

October 19, 2016

**By Email and Certified Mail**

Shelly Eason  
Environmental Specialist  
TxDOT Austin District  
P.O. Box 15426  
Austin, Texas 78761-5426  
Shelly.Eason@txdot.gov

**Comment submittal in reference to: [The Central 7-mile Comprehensive Project Environmental Study](#)**

Dear Ms. Eason,

The Wilshire Wood/Delwood I, Delwood II and Mueller neighborhoods have held multiple joint meetings concerning the Central 7-mile Comprehensive Project. During these meetings, a consensus developed that the current design presented by TxDOT is not acceptable for the area of I-35 from 38<sup>1/2</sup> Street to 51<sup>st</sup> Street and Airport Boulevard from Aldrich Street to 45th Street due to issues with access, safety, human health and connectivity.

We support the engagement efforts of the North Central I-35 Neighborhood Coalition 2 and believe our request for the consideration of the below design concepts to be complementary to that organization's requests for alignment with existing City of Austin planning efforts (including the Airport Boulevard Corridor Plan); a long-range vision for the I-35 corridor (including lowering the main lanes through 51<sup>st</sup> Street); an expansive environmental review of the social, cultural, community connectivity and health-related impacts of the project; and the formation of a north central stakeholder working group.

We are submitting comments for the record which outline key priorities of the Neighborhood Associations and our mutual goal to eliminate barriers to community connectivity that exist in the proposed design. Comments are based on the proposed design provided by TxDOT at the Mobility 35 - Delwood II Stakeholders meeting held September 11, 2016 and the TxDOT Mobility 35 Central 7-mile open house held September 20, 2016.

**Our collective objective is to:** Promote a design that allows pedestrians, transit, cyclists, and automobiles to travel safely and efficiently along and across the Airport Boulevard/I-35 area.

**The priorities of our neighborhoods are:**

1. Access to all of our neighborhoods from and to the main lanes of I-35 via Airport Boulevard
2. Safety for all modes of travel
3. Noise Reduction
4. Connectivity between our neighborhoods and those across I-35 (i.e., quality of life)
5. Human health

It is important that the Project be context-sensitive to its location within the urban core. Airport Boulevard, in particular, should be treated as an urban boulevard that serves nearby neighborhoods and all modes of users.

Please note that the options below are considerations that the neighborhoods have a collective wish to see evaluated by TxDOT and do not represent any official preferences of any Neighborhood Association at this point.

We further recognize that not all of the options are complementary or reflect consensus on the part of the neighborhoods.

**We request that TxDOT evaluate and provide a written response discussing the feasibility and concerns of each option presented below. Additionally, we request continued opportunities to provide input into the design process as it moves forward.**

**Lower deck ramp options:**

- a. Evaluate retention of existing northbound Exit 237A between 38 ½ Street and Airport Boulevard.
- b. Evaluate relocation of northbound Exit 237A to serve as a lower deck ramp for vehicular movement going southbound and northbound onto Airport Boulevard. Options presented by TxDOT should not result in the need to obtain right-of way from Saint George's Episcopal Church and residential properties.

**Upper deck ramp options:**

- a. Evaluate retaining the existing exit from the Upper Deck to Airport Blvd. If removal is required for safety, provide data that supports that the current configuration is unsafe and warrants removal.
- b. Assess adherence to design speeds of 55 MPH or lower on main lanes through the urban core including the Upper Decks; and evaluate if a reduced speed below 55 MPH would facilitate safe use of the existing exit.
- c. Evaluate and provide alternative design configurations for the I-35 Northbound exit ramp at Airport Boulevard that will improve safety and not restrict the use of Parkwood Road for pedestrians, cyclists, and vehicles.

**Southbound/Northbound Airport Boulevard options:**

- a. Evaluate options, including traffic lights, to improve the ability of pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles to safely cross or turn left onto Airport Boulevard from Parkwood Road and Rowood Road.
- b. Evaluate retaining right out/right in access to and from Airport Boulevard at Rowood Road.
- c. Evaluate turn lane configurations on southbound Airport Boulevard at Aldrich Street to allow U-turns onto northbound Airport Boulevard and left turns onto Aldrich Street.
- d. Evaluate use of Airport Boulevard as an urban core area by aligning design options with the Airport Boulevard Corridor plan in a more context-sensitive design.

**I-35 northbound frontage road options:**

- a. Evaluate configuration and appropriate design speed of the northbound frontage road between Wilshire Boulevard and Barbara Jordan Boulevard to allow for safe merging and turning into and out of neighborhood streets abutting the frontage road.
- b. Evaluate the addition of a connection from the frontage road to Philomena Street and assess the impact of this to the existing Mueller trail network.
- c. Assess the configuration of a direct-access exit lane serving 51st Street.
- d. Evaluate design and target speeds no greater than 35 MPH on the frontage roads south of 51<sup>st</sup> Street.

**Airport Boulevard/I-35 interchange:**

- a. Provide examples of similar precedents of Diverging Diamond Interchanges in urban core areas, specifically including data related to the impact on adjacent neighborhoods, pedestrians and cyclists.
- b. Provide alternative context-sensitive configurations to the Diverging Diamond Interchange with proven functionality in urban environments and suitability for pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles.

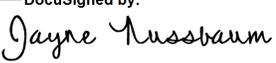
**Health, Noise and Community Connectivity:**

- a. Assess all impacts of the TxDOT proposed changes upon human health, including but not limited to incidents of: premature deaths, cardiovascular and lung disease, asthma and other health conditions known to be associated with proximity to elevated freeways through densely populated areas.
- b. Provide a full evaluation of noise reduction options including a baseline and mitigate for existing and potential-increases associated with carrying capacity and speeds of the upper and lower decks, exits and entrances, frontage roads and Airport Boulevard.
- c. Provide a quantitative analysis of the design improvements for pedestrian, cyclist and vehicular access and connectivity, along with health and safety for the Mueller, Wilshire Wood/Delwood I, Delwood II, Ridgetop and Hancock neighborhoods.
- d. Provide a full evaluation on impacts associated with potential loss of property values.

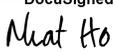
We are committed to a more robust discussion of the options and trade-offs for designs directly affecting our access, safety, quality of life and connectedness as part of of this Project. Thank you for your attention to this input, and we look forward to receiving your written response to each of these options.

Sincerely,

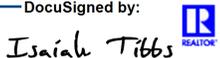
Jayne Nussbaum, Delwood II Neighborhood Association President

DocuSigned by:  
 10/18/2016

Nhat Ho, Mueller Neighborhood Association President

DocuSigned by:  
 10/19/2016

Isaiah Tibbs, Wilshire Wood/Delwood I Neighborhood Association President

DocuSigned by:  
 10/18/2016

CC: US Representative Lloyd Doggett; Senator Kirk Watson; Rep. Dawnna Dukes District 46; Rep. Elliott Naishtat District 49; Hon. Sarah Eckhardt Travis County Judge; Ron Davis Travis County Commissioner Precinct 1; Mayor Steve Adler, Mayor Pro Tem Kathie Tovo; Council Member Ora Houston; Council Member Delia Garza; Council Member Sabino Renteria; Council Member Gregorio Casar; Council Member Ann Kitchen; Council Member Don Zimmerman; Council Member Leslie Pool; Council Member Ellen Troxclair; Council Member Sheri Gallo; Lucia Athens COA Office of Sustainability; Greg Guernsey COA Planning & Development Review Department; Greg Weaver Executive Vice President Catellus Development, Jorge Rousselin CodeNEXT Project Manager; Rob Spillar COA Transportation Department; James Bass TXDOT, Terry McCoy TxDOT, Karen Lorenzini TXDOT, Brandon Marshall TxDOT; and Kelli Reyna TxDOT