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January 29, 2019

The Honorable Steve Adler,
Mayor and City of Austin Council Members
City of Austin
P.O. Box 1088
Austin, TX 78767

RE: TxDOT's Oak Hill Parkway Project Response to Bruce Melton January 25, 2019 letter

Dear Mayor Adler and City of Austin Council Members:

This is in response to the Jan. 25, 2019 letter from Bruce Melton to the Austin City Council regarding the Oak Hill Parkway Project. TxDOT has a long history of coordinating with the City of Austin and other stakeholders regarding traffic projections for this project. In July 2017, TxDOT and CTRMA hosted a traffic growth workshop that was attended by the City of Austin demographer, Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO), Oak Hill Association of Neighborhoods, Save Barton Creek Association, and the project team. The [workshop handouts](#)⁽¹⁾, [meeting minutes](#)⁽²⁾, and a [two hour video](#)⁽³⁾ are available for download on the project's website.

Mr. Melton's letter includes various US 290 comparisons of actual counts and previous CAMPO model projections in various environmental documents for SH 45 and US 290. These previous projections appeared to be developed using the CAMPO Travel Demand Model under the 2030 CAMPO plan. The main theme of the letter is to show that actual traffic on US 290 falls short of the projected volumes. Mr. Melton fails to understand and disclose that the projected volumes from the Travel Demand Model were for a freeway and not for the highway currently in place. There is no way that the existing US 290 roadway (within Oak Hill) will reach the estimated demand in the models due to capacity restraints. The capacity of the highway has always been the limiting factor which reflects actual traffic counts in the field. The true demand for a roadway cannot be determined by the flow of traffic on it. The surrounding local roadways are carrying traffic that US 290 cannot handle.

As US 290 reached capacity around the year 2000, drivers chose alternative routes to avoid the US 290/SH 71 intersection, including: Bee Cave Road, Southwest Parkway, 45 SW, Slaughter Lane, Old Bee Cave Road, Fitzhough Road, Barton Creek Boulevard, Circle Drive and William Cannon Drive. When the continuous flow intersection improvements were constructed and implemented on US 290 in Oak Hill, some of the drivers who had been opting for alternate routes began using US 290 in Oak Hill once again with an observed increase in capacity of about 19%; however, the alternative routes still reflected increased usage and growth in the area. Below is a summary of the growth rates of various roadways north and south of US 290 suggesting unmet demand that now exists throughout southwest Austin.

As shown on Page 2, the traffic projection rate proposed for US 290 (3.58% per year) is in line with the actual traffic growth rates experienced on some of the alternate routes like Southwest Parkway (6.2%), Circle Drive (8.6%) and Bee Cave Road (4.4%). These existing growth rates are considered relatively high.

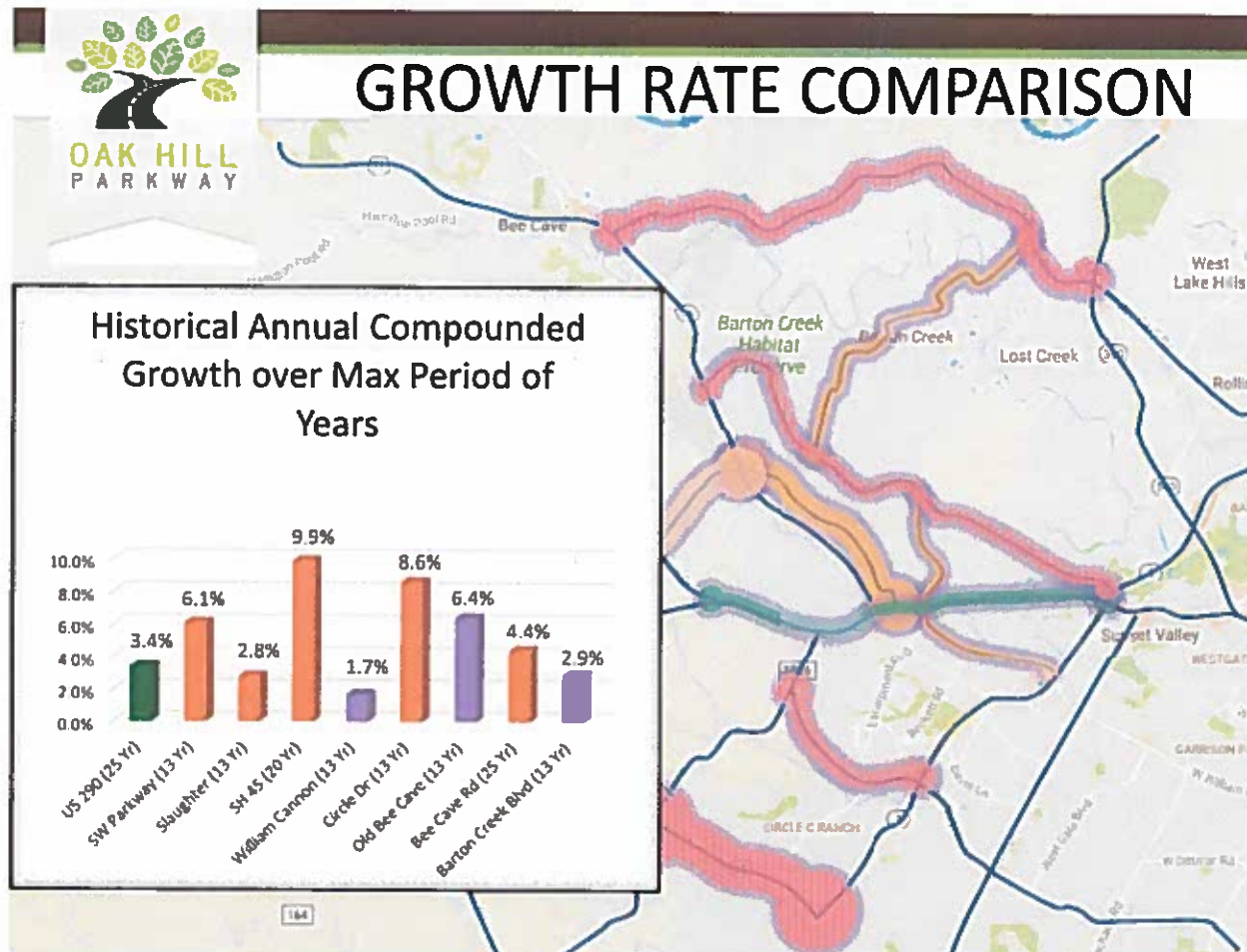
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The fact that 290 is designated as a US highway indicates that mobility and throughput is what the roadway was meant to provide. The traveling public is forced to use local collectors and major arterials instead of the US highway best suited to provide principle access. The local city and county roads will continue to become congested as the Hays county population and employment centers are developed. The Oak hill project will provide an improved facility to the public with access control and increased capacity to help accommodate the future growth for the region.

As the District Engineer for TxDOT's Austin District and a registered engineer for twenty-six years with a career in transportation for over thirty years, I believe the travel demand forecasts used by TxDOT and a team of registered engineers are appropriate and consistent with industry standards. I believe the engineering projections are professionally responsible and consistent with our duty to the public to recommend environmentally sound projects that meet the safety and economic mobility needs of the community. Please feel free to contact Heather Ashley-Nguyen at 512-832-7135 with any follow up questions.



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Sincerely,



Terry G. McCoy, P.E.
Austin District Engineer

Enclosure

cc: Robert Spillar, P.E., Director of Transportation, City of Austin
Ashby Johnson, Executive Director Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization
Marisabel Ramthun, P.E. Director of Transportation Planning and Development, Austin District, TxDOT
Heather Ashley-Nguyen, P.E. Director of Advanced Project Development, Austin District, TxDOT

- (1) <https://www.oakhillparkway.com/images/OHP-Traffic-StakeholderMeeting-07252017.pdf>
- (2) https://www.oakhillparkway.com/20170725_OHP_Growth-Traffic-MtgNotes.pdf
- (3) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TnQDCfxLPLO&feature=youtu.be>



Growth-Traffic Workshop Meeting Documentation Form

Tuesday, July 25, 2017 from 1-3 pm
Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority
3300 N. IH-35, Suite 300, Austin, TX 78705

The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) and the Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority (Mobility Authority) held a Traffic-Growth Workshop on Tuesday, July 25, 2017, from 1-3 pm in the Lebermann Board Room at the Mobility Authority office located at 3300 North IH-35, Suite 300, Austin, Texas 78705. Attendees invited to participate in the workshop via e-mail included individual stakeholders representing the Oak Hill Association of Neighborhoods (OHAN), Save Barton Creek Association, Aviara Neighborhood, Westcreek Neighborhood, and the Oak Hill Gazette. Additionally, individuals representing the following agencies: TxDOT, Mobility Authority, Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO), and the City of Austin; as well as members of the project team including: Rodriguez Transportation Group (RTG), Atkins, and Rifelino were also present. The PowerPoint, as presented by the project team to workshop participants, is available on the project website for public access: <http://www.oakhillparkway.com/environmental/public-input.php#traffic>.

Below is the summary of the main take-aways from the meeting:

- The National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) process requires the Oak Hill Parkway project to use the approved regional model as a starting point for planning. The approved CAMPO model was used for the Oak Hill Parkway traffic modeling as part of the ongoing environmental study. The 2040 Plan (and associated model) is the most current plan approved by the CAMPO Policy Board for regional use. The Oak Hill Parkway project team is mandated by NEPA to use the most recently approved plan and model for the project's environmental study purposes.
- The CAMPO 2040 Plan Regional Traffic Model was designed to account for the following:
 - Six geographical zones that make up the CAMPO region
 - Future growth and needs that may arise
 - Future alternative transportation modes
 - Impedance factors related to toll roads
 - Feedback loops
- The traffic projection bar chart shown at the June, 14, 2017 OHAN meeting by a stakeholder did not use the standard formula for compound growth, and overestimated the projected growth rate for traffic.
- The traffic chart shown by the project team in the workshop is not representative of a trend line, but based on actual and approved traffic modeling data.
- As US 290 reached capacity around the year 2000, drivers chose alternative routes to avoid the US 290/SH 71 intersection, including: Bee Cave Road, Southwest Parkway, 45 SW, Slaughter Lane, Old Bee Cave Road, Barton Creek Boulevard, Circle Drive and William Cannon Drive. When the continuous flow intersection improvements were constructed and implemented on US 290 in Oak Hill, some of the drivers who had been opting for alternate routes began using US 290 in Oak Hill once again with an observed increase in capacity of about 19%; however, the alternative routes still reflected increased usage and growth in the area.
- The traffic projection rate proposed for the Oak Hill Parkway project (3.58% per year) is not out of line with the actual traffic growth rates experienced on some of the alternate routes like Southwest Parkway (6.2%), Circle Drive (8.6%) and Bee Cave Road (4.4%). There was some

OAK HILL PARKWAY Meeting Documentation
Growth-Traffic Workshop
July 25, 2016

discussion regarding actual numbers versus rate of growth, but significantly more traffic has been seen on alternative routes in the area.

- The Hays County growth numbers presented, even with consideration for future employment centers in Hays county, will continue to increase commuter traffic flow between Hays and Travis County.
- If the project footprint is minimized by the reduction of the mainlanes by one lane in each direction, the project would not have sufficient capacity to carry the traffic volumes projected in the CAMPO 2040 Plan regional traffic model.
- The purpose of the Oak Hill Parkway project is safety and mobility. Level of Service was not used as a parameter to gauge mobility; travel time was. Level of Service has not yet been determined, but will be included in the environmental study reports and will be available for public review when the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) is released.
- The project team is working with Capital Metro to plan for transit in the corridor. As a result of that coordination to date, bus pullout locations have been identified and incorporated into the build alternative designs.
- The CAMPO 2040 Plan is a regional plan that considers growth, congestion and transportation needs throughout the region. There are projects identified in the plan that address corridors beyond the Y that experience bottlenecks, specifically improvements to South MoPac to help with congestion that begins near Ben White Boulevard were identified by stakeholders in the meeting.

The environmental impact statement is anticipated to be available late 2017 with a public hearing to follow shortly after. The preferred alternative, either Alternative A, Alternative C or the No Build Alternative, will be determined in the fall and included in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. We anticipate a final environmental decision in mid-2018 from TxDOT Environmental Division on whether the project moves forward or not.