

## Special Called HNA Meeting, February 15, 2023

### Topic: Expansion of I-35

**Barbara Epstein:** Kitten Holloway will run the meeting. Objective is to go through the statement to TxDOT and City Council statement that was drafted by the transportation committee.

**Robyn Ross:** I will give background on what has happened over the past 3 years.

This project is called the Capital Express project, the 8 miles from 290 to SH 71/ Ben White. We will speak specifically to our section of those 8 miles.

When TxDOT first reached out in late 2020, a few things had been decided. Upper decks would be removed. TxDOT had decided to add two managed lanes in each direction. Managed lanes are prioritized to bus, etc. Another term we will be using: NCINC (North Central I-35 Neighborhood Coalition) is a group of 13 neighborhoods roughly from MLK Blvd to Airport Blvd.

The first public meeting in Nov/Dec 2020 was online. They presented 3 alternatives as well as the no build alternative. Alternative 1 lowered main lanes and managed lanes below grade, stacked on top of each other. Alternatives 2 and 3 put main and managed lanes side by side, lowered.

Public meeting 2 in March/April 2021 took feedback. TxDOT said it had more than 2300 comments from public. People wanted them to consider features like decks over the freeway, replacing 35 w/ a boulevard, diverting to SH 130. Meeting 3 online in Aug/Sept 2021 eliminated Alternative 1, because it was too expensive to tunnel so deep. Last month TxDOT presented their preferred alternative and released federally required Draft Environmental Impact Study (DEIS) which they must take feedback on.

The current option is Modified Alternative 3. It has decks over a section of Downtown and UT to later become a sidewalk or park. Funding for decks will not come from TxDOT and City of Austin must figure out how to pay for the top part. Modified Alternative 3 has a crossing at 41 and Wilshire that was not in the previous version. Cherrywood pushed for this.

Maps from DEIS were shared and referenced.

### Questions and feedback:

- Barbara: How far it will go into our side of the neighborhood?
  - Robyn: Yes. \*pointed out existing right of way (ROW) and proposed ROW on map\*. We are losing less than Cherrywood. We are slated to lose a house. Concordia area is protected, Chronicle building is slated to go.
- Terri Myers: We need to emphasize availability of housing in our neighborhood as well as historical housing.
- Barbara: What happens to the Cady lofts?

- Robyn: That is farther in so it won't be affected.
- Mark S: Where will Airport Blvd be?
  - 35 will be under Airport in this scenario
- Barbara: Has there been discussion with other neighborhoods about using this funding for public transit? In looking at DEIS, TxDOT concluded unrealistically that there will be little air pollution impact because they assumed everyone will be using electric vehicles.

**Robyn:** We are asking for a north central deck. Cherrywood came up with a rendering. It would be a way to get the same benefit as UT/Downtown from 32nd to 38th. It would reduce noise and pollution. It would make it easier to walk between Hancock and Cherrywood. Restrooms, park space can be put above the deck.

With the deck we may lose exit ramp from NB I-35 to 38 1/2. Cherrywood, Mueller decided they would be okay losing that exit ramp. Our statement currently doesn't state that but that would be a trade-off to discuss.

The statement HNA decides on will be read to City Council. There is an effort to make a Council statement to TxDOT. Their resolution is in line with what we want: more east-west crossings, lower or cap the deck as much as possible, design it to allow for future caps, safety on frontage roads, minimize eminent domain, incentivize rerouting 18-wheeler traffic to SH 130.

This summer they will announce the selected alternative. They may still choose the no build option or announce another modification. Construction to begin in 2025.

**Kitten:** We will now read the proposed statement aloud and show it on the screen. Sections include our concerns as well as our asks.

#### **Feedback/questions on section A:**

- Terri: I have worked with TxDOT, I have been their consultant on historic preservation. We must emphasize the neighborhood has many houses/buildings of "historic age" which means 50 years or older. They might not demolish a house but they could run the highway right up to them.
- Mark: Will we use Houston as an example? May not be an apples to apples example because Houston has more alternative thoroughfares. We only have Red River/Lamar which are not great options. TxDOT may pick apart the comparison to Houston.
  - Robyn: Katy freeway is the specific one which went from 18 to 26 lanes in 3 years. This induced more traffic from suburban zones into town.
  - Hannes Mandel: This is induced demand. It's people who didn't drive who may start driving now. People may move to suburbs rather than living closer to town.

### **Feedback/questions on Section B:**

- Robyn: This is where we may add language about the tradeoff between deck and the exit ramp.
- Barbara: On the frontage road issue, is that going to affect more traffic on red river? The vision zero map already shows Red River as a dangerous pedestrian street now.
  - Hannes: I agree, more traffic on highway probably means more traffic on nearby streets. UT's rerouting of Red River will probably also increase traffic.

**Barbara:** Thank you transportation committee for your hard work!

**Kitten:** We would like to get approval from the group to vote on the final statement via email. Some revisions need to be made. The doc will be submitted to City Council and to TXDOT as HNA's statement on this issue.

**Barbara:** I motion to approve the vote by email on the final statement on the HNA's comments and feedback provided at the Feb 15 meeting on the I-35 Capital express central project.

**Arvind Ravikumar:** Seconded.

Voice vote. No nays. The motion passes.

**Robyn:** Feedback we will incorporate from today:

- The "historic age" phrase which means 50 years or older
- Preservation of affordable housing
- Potential for traffic to spill onto roads like Red River
- The unrealistic TXDOT assumption that everyone will be driving electric vehicles.

**Terri:** Motion to adjourn meeting.

**Kitten:** Seconded.