

Meeting Minutes – Loop 360 at Westlake Drive/Cedar Street Meeting with Needles Drive neighborhood residents

Project: Loop 360 at Westlake Drive **CSJ:** 0113-13-166

Meeting Location: Riverbend Church Quads 4-A and 4-B; 4214 N Capital of Texas Hwy, Austin, TX 78746

Meeting Date: 12/09/19

Purpose: Discuss updates to the Loop 360 at Westlake Drive/Cedar Street project and how the project might affect local residents

Attendees:

Bruce Byron (TxDOT), Eduardo (Eddie) Garcia (TxDOT), Brad Wheelis (TxDOT), Epigmenio (Epi) Gonzalez (TxDOT), Michelle Romage-Chambers (TxDOT), Seyed Miri (TxDOT), Melissa Hurst (Rifeline), Crystal Wotipka (Rifeline), Barbara Humphrey (Davenport), Jimmy Humphrey (Davenport), Blake Stapper (Davenport), Carole Stapper (Davenport), Evelyne Mullen (Davenport), Brendon Mullen (Davenport), Trevor Winters (Davenport), Bill Williams (Davenport), John Elcock (Davenport), John Kyger (Davenport), Marianne Kyger (Davenport), K. Lee (Davenport), K. Malik (Davenport), Sammy Mahmoud (Davenport), Barbette Cooper (Davenport).

The following represents the undersigned's understanding of the issues discussed and the resolutions agreed upon. Any objection to any item(s) in these minutes must be submitted in writing to the undersigned within ten (10) calendar days of the issue date of these minutes or these minutes shall become part of the permanent project record.

General:

TxDOT welcomed attendees to the meeting and made introductions. Using a PowerPoint presentation (see attached), TxDOT reviewed the original three options presented at the first public workshop in September 2018. Two options involved an overpass at Westlake Drive and included different options for accessing Cedar Street, and one involved an underpass at both Westlake Drive and Cedar Street. Based on public input, TxDOT recommended moving forward with the underpass option. The underpass option increased the estimated cost of the project by \$25-30 million, but allows for better access to Bridge Point Elementary School and Riverbend Church via Cedar Street.

In conjunction with the second public workshop in April 2019, TxDOT heard concerns about

the cliff cuts necessary to complete the project, including concerns about potential structural damage to properties, security and privacy, and need for the proposed shared-use path.

In response to these concerns, TxDOT completed several evaluations:

1. TxDOT re-evaluated the need for the right-turn lane from northbound Loop 360 to eastbound Westlake Drive. Traffic analyses found that the right-turn lane is needed in that location.
2. TxDOT evaluated removing the shared-use path (SUP) or reducing it to a sidewalk. Doing either conflicts with Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) guidelines, which TxDOT is required to follow for federally-funded projects such as the current project.
3. TxDOT evaluated placing the connector road on top of the cliffs and found it to be undesirable due to the steep grade it would create on the northbound approach to Westlake Drive.

The neighborhood asked what entity provides the funding and the requirements for the SUP. TxDOT stated that the SUP must be added due to FHWA guidelines. Additionally, the City of Austin's (COA) policy is to add bicycle and pedestrian facilities to roadways such as this. The neighborhood asked if bicycles would be banned from the Loop 360 mainlanes, and TxDOT explained that they are unable to enforce such a ban as Loop 360 is not a limited access roadway (as is, for example, I-35).

4. TxDOT evaluated shifting the entire roadway to the west. Most utilities are located on the west side of the roadway and currently do not need to be relocated, or can be relocated within existing right of way (ROW). Moving the roadway would likely require ROW acquisition, and would likely require the utility companies to buy easements. Moving the roadway would also incur an added cost, would likely add a couple of years to the construction schedule, and would create alignment issues at the Westlake Drive intersection.

The neighborhood asked how frequently TxDOT completes a project that does not require utility relocations. TxDOT noted that the answer depends on how wide the ROW is. For example, Loop 360 has an abundant ROW. On many recent projects, TxDOT did not need to acquire additional ROW for utilities.

TxDOT discussed the current recommendation, given the constraints described above. The proposal includes reducing the SUP from 10' to 8' and removing the 5' buffer between the connector road and the SUP. These changes save 7' of cliff cut and allow 25' between the edge of the ROW and the edge of the retaining wall. The 25' meets recommendations provided by TxDOT geotechnical experts.

The neighborhood asked questions and TxDOT discussed. Points of discussion included:

- The neighborhood asked if the north-to-southbound U-turn lane can be cantilevered above the mainlanes. TxDOT reported that the engineering may be possible, but would face constraints. For example, the minimal clearance for the underpass must be 18.5', including the new cantilevered section.
- The neighborhood asked what the leeway for cost is for the proposed project. TxDOT noted that this project would typically carry a 20% contingency.

- The neighborhood asked what the cost would be if TxDOT did not cut into cliffs and moved the roadway to the west. TxDOT reiterated the challenges in moving the roadway to the west, including the likelihood of ROW acquisition, utility relocation and additional time to the project.
- The neighborhood asked what entity pays for loss in property values based on roadway design. TxDOT noted that, if they were acquiring ROW, damages would be considered in the estimation from the appraisal, but the project does not currently involve ROW acquisition. The group discussed the potential impacts to property values. (¹Note: after the meeting, the project team consulted the TxDOT ROW department on this issue; their official response is noted as a footnote below.)
- TxDOT stated that they have an obligation to improve mobility and safety on Loop 360. The team has evaluated many alternatives and is presenting the best alternative working within the project's various constraints.
- The neighborhood asked if there would be a natural cliff face or the retaining wall. Retaining walls will be needed beginning approximately 50' south of the Westlake Drive intersection. They will stretch southward approximately 850', to the beginning of the rock catchment zone indicated in blue hatch work on the plan view exhibit on the PowerPoint presentation. South of the retaining wall, the natural cliff face would remain.
- The group asked if any part of the retaining walls would be placed on top of the cliff. As shown in the cross-section diagrams of the PowerPoint presentation, the top of the retaining walls will align with the cliff and the walls will drop down from there. Typically, a flume is added to catch drainage. Any water would flow down the cliff, and drain into the highway drainage system.
- The group asked whether the natural cliff face continues to the south of the project area. TxDOT noted that wherever it is possible, a natural cliff face would be maintained. Because of the number of rock falls that we've had, TxDOT will add a 20' rock catchment zone where ROW allows.
- The group asked about the use of federal funding on other projects around Austin and why the federal guidelines for SUPs apply to Loop 360. TxDOT noted that the timing of the project makes a difference – Federal policies change, and in the last 10 years, there has been increased emphasis on adding bicycle and pedestrian accommodations. Recently, there have been bicycle and pedestrian improvements on MoPac as well as on RM 620.
- The group asked whether the SUP extends the length of Loop 360 or whether it terminates. For the current project, the SUP is proposed to extend to Waymaker Way where it terminates. The project limits also end near that location. The group asked whether, if and when Loop 360 is expanded in the future, the SUP will be required the length of the corridor. TxDOT was unable to say, as those projects are not currently

¹ You are entitled to receive adequate compensation if your property is taken for a public use. The Texas Constitution and the Texas Property Code have been interpreted by the Texas Supreme Court to guarantee compensation if part of your property is taken for a public use. However, the courts have ruled that construction inconvenience due to work on the existing road right of way and problems that are common to the general public are not compensable. Abutting land owners that do not suffer any "taking" are generally not awarded any compensation for temporary construction inconvenience or injury that is of a nature as is suffered in common with other property in the community. (Referring to page 780 of State v. Schmidt 867 S.W.2d 769 (Texas Supreme Court 1994))

planned. TxDOT noted that the COA would prefer to include SUPs the entire length of the corridor.

- The group asked if TxDOT will be able to use the Loop 360 median to expand the roadway, without expanding the Pennybacker Bridge. The bridge can handle two additional lanes by relocating the bike/ped facilities to the outside of the bridge structure and restriping the main bridge decking. TxDOT noted that the bridge itself is not the problem; it is the traffic stopping at signals for Westlake Drive, Cedar Street, and Courtyard Drive. TxDOT noted that the current Loop 360 program includes a project at Courtyard Drive.
- The group asked about the Pennybacker Bridge and its capacity. TxDOT noted that the bridge is designed to handle three lanes in each direction. The group asked where the Pennybacker falls in the list of priorities. TxDOT again noted that the bridge itself is not causing traffic congestion – the congestion is caused by the merging traffic and the traffic signals. Expanding the bridge would likely be part of the expansion to six lanes. That expansion is a projected next step, but is neither currently planned nor funded. TxDOT also noted that the Loop 360 feasibility study evaluated nine different options for improving mobility on Loop 360, and the current program was based on those considerations.
- The group asked about the potential effects on the cliffs. TxDOT noted that they are doing due diligence (e.g., evaluations, surveys) to prevent as many issues as possible.
- The group asked again whether cantilevering the U-turn lane would be a feasible option. TxDOT noted that the turn must accommodate large trucks. The group asked whether TxDOT could prohibit truck U-turns. TxDOT noted that it's possible but cost and desirability would be a factor for the cantilever option. TxDOT will evaluate the option.
- The group asked whether the bicycle lane marked on the northbound Loop 360 to eastbound Westlake Drive lane would remain. It will not, but it will be replaced by the SUP.
- The group asked how many cars typically travel through the Westlake Drive area – TxDOT estimated approximately 45,000.
- The group asked about the project process. The project is estimated to go to bid in early 2022. The Transportation Commission awards the project at their regular meeting. Typically on a project such as this, construction begins 2-3 months later. The group asked whether the lowest bid is always accepted. TxDOT explained that they are required to accept the lowest responsible bid. There are also measures in place to ensure that the contractor is performing accordingly, as well as incentives and penalties to help ensure the project is completed on time.
- The group asked whether Westlake Drive would be widened. TxDOT reported that the roadways would be built as shown on the exhibit. The pavement would be expanded slightly to accommodate the right-turn lane. The through traffic would be separated from the local traffic, which reduces the amount of wait time as the traffic signal can cycle through faster. The group noted that Westlake Drive experiences heavy traffic. The group asked if TxDOT is communicating with the COA regarding the width of Westlake Drive. TxDOT noted that COA is a partner in the current project.
- The group asked whether results of the geotechnical analysis are available, and when they might be expected. The boring (survey) portion of the analysis is complete for now, but analyses are ongoing and the report will not be available until finalized, about 4-6

months from now. The group asked how the report would be made available to homeowners. TxDOT noted that the report typically gets shared internally, but could share the report with the group once finalized.

- The group asked when the environmental study would be complete – TxDOT responded that the environmental study is currently expected to be complete by early 2021.
- The group asked about sound walls and inquired whether they would be added. If recommended, the sound walls are typically located along the property line, depending on their effects. TxDOT noted that it is likely that this project will not require sound walls, since the roadway will be depressed, but analyses are still ongoing.
- The group asked about the construction process. Typically, the connector roads would be constructed before the mainlanes. Once the connector roads are complete, the traffic will be switched to the connector roads. Then, excavation on the mainlanes will begin.
- The group asked how it was decided that Westlake Drive would be the first project to move forward. Using data from the feasibility study, TxDOT identified the projects that would be most beneficial, and the City of Austin identified projects that they would contribute toward. Westlake Drive arose as a priority.
- The group asked whether there TxDOT would eventually need to close the Westlake Drive bridge to excavate. TxDOT has not yet determined that information, but it is possible that traffic might be temporarily relocated to the south of the intersection. TxDOT noted that the objective is to maintain the same number of lanes open during construction as there are today. The group asked about the daily construction schedule. That information is not yet known, but TxDOT works with local residents and others to try to limit impacts.
- The group requested additional details for the SUP. TxDOT clarified that an SUP is a bidirectional bicycle and pedestrian facility and the minimum it can be is 8'. The group asked if there is a contact person for the recommended removal of the SUP. The FHWA contact is Justin Ham. Along with TxDOT, the City of Austin is also an advocate for the SUP.

After confirming that there were no further questions or comments, the meeting was adjourned.

Action Items:

- Once finalized, TxDOT will share the geotechnical survey results
- TxDOT will evaluate cantilevering the U-turn lane over the mainlanes



LOOP 360 PROGRAM



Loop 360 at Westlake Drive: Meeting with Neighborhood Residents
Dec. 9, 2019, 6 - 7 p.m.
Sign in Sheet

Name	Affiliation	Email	Initials
Eddie Garcia	TxDOT	Eduardo.Garcia@txdot.gov	ELG
Bruce Byron	TxDOT	Bruce.Byron@txdot.gov	BB
Seyed Miri	TxDOT	Seyed.Miri@txdot.gov	SM
Paul Terranova	COA	Paul.Terranova@austintexas.gov	
Melissa Hurst	Rifeline	MHurst@rifeline.com	MH
Crystal Wotipka	Rifeline	CWotipka@rifeline.com	CW
Barbara Humphrey	Davenport		BH
Jenny Humphrey	DAVENPORT		JH
Blake Stapper	Davenport		BS
Carole Stapper	"		CS
Evelyn Mullen	Davenport		EM
Brendon Mullen	"		BM
TRAVIS WINTERS	"		TW
Bill Williams	"		WW
John Elcock	"		JE
JOHN & MARIANNE KYGER			
to be had			
K. MALIK			
Pammy Mahmood			
Barbette Cooper	Davenport		
Epi Gonzalez	TxDOT		
Dick Romay-elle	TxDOT		

**Loop 360 at Westlake Drive:
Project Update**

December 2019

September 2018: Overpass Option

OPTION NO LONGER MOVING FORWARD

September 2018

December 2019

Underpass Option

April 2019

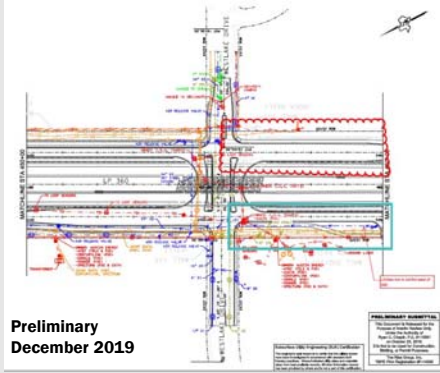
December 2019

April 2019 Proposed Design and Evaluations

April 2019

December 2019

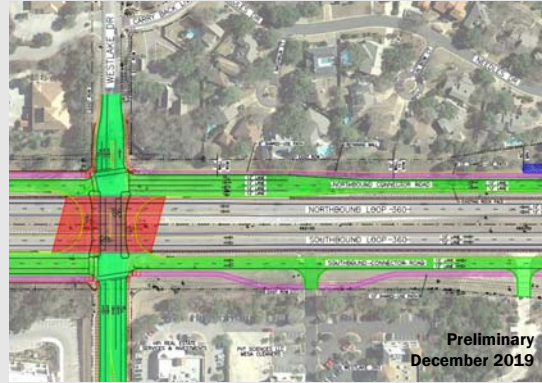
April 2019 Proposed Design and Evaluations



Preliminary
December 2019

December 2019

Recommendation



Preliminary
December 2019

December 2019

Recommendation



April 2019



Preliminary
December 2019

December 2019