



CENTRAL TEXAS
Regional Mobility Authority

NEWS RELEASE

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MoPac Express Lanes Cleared for Construction in 2013 Project Team Fulfills Promise to Expedite Project

(Austin, Texas) – Relief is in sight for drivers frustrated by congestion on the MoPac Expressway (Loop 1) between downtown Austin and Parmer Lane. A plan to add one Express Lane in each direction is moving forward following completion of an accelerated environmental study that took just two years to finish.

“Thanks to an incredible partnership between the Mobility Authority, the Texas Department of Transportation, the City of Austin and the Federal Highway Administration, we delivered on our promise to rapidly bring improvements to the MoPac corridor. As a result, we will be starting construction in 2013,” said Ray Wilkerson, Chairman of the Mobility Authority.

The MoPac Improvement Project is expected to cost just under \$200 million and should be completed by 2016. In addition to the Express Lanes, the project includes construction of seven miles of sound walls, \$5 million worth of bicycle and pedestrian improvements and more than \$3 million in aesthetic enhancements and landscaping.

“I’m extremely pleased that the project team has successfully conducted extensive community outreach, building a high level of understanding and consent for the project throughout the corridor,” said State Senator Kirk Watson. “This project will reduce congestion for commuters, enhance quality of life for those in the surrounding neighborhoods through the addition of sound walls and improve air quality in the region.”

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Public transit buses and registered van pools will be able to use the new Express Lanes for free. Individual drivers who wish to use the Express Lanes will pay a toll. The toll rate will increase when traffic is heavy and go down when traffic is light to help ensure the lanes don't become congested. The existing lanes on MoPac will remain toll-free.

“In addition to improving the flow of traffic in the corridor, the MoPac Improvement Project will likely be one of the most impactful transit projects in Central Texas, providing reliable commute times for bus riders,” said Senator Watson.

The MoPac Improvement Project is being funded through a unique partnership between the community and the Mobility Authority. Members of the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO) have allocated \$130 million to help build the project. As part of that agreement, the Mobility Authority will use tolls collected in the Express Lanes to pay more than \$230 million into a regional infrastructure bank over the next 25 years. Money in the infrastructure bank will then be available to pay for both tolled and non-tolled projects and could be used to help fund improvements to IH-35. The CAMPO Policy Board will decide how to allocate those funds.

“I am impressed by the bold and innovative steps being taken in Central Texas to address mobility challenges,” said Ted Houghton, chair of the Texas Transportation Commission. “The Commission is always looking for opportunities to partner with local communities to leverage funding and maximize our return on investment. Since we created the Mobility Authority in 2002, the agency has established an impressive record for delivering successful projects.”

Senator Watson has been impressed with how the various agencies have worked together.

“The MoPac Improvement Project is an example, and should be a model for, interagency cooperation. All the relevant government agencies came together to develop a process that ensures transparency and a thorough process while eliminating unnecessary repetitive steps,” he said.

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“By sticking to the agreed-upon path and time frames, they were able to expedite the environmental coordination process and shorten the wait for solutions in the MoPac corridor.”

The Mobility Authority is in the process of hiring a design-build firm that will be incentivized to complete construction as quickly as possible. Construction should be under way by the middle of 2013.

“The MoPac Improvement Project is the first step toward creating a regional Express Lane network that will eventually give drivers the option to get across town without delay during the most congested times of the day,” Wilkerson said. “This project showcases the ability of the Mobility Authority and our community partners to successfully deliver critical transportation projects faster than ever before.”

About the Mobility Authority

The Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority is a local, independent government agency created to improve the regional transportation system. Its mission is to implement innovative and sustainable solutions that reduce congestion and create transportation choices that enhance quality of life and economic vitality. Created in October 2002 to serve Travis and Williamson counties, the Mobility Authority operates the 183A toll road in Williamson County and is constructing the Manor Expressway.

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