



MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and Council

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

FROM: Richard Mendoza, P.E., Director, Public Works Department
Robert Spillar, P.E., Director, Austin Transportation Department

DATE: September 19, 2019

SUBJECT: Downtown Public Restroom – Update

This memo provides an update on the downtown public restroom project, which is intended to provide residents and visitors access to safe and accessible restroom facilities in the downtown area. This project is a joint partnership between Public Works, Austin Transportation, Economic Development and the Downtown Austin Alliance (DAA).

Background:

In 2016 staff received direction from Council to establish a pilot program to help inform possible recommendations for installing permanent public restrooms in the downtown area. During the pilot program, a temporary restroom facility was moved between five downtown locations for set periods of time. Following the end of the pilot program, staff examined usage data and other information collected to determine where to install permanent restroom units.

In July 2018, staff provided an update to Council detailing its recommendation for the installation, operation and maintenance of three permanent public restroom facilities at the following locations:

- East side of Trinity St. between 4th St. and 5th St.
- East side of Brazos St. between 5th St. and 6th St.
- Near intersection of 7th St. and IH-35 (exact location to-be-determined)

In the months following the July 2018 update, staff procured the three restroom units from a manufacturer, Portland Loo. The restroom units are solar powered, are designed to connect to existing water/wastewater utilities, and are used by many cities across the U.S. Given their popularity, there was a known backlog in manufacturing and production time before the City could receive these units.

Current Status:

Two of the three restroom units were originally anticipated to be delivered and installed at the Brazos St. and Trinity St. locations this fall. The third unit, intended for the area near 7th and IH-35, was to be delivered and installed in early-to-mid 2020.

Earlier this month, the manufacturer informed staff that due to “parts and labor issues” the production of our units (and those for many other cities) will be delayed. The manufacturer now states the two units intended for Brazos St. and Trinity St. will now be delivered and installed in January 2020. They also state that the third unit will be delivered and installed in mid-2020.

As an early step in this process, staff and stakeholders evaluated different solutions being used nationwide and determined Portland Loo to be the best option for our needs. That remains the case. Further, the utility work to be undertaken next month has been specifically designed for the Portland Loo model, and may not work with an alternative; a change in course may cause further delay. Despite the noted production backlog and manufacturer delays, staff is confident that staying the course with Portland Loo provides the fastest route to obtaining and installing these needed amenities.

Next Steps:

The project team will continue to move forward with the necessary utility work (water/wastewater) this fall. The contractor is set to begin this utility work in early-to-mid October at the Brazos St. and Trinity St. locations. Following the completion of utility work, these two sites will be secured so that once the permanent units are delivered by the contractor they can be installed immediately. Utility work and installation for the third unit will still occur later in 2020.

While we continue to work towards installation of the permanent units, we will evaluate opportunities to redeploy the temporary unit to an area of need. The temporary unit may need to be placed in proximity to the permanent locations, rather in the exact location, due to utility construction.

Additionally, multiple City departments, including the Economic Development Department, Austin Transportation, Public Works and the Convention Center are collaborating on a memorandum of understanding (MOU) that outlines roles and responsibilities for these permanent facilities. Responsibilities are also being coordinated between the City and the DAA.

More information can be found on the project website: <http://www.austintexas.gov/dtpublicrestrooms>

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact our departments.