

Appendix E: Scoping Comment Themes

Agency/Public Scoping Meeting #1 (November 2020) – Comment Themes

Agency/Public Scoping Meeting #2 (March 2021) – Comment Themes

Public Meeting (August 2021) – Comment Themes

Agency/Public Scoping Meeting #1 (November 2020) – Comment Themes

Public and Agency Virtual Scoping Meeting #1 Comment Themes and Responses

The following themes are the primary topics expressed by the public and agencies in comments submitted to TxDOT Nov. 12 through Dec. 31, 2020 as part of virtual scoping meeting #1. The comment themes, listed in alphabetical order, represent the most frequently mentioned subjects and are not intended to summarize all feedback given by project stakeholders during the official meeting comment period. All comments received have been documented and are being considered by the project team.

For more information about virtual scoping meeting #1 and current or future input opportunities, visit My35CapEx.com.

Comment Themes	Response
1	<p>Air Quality: Assess air quality as part of public health analysis.</p> <p>The air quality analysis to be conducted for the I-35 Capital Express Central project are in accordance with the Austin-Round Rock region’s current attainment/unclassifiable status for all National Ambient Air Quality Standards and will follow TxDOT’s guidance for complying with the Clean Air Act, National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and Federal Highway Administration code regarding project effects on air quality (see Air Quality Toolkit at TxDOT.gov).</p>
2	<p>Build Alternatives: Include in the build alternatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urban Land Institute’s I-35 recommendations • Reconnect Austin proposal • Rethink35 proposal <p>Among additional alternatives being considered, ensure deck plazas, or caps, over sections of the lowered highway are included.</p> <p>TxDOT has identified three preliminary build alternatives based on known corridor constraints as well as a “no-build” alternative. The build alternatives propose to add two non-tolled managed lanes in each direction and other operational and safety enhancements. TxDOT has also identified four design options. Design options are concepts that apply to certain segments of the corridor and are being evaluated for their feasibility within each of the build alternatives. Among the four options are local enhancements and direct transit access considerations at Riverside Drive and Dean Keeton Street. The local enhancements include deck plazas, or caps, which incorporate ideas put forth in the Urban Land Institute’s I-35 recommendations, the Reconnect Austin proposal and Rethink35 proposal. TxDOT is coordinating with the City of Austin, which is seeking to design, fund and build caps, as well as develop a community vision for the cap design. TxDOT’s role is to consider the requirements for structural support, future maintenance and operations, and other needs to accommodate potential caps.</p> <p>If feasible, direct transit access at Riverside Drive and Dean Keeton could provide bus-only lanes that connect from the roadway to the cross streets. This design option is being coordinated with CapMetro and the City of Austin and would be funded by others. TxDOT is also coordinating with CapMetro on creating a more dependable and consistent route for the traveling public, including transit.</p>

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Comment Themes		Response
3	Capacity: Add capacity, including people-carrying and multimodal capacity.	All three build alternatives propose to add capacity for vehicles, transit, pedestrians, bicyclists and other modes by adding two high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) managed lanes and bicycle and pedestrian paths in each direction from US 290 East to SH 71/Ben White Boulevard. The HOV lanes would be reserved for use by carpools, vanpools, transit vehicles and emergency responders. TxDOT is also evaluating access-controlled frontage roads and an intersection bypass lane system in downtown Austin. These design options would improve operations by allowing vehicles to bypass frontage road intersection signals in certain areas. Additionally, the alternatives propose to add a frontage road lane, where feasible. Improving overall operations benefits transit, which provides enhanced people-carrying capacity.
4	Climate Change: Assess climate change and greenhouse gases.	TxDOT has conducted a greenhouse gas (GHG) analysis for the statewide on-road transportation system and associated motor vehicle emissions and published the Statewide On-Road Greenhouse Gas Emissions Analysis and Climate Change Assessment technical report. This report also discloses how TxDOT is responding to a changing climate, and strategies that reduce on-road GHG emissions. A brief summary of this report will be incorporated in the Environmental Impact Statement.
5	Comment Period: Provide a 60- to 90-day comment period.	<p>While the formal comment period for the Public Scoping Meeting ended on December 31, 2020, TxDOT welcomes feedback at any time. TxDOT is hosting a second Public Scoping Meeting from March 11 through April 9, 2021. The documentation of feedback will continue throughout the development of the project.</p> <p>TxDOT is developing a Community Working Group open to the public beginning in spring 2021 to address relevant topics based on community feedback.</p> <p>TxDOT will also host an open house later in 2021.</p>
6	Community Engagement: Conduct enhanced outreach by providing more details of the proposed designs and ensure that Austin's communities of color are included in outreach.	<p>TxDOT is making extensive efforts to reach out to vulnerable populations through a variety of notifications about public input opportunities. Since late 2019, TxDOT has met with organizations and agencies regarding the I-35 Capital Express Program and continues to meet with stakeholders and community groups.</p> <p>TxDOT will be conducting outreach and engagement as part of the upcoming Community Impacts Assessment, in addition to hosting a public open house later this year. Representative organizations and populations to be further engaged as part of the analysis include but are not limited to: people of color, minority populations, low-income populations, people with limited English</p>

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Comment Themes		Response
		<p>proficiency, elderly populations, people with disabilities and children.</p> <p>TxDOT is developing a Community Working Group open to the public beginning in spring 2021 to address relevant topics based on community feedback.</p> <p>If your civic or neighborhood organization would like to invite TxDOT attend and present at your meeting, call (512) 832-7357 or email My35CapEx@txdot.gov.</p>
7	Construction Impacts: Evaluate construction impacts and mitigation strategies.	Impacts from construction, such as noise and vibration, impacts to travel patterns, air quality and any mitigation strategies will be evaluated as part of the environmental process and included in the Environmental Impact Statement. A detailed traffic control plan will be developed prior to construction to minimize traffic disruption and outline how access will be maintained during construction.
8	Context-Sensitive Solutions: Include context-sensitive design into the project.	In 2017, TxDOT published <i>Mobility35 Aesthetic Guidelines</i> to identify aesthetic concepts and solutions along the I-35 corridor from Georgetown to San Marcos. The guidelines identify a Capitol-themed concept as the preferred aesthetic treatment for the I-35 Capital Express Program area, based on public input and feedback from a cross-organizational Aesthetics Working Group .
9	Design Speed: Lower design speed and posted speeds.	TxDOT is evaluating the design guidance and will be hosting a workshop as part of the Community Working Group to discuss design speeds with the public. TxDOT must comply with federal and state standards for highway design, including TxDOT's Roadway Design Manual, the AASHTO Policy on Geometric Design of Highways and Streets and the Texas Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices. Posted speeds are determined once construction is complete.
10	Direct Transit Connections: Explore connecting the managed lanes to planned transit facilities, including the intersections at Riverside Drive and Dean Keeton Street.	Design options include direct transit access considerations at Riverside Drive and Dean Keeton Street. TxDOT is coordinating with CapMetro and the City of Austin and will continue to work with the agency to facilitate transit access. Direct access will be incorporated if funding is provided by others.
11	Equity: Consider past, present and potential future equity impacts through an equity impact assessment.	The Community Impacts Assessment, which will begin spring 2021, will explore and evaluate the needs of adjacent communities and document the existing and projected social environment with and without the proposed action. The assessment will include an analysis of mobility, safety, access to employment, relocation, isolation and other community issues. As

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Comment Themes	Response
	<p>part of this assessment, TxDOT will focus on determining the potential impacts to people of color, minority and low-income populations those with limited English proficiency, elderly populations, people with disabilities and children. Among the elements to be analyzed are displacements and relocations, the availability of affordable housing, and bicycle and pedestrian improvements as connections between the east and west sides of I-35. Additionally, the Environmental Impact Statement will evaluate the project as well as past, present and future actions by TxDOT and others.</p>
<p>12</p>	<p>Railroad, Bicycle, and Pedestrian Crossings: Separate the railroad and bicycle and pedestrian facilities from the frontage roads at Fourth Street and CapMetro railroad locations.</p>
<p>13</p>	<p>Health: Evaluate health impacts, especially for adjacent low-income communities, through a health impacts assessment that includes vehicle-related deaths and injuries, air quality, noise and climate change, among other considerations.</p> <p>TxDOT is undertaking the most rigorous level of environmental analysis with the development of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the I-35 Capital Express Central project. The studies conducted as part of the EIS process that relate to human health impacts include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Air quality • Community impacts, including changes in access for drivers, bicyclists and pedestrians; impacts to community facilities, such as shopping areas, community centers, childcare, healthcare and emergency response; and impacts to environmental justice populations, including people of color, minority populations, low-income populations and those with limited English proficiency • Hazardous materials within the corridor • Safety of the existing facility and design changes to improve safety of the facility for the traveling public, including drivers, bicyclists and pedestrians • Traffic noise <p>TxDOT will measure and evaluate existing traffic noise levels and predicted noise levels for each Build Alternative. The potential for noise barrier abatement will also be evaluated for sensitive areas and structures, including residential housing, medical facilities and other facilities per Federal Highway Administration guidance.</p> <p>More information on the methods used to conduct these studies can be found in TxDOT’s Environmental Compliance Toolkits.</p>

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Comment Themes		Response
14	Homelessness: Provide support for people experiencing homelessness.	<p>TxDOT funding is designated for the mobility and the safety of the traveling public. Since 2017, TxDOT's <i>Be Safe Be Seen</i> Pedestrian Safety Initiative has worked to address pedestrian injuries and fatalities occurring along I-35 in high-traffic pedestrian areas and construction zones. This proactive outreach effort focuses on some of the most vulnerable populations, including students, mature adults and those experiencing homelessness. Through the program, TxDOT shares safe pedestrian behaviors and provides ways for pedestrians to <i>Be Safe and Be Seen</i> on Austin roadways.</p> <p>As part of the <i>Be Safe Be Seen</i> program, TxDOT has been convening service providers, agencies and elected leaders for four years through the agency's Initiative to Address Homelessness. The goals of the initiative are to share information on upcoming construction activities and community resources, to assess specific needs for assisting individuals experiencing homelessness, and to identify potential opportunities for temporary and permanent shelter or housing alternatives. Additionally, in 2019, TxDOT made five acres of land available in southeast Austin to be used for Camp Esperanza, a homeless encampment.</p> <p>Outreach for the I-35 Capital Express Central environmental analysis has also included TxDOT's Initiative to Address Homelessness network. TxDOT will also conduct focused engagement of agencies and nonprofit providers supporting people experiencing homelessness through additional outreach as part of the Environmental Impact Statement.</p>
15	Intersection Bypass Lane System: Construct collector-distributor system with direct unsignalized access from Austin streets to the mainlanes and managed lanes.	<p>As one of four design options, TxDOT is evaluating a downtown bypass system, which would include lowered intersection bypass lanes at the same level as the mainlanes and managed lanes. An intersection bypass lane is a dedicated lane for traffic exiting the mainlanes or traveling on the frontage road to bypass a signalized intersection. In another design option, TxDOT is also evaluating access-controlled frontage roads, which are similar to intersection bypass lanes but with potential underpass exits to cross streets, where feasible.</p>
16	Impacts: Mitigate environmental and community impacts.	<p>The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process is a balanced transportation decision-making approach that assesses any potential project impacts on the human and natural environment taking the public's need for safe and efficient transportation into account. The technical analyses included in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will include a comprehensive assessment of potential project-related effects on a broad range of resources. In accordance with NEPA, the EIS will</p>

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Comment Themes	Response
	<p>evaluate and determine the impacts that could result from implementation of the proposed project and will include measures taken to avoid and minimize any adverse impacts. For any adverse community impacts that could not be avoided or minimized, mitigation will be considered. More information can be found in Section 4.4 of TxDOT’s Environmental Handbook for Community Impacts, Environmental Justice, Limited English Proficiency, and Title VI Compliance.</p>
17	<p>Local Plans: Align with local plans, including the Austin Strategic Mobility Plan, City of Austin Vision Zero goals, Austin’s Climate Equity Plan, adopted neighborhood plans adjacent to the I-35 corridor, among others.</p> <p>TxDOT is coordinating with the City of Austin and other local agencies on aligning with plans, where feasible and appropriate, while conforming with state and federal requirements. TxDOT is complying with the City of Austin’s current Bicycle Master Plan and supporting several other plans, either partially or in full, including the Austin Strategic Mobility Plan, City of Austin Vision Zero goals, Austin’s Climate Equity Plan, adopted neighborhood plans adjacent to the I-35 corridor and others.</p>
18	<p>Pedestrian and Bicycle Improvements: Improve pedestrian and bicyclist accommodations along and across I-35 as well as additional east-west crossings.</p> <p>See response to comment theme 17.</p> <p>Continuous bicycle and pedestrian paths in both directions are included in all build alternatives. TxDOT is evaluating multimodal enhancements to east-west crossings, including wider and more accessible cross-streets at multiple locations. TxDOT is also coordinating with the City of Austin to tie into the city street network as well as the Butler Hike and Bike Trail at Lady Bird Lake for continuity of bicycle and pedestrian accommodations.</p> <p>Additional east-west crossings are being evaluated based on the distance between existing crossings and available right-of-way. TxDOT is evaluating multimodal enhancements to east-west crossings, including the feasibility of a pedestrian bridge between 51st street and US 290 East area.</p>
19	<p>Purpose and Need: Include in the Purpose and Need:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving safety • Crash data • Bicycle and pedestrian data • Reducing vehicle miles traveled • Community priorities, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Addressing impacts of the original I-35 construction ○ Safe local access <p>Federal regulations require that the purpose and need statement “briefly specify the underlying purpose and need to which the agency is responding in proposing the alternatives including the proposed action.” TxDOT has revised the purpose and need statement based on community feedback to further emphasize safety; improving east-west connectivity across I-35; and addressing travel demand by prioritizing the movement of people, goods and services through and across the corridor. The Purpose and Need Technical Report includes crash data, including safety related to bicyclists and pedestrians.</p> <p>TxDOT will coordinate with partner agencies to share comments that are outside of TxDOT’s jurisdiction.</p>

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Comment Themes		Response
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Community engagement ○ Minimizing the roadway footprint ○ Mitigating environmental and community impacts 	<p>Many of the community priorities brought forward in the comments from Public Scoping Meeting #1 are part of the overall Mobility35 Program goals (http://www.my35.org/capital-goals-objectives.htm) and will be considered during the development of the Environmental Impact Statement.</p>
20	Ramping: Evaluate ramping scenarios.	TxDOT is considering multiple ramping configuration scenarios as well as access needs and operational considerations throughout the project corridor.
21	Right of Way: Minimize the I-35 footprint.	Minimizing the necessary amount of right of way is one of the major objectives of TxDOT's Mobility35 Program, which includes the I-35 Capital Express Central project.
22	Roadway Elevation: Do not elevate any sections of the roadway.	All build alternatives include removing the upper decks between Airport Boulevard and Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard. Build Alternative 3 proposes an overpass at Airport Boulevard to accommodate the CapMetro Red Line as well as an overpass at Woodland Avenue due to geometric constraints. These overpasses would be at the same height as the existing roadway. To maximize operational efficiency, the flyovers at I-35 and US 290 East would be elevated to provide a direct connection to the managed lanes.
23	Transportation Demand Management/Intelligent Transportation Systems/Connective Vehicles: Consider transportation demand management, intelligent transportation systems and connective vehicles.	Transportation demand management and intelligent transportation systems are being evaluated as part of project development. One of the purposes of the project is to address demand by prioritizing the movement of people, goods and services through and across the corridor. Managed lanes efficiently use the available roadway to improve reliable operations for transit, carpools and vanpools, and serves as a transportation demand management strategy that increases the traffic-carrying capability of the I-35 corridor. These lanes also provide the potential opportunity for future connected and automated vehicle use.
24	Traffic Demand: Reevaluate traffic demand models using alternate data.	Traffic forecasting methodology will follow Federal Highway Administration standards and procedures. Project traffic forecasts are based on a variety of data sources, including historical traffic counts, Texas Department of Transportation forecasts, and the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization travel demand model. Together, these sources incorporate long-range and recent traffic volume trends, regional population and employment forecasts and future land-use types and locations to generate future roadway volumes.

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Comment Themes		Response
25	Toll Alternative: Use tolls on managed lanes.	The current Unified Transportation Program (UTP) is a 10-year plan to guide transportation project development. This project is currently fully funded in the 2021 UTP (\$4.9 billion). Tolling is not currently a funding option and tolled lanes are not currently under consideration.
26	Transit Operations: Optimize transit operations by including direct transit access and designating one of the managed lanes for transit only.	TxDOT is collaborating with CapMetro to study feasibility of direct transit access provided funding is identified by others. Transit would have access to the managed lanes in the proposed build alternatives, which could improve transit operations.
27	Trucks: Re-route trucks or all through-traffic to SH 130 or other corridors.	<p>Studies conducted by the Texas A&M Transportation Institute found that rerouting truck traffic from I-35 to SH 130 would have limited impact on I-35 congestion. Two major reasons for this are: 1) most of the truck traffic has either an origin or destination near the I-35 corridor; and 2) truck drivers passing through on the way to their destination generally find I-35 to be the most efficient route.</p> <p>The report recommended a hybrid approach to solving congestion on I-35 that included additional capacity, less commuters (with more working from home), the use of technology to reduce trips, a shift toward off-peak periods and increased use of alternative modes of transportation.</p>
28	Tunnel: Bury or tunnel I-35.	Build Alternative 1 includes some tunneled sections for the managed lanes. All build alternatives would lower the mainlanes and managed lanes below the frontage roads and cross streets through downtown.

Agency/Public Scoping Meeting #2 (March 2021) – Comment Themes

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Public and Agency Virtual Scoping Meeting #2 Comment Themes and Responses

The following themes are the primary topics expressed by the public and agencies in comments submitted to TxDOT March 11 through April 10, 2021, as part of virtual scoping meeting #2. The comment themes are separated by feedback received on the Alternatives Evaluation Criteria, shared in virtual scoping meeting #2, and general comment themes. Both are listed in alphabetical order, represent the most frequently mentioned subjects and are not intended to summarize all feedback given by project stakeholders during the official meeting comment period. All comments received have been documented and are being considered by the project team.

For more information about virtual scoping meeting #2 and current or future input opportunities, visit My35CapEx.com.

Comment Themes – Alternatives Evaluation Criteria		Response
1	Access and Transit: Measure access to existing and future transit stops and stations.	<p>Each alternative was measured for its ability to accommodate Capital Metro’s Project Connect current stops and proposed light rail system at east-west crossings.</p> <p>During construction there may be impacts to existing stops. All potential impacts will require coordination with CapMetro to discuss maintaining access to transit along and across the project during construction.</p> <p>Current routes within our project limits along I-35 include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UT Shuttle (both frontage and mainlanes) • MetroExpress/MetroFlyer (frontage lanes only) <p>There are 13 bus/shuttle routes that cross the highway, at the following streets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Airport • 38 ½ St. • Dean Keeton • Clyde Littlefield • MLK • 12th St. • 11th St • 8th St • 7th St • Cesar Chavez • Riverside • Oltorf • US 290/71 Ben White Blvd.

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2	ADA Access: Measure ADA access.	Each alternative was evaluated for its ability to conform with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) as well as with the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation (TDLR) accessibility standards. Reconstruction of sidewalk segments along I-35 Central are also prioritized in the City of Austin Sidewalk Master Plan and ADA Transition Plan Update (City of Austin 2016) from low to very high need, depending on location.
3	Affordable housing: Measure loss of existing income-restricted affordable housing as well as market-rate affordable housing.	Each alternative was measured for its potential to displace residences and businesses both outside of and within minority and low-income communities. A community impacts assessment (CIA) will be completed for the alternatives that are carried forward into the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). The CIA will consider the demographics of the study area and analyze displacements as well as changes in access and travel patterns and impacts or benefits to community cohesion.
4	Air Quality: Measure air quality.	As a result of public and agency input, this criterion was added to the alternatives evaluation criteria. Each alternative was evaluated for its potential impacts to air quality by measuring the estimated total future year emissions compared to existing conditions.
5	Annual cost of delay: Measure annual cost of delay and measure it per person.	Each alternative was evaluated based on the I-35 total corridor (mainlanes and managed lanes) travel time and associated societal costs. The CAMPO 2045 travel demand model was modified for the project and provided daily vehicle-hours traveled (VHT) output of all vehicles traveling along the I-35 mainlanes and managed lanes within the project area. The daily VHT was then converted into annual cost of travel based on assumed value of time (\$30.54 in 2021 USD) and number of days per year realizing this travel time (250 workdays).
6	Connectivity: Measure connectivity.	Each alternative was evaluated on its ability to provide enhanced vehicular, bicycle and pedestrian east-west crossings along the I-35 Capital Express project limits, as well as for its ability to accommodate Capital Metro's Project Connect proposed light rail system at east-west crossings. Additional east-west crossings are being evaluated based on the distance between existing crossings and available right of way. TxDOT is evaluating multimodal enhancements to east-west crossings including wider and more accessible cross-streets at multiple locations. TxDOT is also coordinating with the City of Austin to tie into the city street network as well as the Butler Hike and Bike Trail at Lady Bird Lake for continuity of bicycle and pedestrian accommodations.
7	Cost of Crashes: Measure cost of crashes.	TxDOT is aligning with TxDOT's Road to Zero and the City's Vision Zero with an emphasis on safety and prevention of fatalities and serious injuries. Cost of crashes has not been factored into our evaluation because crash costs are typically only estimated for the

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		<p>purposes of a formal safety cost-benefit analysis, which, per FHWA, needs to consider the costs of all crash severities. The purpose of the criterion is to evaluate the alternatives' alignment Road to Zero and Vision Zero, which emphasize safety and prevention of fatalities and serious injuries.</p>
8	<p>Displacements: Measure minimizing displacements and expand metrics by including income, race, ethnicity and transportation modes.</p>	<p>Each alternative was evaluated for the number of potential minority and/or low-income property displacements.</p>
9	<p>Lane miles: Measure lane miles added.</p>	<p>The number of lane miles added was not used as an evaluation criterion because it is approximately the same for all three build alternatives.</p>
10	<p>Noise and Light Pollution: Measure light and noise pollution.</p>	<p>TxDOT performed a qualitative analysis of traffic noise impacts by evaluating each for its potential to reduce noise impacts to sensitive receptors. The evaluation consisted of a qualitative review of each alternative's ability to lower noise levels through its design, its potential to provide noise abatement, or both, as compared to each other. Further, a quantitative noise evaluation will be conducted to analyze noise impacts during the development of the draft Environmental Impact Statement.</p> <p>While light pollution has not been measured, proposed aspects of the project, including removal of the I-35 upper decks, along with their elevated lighting, and placing the mainlanes and managed-lanes in a lowered section are anticipated to reduce the ambient light pollution associated with this project.</p> <p>As the project continues, TxDOT may consider additional light pollution reduction measures.</p>
11	<p>Managed Lanes: Measure the managed lane concept to address demand.</p>	<p>The managed lanes were measured for their ability to address demand by comparing the 2030 p.m. peak hour travel time within the project limits along the managed lanes to the no build alternative. The criteria also included measuring the travel demand within the adjacent transportation roadway network: Each alternative was evaluated based on its travel demand patterns/traffic volumes along major and minor, parallel facilities (excluding I-35). The CAMPO 2045 travel demand model, a 6-county regional model of existing and future transportation demand based on population and employment demographics, was modified for the project and provided daily vehicle-miles traveled (VMT) output of a subarea bounded by Mopac, US 183, SH 71, and US 183.</p>
12	<p>Non-vehicular travel: Measure potential to increase travel by non-car methods.</p>	<p>Each alternative was evaluated for its total mainlane and managed lane person-carrying capacity. The mainlane and managed lane person-carrying capacity at a given point along the corridor was calculated based on basic freeway and transit capacity estimates for each alternative per the below methodology and assumptions. I-35 frontage roads, ramps, bypass lanes,</p>

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		<p>and flyovers were not considered as part of the analysis, as those facilities' main functions are to connect I-35 mainlanes and managed lane with other facilities and adjacent developments rather than provide true travel capacity. Managed lanes will be restricted to buses, carpools, vanpools, and emergency responders.</p> <p>Continuous bicycle and pedestrian paths in both directions are included in all build alternatives. Further, based on input from community groups including Downtown Austin Alliance, Reconnect Austin, and Rethink35, each east-west crossing within the project has been enhanced to include wider bridge structures, featuring up to a 20-foot buffer between bicyclists and pedestrians and vehicular travel lanes, to make biking and walking across the corridor a safer and more user-friendly experience.</p>
13	<p>Number of east-west crossings: Measure east-west crossings, including the number and quality of crossings for vehicles, pedestrians and bicyclists.</p>	<p>Each alternative was evaluated on its ability to provide enhanced vehicular, bicycle and pedestrian east-west crossings along the I-35 corridor.</p> <p>Continuous bicycle and pedestrian paths in both directions are included in all build alternatives. Further, based on input from community groups including Downtown Austin Alliance, Reconnect Austin, and Rethink35, all 28 east-west crossings within the project has been enhanced to include wider bridge structures featuring up to a 20-foot buffer between bicyclists and pedestrians and vehicular travel lanes, to make biking and walking across the corridor a safer and more user-friendly experience.</p> <p>In addition, through coordination between City of Austin and TxDOT, City of Austin is considering designing and funding multiple deck cap areas as green spaces within the urban core of Austin. Caps are being proposed between Cesar Chavez St and 12th street as well as an enhanced cap area north and south of Dean Keeton near the University of Texas and at Airport Blvd.</p>
14	<p>Reduction of Lanes: Measure reduction of lanes on local frontage roads</p>	<p>Since the frontage roads are in the right of way, TxDOT always evaluates and determines the number of frontage roads based on the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) capacity required to accommodate forecasted peak hour traffic volumes, including turning movements at intersections, and (2) lane balancing between upstream and downstream ramps and intersections. <p>In addition, TxDOT will also be evaluating frontage road relocation concepts and will present findings at an upcoming community meeting.</p>

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15	Right of Way: Measure amount of acres for proposed right-of-way impacts and cost of acquisition.	Each alternative was evaluated based on the acres that would be required for proposed right of way. The cost of acquisition will be estimated during further design of the preferred alternative.
16	Safety: Measure safety.	Alternatives were measured for their ability to improve emergency response time (for EMS, Police, Fire, and Hospitals),; emergency egress requirements, and their ability to reduce fatalities and severe injury crashes.
17	Travel time: Measure travel time and access for transit riders, people walking and people bicycling.	<p>Each alternative was evaluated for its total managed-lane and mainlane person-carrying capacity. The managed-lane and mainlane⁽⁰⁰⁾ person-carrying capacity at a given point along the corridor was calculated based on basic freeway and transit capacity estimates for each alternative per the below methodology and assumptions. I-35 frontage roads, ramps, bypass lanes, and flyovers were not considered as part of the analysis, as those facilities' main functions are to connect I-35 managed-lanes and mainlanes with other facilities and adjacent developments rather than provide true travel capacity.</p> <p>Continuous bicycle and pedestrian paths in both directions are included in all build alternatives. TxDOT is evaluating multimodal enhancements to east-west crossings, including wider and more accessible cross-streets at multiple locations. TxDOT is also coordinating with the City of Austin to tie into the city street network as well as the Butler Hike and Bike Trail at Lady Bird Lake for continuity of bicycle and pedestrian accommodations.</p> <p>Additional east-west crossings are being evaluated based on the distance between existing crossings and available right of way. TxDOT is evaluating multimodal enhancements to east-west crossings and is proposing a pedestrian bridge at 4th street, 5th street in the area between 51st street and US 290 East, and for the Red Line on Airport Boulevard.</p>
18	Weighted evaluation criteria of vulnerable road users: Weight the criteria to emphasize safety and improvements for the most vulnerable road users and de-emphasize increasing capacity and travel time for single-occupancy motor vehicles.	<p>TxDOT funding is designated for the mobility and the safety of the traveling public. Since 2017, TxDOT's <i>Be Safe Be Seen</i> Pedestrian Safety initiative has worked to address pedestrian injuries and fatalities occurring along I-35 in high-traffic pedestrian areas and construction zones. This proactive outreach effort focuses on some of the most vulnerable populations, including students, elderly those experiencing homelessness.</p> <p>As part of the <i>Be Safe Be Seen</i> program, TxDOT has been convening service providers, agencies and elected leaders for four years through the agency's Initiative to Address Homelessness. The goals of the initiative are to share information on upcoming construction activities and community resources, to assess specific needs for assisting individuals experiencing homelessness, and to identify potential opportunities for</p>

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		<p>temporary and permanent shelter or housing alternatives. Additionally, in 2019, TxDOT made five acres of land available in southeast Austin to be used for Camp Esperanza, a homeless encampment.</p> <p>Generally, evaluation criteria is not weighted. The alternatives are evaluated against one another and the no-build alternative. There will not be an alternative with a highest score, but a series of potential impacts and benefits that will be considered by the project team, with community input, to be evaluated and used to identify the alternatives to be evaluated in detail in the Draft EIS. Vulnerable populations will be further analyzed in the Community Impacts Assessment for the DEIS.</p>
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General Comment Themes		Response
1	<p>Aesthetics: Update the Aesthetics Guidelines for what the roadway will look like, including walls and bridges to reflect the local culture and improve neighborhood cohesion.</p>	<p>TxDOT will be engaging the community to update Aesthetics Guidelines for the Central project area. These guidelines will provide the conceptual direction for aesthetic treatments for new bridge structures, hardscapes, retaining walls, lighting, landscaping, railings, etc. These elements can enhance community cohesion and values.</p>
2	<p>Build Alternatives: Conduct a full engineering, transportation, environmental and quality of life review of a wide range of design alternatives, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urban Land Institute’s cap and stitch proposal • Reconnect Austin proposal • Rethink35 proposal 	<p>Beginning as far back as the 1980s, TxDOT recognized the need to upgrade I-35 through the region to provide improved mobility. This project builds upon previous efforts to improve I-35, such as the I-35 Corridor Advisory Committee (2011-2013), Downtown Stakeholder Working Group (2013-2014), a Planning and Environmental Linkages Study (2014), the Decks Neighborhood Workshops (2014-2015), public involvement conducted on the Central7 project (2016-2017) and a Design Charette (2020). These efforts have helped form a foundation for all the build alternatives that are currently under consideration. All build alternatives include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removing the upper decks on I-35 (between Airport Boulevard and MLK Jr. Boulevard) • Lowering I-35 through downtown (between MLK Jr. Boulevard and Holly Street) • Adding two managed lanes in each direction • Reconstructing the bridge across Lady Bird Lake • Improving bicycle and pedestrian paths • Accommodating current and future CapMetro routes • Accommodating a deck plaza in the downtown area funded by others <p>Given the high level of interest in community-based concepts and feedback received as part of the first two scoping meetings for the</p>

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General Comment Themes	Response
	<p>I-35 Capital Express Central project, the Texas A&M Transportation Institute (TTI) conducted an independent analysis on the proposed build alternatives, as well as the community concepts, including Reconnect Austin, the Urban Land Institute (ULI) recommendations, and Rethink35. The purpose of the analysis was to provide a third-party evaluation of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elements of the community concepts that are currently incorporated or could be reasonably incorporated into the proposed build alternatives. • Elements of the community concepts that require further study and analysis. • Whether the community concepts are feasible as standalone alternatives. <p>TTI’s analysis of the community concepts shows that, while none of the three concepts described above are feasible as standalone alternatives, much of what these separate entities are proposing is already included in or has recently been added to the TxDOT build alternatives, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lowered travel lanes. • More than 15 widened east-west crossings, including a new crossing at 5th Street for all users; and new pedestrian crossings at Cap Metro Red Line/Future Gold Line south of Airport Boulevard, and between 51st Street and US 290 E. • Bicycle and pedestrian enhancements including 20-foot buffers and 10-foot shared-use paths. • Low design speeds on frontage roads. • Enhanced person-carrying capacity along the corridor by providing a reliable route for transit in managed lanes. <p>Based on TTI recommendations, the build alternatives carried forward for evaluation by the criteria, include the TxDOT-proposed build alternatives 1, 2 and 3, along with elements of the community concepts, as described in the list above.</p> <p>In addition, TTI recommended a frontage road shift in the downtown area, and TxDOT is evaluating this improvement for the proposed build alternatives.</p> <p>The TTI report is available with the public meeting materials.</p>
3	<p>Community Engagement: Conduct enhanced outreach by providing more details of the proposed designs and ensure that Austin’s communities of color are included in outreach.</p> <p>Community involvement is essential to this project’s success. To provide additional engagement opportunities, TxDOT has established a community working group, CapEx VOICE (Volunteer Opportunity in Community Engagement), which is open to all members of the public. The purpose of CapEx VOICE is for TxDOT</p>

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General Comment Themes	Response
	<p>to learn more about the public’s ideas and priorities for rebuilding I-35 through Central Austin. The first three meetings were held in April, May and July 2021. Meetings are held online and will take place throughout the remainder of the environmental process every month or every other month.</p> <p>In addition, TxDOT is making extensive efforts to reach out to vulnerable populations through a variety of notifications about public input opportunities. Since late 2019, TxDOT has met with organizations and agencies regarding the I-35 Capital Express Program and continues to meet with community leaders and stakeholders.</p> <p>If your civic or neighborhood organization would like to invite TxDOT attend and present at your meeting, call (512) 832-7357 or email My35CapEx@txdot.gov.</p> <p>Through Scoping Meeting #2, TxDOT has conducted 150 meetings; of those meetings, 42 were with local and state agencies, 41 stakeholder meetings, and 20 elected officials' meetings. We also conducted 4 Pop-In meetings in high foot traffic areas to meet underrepresented populations.</p>
4	<p>Deck Plazas: Build deck plazas, or caps, over the highway.</p> <p>One design option being coordinated with the City of Austin, in partnership with the Downtown Austin Alliance, are local enhancements, which could include deck plazas, or caps, as shown in the renderings at the public meeting materials. The mainlanes and managed lanes are not visible from ground level.</p> <p>During previous public and agency engagement, we heard extensive feedback about capping I-35 and all proposed alternatives could accommodate these locally funded enhancements. We are currently in the engineering feasibility stage and are working closely with the City of Austin on these concepts.</p> <p>Similar projects across the State were funded through similar partnerships, such as Dallas’ Klyde Warren Park which is a deck plaza.</p>
5	<p>Design Speed: Lower design speed and posted speeds.</p> <p>Design speed is used for determining values for road design, such as horizontal curve radius and sight distance based on the roadway function and classification. Roadway geometric design features such as cross-section elements, lane widths, shoulder width, etc., are determined based on the road function and safety in-relation to the design speed.</p> <p>The posted speed limit is normally set at the nearest value to the 85th percentile speed ending in 5 or 0 of the observed speed of a</p>

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General Comment Themes	Response
	<p>group of vehicles traveling on a section of road. City governments and TxDOT must conduct traffic and engineering studies according to requirements outlined in TxDOT's publication, <u>Procedures for Establishing Speed Zones</u>, when setting a speed limit on the state highway system.</p> <p>Currently, frontage road posted speeds, in the project area, range between 40 and 50 mph. Posted speeds are determined once construction is complete. TxDOT is currently evaluating frontage road speeds of 35 to 40 mph.</p> <p>TxDOT is evaluating the design guidance and will be hosting a workshop as part of the CapEx VOICE to discuss proposed speed limits with the public. TxDOT must comply with federal and state standards for highway design, including TxDOT's Roadway Design Manual, the AASHTO Policy on Geometric Design of Highways and Streets and the Texas Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices.</p>
6	<p>History of I-35: Acknowledge the local history of I-35 as a racial barrier and its resulting economic impacts.</p> <p>I-35 in Austin was built along East Avenue, which was seen effectively as a racial divide in Austin's early history, and later evolved as a regional highway corridor throughout the 1930s, 40s and 50s. By 1955 (one year before the Interstate Highway Act was signed into law), the East Avenue corridor had progressed on this path and carried the designation as the 'Interregional Highway' and 'Blue Star Memorial Highway' along with U.S. Highways 79, 81 and 290.</p> <p>TxDOT understands the significance of I-35 to the local community and the present chance to address local concerns as we develop and implement the Capital Express Central project. This project offers the option to remove the visual separation and provide opportunities to reconnect the communities and spaces east and west of I-35. The reconnection would involve removing the upper decks and elevated lanes, lowering of I-35 through the downtown core, and rebuilding the east/west bridges for wider and safer bicycle and pedestrian crossings. TxDOT is working closely with the City of Austin, CapMetro and the community to allow for deck plazas to be developed and to rebuild I-35 in a way that encourages transit and meets the needs of commuters, local bicyclists and pedestrians. This is about a vision for tomorrow's I-35.</p>

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General Comment Themes	Response
<p>7 Homelessness: Provide support for people experiencing homelessness who shelter beneath I-35 underpasses.</p>	<p>TxDOT funding is designated for the mobility and the safety of the traveling public. Since 2017, TxDOT's <i>Be Safe Be Seen</i> Pedestrian Safety Initiative has worked to address pedestrian injuries and fatalities occurring along I-35 in high-traffic pedestrian areas and construction zones. This proactive outreach effort focuses on some of the most vulnerable populations, including students, mature adults and those experiencing homelessness. Through the program, TxDOT shares tips for being safe and provides ways for pedestrians to <i>Be Safe and Be Seen</i> on Austin roadways.</p> <p>As part of the <i>Be Safe Be Seen</i> program, TxDOT has been convening service providers, agencies and elected leaders for four years through the agency's Initiative to Address Homelessness. The goals of the initiative are to share information on upcoming construction activities and community resources, to assess specific needs for assisting individuals experiencing homelessness, and to identify potential opportunities for temporary and permanent shelter or housing alternatives. Additionally, in 2019, TxDOT made five acres of land available in southeast Austin to be used for Camp Esperanza, a homeless encampment.</p> <p>Outreach for the I-35 Capital Express Central environmental analysis has also included TxDOT's Initiative to Address Homelessness network. TxDOT will also conduct focused engagement of agencies and nonprofit providers supporting people experiencing homelessness through additional outreach as part of the Environmental Impact Statement.</p>
<p>8 Induced demand: Consider induced demand and how the project contributes to induced demand.</p>	<p>I-35 in the project area is one of the most congestion roadway section in the state. Rather than inducing demand, the project will address latent demand, which refers to travel that cannot take place because of constraints or congestion. We see latent demand when drivers who would otherwise use I-35 avoid it in favor of neighborhood streets. When additional multi-modal opportunities and operational improvements are provided, the driver would likely opt for a more direct route and use I-35. At that point, the latent demand materializes as actual usage.</p>
<p>9 Do Not Build: Do not widen or expand I-35. Use the funds to increase public transit, including rail.</p>	<p>All build alternative proposed improvements and impacts are being compared with the no-build alternative. The no-build alternative will continue to be evaluated as a viable outcome for the preferred alternative in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement.</p>
<p>10 Pedestrian and Bicycle Connectivity: Improve pedestrian and bicycle paths</p>	<p>Continuous bicycle and pedestrian paths in both directions are included in all build alternatives. TxDOT is evaluating multimodal</p>

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General Comment Themes	Response
	<p>along and across I-35 as well as additional east-west crossings.</p> <p>enhancements to east-west crossings, including wider and more accessible cross-streets at all east-west crossings along the project. TxDOT is also coordinating with the City of Austin to tie into the city street network as well as the Butler Hike and Bike Trail at Lady Bird Lake for continuity of bicycle and pedestrian accommodations.</p> <p>Additional east-west crossings are being evaluated based on the distance between existing crossings and available right of way. TxDOT is evaluating additional multimodal enhancements to east-west crossings.</p> <p>Additionally, we are planning a CapEx VOICE meeting to discuss and gain feedback about bike/ped improvements and conducted walking tours with Active Mobility.</p>
<p>11</p>	<p>Purpose and Need: Revise the Purpose and Need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State that the top goal is to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Improve the safety along and across the corridor for all users, in accordance with Vision Zero principles. ○ Improve access and mobility within key employment centers ○ Reconnect east and west Austin. ○ Reduce dependency on single-occupancy vehicles. ○ Construct the narrowest roadway possible. • Explicitly recognize how previous planning processes for I-35 systematically undermined the health and agency of communities of color. • Articulate commitments to Road to Zero and local plans • State that every aspect of the project is designed and built to maximize safe, convenient and enjoyable access for people with disabilities. <p>TxDOT has revised the purpose and need statement based on community feedback to further emphasize safety; improving east-west connectivity across I-35; and addressing travel demand by prioritizing the movement of people, goods and services through and across the corridor. The Purpose and Need Technical Report includes crash data, including safety related to bicyclists and pedestrians.</p> <p>TxDOT will coordinate with partner agencies to share comments that are outside of TxDOT’s jurisdiction.</p> <p>Many of the community priorities brought forward in the comments from Public Scoping Meetings #1 and #2 are part of the overall Mobility35 Program goals (http://www.my35.org/capital-goals-objectives.htm) and will be considered during the development of the Environmental Impact Statement.</p> <p>TxDOT has established a community working group, CapEx VOICE (Volunteer Opportunity in Community Engagement), which is open to all members of the public. The purpose of CapEx VOICE is for TxDOT to learn more about the public’s ideas and priorities for rebuilding I-35 through Central Austin. Our goal is to have 4-6 meeting by the end of year to address the topics important to the community.</p> <p>In addition, TxDOT is making extensive efforts to reach out to vulnerable populations through a variety of notifications about public input opportunities. Since late 2019, TxDOT has met with organizations and agencies regarding the I-35 Capital Express Program and continues to meet with community leaders and stakeholders.</p>

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General Comment Themes		Response
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acknowledge local history of how I-35 has segregated People of Color as well as current conditions, with I-35 being home to one of the largest concentrations of unsheltered people in Austin, specifically, unsheltered African Americans. Include urban streetscape and human-centric design needs. Include the need to address and enhance people's health and safety within the corridor. 	<p>If your civic or neighborhood organization would like to invite TxDOT attend and present at your meeting, call (512) 832-7357 or email My35CapEx@txdot.gov.</p> <p>Through Scoping Meeting #2, TxDOT has conducted 150 meetings; of those meetings, 42 were with local and state agencies, 41 stakeholder meetings, and 20 elected officials' meetings. We also conducted 4 pop-in meetings in high foot-traffic areas to meet underrepresented populations.</p>
12	Red Line Crossings: Separate the railroad and bicycle and pedestrian paths from the frontage roads at CapMetro Red Line crossing locations.	TxDOT is evaluating separating the railroad and the bicycle/pedestrian paths from the frontage roads at the Fourth Street and Airport Boulevard Red Line crossings.
13	Right of Way: Minimize the I-35 footprint.	<p>Minimizing the amount of right of way is one of the major objectives of TxDOT's Mobility35 Program, which includes the I-35 Capital Express Central project.</p> <p>We will share more info at future public outreach events</p>
14	Traffic Demand Modeling: Reevaluate traffic demand models using alternate data.	Traffic forecasting methodology will follow Federal Highway Administration standards and procedures. Project traffic forecasts are based on a variety of data sources, including historical traffic counts, Texas Department of Transportation forecasts, and the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization travel demand model. Together, these sources incorporate long-range and recent traffic volume trends, regional population and employment forecasts and future land-use types and locations to generate future roadway volumes.
15	Transit Operations: Optimize transit operations by including direct transit access and prioritizing transit use in the managed lanes.	<p>Currently, public transit buses, registered van pools and emergency vehicles must remain in traffic with all other vehicles on I-35. Managed lanes would help manage overall traffic demand and provide qualifying vehicles such as those listed above with a more reliable route, allowing them to bypass congestion and arrive at their destinations more quickly.</p> <p>TxDOT is collaborating with CapMetro to study the feasibility of direct transit access, provided funding is identified by others. Transit would have access to the managed lanes in the proposed build alternatives, which could improve transit operations.</p>

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General Comment Themes		Response
16	Trucks: Re-route trucks or all through-traffic to SH 130 or other corridors.	<p>Studies conducted by the Texas A&M Transportation Institute found that rerouting truck traffic from I-35 to SH 130 would have limited impact on I-35 congestion. Two major reasons for this: 1) most of the truck traffic has either an origin or destination near the I-35 corridor; and 2) truck drivers passing through on the way to their destination generally find I-35 to be the most efficient route.</p> <p>The report recommended a hybrid approach to solving congestion on I-35 that included additional capacity, less commuters (with more working from home), the use of technology to reduce trips, a shift toward off-peak periods and increased use of alternative modes of transportation.</p>
17	Tunnel: Bury or tunnel I-35.	<p>All build alternatives would lower the mainlanes and managed lanes below the frontage roads and cross streets through downtown between north of 51st St, and Oltorf St. Alternative 3 would require overpasses.</p> <p>Further, based on input from community groups including Downtown Austin Alliance, Reconnect Austin, and Rethink35, each east-west crossing within the project has been enhanced to include wider bridge structures (stitches) including a 20-foot buffer between bicyclists and pedestrians to make biking and walking across the corridor a safer and more user-friendly experience that is anticipated to enhance non-vehicular travel.</p> <p>In addition, in coordination between City of Austin and TxDOT, multiple Deck Cap areas to be designed as green spaces within the urban core of Austin, are being proposed between Cesar Chavez St and 12th street as well as an enhanced cap area north and south of Dean Keeton near the University of Texas.</p>

Public Meeting (August 2021) – Comment Themes

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Comment Themes and Responses Virtual Public Meeting with In-person Event Aug. 10 – Sept. 24, 2021

The following themes were the primary topics expressed by the public and agencies in comments submitted to TxDOT Aug. 10 -Sept. 24, 2021. Listed in alphabetical order, the themes represent frequently mentioned subjects and are not intended to summarize all feedback given by project stakeholders during the official meeting comment period. All comments received during the 45-day comment period have been documented and are being considered by the project team.

At the summer 2021 virtual public meeting and in-person event, TxDOT announced that two of the three proposed build alternatives (Alternative 2 and 3), along with the no-build alternative, would be carried forward for further evaluation in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. Since that time, TxDOT has reviewed community feedback and worked with community leaders and organizations to make additional refinements to both Alternative 2 and Alternative 3. The result of that work was presented to the public at the January 14, 2022, CapEx VOICE meeting, including the announcement of a refined Alternative 2 and a Modified Alternative 3. The modifications incorporated many of the design features requested by the community. Thus, some of the comment responses have been updated to reflect the most recent design changes and may refer to Modified Alternative 3 or refined Alternative 2 where applicable.

For more information about the I-35 Capital Express Central project and how to submit feedback, visit [My35CapEx.com](https://www.my35capex.com).

Comment Themes		Response
1	Aesthetics – TxDOT should consider aesthetics in the project design.	To celebrate Austin’s cultural and community diversity, TxDOT has launched the Live35 (Locally Influenced Visual Enhancements) aesthetic design program in partnership with the City of Austin for the I-35 Capital Express Central project. The goal is to gain community input to help identify design elements for cross streets and east-west connections that resonate with Austinites. This will improve east-west connectivity and enhance bridges and intersections to reflect the Austin community. TxDOT will also work with the community to develop materials and gather feedback on outreach and engagement strategies.
2	Air Quality – TxDOT should consider how the project will affect air quality.	The air quality analysis to be conducted for the I-35 Capital Express Central project is in accordance with the Austin-Round Rock region’s

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Comment Themes		Response
		<p>current attainment/unclassifiable status for all National Ambient Air Quality Standards and will follow TxDOT's guidance for complying with the Clean Air Act, National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Federal Highway Administration code regarding project effects on air quality (see Air Quality Toolkit: https://www.txdot.gov/inside-txdot/division/environmental/compliance-toolkits/air-quality.html).</p> <p>As part of the air quality analysis for the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), TxDOT is evaluating quantitative assessments of CO (carbon monoxide) for all proposed build and no-build alternatives as well as a review of MSATs (Mobile Source Air Toxics) for the corridor. This data will be made available for review and public comment as part of the DEIS and Public Hearing. Quantitative MSATs and CO2 (carbon dioxide) analyses, for the preferred alternative, will be presented as part of the Final EIS and Record of Decision (ROD).</p>
3	Alternative 1 – Alternative 1 should be carried forward in the DEIS and built for the design of the project.	At the summer 2021 public meeting, TxDOT announced that two of the three proposed build alternatives (Alternative 2 and 3), along with the no-build alternative, would be carried forward for further evaluation in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Since that time, TxDOT has reviewed community feedback and worked with community leaders and organizations to make additional refinements to both Alternative 2 and Alternative 3. The result of that work was released in January 2022, with the announcement of a Modified Alternative 3, which incorporates many of the design features requested by the community.
4	Alternatives the Same – Alternative 2 and Alternative 3 seem the same.	Both Alternative 2 and Modified Alternative 3 include operational and safety enhancements that would reconstruct ramps, bridges and intersections; improve frontage roads; enhance bicycle and pedestrian crossings, accommodate transit routes and accommodate the construction of caps, or deck plazas. The most significant difference between the two is the shifting of the frontage road in Modified Alternative 3 from the east side of the interstate to the west side to create an urban boulevard. Other distinguishing features include the number of bicycle-pedestrian crossings proposed in

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Comment Themes		Response
		<p>Modified Alternative 3, as well as the innovative intersection at East Riverside Drive and the removal of the previously proposed flyover at US 290 East.</p>
5	<p>Bike/Ped Safety – Safety for bicyclists and pedestrians should be considered and access provided within the project design.</p>	<p>Enhanced, continuous bicycle and pedestrian paths in both directions along I-35 are included in the proposed build alternatives. Additional improvements include: 16.6 miles of shared-use paths in construction or design, 13 connections to the urban trail network and bicycle network, and more than 28 intersections that contain bypass lanes to reduce through traffic and create safer areas for people walking, biking, or otherwise not in vehicles.</p> <p>Further, based on input from community groups, including Downtown Austin Alliance, Reconnect Austin and Rethink35, each east-west crossing within the project area has been enhanced to include wider bridge structures with 30 feet of combined shared-use path and buffer between bicyclists and pedestrians and vehicular travel lanes for a safer, more user-friendly experience. Among the recent design changes included in the proposed build alternatives are several new bicycle-pedestrian-only crossings throughout the corridor.</p> <p>For illustrations on the bike/ped safety concept, visit: https://my35capex.com/bicycle-pedestrian-improvements/</p>
6	<p>Bury/Tunnel – TxDOT should consider burying or tunneling I-35 instead of the proposed alternatives.</p>	<p>In the process of preparing a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in 2020, TxDOT moved three proposed build alternatives forward to the scoping process for further evaluation. Alternative 1 proposed the installation of managed lanes into tunnels with the mainlanes in a lowered section above the tunnels and frontage roads at street level to keep the profile as narrow as possible.</p> <p>Three proposed build alternatives and a no-build alternative were evaluated based on engineering and environmental criteria established through the agency and public scoping process. Based on the results, TxDOT determined that Alternative 1 would not be carried forward. Proposed build Alternatives</p>

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Comment Themes	Response
	<p>2 and 3 were carried forward for evaluation as part of the Draft EIS (along with the no-build alternative), based on the following key advantages they offer when compared to Alternative 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faster response times for EMS, police, fire department and hospitals. • Shorter construction duration by 1.5 years. • Improved traffic operations during construction with fewer lane closures. • Fewer utility conflicts and lower relocation costs. • Fewer drainage conflicts. • Lower design-build costs. • Lower annual and lifetime maintenance requirements and cost. <p>The evaluation was presented to the public in August-September 2021. TxDOT will continue to evaluate and improve the proposed build alternatives through additional public involvement and coordination with stakeholders and the City of Austin to maximize improvements and minimize environmental impacts.</p>
<p>Business/Residential Displacements/Do Not Widen – Widening the I-35 footprint will displace too many businesses and residents.</p> <p>7</p>	<p>Minimizing the amount of right of way is one of the major objectives of TxDOT’s Mobility35 Program, which includes the I-35 Capital Express Central project, and right of way will continue to be refined throughout the process. The majority of the proposed impacts are in the upper deck area (Airport Boulevard to Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard). Right-of-way (ROW) in this area is 200 feet. TxDOT will require at least 100 additional feet of right of way to accommodate construction, which will include deconstructing the decks while keeping three lanes of traffic open in both directions on I-35 during construction.</p> <p>The Community Impacts Assessment, which began spring 2021, will explore and evaluate the needs of adjacent communities and document the existing and projected social environment with and without the proposed action. The assessment will include an analysis of mobility, safety, access to employment, relocation, isolation and other community issues.</p>

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Comment Themes		Response
		<p>TxDOT will focus on determining the potential impacts to people of color, minority and low-income populations, those with limited English proficiency, elderly populations, people with disabilities and children. Among the elements to be analyzed are displacements and relocations, the availability of affordable housing and bicycle and pedestrian improvements as connections between the east and west sides of I-35.</p> <p>For more information about TxDOT’s right-of-way process, visit: https://www.txdot.gov/inside-txdot/division/right-of-way.html Link to Row forms and publications page: https://www.txdot.gov/inside-txdot/forms-publications/consultants-contractors/forms/row.html</p>
8	<p>Caps/Deck Plazas – Implement caps for east-west connectivity and for park/greenspace opportunity.</p>	<p>In coordination with the City of Austin, TxDOT is evaluating potential locations to accommodate caps, or deck plazas, that were recommended for design as green spaces within Central Austin. These include areas from 12th Street to 11th Street, 8th Street to 6th Street and 4th Street to Cesar Chavez Street. An enhanced cap area at Dean Keeton Street near The University of Texas is also being considered.</p> <p>The City of Austin can implement cap-and-stitch development, funding and implementation within the Capital Express Central project. If outside funding is committed, TxDOT’s proposed improvements will include the infrastructure to support the city’s cap-and-stitch plan. Working together with the community, our agencies can bring improvements to enhance connectivity within our city. Similar projects across Texas were funded through local partnerships, such as the Klyde Warren Park in Dallas.</p>
9	<p>City of Austin – TxDOT should coordinate with the City of Austin to align the Capital Express Central project with other city projects and improvements.</p>	<p>TxDOT is coordinating with the City of Austin and other local agencies to align plans, where feasible and appropriate, while conforming with state and federal requirements. TxDOT hosts regular meetings on the overall program. Topics include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bike/pedestrian accommodation. • Cap Metro coordination. • Community values.

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Comment Themes	Response
	<p>Where possible, TxDOT is incorporating elements of the City of Austin’s current Bicycle Master Plan, the Austin Strategic Mobility Plan, City of Austin Vision Zero goals, Austin’s Climate Equity Plan and adopted neighborhood plans adjacent to the I-35 corridor.</p>
<p>Climate Change – TxDOT should consider how this project will affect the climate.</p> <p>10</p>	<p>TxDOT has conducted a greenhouse gas (GHG) analysis for the statewide on-road transportation system and associated motor vehicle emissions and published the Statewide On-Road Greenhouse Gas Emissions Analysis and Climate Change Assessment technical report. This report also discloses projected climate change projections for the state of Texas, how TxDOT is responding to a changing climate and TxDOT actions and funding that reduce on-road GHG emissions. A brief summary of this report will be incorporated in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).</p> <p>Potential impacts on the human and natural environment that would result from the proposed build alternatives and no-build alternative will also be evaluated as part of the EIS process. The outcome of these studies and the identification of the preferred alternative included in the Draft EIS will be presented to the public and agencies at the public hearing. Topics include water resources, air quality, traffic noise, community impacts, vegetation and wildlife, threatened and endangered species, indirect and cumulative Impacts, historical and archeological resources, hazardous material sites, land use, parkland and climate change.</p>
<p>Community Alternatives – Community alternatives should have been considered and evaluated before the alternatives were presented at the public meeting.</p> <p>11</p>	<p>Three community alternatives were independently evaluated for feasibility by the Texas A&M Transportation Institute (TTI), including those developed by Reconnect Austin, Downtown Austin Alliance and Urban Land Institute and Rethink35. The evaluation found that none of the community concepts could be considered feasible as stand-alone projects. However, many elements of the community concepts have been incorporated into TxDOT’s planned improvements, and this work continues as the alternatives are refined.</p>

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Comment Themes	Response
	<p>The I-35 Capital Express Central project alternatives under evaluation would reduce traffic on neighborhood streets whereas the proposed community alternatives would increase neighborhood traffic. The TTI report found that Rethink 35 and Reconnect Austin reduce the capacity of I-35 and increase traffic volumes on the adjacent city street network, in many cases by more than 25%, particularly in east Austin. The city network is neither designed for, nor capable of handling the additional traffic.</p> <p>View the TTI report at: https://my35capex.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Community-Alternatives-Analysis.pdf.</p>
12	<p>Crash Rates – Crash rates and safety should be considered as the project develops.</p> <p>Federal regulations require that the purpose and need statement “briefly specify the underlying purpose and need to which the agency is responding in proposing the alternatives including the proposed action.” TxDOT has revised the purpose and need statement based on community feedback to further emphasize safety. We are currently updating the design to current design standards and focusing on what will improve the road and facilities safety including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving east-west connectivity across I-35 with widened bridges. • Proposing 20-inch buffers between bike/ped and vehicular travel. • Utilizing bypass lanes that relieve frontage road intersection congestion. • Including extra lanes between entry and exit ramps that will reduce the conflicts in these weaving areas across the corridor. <p>Based on public and agency input and comments from Scoping Meeting #1, TxDOT revised the project purpose and need statement to incorporate a project purpose of enhancing safety within the corridor. Criteria added to the safety evaluation included a summary of crash rates, crash severity, and crash types. The Purpose and Need Technical Report, which can be found here: https://my35capex.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Final-Purpose-Need-Technical-</p>

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Comment Themes	Response
	<p>Report.pdf, includes crash data, including safety related to bicyclists and pedestrians.</p>
13	<p>East-West Connectivity – The project design should improve connectivity between the east and west sides of I-35.</p> <p>TxDOT is improving east-west connectivity by rebuilding cross street bridges for wider, safer bicycle and pedestrian crossings. These proposed crossings include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30 feet of combined shared-use paths and buffers between the road and the paths. • A street and shared-use path connection at 5th street. • New bicycle-pedestrian bridges between US 290 East and 51st Street, at both Red Line crossings at Airport Boulevard and 4th Street, and other potential locations. <p>Each alternative was evaluated on its ability to provide enhanced vehicular, bicycle and pedestrian east-west crossings along the I-35 Capital Express Central project limits, as well as its ability to accommodate Capital Metro’s Project Connect proposed light rail system at east-west crossings.</p> <p>TxDOT, in coordination with the City of Austin, is evaluating multiple deck cap areas that were recommended as potential green spaces within the urban core of Austin. The deck plazas will also improve east-west connectivity. The locations were recommended from 12th Street to 11th Street, 8th Street to 6th Street and 4th Street to Cesar Chavez Street as well as an enhanced cap area at Dean Keeton Street near The University of Texas.</p> <p>TxDOT is evaluating multimodal enhancements to east-west crossings including wider and more accessible cross streets at multiple locations. TxDOT is also coordinating with the City of Austin to tie into the city street network as well as the Butler Hike and Bike Trail at Lady Bird Lake for continuity of bicycle and pedestrian accommodations.</p>

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Comment Themes	Response
	<p>To celebrate Austin’s cultural and community diversity, TxDOT is launching Live35, an aesthetic design program in partnership with the City of Austin for the I-35 Capital Express Central project. The goal is to gain community input to help identify design elements that create an I-35 with cross streets and east-west connections that resonate with Austinites. This will improve east-west connectivity and enhance bridges and intersections to reflect the Austin community. TxDOT will also work with the community to develop materials and gather feedback on outreach and engagement strategies.</p>
<p>14</p>	<p>East-West Connectivity/Racial Justice – The project design continues to divide the east and west sides of I-35 and promoting systematic racism.</p> <p>I-35 was built along East Avenue in Austin, which was seen as a racial divide in the city’s early history, and later evolved as a regional highway corridor throughout 1930-1950. By 1955, one year before the Interstate Highway Act was signed into law, the East Avenue corridor carried the designation as the ‘Interregional Highway’, ‘Blue Star Memorial Highway’ along with U.S. Highways 79, 81 and 290.</p> <p>TxDOT understands the significance of I-35 to the local community and the chance to address local concerns as we develop and implement the Capital Express Central project. This project offers the chance to remove the visual separation within Austin and provide opportunities to reconnect communities and spaces east and west of I-35. The reconnection would involve removing the upper decks and elevated lanes, lowering I-35 through the downtown core and rebuilding the east/west bridges for wider and safer bicycle and pedestrian crossings.</p> <p>TxDOT is working closely with the City of Austin, CapMetro and the community to allow for outside funding to be committed for the development of deck plazas to rebuild I-35 in a way that encourages transit and meets the needs of commuters, local bicyclists and pedestrians.</p>
<p>15</p>	<p>Induced Demand – Improvements to I-35 will induce demand and cause more congestion.</p> <p>The stretch of I-35 within the project area is one of the most congested roadway sections in the state. The Capital Express Central project is being proposed to keep this multi-functional interstate moving, as it plays an</p>

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Comment Themes	Response
	<p>important role in the transfer of people, goods and services within Austin and throughout Texas and the central United States.</p> <p>The project proposes to maintain the same number of mainlanes, three in each direction, excluding auxiliary lanes connecting ramps, as exist currently. The main additional capacity proposed as part of the project is in the form of four high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) managed lanes, two in each direction, that seek to provide travel time reliability while limiting the negative impacts of induced demand by restricting the lanes' use to high occupancy and mass transit vehicles thus moving more people not necessarily cars. Bypass lanes are also being proposed to reduce congestion along I-35 at local streets and frontage roads to allow drivers to avoid stoplight-controlled intersections. By implementing safety and operational improvements, rather than inducing demand, the project will address latent demand, which refers to travel that cannot take place because of constraints or congestion. We see latent demand when drivers who would use I-35 avoid it in favor of neighborhood streets. Due to congestion on I-35, traffic is spilling over into neighborhoods causing further delays to local travelers. When additional multi-modal opportunities and operational improvements are provided, the driver would likely opt for a more direct route and use I-35. At that point, the latent demand materializes as actual usage. The recent Texas A&M Transportation Institute (TTI) study found the TxDOT design alternatives help alleviate traffic from the local street network.</p>
<p>16 Keep Upper Decks – Do not remove upper decks on I-35.</p>	<p>The Capital Express Central project proposes to remove the existing I-35 decks within the project limits. This design reflects community feedback and the results of evaluating both maintaining and removing the decks. The decks no longer meet current design standards nor can they be upgraded to permanently accommodate additional lanes. The community feedback began in early 2010 including the Downtown Stakeholder working group led by former City of Austin Mayor and Texas State Senator Kirk Watson. The report may be viewed at: https://ftp.txdot.gov/pub/txdot/my35/capital/projects/capital-express-central/stakeholder-report.pdf</p>

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Comment Themes	Response
	<p>TxDOT also hosted five Decks Neighborhood Workshops for nearby neighborhood residents and The University of Texas. The “decks area” is located between Airport Boulevard and MLK Jr. Boulevard. Participants called for the decks to be removed. In both alternatives under consideration, the decks remain elevated. The Downtown Stakeholder Working Group releases a report with recommendations (https://my35capex.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Downtown-Stakeholder-Working-Group-Report.pdf) and supports lowering the mainlanes and managed lanes.</p> <p>In January 2020, TxDOT hosted the I-35 Capital Express Central design charrette to solicit input from stakeholders regarding previous concepts that were developed. During this meeting TxDOT received additional input to be considered during the development of further proposed build alternatives, including the addition of two managed lanes in each direction and removing the decks. More than 30 concepts were proposed during the charrette. Design charrette participants included TxDOT personnel, Mobility35 General Engineering Consultant staff, representatives from the City of Austin Transportation Department, Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority, CapMetro, CAMPO, FHWA, the University of Texas and Downtown Austin Alliance.</p>
17	<p>Reduce Speed Limits – Request to reduce speed limits within the project limits.</p> <p>Current frontage road posted speeds within the project area range between 40-50 mph. Posted speeds are determined once construction is complete. For all proposed build alternatives, TxDOT is lowering frontage road design speeds to 35-40 mph.</p> <p>TxDOT routinely evaluates the design guidance, which includes design speed, and must comply with federal and state standards for highway design, including TxDOT’s Roadway Design Manual, the AASHTO Policy on Geometric Design of Highways and Streets and the Texas Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices.</p>

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Comment Themes		Response
		<p>Design speed is used explicitly for determining minimum values for road design, such as horizontal curve radius and sight distance based on the roadway function and classification. Roadway geometric design features such as cross-section elements, lane widths, shoulder width, etc., are determined based on the road function and safety in relation to the design speed.</p> <p>The posted speed limit is normally set at the nearest value to the 85th percentile speed ending in 5 or 0 of the observed speed of a group of vehicles traveling on a section of road. City governments and TxDOT must conduct traffic and engineering studies according to requirements outlined in TxDOT's publication, Procedures for Establishing Speed Zones, when setting a speed limit on the state highway system.</p>
18	Lowered Lanes – Lanes should be lowered within the project limits.	All proposed build alternatives include removal of the upper decks and lowered lanes through the project corridor.
19	More Lanes Needed – The project should include adding more lanes instead of moving forward with the proposed alternatives.	<p>TxDOT is optimizing the number of lanes based on traffic demand. All proposed build alternatives propose to add two high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) managed lanes and bicycle and pedestrian shared-use paths, carpools/vanpools, in each direction from US 290 East to SH 71/Ben White Boulevard. The HOV lanes would be reserved for use by carpools, vanpools, transit vehicles and emergency responders.</p> <p>TxDOT is also evaluating an intersection bypass lane system throughout the project. Bypass lanes are being proposed to reduce congestion along I-35 at local streets and frontage roads to allow drivers to avoid signalized intersections. The project will maintain three to four mainlanes in each direction, which is the same number that exists today. These design options would improve operations by allowing vehicles to bypass frontage road intersection signals in certain areas and improve overall operations that benefits transit and provides enhanced people-carrying capacity.</p>
20	Mount Calvary Cemetery – Concern for taking right of way from cemetery.	TxDOT is considering acquiring right of way along the border of Mount Calvary Cemetery where it meets the northbound I-35 frontage road. St.

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Comment Themes	Response
	<p>Edward’s University, which owns the cemetery property, has expressed full support of the I-35 Capital Express Central project. Assumption Cemetery, which maintains the grounds, has confirmed that no recorded graves appear in the proposed right of way. In accordance with best practices, TxDOT will use extreme care to fully examine the land as design details are finalized.</p>
<p>21</p> <p>No Build – Not in favor of any of the proposed build alternatives.</p>	<p>The proposed build alternatives, along with the no-build alternative, are undergoing further evaluation in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. The project is still in the design phase, and proposed improvements are subject to change as community feedback is collected and considered. The most recent developments include significant refinements to Alternative 3, which has resulted in Modified Alternative 3 as of January 2022.</p>
<p>22</p> <p>No Higher/No Wider – Do not elevate or widen I-35.</p>	<p>The proposed improvements include removing the upper decks, lowering the roadway and adding two high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) managed lanes in each direction along I-35 from US 290 East to SH 71/Ben White Boulevard. The project will also reconstruct east-west cross-street bridges, add pedestrian and bicycle paths, and make additional safety and mobility improvements within the project limits.</p> <p>In 2011, TxDOT was looking at a modified existing design including elevation. In 2014, the North Central neighborhoods requested the removal of the upper decks as part of the project. In 2017, TxDOT announced it could add two high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) managed lanes in each direction and remove the upper decks between Airport Boulevard and Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard.</p> <p>To remove the upper decks, we are working to minimize impact and displacement of residents and business owners. In our effort to lower the lanes and provide adequate space for two high-occupancy vehicle/transit lanes in each direction, the current schematics propose acquiring an additional 100 feet of right of way in this area. To dismantle the upper decks and keep three traffic lanes operating in each direction during</p>

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Comment Themes	Response
	<p>construction, TxDOT requires more than the 200 feet that is currently available in the upper deck section. As a comparison, the downtown section, from Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard to Lady Bird Lake, has between 375-400 feet of right of way.</p> <p>The proposed build alternatives also include a 20- to 25-foot buffer between residential fences and I-35, and a lowered speed limit of 35-40 mph along the frontage road. Minimizing additional right of way is a major objective of TxDOT's Mobility35 Program, which includes the I-35 Capital Express Central project, and right-of-way needs will continue to be refined. For more information about TxDOT's right-of-way process, visit: https://www.txdot.gov/inside-txdot/division/right-of-way.html</p> <p>Link to Row forms and publications page: https://www.txdot.gov/inside-txdot/forms-publications/consultants-contractors/forms/row.html</p>
<p>Public Transit – The alternatives proposed for the project should accommodate and promote public transit.</p> <p>23</p>	<p>Each alternative was measured for its ability to accommodate Capital Metro's Project Connect proposed light rail system at east-west crossings.</p> <p>At the present time, public transit buses, registered van pools and emergency vehicles must remain in traffic with all other vehicles on I-35. Managed lanes would help manage overall traffic demand and provide qualifying vehicles with a more reliable route, allowing them to bypass congestion and arrive at their destinations more quickly. Transit would have access to the managed lanes in the proposed build alternatives, which could improve transit operations.</p> <p>TxDOT is collaborating with CapMetro to study the feasibility of direct transit access and identify funding to be provided by others.</p>
<p>Reroute Traffic, Reroute to 130 – Reroute traffic to another corridor within the city or to SH 130.</p> <p>24</p>	<p>The project team has considered and documented community input regarding rerouting traffic from I-35 or redesignating I-35 to SH 130. Every day, more than 200,000 vehicles travel on I-35 within the project area (from US 290 East to SH 71/Ben White Boulevard). Of this amount, 82% is local traffic, meaning it originates or ends in the vicinity of the project</p>

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Comment Themes	Response
	<p>area. Through traffic, or traffic that does not start or stop within the project area, comprises 18% of total traffic. With regard to truck traffic, even if there were no trucks that used I-35, the same number of lanes would be required to manage current and future demand. In addition, incentives to use SH 130 would have little effect on trucks needing to make deliveries along the I-35 corridor.</p> <p>SH 130 is part of the Central Texas Turnpike System (CTTS), which is made up of segments from SH 130, SH 45 North, Loop 1 and SH 45 SE. An outstanding \$3 billion in debt is assigned to the system which would also be the cost to remove the tolls on SH 130. The current \$4.9 billion allotted for the I-35 Capital Express Central project would not be eligible for paying this outstanding debt. TxDOT would need a waiver to reduce or remove the tolls. While this does happen, it is usually for a temporary scenario such as construction.</p>
25	<p>Sound Walls / Noise Barriers– The project should include methods to reduce traffic noise.</p> <p>TxDOT is evaluating existing and future traffic noise impacts and ways to reduce them (by implementing noise barriers) as part of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The results of this study, including proposed noise barriers, will be included in the Draft EIS and presented at the public hearing.</p> <p>For more information, please refer to the traffic noise barrier brochure: https://ftp.txdot.gov/pub/txdot-info/env/toolkit/730-01-bro.pdf</p>