

Loop 360 Improvement Study Update – October 2016

The Loop 360 Improvement Study, initiated in late 2014, has identified a range of potential short- and long-term mobility and safety improvements along Loop 360 that have been refined based on public input and technical analysis. The study team has wrapped up preliminary analysis of nine scenarios for the corridor and plans to conclude the study in fall 2016. All current project information to date can be found on the Loop 360 project website, www.Loop360study.org.

Final Study Report Scheduled for Fall 2016 Release

After months of analysis on the proposed Loop 360 corridor scenarios, the Texas Department of Transportation plans to release a comprehensive final study report that will reflect the results of public input received to date, as well as the technical analysis of possible improvement scenarios for the corridor.

The report is intended to show how various improvement scenarios could impact mobility, safety, environmental resources, aesthetics, and other corridor characteristics. This will help TxDOT, stakeholders, and the public understand the tradeoffs of different scenarios and what compromises can be made to balance the wide range of needs along the corridor, concluding with a recommendation of improvements to be carried forward for more detailed study in the next phase of project development.

The potential solutions identified and evaluated through the study process represent a wide range of options from short-term intersection improvements to long-term significant capacity improvements. There were ultimately nine different options that were modeled to show how they will potentially impact traffic and other corridor characteristics by the year 2040. The following scenarios will be outlined in greater detail in the study report:

Scenario 1	No-Build (Do Nothing), which assumes that no improvements will be made except those already included in the 2040 CAMPO regional transportation plan
Scenario 2	Improve Intersections
Scenario 3	Add one at-grade lane in each direction (keeping existing traffic signals)
Scenario 4	Grade-separate existing four lanes
Scenario 4.C	Grade-separate existing four lanes and add flyovers and improved connections at US 183 and at south MoPac
Scenario 5	Grade-separate existing four lanes, add flyovers and improved connections at US 183 and at south MoPac, and add one grade-separated general purpose lane in each direction
Scenario 5.M	Grade-separate existing four lanes, add flyovers and improved connections at US 183 and at south MoPac, and add one grade-separated managed (toll/HOV/transit) lane in each direction
Scenario 6	Maintain existing four lanes, add flyovers and improved connections at US 183 and at south MoPac, and add two grade-separated general purpose lanes in each direction
Scenario 6.M	Maintain existing four lanes, add flyovers and improved connections at US 183 and at south MoPac, and add two grade-separated managed (toll/HOV/transit) lanes in each direction



Additional detail on each of these scenarios along with other study findings will be included in the comprehensive report. The final version will be available for public review and comment on the project website, www.Loop360study.org, as soon as it is complete in the fall.

Key Findings of Importance in the Loop 360 Improvement Study



Within the full report, some interesting findings as a preview include:

- Scenarios 1, 2 and 3 do not do enough on their own to provide long-term improvements for the Loop 360 corridor, but in some areas scenarios 2 and 3 can be used as building blocks for an ultimate solution.
- Grade-separating the intersections was not only a popular request in the public survey, but those scenarios that grade-separate the major intersections are the only ones that provide long-term benefits.
- Managed lane scenarios would provide the best access for emergency vehicles and would make transit more viable.
- The negative environmental and aesthetic impacts of scenarios 6 and 6.M may outweigh the benefits.

Look for the full report to be released in November 2016.

Bicycle Safety Remains an Important Corridor Concern



Bike safety remains a concern in the Austin area, especially along the Loop 360 corridor. As biking continues to gain support as a valid transportation option, community-wide efforts are needed to increase bike safety awareness and practices. Bicycle safety is an important component of the Loop 360 transportation study and bicyclist and pedestrian accommodations will be considered in future corridor improvements.

While roadway improvements can be made to increase overall bicycle and pedestrian safety, educational programs such as the Bike Safety Jubilee at Laurel Mountain Elementary teach children how to safely commute across Austin. The school, located near the Loop 360 project area and Old Springwood Springs Road, has joined in an awareness campaign by securing a grant for bike safety to provide hands-on, bike safety instructions for their fifth grade students. The campaign focuses on bicycle safety rules for young students to ride bikes to school. Transportation improvements, combined with community awareness and safety practices, will help ensure corridors like Loop 360 remain a valid alternative for all transportation modes.

The Loop 360 study team continues to value community feedback on how we can better improve the safety of our bicyclists along the corridor. If you would like to leave a comment with our study team, please visit www.Loop360study.com to provide input.

Public Involvement Shaped the Loop 360 Improvement Study

Ongoing public involvement shaped the Loop 360 Improvement Study, helping the study team identify specific needs along the corridor, develop and analyze additional ideas for improvements, and refine important factors to consider in the evaluation process. Some highlights from public input that led to study improvements include:

- Some Build scenarios were refined to optimize either local mobility (focusing on improving travel within the corridor) while others optimized regional mobility (focusing on improving connections between Loop 360, US 183, and south MoPac, as well as maximizing available capacity within the corridor to handle higher traffic volumes), depending on what maximized the performance of that scenario.

- The number of Build scenarios considered in the study was expanded from 4 to 8 to provide a broader comparison of potential mobility impacts.
- The “Mobility” evaluation criterion was separated into two unique criteria to distinguish between local and regional mobility impacts.
- The “Aesthetics/Visual and Other Impacts” evaluation criterion was separated into two unique criteria to create a clearer distinction between the “built environment” (aesthetic/visual impacts) and the natural environmental impacts, which have been highlighted as two very important factors along the corridor.
- A “Transit/Emergency Access” evaluation criterion was added to assess the ability of each scenario to accommodate emergency response needs and offer viable transit opportunities.