

NEWS RELEASE



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State and Local Officials Announce Beginning of MoPac Improvement Project

(Austin, Texas) – State and local officials are launching a study of the MoPac corridor to determine if the construction of two new Express Lanes can improve mobility and transit reliability in the corridor. The proposed MoPac Improvement Project would involve adding one Express Lane in each direction between Cesar Chavez and Parmer Lane. It would also include the construction of sound walls to reduce noise in nearby neighborhoods. The cost of construction for the project is estimated at \$220 million. The study has the backing of the Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority, the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), the City of Austin and Capitol Metro, who came together at the urging of the community, as well as state and local leaders.

“The goals of this project have been a priority for MoPac neighbors and commuters throughout the corridor for years, said State Senator Kirk Watson. “However, this project would have continued to languish were it not for the commitment and cooperation of many individuals and organizations. I can't express how pleased I am to get this project and this corridor moving again.”

The Express Lanes would provide un-tolled, congestion free travel to public transit buses and registered vanpools, enhancing the reliability of service provided to those customers. To maximize use of the Express Lanes, individual drivers would also have the option to use them if they choose to pay a toll. The toll rates would be adjusted up or down depending on traffic levels to prevent the Express Lanes from becoming congested.

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Express Lanes are frequently used by people who are late for an important meeting or who are facing financial penalties for picking a child up late from daycare. They have been successfully implemented in several U.S. cities including Dallas and Houston.

“Express Lanes are one of the most innovative transportation solutions being utilized today, said Mobility Authority Board Chairman Ray Wilkerson. “They are especially valuable on narrow roads where there isn’t much available room to add more capacity. Whatever the outcome of the study, the Mobility Authority is committed to implementing Express Lanes or other solutions that will address the mobility challenges plaguing MoPac and our entire region.”

The study that is being undertaken will help determine the best options for improving the corridor, and the community will be invited to review the proposal in detail and share their preferences. Extensive public involvement processes like the one planned for MoPac often last several years. But the goal of the project partners is to have the environmental study completed by 2013.

Initial phases of the MoPac Improvement Project are already underway. TxDOT is currently repaving MoPac between RM 2222 and Lady Bird Lake using a new Permeable Friction Course (PFC), which reduces road noise and provides better traction during rainy weather, while reducing the overspray created by vehicles. The repaving project should be completed by the end of September. Once the repaving project is complete, TxDOT will restripe the lanes on northbound MoPac to eliminate the bottleneck between the Enfield Road exit and the Cesar Chavez Street entrance ramp. Those improvements will add a third northbound through lane at the Enfield Road exit ramp.

“After a two-year pause due to funding constraints, the MoPac Improvement Project is back underway,” said Texas Transportation Commission Chairwoman Deidre Delisi. “TxDOT is pleased to join forces with the Mobility Authority and the City of Austin to efficiently address the mobility problems on MoPac and provide transportation choices to Central Texas drivers.”

Additional enhancements to the MoPac Improvement Project may also be provided through the City of Austin. In July 2010, the Austin City Council will consider a transportation bond proposal that would ask voters for investments in roads, transit, and bicycle and pedestrian facilities to further help mobility. The investment would allow the City to leverage federal monies with local dollars to make further improvements to connect MoPac to downtown.

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“As a representative of Austin, I want to applaud our partners who will soon begin developing new tools for Austinites and Central Texas commuters to reach employment centers in Downtown, the Capitol Complex and the University of Texas,” said Austin City Manager Marc Ott. “We welcome the opportunity to work with the Mobility Authority and TxDOT to improve mobility into and out of Central Austin and enhance the quality of life here in this corridor.”

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