

FACT SHEET

Why Improvements Are Needed

Loop 360 is a major transportation corridor for the capital area region, acting as a thoroughfare and commuter route for residents in west Austin and those passing through. The 14-mile corridor runs from US 183 on the north end to US 290/SH 71 on the south end.

Increased traffic congestion at Walsh Tarlton Lane and along Loop 360 has resulted in a lack of mobility and increased safety concerns. Unless something is done, traffic conditions will worsen as our population grows.

Project Overview

The purpose of the project is to improve mobility and safety on Loop 360 at Walsh Tarlton Lane.

Proposed solutions include:



Removal of the traffic signals from the Loop 360 mainlanes at Walsh Tarlton Lane.



Construction of an overpass at Walsh Tarlton Lane, including non-signalized U-turns in both directions.



Addition of a shared-use path and sidewalks within the project limits to improve bicycle and pedestrian accommodations.



Details and Timeline

Environmental coordination began in fall 2018 along with incorporating public input.

The environmental, preliminary and final engineering stages are anticipated to be complete in early 2025.

PROJECT PROCESS | The Loop 360 at Walsh Tarlton Lane project will be conducted using a multi-step process that engages stakeholders on an ongoing basis.



Feasibility Study
(1-2 years)
COMPLETE



Purpose and Need
Identify the problem we are trying to solve



Environmental Analysis of Alternatives
Thoroughly analyze alternatives for potential impacts



Draft Documentation/ Public Involvement
The draft environmental document is prepared and reviewed



Final Documentation Review
The final environmental document is completed



Environmental Decision
Either the preferred build alternative or the no build alternative



Utility Relocation
(Approximately 1 year)



Construction
(2-3 years, depending on project)

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STAKEHOLDER OUTREACH



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TxDOT Public Information Officer

Brad Wheelis

Bradley.Wheelis@txdot.gov | 512.832.7060

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS – WALSH TARLTON LANE

1. What types of improvements will be considered?

This project consists of removing the traffic signals on the Loop 360 mainlanes at Walsh Tarlton Lane and adding an overpass (where the mainlanes go over the cross street) with non-signalized U-turns in both directions. The project also includes a shared-use path (SUP) and sidewalks within the project limits to improve bicycle and pedestrian accommodations.

2. How does TxDOT decide what changes will be made to the different options?

At the beginning of any environmental study, the community is invited to help define the problem we are trying to solve. Option(s) are developed to help solve that problem, and the community is invited to provide additional input on the development and evaluation of all proposed improvements. A "no build," or "do nothing," alternative will be carried through the process and used as a baseline for comparison.

Public feedback is then combined with engineering feasibility, social, economic and environmental analysis to identify the best option, ultimately leading to the identification of a preferred alternative. As the environmental study nears completion, a preferred alternative will be presented to the public.

3. What is the project timeline?

Environmental coordination began in fall 2018 along with incorporating public input. During the environmental process TxDOT will: identify the purpose and need, perform environmental analysis of alternatives, review draft documentation, finalize documentation and come to an environmental decision. Due to the project being located in an environmentally sensitive area, the environmental phase may be extended past the typical 2-4 years. The environmental, preliminary and final engineering stages are anticipated to be complete in early 2025. The project will undergo utility relocation, typically lasting one year, then will proceed to construction. The construction process is projected to take 2-3 years.

4. Why can't TxDOT move faster/build it now?

Prior to starting construction, projects must go through a rigorous environmental study dictated by the federal National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The program team is working to move through the projects as efficiently and quickly as possible given these guidelines and limitations.

5. Are there any improvements planned for the MoPac intersection?

At this time, improvements at MoPac are not included in the Loop 360 program. Improvements at the intersection may be considered as part of a separate project.

6. Will the Walsh Tarlton Lane project impact Barton Creek Greenbelt or the Balcones Canyonlands Preserves?

No.

7. How will I access MoPac from southbound Loop 360?

To access northbound MoPac, drivers will remain on the southbound Loop 360 mainlanes, go through the existing traffic light at the MoPac intersection, and turn left.

To access southbound MoPac, two concepts are being proposed:

Concept 1 – Drivers will exit north of Walsh Tarlton Lane and pass through the signalized intersection at Walsh Tarlton Lane. Then, drivers in both lanes will proceed down the connector road to access southbound MoPac as they do today.

Concept 2 – Drivers will exit north of Walsh Tarlton Lane and pass through the signalized intersection at Walsh Tarlton Lane. Then, the right lane will proceed down the connector road to access southbound MoPac, and the left lane will enter southbound Loop 360.

8. How will I access northbound Loop 360 from the northbound Loop 360 connector road?

There are two concepts proposed for this movement:

Concept 1 – An acceleration lane will be added from the Loop 360 connector road north of Stoneridge Road to the northbound Loop 360 mainlanes.

Concept 2 – A stop sign will be added from the Loop 360 connector road north of Stoneridge Road to the northbound Loop 360 mainlanes.

9. How will I access the northbound Loop 360 connector road from the southern Barton Creek Square driveway?

There are three concepts proposed for this movement:

Concept 1 – Drivers exiting the south driveway from Barton Creek Square will enter the northbound connector road after yielding to cross traffic.

Concept 2 – Drivers exiting the south driveway from Barton Creek Square will enter the northbound connector road using their own dedicated lane.

Concept 3 – The south driveway to/from Barton Creek Square is removed.

10. How will I get to Barton Creek Square?

Drivers heading southbound on Loop 360 will exit north of Walsh Tarlton Lane to the connector road and turn left at the signalized intersection at Walsh Tarlton Lane. They will turn right to enter the mall through the driveway on Walsh Tarlton Lane.

Drivers heading northbound on Loop 360 will exit south of Walsh Tarlton Lane and will turn right to enter the mall using its northern driveway on the Loop 360 connector road.

11. How does TxDOT plan to address noise?

A noise analysis is currently underway as part of the environmental study. The analysis considers the current level of noise at many locations throughout the study area, calculates existing and projected future traffic noise levels and considers noise reduction measures. Noise reduction measures are only proposed if the predicted future noise levels exceed acceptable levels for surrounding properties. The results of that analysis will be made available at future public meetings and will be included as part of the environmental study.

The most common noise reduction measure is the construction of noise barriers or sound walls. If the noise analysis shows that noise levels exceed acceptable standards in a

particular area, the project will provide sound walls if they are determined to be feasible, reasonable and acceptable to the adjacent property owners. Feasibility considers whether a substantial noise reduction can be achieved and whether the noise barrier will cause a reduction in safety. Reasonableness considers, among other factors, cost effectiveness, expected noise levels and land use. Acceptability considers the opinions of the residents that live adjacent to the proposed wall.

12. Does TxDOT require additional right of way for the Walsh Tarlton Lane project?

At this time, the proposed improvements would not require additional right of way.

13. How are the bicycle and pedestrian accommodations being added to the Walsh Tarlton Lane project?

The current design shows a 10-foot shared-use path along the southbound (west) side of Loop 360, and a 6-foot sidewalk along the northbound (east) side, within the project limits.

FACT SHEET

About Loop 360

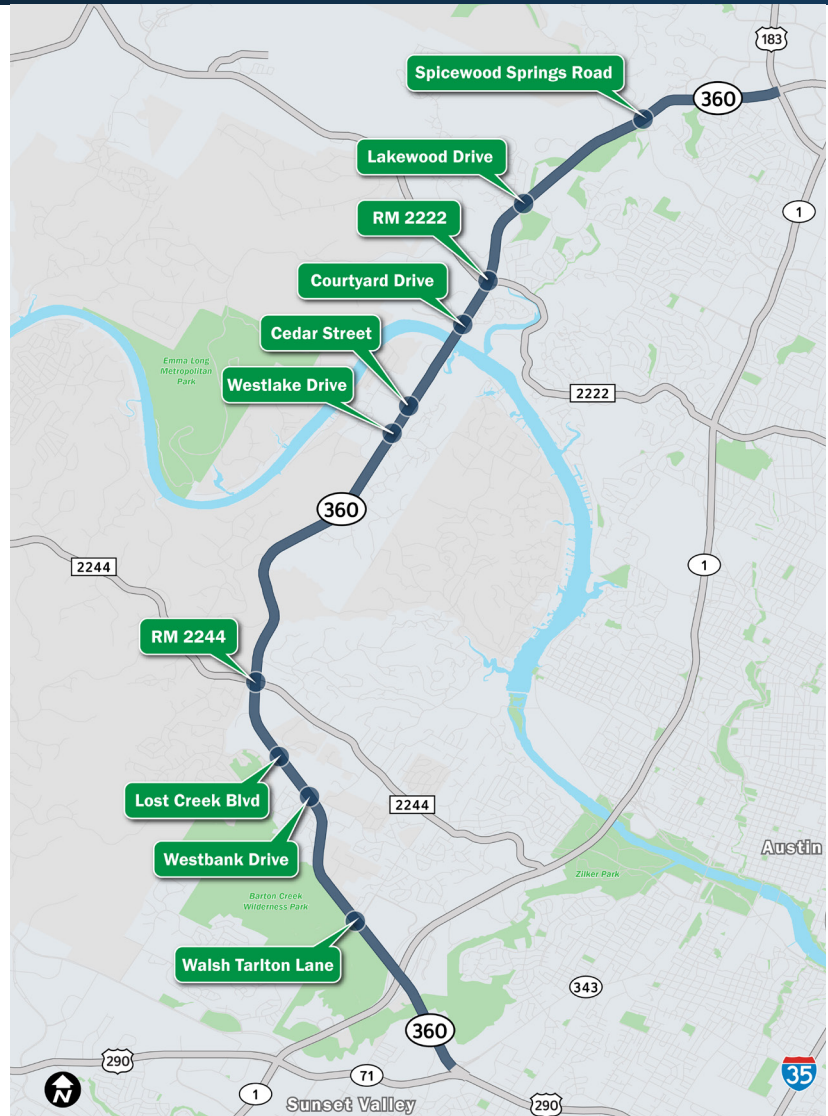
Loop 360 is a major north/south transportation corridor for the capital area region, acting as a thoroughfare and commuter route for residents in west Austin as well as those passing through. The natural beauty and unique Hill Country environmental features along Loop 360 draw regional, national and even international visitors to the area.

Loop 360 has severe traffic congestion, causing both mobility and safety concerns. We can expect traffic congestion to worsen as our population grows. More than two million people live in the Austin area today, and that number is expected to double by 2040.

Program Details

The Loop 360 program will upgrade multiple intersections along the roadway. Improvements include removing traffic signals from the Loop 360 mainlanes and constructing overpasses or underpasses at several intersections along the corridor. Diverging diamond intersections will likely be built at RM 2222 and RM 2244.

Projects include: Lakewood Drive/Spicewood Springs Road, Courtyard Drive/RM 2222, Westlake Drive/Cedar Street, RM 2244, Westbank Drive/Lost Creek Boulevard and Walsh Tarlton Lane.



PROGRAM PROCESS | The Loop 360 program will be conducted using a multi-step process that engages stakeholders on an ongoing basis.



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TxDOT Public Information Officer
Brad Wheelis
Bradley.Wheelis@txdot.gov | 512.832.7060

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS – OVERALL PROGRAM

1. What is the purpose of the Loop 360 program?

Loop 360 is a major transportation corridor for the capital area region, serving as a north/south route and functioning as a connector between US 183 and US 290/SH 71. The 14-mile corridor acts as a commuter route and a local thoroughfare for residents and businesses. Loop 360 also provides access for other citizens, including bicyclists, photographers, geologists, hikers, and visitors to Lake Austin. The purpose of the Loop 360 program is to upgrade multiple intersections along the corridor. The program team will involve stakeholders throughout the community in selecting the best option for each intersection to improve safety and mobility along the Loop 360 corridor.

2. Why are improvements needed?

Increased traffic congestion along Loop 360 has resulted in a lack of mobility and increased safety concerns. Three sections of the corridor are listed on the state's Most Congested Roadways list. Unless something is done, traffic conditions along Loop 360 will worsen as our population grows. More than two million people live in the Austin area today, and that number is expected to double by 2040.

3. Who will benefit from the projects?

Ultimately, TxDOT hopes that all residents, pedestrians, bicyclists, businesses, commuters, and others who use and rely on Loop 360 will benefit. The goal of the program is to work with stakeholders to identify solutions that optimize safety and mobility, while balancing local accessibility and corridor-wide mobility, bike/pedestrian/transit use, environmental impacts, and other important issues for all Loop 360 users. Specific benefits for each user group will depend on the solutions that are recommended for further development.

4. Will the projects consider pedestrian, bicycle and transit needs?

Yes. The projects will consider a wide range of transportation modes. The degree to which alternative modes are incorporated into proposed solutions will depend largely on the initial needs identified through stakeholder input and technical analysis. TxDOT is coordinating with representatives from the bicycling community, Capital Metro and local neighborhoods to identify these needs and opportunities for alternative transportation improvements within the corridor.

5. What is the program timeline?

The Loop 360 program began in summer 2018 and is comprised of separate projects, each with their own timeline. Each project will include an environmental, design, utility relocation and construction phase estimated to take seven to ten years to complete.

6. What is CAMPO and how does it impact the planning process?

The Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO) is the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for Bastrop, Burnet, Caldwell, Hays, Travis and Williamson counties. MPOs are federally required throughout the country in areas with a population of 50,000 or more and are required to produce a 20+ year transportation plan, called a Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), and a four-year planning document called the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

A 20-member Transportation Policy Board made up of 18 elected officials and representatives from TxDOT and Capital Metro governs CAMPO.

For a project to move forward into the environmental phase, CAMPO includes the project in the RTP and TIP, and the agency sponsor, in this case TxDOT, chooses to move forward into environmental phase.

7. What types of improvements will be considered in the projects?

Improvements will vary by intersection. Overpasses (where the Loop 360 mainlanes go over the cross streets) or underpasses (where the Loop 360 mainlanes go under the cross streets) will likely be constructed at eight of the intersections along the corridor. Diverging diamond intersections will likely be built at RM 2222 and RM 2244 where overpasses already exist.

8. How did you decide in what order intersections were being improved?

Based on the results of the Loop 360 feasibility study, the first projects to move forward will be Westlake Drive/Cedar Street, Lakewood Drive/Spicewood Springs Road and RM 2222/Courtyard Drive. The City of Austin decided to include these intersections in their 2016 Mobility Bond because they were the most congested. Whereas the other projects in the program (RM 2244, Lost Creek Boulevard/Westbank Drive and Walsh Tarlton Lane) are also funded, improvements for those intersections are still under development. TxDOT continues to study the remaining intersections along Loop 360.

9. Why isn't TxDOT adding lanes or widening Loop 360 or the Pennybacker Bridge?

TxDOT looked at options for additional lanes as part of the Loop 360 feasibility study, which ended in 2016. The study found that adding lanes would be beneficial, but would significantly increase the cost of the project. More benefit would be gained if signals on the mainlanes were first removed and replaced by overpasses (where the Loop 360 mainlanes go over the cross street) or underpasses (where the Loop 360 mainlanes go under the cross street). Once these improvements are complete, future projects may include adding an additional pair of lanes to Loop 360, which could be connected directly via flyovers to US 183 and south MoPac.

10. Will the projects impact the Pennybacker Bridge?

No. The bridge will remain intact as built. The bridge can accommodate six continuous lanes, but the current projects do not include these improvements. In summer/fall 2019, TxDOT has plans for routine maintenance work on the bridge.

11. How will selected improvements be financed?

The improvements in the Loop 360 program are funded by TxDOT. The City of Austin will contribute \$46 million in funds from the 2016 Mobility Bond.

12. What intersection improvements are funded by the 2016 Mobility Bond?

The 2016 Mobility Bond includes \$46 million to improve four Loop 360 corridor intersections. Those intersections are Westlake Drive, Spicewood Springs Road, Courtyard Drive and Lakewood Drive. TxDOT is also investing \$204 million to improve these intersections and six other intersections along Loop 360.

13. How will TxDOT ensure that the beauty of Loop 360 is maintained?

TxDOT has heard a clear message that the community wants to maintain the beauty and character of Loop 360, regardless of which improvements are ultimately identified for the corridor. The project team will consider this important factor in its analysis of all proposed improvements. The team will share any potential visual impacts associated with each scenario as part of this project. Aesthetics will continue to be an important factor as Loop 360 improvements move through the project development process.

14. What is a diverging diamond intersection?

Diverging diamond intersections (DDIs) are proposed for intersections with a high volume of left-turning traffic. DDIs allow vehicles to travel more quickly through an intersection by temporarily shifting traffic to the left side of the road. This allows through-traffic and left-turning traffic to proceed through the intersection simultaneously, eliminating the need for a left-turn arrow. To help drivers navigate, DDIs are designed with overhead signs, pavement markings and traffic signals. Learn more about DDIs by visiting Loop360Project.com and checking out the FAQs page.

15. How is stakeholder input being incorporated into the program, and how can I get involved?

Stakeholder involvement not only helps identify the issues experienced by Loop 360 users, but helps shape the solutions and potential visual, economic, environmental and community impacts. Input received to date has helped the program team evaluate and refine the originally proposed scenarios, identify new scenarios to be studied, and refine the criteria by which all scenarios will be evaluated. Ongoing stakeholder involvement is necessary to support and promote solutions for the corridor. Throughout the process there will continue to be opportunities to provide feedback, concerns and ideas. Comments are welcome at any time, and may be submitted through the online comment form at www.Loop360Project.com. TxDOT will also meet with stakeholder groups along the corridor, in addition to other interested stakeholders throughout the greater Austin area, to discuss both local and corridor-wide issues.

16. How does TxDOT respond to stakeholder comments and inquiries?

The Loop 360 project team values stakeholder feedback and typically responds to all stakeholder questions and comments within a 24-hour period. The exception to this is during the official 15-day comment period for a public workshop, open house or hearing. Any comments received during the 15-day period are included in the comment/response matrix for each public meeting summary. This allows the team to consider all comments and concerns, evaluate any potential changes to the project, and offer consistent responses to stakeholder concerns. The meeting summary is typically posted on the program website 3-6 months after a public meeting.

17. Why can't TxDOT just synchronize the traffic lights along the corridor?

Improving traffic signal synchronization will help, but not solve, the congestion issue on Loop 360. Currently, the corridor's traffic signals are manually configured and do not "talk" to each other. Therefore, any timing tweaks must be made on-site to each individual signal, and any tweaks to one signal do not affect any other signals along the corridor. The program team is currently working to identify potential signal upgrades and timing improvements that would provide some relief in light to moderate traffic conditions. However, such improvements would have little to no effect during peak traffic times unless they are accompanied by more significant design and/or capacity improvements – there are simply too many cars trying to move through each intersection to avoid sitting through multiple signals. All proposed improvements, including intersection and additional capacity improvements, will assume that traffic signals will be upgraded and synchronized to the greatest extent possible.



For more information or to provide input until Aug. 23, 2019, visit www.Loop360Project.com or contact TxDOT Public Information Officer Brad Wheelis via email at Bradley.Wheelis@txdot.gov or via phone at 512.832.7060.



LOOP 360 AT WALSH TARLTON LANE PROJECT



YOU CAN ALSO VISIT US ONLINE AT OUR VIRTUAL WORKSHOP

www.Loop360Project.com

from Aug. 8-23, 2019

Download and review meeting materials



Provide your comments or ask questions



Give feedback on Context Sensitive Solutions for the corridor



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