



AGENDA ITEM #11 SUMMARY

Executive Director's Report.

CENTRAL TEXAS Regional Mobility Authority

Strategic Plan Relevance: Regional Mobility

Department: Executive

Associated Costs: N/A

Funding Source: N/A

Board Action Required: No

Description of Matter:

Executive Director's Monthly report

- A. Project Updates
- B. Electronic tolling and customer service
- C. Board of Directors and public communication
- D. Loop 1 South Update
- E. Expansion of the Carma Carpooling Program
- F. Metropia update
- G. Green Mobility Project implementation
- H. Upcoming briefing on data used for Mobility Authority traffic and revenue studies

Reference documentation:

Executive Director's report

Contact for further information: Mike Heiligenstein, Executive Director

BUILDING at TOWN CENTER CENTER

In 2014 the Town Center shopping plaza grew from anchor tenant Costco, which opened in November 2013, to include 10 new restaurants and five other new businesses. In 2015 the plaza will open two new restaurants, Lupe Tortilla and PDQ, and is building a new strip in front of At Home for restaurants or retail.

- 1 Costco**
Opened Nov. 22, 2013
Costco debuted as Town Center's anchor retailer and includes a gas station next to Toll 183A.
- 2 In-N-Out Burger**
Opened April 10, 2014
- 3 905 E. Whitestone Blvd.**
Opened March–June 2014
Pieology Pizzeria, Ste. A
Care Spot Express Healthcare, Ste. B
Verts Kebap, Ste. C
Town Center Dental, Ste. D
Jersey Mike's Subs, Ste. E
Sushi Fever, Ste. F
Expert Nail Salon, Ste. G
Zoës Kitchen, Ste. H

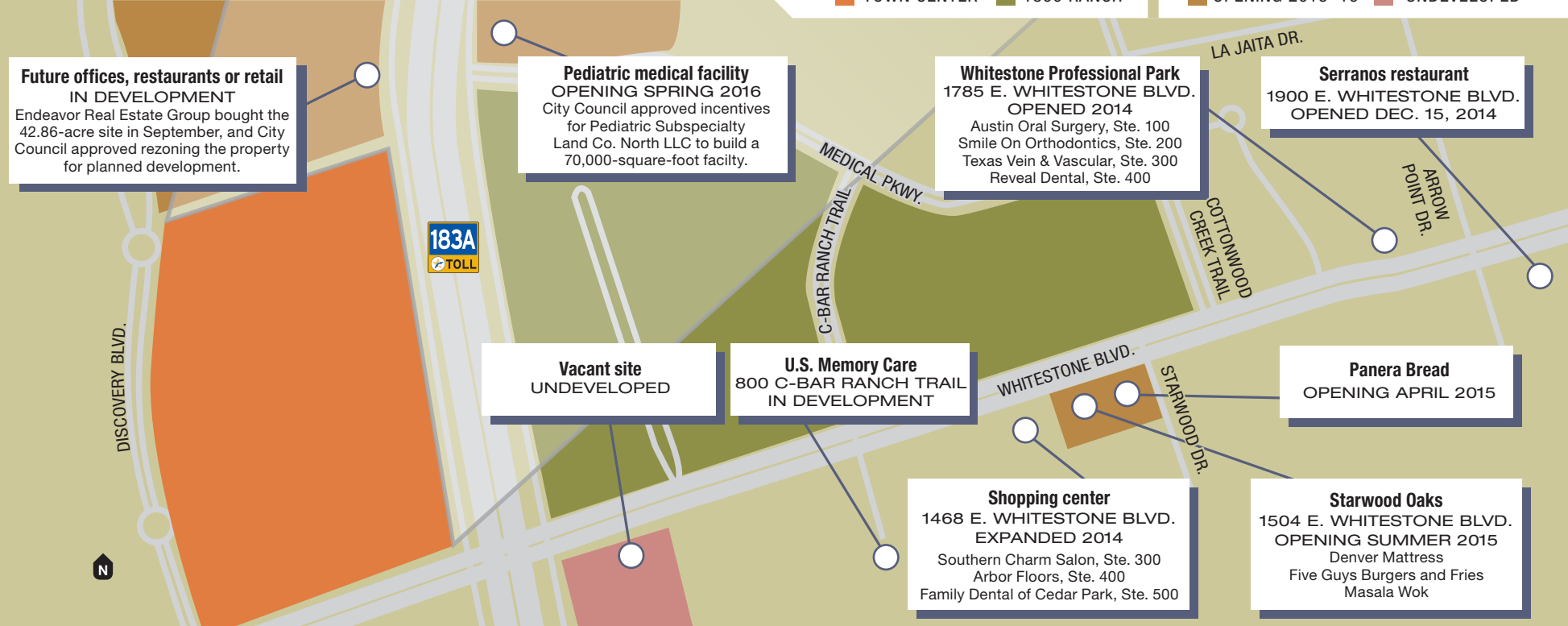
- 4 909 E. Whitestone Blvd.**
Opened Aug.–Nov. 2014
Chipotle Mexican Grill, Ste. A
Smoothie King, Ste. B
Menchie's Frozen Yogurt, Ste. C
Sleep Number, Ste. D
- 5 BJ's Brewhouse**
Opened Sept. 29, 2014
- 6 At Home: The Home Décor Superstore**
Opened Oct. 22, 2014
- 7 4701 Toll 183A**
Opening winter–spring 2015
Mattress Pro, Ste. A (open)
Supercuts, Ste. B
TLC Pediatric Dentistry, Ste. C
Spa Organic Nail Salon Plus, Ste. D

- 8 Future retail**
Opening 2015
- 9 PDQ**
Opening Feb. 22, 2015
- 10 Lupe Tortilla**
Opening May 2015
- 11 Future restaurants or retail**
In development
- 12 SpringHill Suites by Marriott**
Begins construction in 2015



BUSINESS BOOMS AT TOLL 183A & WHITESTONE

Town Center's success has encouraged more health care clinics, restaurants and shops that sprang up near the intersection of Toll 183A and Whitestone. In mid-2015 developers will open the Starwood Oaks retail and restaurant strip at Starwood Drive and Whitestone, and the U.S. Memory Care assisted-living facility on C-Bar Ranch Trail. Cedar Park City Council also approved rezoning for a nearly 43-acre site north of Town Center.



Future offices, restaurants or retail
IN DEVELOPMENT
Endeavor Real Estate Group bought the 42.86-acre site in September, and City Council approved rezoning the property for planned development.

Pediatric medical facility
OPENING SPRING 2016
City Council approved incentives for Pediatric Subspecialty Land Co. North LLC to build a 70,000-square-foot facility.

Whitestone Professional Park
1785 E. WHITESTONE BLVD.
OPENED 2014
Austin Oral Surgery, Ste. 100
Smile On Orthodontics, Ste. 200
Texas Vein & Vascular, Ste. 300
Reveal Dental, Ste. 400

Serranos restaurant
1900 E. WHITESTONE BLVD.
OPENED DEC. 15, 2014

Vacant site
UNDEVELOPED

U.S. Memory Care
800 C-BAR RANCH TRAIL
IN DEVELOPMENT

Panera Bread
OPENING APRIL 2015

Shopping center
1468 E. WHITESTONE BLVD.
EXPANDED 2014
Southern Charm Salon, Ste. 300
Arbor Floors, Ste. 400
Family Dental of Cedar Park, Ste. 500

Starwood Oaks
1504 E. WHITESTONE BLVD.
OPENING SUMMER 2015
Denver Mattress
Five Guys Burgers and Fries
Masala Wok



PROJECT UPDATES

MoPac Improvement Project

- The Oversight Team is working with the Contractor on a revised project schedule that reflects the impacts of the numerous owner-directed change orders.
- Contractor is working to accelerate productivity by bringing on additional resources (self-performing and subcontractors) and assessing future opportunities to expedite delivery.
- The permitting process with utilities and railroads, as well as coordination with other local agencies, continues. The execution of several rights-of-entry agreements with the UPRR will allow work to begin in those areas. The relocation of the City of Austin 42" water line is a significant stand-alone activity within the Project. The team continues close coordination with the City as this part of the project moves from design to construction to prevent impacts to the overall Project schedule.
- Lane striping in the corridor is being evaluated on a weekly basis; comments received from the public have decreased significantly over the past several months. Contractor has submitted a work plan for addressing deficiencies.



- Illumination of the corridor is being evaluated nightly; areas for repair have been identified and a repair schedule implemented. Lighting of the ramps is the priority - the contractor has installed portable lights and generators at these areas until permanent repairs can be made. Maintenance of the lighting will be an on-going activity.

- The installation of sound wall columns and panels has begun on the wall near 10th Street. Construction of other sound walls will follow.



Workers pour the concrete deck for the expanded southbound bridge at Enfield (February 5, 2015).

- Boring activities for two large tunnels associated with drainage pipes for the under-crossings near downtown are complete. These tunnels are significant and time-consuming efforts. Work on a third tunnel has started and the effort is more than 50% complete; work on the fourth and final tunnel will commence shortly.
- Conduit construction for ITS wiring, which will service cameras and other detection equipment as well as the toll signage, continues.

183 North Mobility Project



- Technical Memoranda continues to be prepared for social, economic, and environmental impact evaluations.
- The Technical Working Group is meeting on February 24, 2015.
- Additional corridor improvements are being considered, including a consistent 4-lane section from McNeil to MoPac.
- Draft Design Exception package is being updated to reflect continuous 4-lane section throughout the corridor for reduced lane and shoulder widths.
- Initial Bicycle and Pedestrian accommodations continue to be evaluated and refined.
- Traffic analysis for operations and environmental evaluations continues.
- The next Public Workshop is scheduled for March 5, 2015.
- Initial draft EA submittal is planned for early 2015 with Public Hearing planned for late 2015.

MoPac South Environmental Study

- Technical Memoranda continue to be prepared and reviewed for social, economic, and environmental impact evaluations.
- The schematic will continue to be refined as operations analysis is conducted and agency and public comment is received.
- Refinement of traffic models for traffic operational analysis and environmental evaluations continues and should be complete in the spring.
- A public workshop is planned for February 26, 2015. The alternatives analysis process will be explained and the preferred alternative (Express Lanes) will be presented in schematic form.
- Initial draft EA submittal is planned for early 2015 with a Public Hearing planned for late 2015.

MoPac Intersections Environmental Study

- The Schematic Design and the majority of the technical memoranda are substantially complete.
- The first draft of the environmental document will be submitted for review in February 2015, available for public review in the spring with a Public Hearing mid-2015.
- Stakeholder outreach and public communication is planned over the next several months.
- Once the project is environmentally cleared, TxDOT will take over the final design and construction.

SH 45SW Environmental Study



- TxDOT has released the Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and an environmental finding is anticipated in late February 2015.
- The Mobility Authority's Design Team is collecting survey data, setting up files, reviewing environmental commitments, and preparing to begin final design tasks once environmental clearance is received.
- Stakeholder meetings and Context Sensitive Solutions efforts will be initiated as the project design progresses.

Bergstrom Expressway Project



- The Mobility Authority published the Environmental Assessment Notice of Availability in January and expects the environmental finding before March 2015.
- The procurement process has been initiated with the Request for Qualifications issued in April 2014, Shortlist of Proposers in September 2014, release of the Final Request for Detailed

Proposals in December 2014 and Best Value Selection scheduled for Spring 2015.

- Project programming activities continue as the team works to finalize project-funding agreements with TxDOT and FHWA.
- Other project programming efforts have continued in order to meet Federal requirements such as the Project Management Plan and the Initial Finance Plan. The Cost Estimate Review Workshop was completed in October 2014 with an update scheduled for February 2015.
- Financing activities continue as updates to TIFIA Application are developed and the Investment Grade Traffic & Revenue Study begins.
- Continuing early utility coordination and ROW Acquisition activities for items with long lead times.
- As community outreach shifts from the environmental phase to construction, the team is developing strategies, updating tools, and continuing stakeholder outreach.
- Traffic noise barrier workshop planning has begun; the meeting is anticipated to occur in March 2015.

Maha Loop/Elroy Road, Phase I Project



Maha Loop Construction

- Placement of hot mix Type B was completed in mid-December; final surface course to be placed in February, if temperatures allow.
- Final grading of ponds is ongoing; placement of gabion walls and filtration material has begun.

- The bridge rail and sidewalk for the south bridge was completed and is ongoing for the north bridge.
- The bridge deck for the north bridge was completed January 14 and the approach slab on the south bridge January 16 which symbolized the last bridge pour.
- Placement of matting and seeding in west ditch was completed.
- Placement of driveways will be complete in February.
- There is a pending change order to add a traffic signal and turn lanes on SH 71 and a traffic signal on Pearce; design work is complete and has been provided to Contractor for price.
- Ribbon Cutting has been scheduled for March 27.

290 Toll (Manor Expressway)

- CTMC is finalizing the non-conflict utility relocations required by the project to obtain Final Acceptance.

Oak Hill Parkway Project

- Efforts with TxDOT and the City of Austin continue for potential regional detention facilities.
- Design level schematics for both concepts moving forward into the alternatives analysis phase were presented at an Open House on Tuesday, January 20, 2015 from 4:30 pm – 7 pm at Covington Middle School. Approximately 105 members of the public attended, as well as Judge Susan Steeg (Justice of the Peace #3) and Ellen Troxclair (Austin City Council, District 8). The Virtual Open House on the project website (www.OakHillParkway.com) was available for public review and official comment, from Jan. 21 – 30, 2015, and received over 450 unique visitors.



- Planning has begun for the next Context Sensitive Solutions workshop; anticipated for April 2015.
- A targeted outreach plan is being developed for stakeholders with concerns about access, regional water detention, right-of-way acquisition, and bicycle/pedestrian improvements.

- A ceremonial groundbreaking was held on Jan. 27, 2015. Chairman Wilkerson was a key speaker, along with: Russell Zapalac, Chief Planning/Project Officer TxDOT; Eddie Rodriguez, Texas State Representative; Lt. Gen. Joe Weber, USMC, (Ret), TxDOT Executive Director; Jim Smith, Director of Aviation, Austin-Bergstrom International Airport; and Kurt Knebel, Vice President of Civil Operations, McCarthy Building Companies. Thanks to all who attended!
- Short-term lane closures are starting to trickle in, and the outreach team is working to disseminate the information to the public.

SH 71 Express



- TxDOT issued Notice to Proceed 2 (NTP2) for design services on 12/22/14; McCarthy is still working on deliverables required to achieve NTP2 for construction.
- Coordination meetings between McCarthy and the Toll Integrator have commenced.
- McCarthy design submittals to TxDOT are coming soon.
- Atkins will provide Schneider Electric the toll plans as soon as they are available for review.





Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority Overview of Toll Operations with TxDOT

DRAFT Updated February 12, 2015

What is the Mobility Authority doing to work with TxDOT to resolve the customer service complaints regarding toll bills and the customer call center?

- The Mobility Authority has an important partnership with TxDOT's tolling division and TxTag. TxDOT is a trusted partner and we couldn't operate our toll road systems without them. We are collaborating with TxDOT to provide responsive solutions to address concerns raised by our customers.
 - We have placed Mobility Authority customer service representatives on-site at the TxTag service center if a walk-in customer needs assistance for an invoice on one of our toll roads, 183A Toll or 290 Toll.
 - With regard to call center phone customers, we are establishing a two-way call center hotline that will allow us to "hot transfer" a customer directly to a TxTag customer service rep for issues related to their TxTag account or invoice. Conversely, a TxTag customer service rep will be able to transfer a customer to our call center for issues or questions about a toll bill on one of our roadways. This way, customers will not have to be sent to a second cue to wait on hold for assistance.

What happened to create the backlog from TxTag, when did it happen and what was the impact?

- From July 1-17, TxTag's back office was shutdown to migrate to the new Xerox system. A backlog of transactions was building during this shutdown. When the Xerox system came back online there was a large backlog to process - approximately 1.5 million transactions. This prevented MSB from processing and sending Mobility Authority customers Pay-by-Mail invoices.
- From July 1 – August 1, the new Xerox system did not include the license plate verifications for fleet account (fleets include large commercial and third parties supporting rental car agency vehicles). During the time, the Mobility Authority was unable to process invoices to fleet providers. The Mobility Authority worked with MSB to mitigate pay-by-mail bills from being generated and mailed.
- On Aug. 24 the Mobility Authority noted an anomaly when the new Xerox software rejected more than 200,000 valid TxTag transponder transactions on our roadways (Typically, approximately 3000 per day are rejected) As quickly as possible, the Mobility Authority shut down our processing system so as to not send pay-by-mail invoices to valid TxTag account holders. However, we believe approximately 4000 pay-by-mail transactions may have been billed incorrectly to valid TxTag account holders. Following the discovery of this anomaly, TxTag shut its back office down from August 25th to September 14, creating an additional backlog.
- To address this concern, we provided instructions to MSB to reduce the toll to the TxTag rate and waive all other fees if a customer stated that they had a valid TxTag account for transactions

that were billed. Once we determined the time period in which the billing errors occurred, we instructed MSB to continue the instructed practice for all Mobility Authority transactions occurring between July 1, 2014 and October 31, 2014.

- Two major transaction backlogs occurred because TxTag was offline for a two-week period. To recover from the backlog, TxTag processed two days worth of transactions every day. This caused cash-backed accounts to be depleted, causing rejections, and triggering pay-by mail invoices.

How do the Mobility Authority's tolling and customer service operations interact with TxDot's tolling division and TxTag customer service operations?

- All of the Mobility Authority's toll transactions – both video tolling and pay-by-mail – are reviewed to determine whether a TxTag account is associated with the vehicle.
- The Mobility Authority system interacts with the TxTag system when a transaction has taken place on one of our Expressways (183A Toll and 290 Toll).
 - If the vehicle has a TxTag transponder, the toll transaction is sent to TxTag to confirm that the tag account is funded. If the account is funded, TxTag debits the tag holder's account and TxTag sends us the toll funds.
 - For vehicles without a TxTag, our tolling equipment takes a picture of the vehicle's license plate and sends data to TxTag to check for a funded account. If there is no account or the account does not have funds, the customer is sent a Pay-by-Mail invoice.

What impacts has TxTag's back office backlog had on the Mobility Authority's pay-by-mail operations?

- Under our operating guidelines with Municipal Services Bureau (MSB), the Mobility Authority bills Pay-by-Mail customers within 30 days. Currently, we are experiencing a two-week backlog, as we work to catch up with our backlog from TxTag that at one time was nearly 30 days (see the next section for details). Our customers are not being assessed late payment fees for this delay.
- Prior to the migration, we mailed approximately 7,000 invoices per day. Since the migration, in order to catch up on our invoices, we have been mailing 25,000 to 30,000 invoices per day.

Why have Mobility Authority/MSB call volumes soared?

- When TxTag experiences more customer calls, we do too, as customers call us about their bills on our roads when they can't get through to TxTag, or TxTag refers them to us when they determine their trip occurred on one of our roads. In recent weeks, our call customer service call center has been overwhelmed. Call volume has tripled.
 - Prior to the TxTag/Xerox migration we received 750-950 customer calls a day. We're currently receiving approximately 3,000 calls per day.
 - Our call wait time has also increased – from an average of about 5 minutes to sometimes more than an hour.

- We understand that an hour hold time is unacceptable, and we are taking action to increase our staff. In addition to the solutions listed above, customers can opt for a call-back from our service center instead of waiting on hold or submit an inquiry through our paytaxastoll.com website.

Town Center takes root in Cedar Park



Jan. 21, 2015

By Stephen Burnett

New restaurants and retail to open near Toll 183A

In 2014 the Town Center shopping plaza at Toll 183A and Whitestone Boulevard in Cedar Park expanded from a single Costco store to 16 businesses. In 2015 the project is still growing and continues to encourage new development nearby, making Toll 183A and Whitestone a flourishing retail and restaurant hub.



City leaders said that in 2015 residents will likely see more businesses and offices announce their arrivals in the Toll 183A corridor between New Hope Drive and Whitestone.

Town Center's developer, The Ainbinder Company, has announced that in 2015 it will open two restaurants, Lupe Tortilla and PDQ, and at least two more businesses, Spa Organic Nail Salon Plus and Supercuts.

Nearby, southwest of Cottonwood Creek Trail and Whitestone, another new retail center, Starwood Oaks, will open in summer with a Denver Mattress store and two restaurants—Masala Wok and Five Guys Burgers and Fries. Panera Bread will also open a new location in March, east of Starwood Oaks and just south of the 1890 Ranch shopping center, southwest of Whitestone and Starwood Drive.

More medical facilities are also coming to the corridor, such as a pediatric facility at Toll 183A and Medical Parkway, and a U.S. Memory Care assisted-living center on C-Bar Ranch Trail.

All the area growth is exceeding the initial expectations of city leaders and business owners,

said Phil Brewer, Cedar Park director of economic development.

"It is such a hot area in terms of traffic volume and access and visibility," Brewer said.

Every day about 30,000 vehicles travel Toll 183A, and 40,000 vehicles travel Whitestone, he said.

"That's a real attractive area for commercial developers, whether it's retail or restaurants or office space," he said.

Center of growth

Previously Cedar Park planners envisioned Town Center as the site of a new City Hall and mixed-use, walkable downtown. But in 2011, Michael Ainbinder, owner The Ainbinder Co., proposed a traditional retail plaza anchored by a big-box store.

Costco was the first business to open at Town Center in November 2013, and six new restaurants southwest of Costco opened by summer 2014. By the end of 2014, Town Center included two large retailers—Costco and At Home—10 restaurants and four other businesses.

After Zoës Kitchen opened in April, the restaurant was packed with customers for months, Krista Kharazi-Goljahi, Zoës assistant general manager said.

"When I first moved to the Cedar Park area, none of this [development] was even here," she said. "I see Costco—they have a line out the door. ... This is definitely a good spot."

Ainbinder said the Town Center project is almost 100 percent leased.

"We're very happy to be developing in Cedar Park," Ainbinder said. "The area between [US] 183 and I-35 north of Lakeline Mall is the fastest-growing trade area in the state of Texas. ... And Cedar Park has historically been an underserved market. All of the retail concentration is down by Lakeline Mall, but that's not generally where the population is."

The new businesses have encouraged another project to the north of Town Center—a 42.86-acre

site Austin-based Endeavor Real Estate Group bought in September, Brewer said. That month City Council approved rezoning the site from downtown district use to a planned development. The zoning category can include office space or retail and limits uses such as vehicle sales. Endeavor has not announced its plans for the site.

Endeavor is the developer that in 2007 launched the 1890 Ranch shopping center and in 2011 sold the center, which is now owned by RioCan Real Estate Investment Trust.

The city's vision

For 10 years Cedar Park City Council has invested in the Toll 183A and Whitestone hub, Brewer said. Mayor Matt Powell said city leaders have long wanted businesses such as Costco and In-N-Out Burger to be located in that area to draw in new industries, offices and stores.

On Nov. 20, City Council approved an update to the city's comprehensive plan, which outlines the city's long-term vision for local development and future zoning. The plan's land-use map reflects city leaders' goal to zone land near Toll 183A and Whitestone for future offices and retail. The map also promotes new shops, restaurants or offices extending northeast from the existing Town Center and 1890 Ranch shopping centers to the city limit.

City Council has encouraged new commercial interest in the area by offering incentives to developers.

In 2012, City Council approved an agreement stipulating that landowner Cedar Park Town Center can keep portions of Costco's generated tax revenue—20 percent of property taxes and 25 percent of sales taxes—for 15 years or up to \$6 million. In September 2014, City Council approved another incentive for Pediatric Subspecialty Land Co. North LLC to open a 70,000-square-foot facility by spring 2016 northeast of Toll 183A and Medical Parkway.

Cedar Park Mayor Matt Powell said the successes of Costco and other Town Center businesses have helped boost Cedar Park's sales taxes. In fiscal year 2012–13, Cedar Park gained about \$8.7 million in sales tax revenue, a number that jumped to \$10.2 million in FY 2013–14.

2015 and beyond

Ainbinder said planning has begun for a Town Center hotel, SpringHill Suites by Marriott, which may break ground this year. City leaders said they expect expansion near the intersection will continue in 2015 because of the growth of clinics

on Medical Parkway and high-tech companies at Scottsdale Crossing Commerce Park.

Dana Holding Corp.'s research and development facility at Scottsdale Crossing is complete. In September city leaders approved incentives for Voltabox, a lithium ion battery manufacturer that has broken ground on a 22,000-square-foot facility next door to the Dana building.

Existing business in and near Town Center and 1890 Ranch also help make the area attractive to prospective employers.

"You naturally end up spending money near where you work," Powell said. "The offices and the hospital and everything out there [on Toll 183A] all work together to get a multiplying effect."



But challenges persist for some Toll 183A/Whitestone-area properties, such as within the 1890 Ranch shopping center. As of Jan. 5 the center had 10 vacancies, most of them behind Gold's Gym or in front of the Cinemark movie theater.

Brewer said any large shopping center such as 1890 Ranch, whose shops' square footage totals about 900,000 square feet, will have a small percentage of vacancies.

Powell said city staffers are planning traffic signal adjustments for expected increased traffic at Toll 183A and Whitestone. Design has also begun for the RM 1431 Gap Project to widen Whitestone between Cottonwood Creek Trail and Vista Ridge Boulevard.

In 2015 more businesses will likely announce they are building on Toll 183A and Whitestone, though Brewer said the city can't yet announce new projects. He said city planners hope more specialty stores will build near the intersection.

"We would [also] like to see maybe higher-end restaurants coming into that area," Brewer said.



CENTRAL TEXAS
Regional Mobility Authority



News Release

FOR RELEASE: February 10, 2015

Carma Carpooling Launches the “Love My Commute 30-Day Challenge”

Carpooling app extends toll reimbursements to all Central Texas toll roads in partnership with the Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority and TxTag

AUSTIN, TX – February 10, 2015 – To celebrate the expansion of Carma Carpooling toll reimbursements to all toll roads* across Central Texas, and just in time for Valentine’s Day, Carma, the Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority and the Texas Department of Transportation’s TxTag are challenging commuters to take the “Love My Commute 30-Day Challenge.”

A year after successfully announcing a pilot program with the Mobility Authority to reimburse tolls on 183A and 290 Toll Roads, Carma is expanding the toll reimbursement program through June 30th to include Texas Department of Transportation toll roads Loop 1, SH 45N, SH 45 SE and portions of SH 130.* To celebrate, Carma is challenging Central Texans to submit their best video, photo, song or poetic work that shows just how passionate they are about commuting with Carma.

The top submission will receive a Dream Commute for one month. The prize includes:

- **Exclusive use of Carma’s Tesla Model S** for 30 days
- **Brand new iPhone 6** (Ready to download the Carma App)
- **A Coffee a Day** (\$150 gift card to Starbucks)
- **\$100 in TxTag credit.**

Carma Carpoolers are invited to share their happy commute stories via videos, photos, or written entries via social media, and challenge their friends to carpool. Between February 10 and March 10, commuters can sign up for Carma and show just how passionate they are about carpooling. To learn more, visit www.carmacarpool.com/love

“We’re challenging Central Texans to try Carma and love their commute again,” said Lauren Albright of Carma. “We know that 877,000 Central Texas residents drive to work alone - that’s more than 2.3 million empty seats going unused every single rush hour. So, the answer to Austin’s traffic problem is simple: put wasted car seats to good use!”

Carma is the world's first real-time ridesharing network to offer toll benefits to carpooling commuters. The free app makes it easy for co-workers and neighbors with similar commute routes and schedules to find each other so they can set up carpools, and through the tracking of journeys, Carma brings money-saving benefits back to its members.

"We're pleased to partner with Carma because it supports our mission to find innovative solutions to our region's transportation challenges," said Mobility Authority Executive Director Mike Heiligenstein. "During the past year, Carma has surpassed our pilot project goals by a considerable margin. As many as 10,600 carpool trips over 172,000 miles were shared by members, 8,200 gallons of gas saved and 160,600 pounds of CO₂ emissions avoided. In addition, Carma gave more than \$2,500 in toll refunds to area commuters driving the 183A and 290 (Manor Expressway) Toll Roads."

Austin residents are invited to download the Carma Carpooling app for iPhone and Android devices at www.carmacarpool.com

*Excludes segments 5 & 6 of SH 130, south of 45 SE.

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Contacts:

Carma, Lauren Albright

(469) 855-1666

Lauren.Albright@car.ma

Mobility Authority, Rick L'Amie

(512) 996-9778

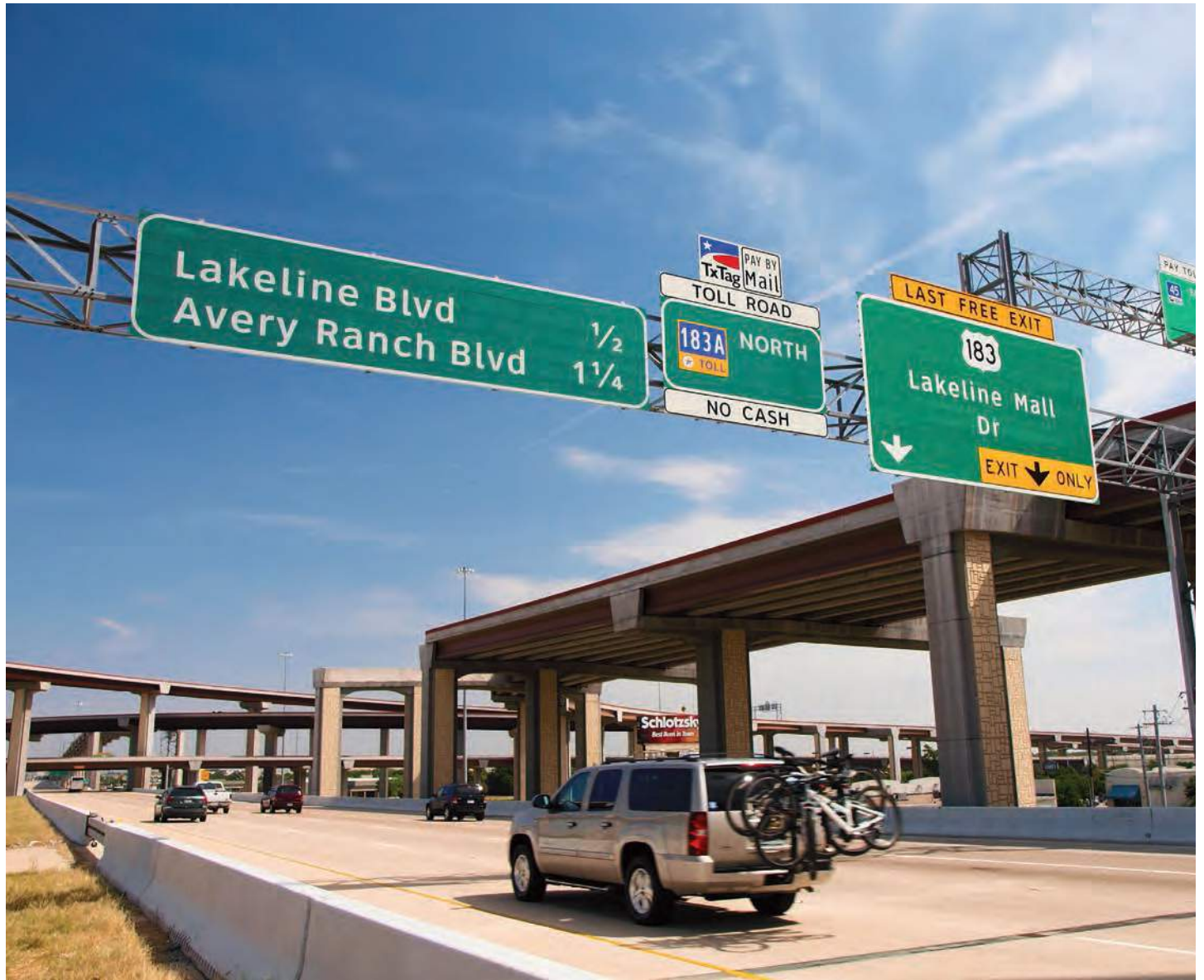
rlamie@mobilityauthority.com

About Carma

Carma's smartphone app instantly connects people who are going in the same direction for work, making commuting faster, safer and more affordable. Unlike Transportation Network Company apps (for-hire drivers) that put more cars on the road, Carma matches people with other commuters from their neighborhood, reducing the number of cars on the road and making millions of empty seats available for good use. Carma's carpool approach is in line with its mission to reduce traffic congestion, carbon emissions and the cost of car ownership. Download Carma by visiting the App Store or Google Play or www.carmacarpool.com.

About the Mobility Authority

The Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority is a local, independent government agency created in 2002 to improve the regional transportation system in Travis and Williamson Counties. The Mobility Authority implements innovative and sustainable transportation options to enhance quality of life and economic vitality in Central Texas. The Mobility Authority operates 183A Toll in Williamson County and 290 Toll (Manor Expressway) in east Austin and is constructing Express Lanes on MoPac Expressway. For more information about the Mobility Authority, visit www.MobilityAuthority.com



183A Toll road

The new normal

The Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority is keeping Austin moving through innovation and technology, as **Mike Heiligenstein** explains

As one of the fastest growing cities in the United States, Austin, Texas has built a worldwide reputation as an innovative, technology hotbed – attracting newcomers at a rate of 70 people every day according to recent studies. That kind of phenomenal growth has led to clogged roadways – earning the hip city a less popular

reputation as one of the most traffic-jammed cities in the country.

So, when the two counties that surround Austin created the Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority (CTRMA) in 2002 to provide innovative transportation programs to help ease traffic congestion, it was assumed that the Mobility Authority would have to serve its citizens



“It would be fair to ask: what in the world would a toll agency be doing to encourage drivers to share rides? Wouldn’t that raise the prospect of diminishing the opportunity for toll paying customers?”

with advanced technology. After all, Austin was the home of several high technology firms at the time, including Dell, Motorola, Advanced Micro Devices, IBM and Apple. Many more now call Austin home such as Google, Facebook, eBay, Samsung, Oracle and more. So there was a native population that not only was receptive to high tech solutions, but would also demand them on any effort to improve mobility.

With little or no state or federal transportation funding in sight, the Mobility Authority began building a system of toll roads to re-connect the community. When the Mobility Authority opened its first toll road in 2007, it included gantries for Electronic Toll Collection (ETC), and also expensive, staffed, tollbooths built on land that cost hundreds of thousands of dollars. Why the frustrating duplication in toll collection methods? When it came to financing the toll roads, bond rating agencies and the investment community insisted that payment by cash was

necessary because the risks were too high to trust the certainty that “all electronic tolling” would not see high violation rates and reduced revenues. When actual experience proved that reliable revenue streams could be built on all ETC, the investor world relented and the cash tolling options were decommissioned. Since then, moving to all ETC has saved the Mobility Authority millions of dollars. The Authority was the first agency in the US to convert to all ETC from a mixed cash and ETC cash payment system.

OPTIONAL EXTRAS

As a result of technological innovation and the demand to ease traffic congestion, the Authority has aggressively pursued new layers of technology. Just a few years after the opening of the agency’s first tolled roadway, the Authority decided to offer customers that did not want electronic toll tags, or that only planned to occasionally use our toll roads, another option – video tolling,

which photographs a vehicle’s license plate and then generates an invoice to be mailed.

While more costly to the consumer than toll tag bills, video tolling provides another option and allows motorists to access nearly every toll facility in Texas. But advances in technology had only just begun – the world was changing, and tolling agencies (if they wanted to thrive) were becoming enterprises defined by finance and technology, not concrete and steel.

What made the adoption of innovative solutions important to the Authority was that it fashioned itself as an entrepreneurial entity – one that had to adapt and adopt. But with adoption of new technology comes risk. As an agency we decided to heed the advice of researcher and author Jim Collins from his book *Great by Choice* and adopt the “bullets before cannonballs” approach to change. The bullets began with all ETC and video tolling, and lent themselves to our next phase of development; managed or express lanes with all the tolling complexity that accompanies that method.

But before we entered that world, we decided to explore more travel options to determine whether we could offer our customers a more rewarding and cost effective travel experience. One research effort partnered with the Federal Highways Administration to determine if offering drivers a discount to drive on “shoulder” times would encourage off-peak trips. (Austin, like much of the nation, has particularly bad congestion during peak commuter hours). The drivers were offered a discount on their toll rates if they chose to do so. The point of all this is that we know that it’s not just about new capacity, or even new and better technologies that will be needed to address congestion – it’s also human



Construction of the MoPac Express Lanes



behavior and how the new technologies will interact with existing behavior patterns and alter or eliminate those elements that contribute to congestion.

To that end, we have invested in two smartphone technologies; a mobile app for ridesharing and another app to help drivers use existing capacity and avoid as much congestion as possible. The ride-sharing app helps drivers with similar destinations and time constraints to connect in order to share rides and the costs of driving and tolls. The Authority offers toll reimbursements to those that give the ride share option a chance to work for them.

In Austin, as in most American urban areas, a large percentage of commuters



290 Toll (Manor Expressway – top) as well as the adjacent shared use (hike and bike path – above)



This operations center will be the control center for the MoPac project

drive alone. That number equates to 900,000 empty car seats a day in Austin! It would be fair to ask: what in the world would a toll agency be doing to encourage drivers to share rides? Wouldn't that raise the prospect of diminishing the opportunity for toll paying customers? Of course it might, but in one of the fastest growing cities in America, in order to address congestion in meaningful way, all options need to be on the table, including behavior modification. After all, we are a Mobility Authority, not just a toll agency. With that in mind, we're also developing a mobile app that will help commuters navigate to their destination and help reduce capacity on our overcrowded roadways. By planning their trip ahead of time on the mobile app, the driver will receive a reward for using the designated route at the designated time – with greater rewards for off-peak trips. What coffee company in the world wouldn't want to have their product be part of that incentive package – by offering an incentive to drivers to get to their retail outlets in a more timely and reliable fashion?

A NEW NORMALITY

A key project we're implementing will combine technology and the science of human behavior to create a "new

“What coffee company in the world wouldn't want to have their product be part of an incentive package – by offering an incentive to drivers to get to their retail outlets in a more timely and reliable fashion?”

normal” in the world of transportation. Congestion pricing, or managed lanes, have taken on increasing importance in the United States. The Mobility Authority, after “ringing bullets”, has decided to load a few cannonballs to improve reliability on some of our more congested freeways. Austin, like most cities don't have available real estate to create new corridors of a sufficient width to provide multiple new lanes of capacity. In order to provide a more reliable trip time on one of our most congested corridors, the Authority is adding one new “express” lane in each direction of an 11-mile stretch of a very congested “core” artery. Advanced monitoring technology and back-end software will generate sophisticated algorithms to dynamically price the lanes based on the elasticity demand – taking into consideration not only the managed express lane, but also the general purpose lanes and how they are operating. Having given due praise to technology and its benefits, I must also point out that while firing a cannonball, we also incorporated a safety valve for backup. We will have the ability to manually override the functioning of the algorithms in the operations center, especially during the first couple of years, in the event we see anomalies that need to be addressed on a real-time basis. This is truly the merging of finance, technology and micro-economics.

SEEING IS BELIEVING

Finally, smart technology cannot be limited to cars, toll gantries and back rooms. We, in the tolling industry must lead the way with new, smart roadways. Technology must be included and embedded in all new roadways so that those roadways will be able to accept the most innovative technologies coming out

of auto factories and research institutions. We must lead the way and ensure that our toll facilities are as safe as possible, and provide a premium experience for our customers. Vehicle to infrastructure communications is now entering a phase that will permit transportation agencies the opportunity to proactively avoid collisions on our highways. How many fatalities could be prevented if infrastructure could communicate with and shut down wrong way drivers who mistakenly enter an exit ramp before they become a deadly force, better yet, notify oncoming traffic to steer clear of such dangers?

Tolling agencies have learned that “seeing is believing.” That driving forward in the name of what our customers want is what really matters. By capitalizing on the relationships we've built with our customers over time, and integrating the many new, innovative features that technology has to offer, we can truly begin to bring roadway infrastructure into the future. Toll agencies offer a unique opportunity to lead the way and to study the results in a controlled environment that can improve the experience over time. We should offer a service on an entrepreneurial platform – and we should learn from and be just as inventive as our private sector peers. To do less would be a disservice to all who depend on us to keep our regions, states, and nation safe and mobile. 📍



Mike Heiligenstein is Executive Director of Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority based in Austin, Texas



www.mobilityauthority.com