

I-35 CAPITAL EXPRESS CENTRAL PROJECT



PROJECT OVERVIEW



Why improvements are needed

I-35 is a key gateway to downtown Austin and an important corridor serving as the backbone for local, regional and national travel, as well as an international transportation network that runs from Minnesota to Mexico. Most businesses and employment are clustered along I-35, resulting in one-third of gross domestic product being moved on the highway throughout Williamson, Travis and Hays counties. Population growth trends show that the region has nearly doubled since 1990, with drivers experiencing a noticeable lack of mobility on I-35. The Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO) estimates that the Austin region will grow to nearly 4.7 million residents by 2045, and it is expected that the existing congestion on I-35 will only worsen.

The existing I-35 Capital Express Central (Central) corridor:

- Ranks #1 on the list of [most congested highways in Texas](#).
- Has received an “F” for current level of service during much of the peak travel periods.
- Does not adequately meet current and future travel demand, or federal and state design standards.

Significance

Current population growth, coupled with the increased cost of congestion (hours in delay, gallons of excess fuel, pounds of CO₂ emissions), require improvements to our infrastructure that will keep pace with the needs of roadway users.

- The Central project was deemed a priority project in the 2045 CAMPO Regional Plan.
- Construction funding was allocated through the 2020 Unified Transportation Program (UTP).
- TxDOT is working with the City of Austin, CAMPO, CapMetro and other local organizations to move this project forward.

It is TxDOT's responsibility to plan for and address our community's safety and mobility needs now and in the future and better protect the quality of life for residents.

What We Heard

Beginning as far back as the 1980s, TxDOT recognized the need to upgrade I-35 through the region to provide improved mobility. The following historic efforts have formed the foundation for the current build alternatives under consideration:

- I-35 Corridor Advisory Committee (2011-2013)
- Downtown Stakeholder Working Group (2013-2014)
- Planning and Environmental Linkages Study (2014)
- Decks Neighborhood Workshops (2014-2015)
- Central7 project outreach (2016-2017)
- Design Charette (2020)
- CapEx Volunteer Opportunity in Community Engagement (April, May and July 2021)

TxDOT is undertaking the most rigorous level of environmental analysis with the development of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Central project. As a part of the EIS process, TxDOT hosted public scoping meetings (December 2020, March 2021) to gather input on the



range of alternatives, provide information on the project purpose and need, and present the future project schedule.

Feedback received at various community and agency meetings and from more than 3,500 public meeting comments have resulted in the following changes:

- Lowered mainlanes and managed lanes below ground level.
- East-west crossings that feature a 10-foot shared-use path (SUP) with a 20-foot buffer between vehicles and a SUP on both sides of I-35.
- Additional east-west crossings, including a new connection 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 East.
- Strategically placed intersection bypass lanes, and reduced design speeds on frontage roads which improve safety for all users.
- High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes for use by express bus transit service, carpools and vanpools.

In addition:

- We are teaming with local partners to provide opportunities for deck plazas, or caps and stitches.
- We modified the Alternatives Evaluation Criteria to include a measurement for air quality and alignment with the City of Austin's bicycle and pedestrian paths.
- We asked the Texas A&M Transportation Institute to review the community concepts, including Reconnect Austin, the Urban Land Institute recommendations and Rethink35.
- We modified the project Purpose and Need to emphasize improved throughput and the need to improve safety.

For more information on the project, please visit <https://my35capex.com/projects/i-35-capital-express-central/>.

Continued community input and anticipated timeline*

The development process will incorporate public input from a series of public involvement opportunities, including stakeholder and open house meetings.

- Environmental study and schematic design: 2020-2023
- Neighborhood, community, and stakeholder meetings: Ongoing
- Public meetings: Nov. 2020, March 2021 and Aug. 2021
- Anticipated construction: late 2025

**Timeline is subject to change.*

Estimated construction cost: \$4.9 billion

Contact information and updates

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Program overview

The I-35 Capital Express Program comprises three projects (North, Central and South). The North project proposes to add one managed lane in each direction along I-35 from SH 45 North to US 290 East. The Central project proposes to add two managed lanes in each direction along I-35 from US 290 East to SH 71/Ben White Boulevard. The South project proposes to add two managed lanes in each direction along I-35 from SH 71/Ben White Boulevard to SH 45 Southeast.