

Loop 360 from MoPac to RM 2244 Public Workshop Presentation Transcript

SLIDE 1: Welcome

- Hello, welcome to the Loop 360 MoPac to RM 2244 public workshop. My name is Lucas Short, transportation engineer and Loop 360 program manager for TxDOT. I will be guiding you through our virtual public workshop today. As you know, Loop 360 has experienced a severe amount of congestion over the years, and as the population grows that traffic is only going to get worse.

SLIDE 2: Project Overview

- This project will improve safety and mobility on Loop 360 between MoPac and RM 2244 by removing the traffic signals from the Loop 360 mainlanes throughout the project area and replacing them with overpasses or underpasses at Walsh Tarlton Lane, Westbank Drive, and Lost Creek Boulevard, constructing continuous one-way northbound and southbound frontage roads to improve local connectivity, and adding shared-use paths and sidewalks to improve bicycle and pedestrian accommodations.
- During this presentation, I will be giving you an overview of the Loop 360 Program, public feedback and schedule to date, we will be walking through proposed details of the project, and this information can all be found on the Loop 360 website, which is Loop360Project.com. Your input is extremely valuable to the team, and there are four different ways that you can comment.

SLIDE 3: Comments

- Comments can be received either online at the Loop 360 website, via email, verbally by calling 512-904-3800 and leaving a voice message, or by mail at the address on your screen. Comments must be received by July 23rd, 2020 to be considered part of the formal comment period.

SLIDE 4: History

- Loop 360 has been around for nearly four decades! Construction was completed in December of 1982 with the opening of the Pennybacker Bridge. In 2016, TxDOT completed a feasibility study which identified transportation solutions for the corridor. The current Loop 360 program takes into account the recommendations from the feasibility study by upgrading multiple intersections along the corridor to improve mobility and enhance safety.

SLIDE 5: What We've Heard

- Community input is also an important part of the process. Through public workshops and meetings with neighborhood and business groups, we've heard the community wants the Loop 360 program to: Improve mobility and safety for all users, minimize impacts to the environment and the community, balance the needs of through-traffic

with local access, while reducing cut-through traffic in neighborhoods, and address delays at signalized intersections.

SLIDE 6: Traffic Summary

- Loop 360 experiences some of the heaviest traffic congestion in the area, especially during peak hours. A 2014 traffic study found it took approximately 70% longer to travel on Loop 360 during peak periods compared to free-flow conditions. And if nothing is done by 2040, morning peak travel times could increase by an average of 46%, and evening peak travel times could be nearly double the off-peak travel times. Loop 360 from RM 2244 to SH 71 is among the top 100 most congested roadways in Texas. Unless something is done, traffic conditions will get worse as our population grows.

SLIDE 7: Program Schedule

- The big question most people have is when will construction begin? Take a look at our program schedule. The map to the right shows the 10 intersections where improvements will be made. They are grouped together into several different projects.
- We've already started utility relocation on the Westlake Drive/Cedar Street project and construction will begin in 2022. This intersection experiences the most congestion and is the first to move forward. We've ordered the rest of the projects accordingly. As you can see, improvements to the RM 2244 intersection will be handled as a part of a separate project in the program. Environmental work on the MoPac to RM 2244 project began in late 2019.

SLIDE 8: Project Process

- We receive many questions as to why it takes so long for TxDOT to complete construction for transportation improvements. The Loop 360 Program began with the feasibility study, which took two years to complete. The next step is planning, environmental and detailed design which typically takes between 2-4 years to complete. During this part of the project, our team analyzes multiple alternatives, reviews the final version and comes to an environmental decision. It usually takes about a year for utility relocation. Then the project can move to construction, which typically takes between 2-3 years, depending on the project.

SLIDE 9: Environmental Constraints

- During the environmental study, the team takes a look at all of the environmental constraints in the area. This includes things like people and animals who live in the area, existing buildings and other structures, parks and preserve lands, utilities, and natural features like springs, caves and wetlands. This project lies in an area where there is a mixture of residential homes and businesses. It is also in the Edwards Aquifer recharge and contributing zones, as well as being adjacent to the Balcones

Canyonlands Preserve land. There are several other constraints that our environmental team takes a look at. If you'd like to see this map in more detail, check it out on our website, Loop360Project.com.

Slide 10: Line Diagram -- Option 1 Conceptual Layout -- Overpass at Westbank Drive

- I'm going to give an overview of the project and explain its main components. And later, we'll take a zoomed-in look at the major intersections in the project area. The project runs from MoPac on the south side to RM 2244, or Bee Caves Road, on the north side. There are 2 options for the project, and the only difference is the overpass or underpass at Westbank Drive. The proposed Option 1 includes:
 - Existing mainlane signals at Walsh Tarlton Lane, Westbank Drive and Lost Creek Boulevard replaced with mainlane overpass (where the Loop 360 mainlanes will go over the cross streets) with non-signalized U-turns.
 - Existing mainlane signal at southern entrance to Barton Creek Square, and existing crossovers, removed.
 - Existing mainlane signal at Las Cimas Parkway removed; new signals added on the new northbound frontage road.
 - Northbound to southbound U-turn added at RM 2244.
 - One-way frontage roads added on either side of Loop 360 in the project limits.
 - Addition of a shared-use path and sidewalks within the project limits to improve bicycle and pedestrian accommodations.

Slide 11: Line Diagram -- Option 2 Conceptual Layout -- Underpass at Westbank Drive

- Option 2 includes all the same things I just described for Option 1. The difference is that Option 2 adds an underpass (where the Loop 360 mainlanes will go under the cross street) at Westbank Drive. Let's talk about how you'd get from place to place as you drive along Loop 360 in the future.
- If you're headed southbound on the mainlanes
 - The first exit you would come to just after you cross over RM 2244 would put you on the southbound frontage road. From there, you could access Las Cimas Parkway, Lost Creek Boulevard and Westbank Drive and Scottish Woods Trail.
 - As you continue southbound, the second exit you would come to allow you to access the Walsh Tarlton Lane intersection as well as southbound MoPac.
 - If you're already on the frontage road and just want to get onto southbound Loop 360, there are entrance ramps just south of Las Cimas Parkway, south of Westbank Drive, and just south of Walsh Tarlton Lane.
 - To access northbound MoPac from southbound Loop 360, you would stay on the Loop 360 mainlanes and take a left at the MoPac intersection, as you do today.
 - As I mentioned before, to access southbound MoPac, you would exit north of Walsh Tarlton lane and turn right onto MoPac.

- If you're headed northbound on the mainlanes
 - The first exit you would come to allows access to Barton Creek Square mall, as well as to Walsh Tarlton Lane. If you're coming from southbound MoPac already, you would already be on the frontage road and could just easily access the mall and Walsh Tarlton.
 - As you continue northbound, the second exit you would come to would provide access to Stoneridge Road, Westbank Drive and Lost Creek Boulevard.
 - The third exit would allow access to RM 2244 and the Village at Westlake shopping center with the HEB.
 - If you're on the frontage road and want to enter northbound Loop 360, you could do so north of Stoneridge Road, or just south of RM 2244.

- There will also be non-signalized U-turns at Walsh Tarlton Lane, Westbank Drive, Lost Creek Boulevard, and a north-to-south U-turn at RM 2244. These will allow you to change direction and provide better access to local businesses, schools, neighborhoods and other destinations that you may be trying to reach.

- Now I'm going to zoom in on a few major intersections to show you in a little more detail what they would look like. If you would like to see the entire roll plot in greater detail, you can download it on our website, Loop360Project.com. We'll start with the southern end of the project and work our way up.

Slide 12: Loop 360 at MoPac

- As you can see, the MoPac at Loop 360 intersection hasn't changed too much, and you'll still be able to access MoPac very much like you do today. The current project ends at MoPac, so anything south of that won't be considered as part of this project.

Slide 13: Walsh Tarlton Lane

- An overpass with non-signalized U-turns is proposed for Walsh Tarlton Lane. There are 4 lanes on the northbound frontage road of Loop 360, and 3 lanes on the southbound frontage road. At this point, the shared-use path is on the west side of Loop 360. We did that in order to connect the shared-use path to existing bicycle and pedestrian facilities on MoPac. On the east side, a sidewalk provides access to Barton Creek Square mall and connects to the existing sidewalk on Walsh Tarlton Lane.

Slide 14: Walsh Tarlton Lane 3D Rendering

- This is what the intersection might look like when the project is complete. This rendering shows the viewpoint if you're standing on the east corner, facing north. As you can see on the left here, drivers will have the ability to make a non-signalized u-turn in order to travel southbound on Loop 360. The second and third lanes from the left allow drivers to continue northbound on the frontage road and access businesses and neighborhoods here on the east side of Loop 360. Finally, the lane on the right

provides a yield condition for drivers to travel eastbound on Walsh Tarlton Lane. This allows for additional access to Barton Creek Square mall and Stoneridge Road, for example.

Slide 15: Westbank Drive – Overpass

- Either an overpass or underpass with non-signalized U-turns is proposed for Westbank Drive. The example on the screen shows the overpass option.

Slide 16: Westbank Drive – Underpass

- And this slide shows the underpass option. Regardless of the type of bridge we build, there will be 4 lanes on the northbound frontage road of 360, and 5 lanes on the southbound frontage road. As you are approaching Westbank Drive from the south, there is a right-turn lane that allows for easier, safer access to Westbank Drive. You will note a sidewalk to the east side of Loop 360, and the shared-use path on the west side.

Slide 17: Westbank Drive Rendering – Overpass

- This visual represents what the intersection may look like again if you were standing on the east corner of the corridor facing north when it is complete. Most of you will recognize this intersection as being the one that provides access to the Eanes I.S.D. Administration Building and Westlake High School.
- Again, drivers in this lane furthest to the left will have a non-signalized U-turn to access southbound Loop 360. The second lane from the left is a left-turn only condition. The other two lanes allow drivers to continue through the traffic signal and travel northbound on the frontage road. Just outside of the range of this rendering is the right-turn option which will allow northbound drivers to make a right-turn before approaching the intersection. That will provide better, safer access to Westlake High school and other destinations east of Loop 360.

Slide 18: Westbank Drive Rendering – Underpass

- This view is from the same location as the previous rendering but with the option of an underpass instead of an overpass at Westbank Drive and Loop 360. The lane configuration and driving patterns I just described will remain the same.

Slide 19: Lost Creek Boulevard

- An overpass with non-signalized U-turns is proposed for Lost Creek Boulevard. This intersection experiences more traffic than Westbank Drive or Walsh Tarlton Lane, so for that reason we are including five lanes in either direction on the frontage roads. North of Lost Creek Boulevard, we are adding a shared-use path on the east side of Loop 360 with a sidewalk on the west side. The shared-use path and sidewalk switch at Lost Creek Boulevard to provide connectivity with the existing shared-use path at MoPac, as I mentioned before.

Slide 20: Lost Creek Boulevard Rendering

- Again, this rendering is a view of what it would look like when standing on the east corner of the corridor facing north. Drivers here in this left lane will have a non-signalized U-turn in order to access the southbound frontage road which would allow access to Heights Drive and Parkstone Heights Drive.
- In addition, drivers could access the southbound Loop 360 mainlanes. The second lane from the left is a left-turn only condition. These two middle lanes allow drivers to continue through the traffic signal and travel northbound on the frontage road. From there drivers can either choose to access the Village at Westlake shopping center and the HEB, or they can use the entrance ramp to travel northbound on Loop 360, or they can continue and access RM 2244.
- We also plan to include this right-turn only condition here at Lost Creek Boulevard allowing commuters to arrive at Valley View Elementary, Forest Trail Elementary, or Westlake Offices located here.

Slide 21: RM 2244

- The project will add a northbound to southbound U-turn at RM 2244. Additional improvements to the RM 2244 intersection will be considered as part of a separate project. If you'd like to take a closer look at any of the intersections, visit Loop360Project.com to view and download the exhibits.

SLIDE 22: Context Sensitive Solutions

- So, what will this project and others look like when completed? TxDOT uses an approach called Context Sensitive Solutions, or CSS, which helps us to develop roadways that fit in with their surroundings. In November 2018, we started asking the community what they'd like to see.

SLIDE 23: Context Sensitive Solutions

- Based on that feedback, TxDOT plans to incorporate certain landscaping and hardscaping elements. TxDOT plans to use native grasses, wildflowers and plants along the center median, and more structured planting near intersections. Hardscaping finishes will include muted colors with simple accents, to maintain the natural look of the corridor. The project team proposed cobra head light fixtures with low-intensity LED bulbs to be installed at intersections and on ramps only. This helps us to maintain the night skies while still providing necessary safety lighting.

SLIDE 24: Comment

- TxDOT appreciates the time you've taken to visit our virtual workshop. As I mentioned before, if you'd like to take a closer look at any of the boards or exhibits, I have

discussed here, just head over to Loop360Project.com to download those materials. You will also find Fact Sheets and a list of frequently asked questions that will give even more details than I've been able to provide here. We want to hear from you! There are four ways you can submit your comments as part of the official comment period for this workshop. You can submit your comments:

- Online at the Loop 360 website.
 - By email.
 - Verbally by calling 512-904-3800 and leaving a voice message.
 - Or by mail at the address on your screen.
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- Comments must be received by July 23, 2020 to be considered part of the formal comment period. However, the Loop 360 team welcomes your feedback anytime. If you have any questions regarding the program, you can visit us at the website or give us a call at 512-832-7192.
 - Again, from the Loop 360 team we greatly appreciate your input and your time to go through this workshop with us. Stay safe out there and we hope to see you soon.