

BARTON SPRINGS ROAD SAFETY PILOT



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How does this pilot project relate to or affect the Barton Springs Road Bridge project and the Zilker Park Vision Plan?

Austin Transportation and Public Works (TPW) staff have had regular communications with the project management teams of the [Zilker Park Vision Plan](#) and [Barton Springs Road Bridge project](#), which have been two related, but independent, initiatives. While there is geographic overlap and shared goals between the three initiatives, each stands alone in their respective processes.

The planning process for the Zilker Park Vision Plan was halted in August 2023. The Safety Pilot is a separate initiative for transportation safety on Barton Springs Road. Operational and safety analysis for the Safety Pilot covered the section of Barton Springs Road from Lou Neff Road to South Lamar Boulevard. This is not the future operational traffic analysis that was referenced in the draft Zilker Park Vision Plan as it relates to the section of Barton Springs from MoPac to Lou Neff Road.

The Barton Springs Road Bridge design process is in its preliminary phase and construction funding has yet to be identified for the bridge, so the safety pilot project will provide the necessary improvements to enhance safe, multimodal access over the bridge for the near-term future.

How will this affect drivers who use this roadway?

Motor vehicle congestion typically occurs at signalized intersections because each direction of traffic must stop while other directions take their turn. Detailed traffic modeling shows the proposed design would add some length to motor vehicle queues at signals, but drivers are expected to get through the signalized intersections in the same signal cycle as today.

[Watch a video](#) about how streets can become safer while also supporting existing motor vehicle traffic.

As we work towards our community's Vision Zero goals, we will accept minor impacts on motor vehicle travel times and additional queuing during peak traffic periods while improving safety and access for everyone at all times of day, every day.

How will this affect emergency response along the corridor?

Transportation and Public Works understands that Barton Springs Road is a critical route for emergency services. As discussed in the public open house materials, travel times along the corridor are expected to remain unaffected. Additionally, the bicycle lane will remain accessible to emergency vehicles as necessary which should support equivalent or better response times along the corridor compared to existing conditions. TPW staff will stay in close communication with our emergency service partners through the pilot period to get feedback and make design modifications as necessary.

If the pilot causes major issues with motor vehicle traffic flows throughout the day, what would the City do?

This is a pilot project which plans to use paint and mostly temporary materials to achieve the minimum viable result of a new roadway configuration. The City has committed to evaluate the project during the rollout phase, at six months, and prior to 12 months. Should the project cause unexpected motor vehicle traffic impacts, we can make additional changes such as adjustments to accommodate queue lengths or signal timing changes, or at the end of the pilot period there will be an option to revert the roadway lanes back to current conditions.

Will this decision go to Austin City Council for approval?

Austin's City Council adopted the Vision Zero policy goal in 2015 and has reaffirmed its commitment to this goal five times since then through various policies and plans that have been adopted. The Austin community has supported bond dollars for Vision Zero projects three times (2016, 2018, and 2020). This Safety Pilot Project will be implemented for a period of 12 months and evaluated multiple times for mobility and safety impacts. There will not be a Council vote on this project.

Why is this project coming up now?

A severe crash happened in April 2022 that severely injured 10 people. TPW staff worked on crash analysis, collected traffic data and analyzed results, and developed various options for conceptual designs over the summer and fall of 2022. From December through February, TPW lowered speed limits, added access control at specific median openings, and added dynamic speed display devices to try and mitigate the high speeds and high-risk movements in the corridor. Unfortunately, there are still 70+ drivers each day that are exceeding the speed limit by 15 mph so additional changes are needed to provide a safer, multi-modal environment and address the root causes that allowed the April 2022 crash to occur. We are leveraging a planned pavement resurfacing for Barton Springs Road, which must occur in warmer months, to cost-effectively implement this pilot project.

Why doesn't the design simply add protection to the bike lane without removing vehicle lanes?

Barton Springs Road does not have enough space to maintain the existing two vehicle lanes and provide protected bicycle lanes. As with many projects, there is only so much pavement and right-of-way to work with to accomplish our City's mobility and safety goals. How we choose to allocate that space, with minimal impacts to work week peak-hour drivers and a major improvement of safety for everyone using the roadway, is the key decision that we face as a community.

When is construction starting?

The first bus stops started construction in mid-July, and the roadway re-surfacing and new lane lines started in late July and will happen through early September. The project's final treatments will likely be added in late October after the music festival has left Zilker Park.

Is the design open to modifications?

Absolutely. Elements of the design have been and may continue to be adjusted to address feedback or issues reported during the pilot period. We received community feedback during our initial engagement process in June 2023. As an example, after reviewing feedback, staff modified the design to open from one to two westbound lanes sooner, about 100 feet from the west end of the Barton Springs Road Bridge. The bike lane will

connect by a ramp to the existing off-street granite path that begins immediately west of the bridge until Lou Neff Road, so this will maintain connectivity for the bike path. This modified design will provide 360 feet to the second westbound lane from the initial design and maintain the existing four travel lanes west of the bridge.

We also plan to gather feedback during and after the pilot.

In the proposed design, will the wider single travel lane still influence drivers to speed?

Based on experience from other projects we expect that the single lane configuration, regardless of lane width to significantly reduce egregious speeding (10 mph over the posted speed limit). The updated design reduces the vehicle lane from the 13' originally proposed to 12', which includes the 18" median gutter.

Will the street surface be maintained before new markings and flex posts go in? The street's current condition should be addressed.

Our department crews completed [mill and overlay of the roadway](#) in early August. This process addressed surface deficiencies and resulted in a smooth roadway surface for all roadway users.

If speeding is the issue, then why not simply have more enforcement on driver behavior?

With limited public safety resources available for traffic enforcement, this design will reinforce appropriate driver speeds and help alleviate some of the egregious speeding that has been captured in data collection efforts over the past year.

As the design is proposed, the additional lanes at intersections at South Lamar Boulevard and Azie Morton Road pose conflicts

between people in cars and people on bicycles. Will you be addressing this in a future design?

Intersection improvements at South Lamar Boulevard are in the design stage through the Corridor Construction Program.

With the single vehicle lane in each direction, won't traffic back up behind the bus route that runs along Barton Springs Road?

The enhanced bus stops as designed will allow buses to pull up to the curb and create space for other motor vehicle traffic to pass while providing high quality bus stops for people using transit, walking, bicycling or riding scooters.

Could the bike lane instead be improved with bollards or a raised curb to offer more separation from motor vehicle traffic?

Based on feedback received during our initial engagement process, a mix of high-quality flex posts and ground mounted barriers will be used to minimize visual clutter. This allowed us to reduce the number of flex posts by 40%, addressing concerns with the aesthetics and quality / safety of the barrier. Since the pilot will be conducted for 12 months, the project team has selected materials that allow the design to be adjustable or reversible. The results of the pilot may inform the use of other materials for the bike lane protection.

Could the pedestrian crossings receive additional treatments to make pedestrians more visible to drivers, such as beacons?

The scope of the pilot does not currently include beacons, given the 12-month duration of the pilot. After the pilot construction is complete, our continual evaluation may inform future safety improvements identified along the street.

Why doesn't the pilot extend through the park?

The Safety Pilot's operational and safety analysis covered the section of Barton Springs Road from Lou Neff Road to South Lamar Boulevard. Results from the pilot will inform future analysis for Barton Springs Road west of Lou Neff Road.