 20 feet in clear width.

54) So what is the road width that AFD feels is appropriate for the TCM? 20'? 25'?

AFD response:

If only it were as simple as setting a standard width! Like Austin, each development has unique features that impact the size of the street. For example, some residential neighborhoods have driveways, while others use alleys for personal vehicle access. Since it is rare that someone parks in front of their driveway, an option is to purposely place their location. This creates extra space that can be used for fire department access. For a neighborhood that has alley access parking, there are no driveways on the street, which allows for street-side parking for the whole length of the block. In this situation, we ask for a strategically located “no parking zone” to allow for emergency scene set up. In both scenarios, the clear width is not 25 feet nor 20 feet, but rather the operational space for emergency scene setup (including the deployment of hoses, and equipment to make rescues and extinguish the fire) is made wider with clear access on the roadway as well as onto the adjoining spaces. It can also be used to set up an aerial unit which requires the extension of stabilizers (16 – 19 feet in width) from each side of the vehicle.

55) IFC requires 20' clear between fixed objects. ATX requires 25'. Most of Austin's peers have adopted IFC w/o exception. Can Austin adopt IFC w/o exception? ... Int. Fire Code requires 20' clear. Most cities adopt IFC without amending that provision. Why does Austin have a local amendment that requires 25' clear? ... If the clear space was 20', and austin now wants 25' clear, what other communities are using 25' clear? Are there comparative fire and crash rates from them?

AFD response:

Many cities have adopted the International Fire Code language of 20 feet; most of our partner cities around Austin have adopted the Appendix D language of 26 feet. We have learned that, instead of applying a standard across the board, looking at each development individually is the most appropriate. When all agencies are involved in the discussions from the beginning of a project, the best options for street design can be incorporated. The code does allow for alternate methods of compliance to ensure not only multimodal safety, but also emergency response and setup during an emergency. As the code currently reads, there is flexibility in using purposeful design to develop a functional and safe roadway; connectivity is the key on this. There are recent designs that were limited due to the configuration of the property where connectivity was not possible. Under those conditions, the ability to be able to pass another emergency vehicle is important so that we can set up in the best location and still have the ability to respond to another incident that is past the location of the first. We have not compared crash rates of communities with 20' clear requirements to City of Austin crash rates.

Recommendations and Next Steps

56) What exact changes, if any, are you proposing to current practices? I'm still confused about that ... So what are the proposals for long term, medium term and short term changes and the policy analysis driving those strategic initiatives? ... are we only looking at street width? or are we also talking about issues like redundancy in the grid - needing multiple ways to enter and exit communities ... Please clarify exact policy recommendations that are being proposed. ... What is the next step here and how will we know about it? ... Development Services Dept has failed to ensure implementation of site plan specs. Should this plan include recommendations on improving site plan compliance?

Combined response:

Staff is considering the implications of a variety of strategies, including changes to street regulations (e.g., width, tree requirements, connectivity, building standards), process improvements (e.g., development review, performance measures, hiring), operations (e.g., responses to non-fire emergencies), fire apparatus size and design, fire station density, and approaches to speed management (e.g. traffic calming, enforcement). Staff is planning to report to Council in February 2019 with recommendations on short- and long-term strategies to reduce the overall number of fire and traffic deaths. Staff will continue to update stakeholders through memorandums and online at AustinTexas.gov/StreetDesign.

57) Will Council eventually be making a decision about how to address this issue? If so, when?

Combined response:

Staff will provide the City Manager and Council with a policy analysis and recommendations in February 2019. Council may take action at any time.

58) How do you resolve and honest disagreement between two city departments that disagree on what constitutes a safe condition?

Combined response:

AFD and ATD are working to balance the needs of both departments and have identified collaborative solutions to provide the safest conditions while considering all risks.

59) How can you provide more predictability for developers interested in building urban projects?

Combined response:

ATD is currently working in coordination with AFD and other departments impacted by the right of way on an update to the Transportation Criteria Manual, which contains standards for street design. The update will include new street cross-sections that will provide more predictability for developers. These cross-sections are being applied to streets through the Austin Strategic Mobility Plan. Cross-sections and associated rights of way for all streets will be shown in a Street Network table and map as part of the Austin Strategic Mobility Plan.

60) Last January, Rob Vires presented to the Public Safety Commission the problems drivers were having with emergency access. What has happened since?

AFD response:

AFD, ATD, and various citizen groups have come together to better understand each other's issues and work together to identify possible solutions. There have been regular internal meetings and one large stakeholder meeting to share the progress we've made and get feedback from the community. The plan has been, and continues to be, to look for cooperative solutions to meet the various needs. We all agree that is the optimum way to ensure everyone's needs are heard and, as best they can be, met.

General Statements

- Deaths should not be the only measure of success. Injury should be accounted for as well.
- AFD policy of response times metrics seems flawed, inequitable & should be rethought to be people based. More stations to dense areas better than unsafe streets
- So weird what manipulative language AFD uses, such as "getting to your emergency" or making fun of people not knowing they refer to fire trucks as "apparatus"
- Brain damage can also occur immediately due to a traffic crash.
- Sounds like we need more smaller trucks and more EMT staff and vehicles.
- Safety is important, though there are other reasons a community can want narrow streets. AFD & EMS response time with appropriate equipment may not be affected.
- let's minimize setbacks!
- Sounds like AFD should discourage setback requirements.
- AFD appears to have made up their minds. Less safe streets for everyone!! Austin is regressive in this regard
- EMS needs to be lead in medical calls from a medical and apparatus size perspective.
- AFD is talking in circles!! Eliminating parking lanes in Mueller increases the de facto lane width making it less safe for everyone
- EMS needs to be part of the conversation.
- AFD is operating with blinders on (hence their desire for wide lanes without traffic calming devices)
- Active Transportation should be in the front row of this conversation, not the back row.
- Deaths related to fire continue to fall while deaths related to auto injuries continue to climb— do we want safer streets 100% of the time or 3 trucks at wreck?
- Mueller has 1000s of residents who bought into a plan predicated on narrow safe, calm, safe streets with street parking. Aren't they owed what was promised.