



FIRST QUARTER (JANUARY - MARCH) 2021 ▪ E-NEWSLETTER

A quarterly e-newsletter providing information about Mobility35, a regionwide effort to improve safety and mobility along I-35 in Williamson, Travis and Hays counties.



LOOKING BACK AT 2020: MOBILITY35 MOVING FORWARD

While 2020 proved to be a challenging year, the Mobility35 Program continued to make great strides in the effort to improve safety and mobility along I-35 through Williamson, Travis and Hays counties.

The I-35 Capital Express North, Central and South projects were a major focus for the program this year. In April 2020, the Texas Transportation Commission approved an update to the 2020 Unified Transportation Program (UTP) to allocate \$3.4 billion for the I-35 Capital Express Central project. In August, the commission allocated another \$300 million in the 2021 UTP. In addition, the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO) passed a resolution committing \$633 million to the Capital Express project.

Environmental study and design continued for all three projects - North, Central and South – and the community was invited to provide feedback at various online public and stakeholder meetings. Project development and opportunities to review and provide input on these projects will continue into 2021. TxDOT also launched [My35CapEx.com](https://www.txdot.gov/my35capex) to provide a central place to get the latest

information on the projects, review materials and provide comment.

The Mobility35 Program continued development of various projects along the corridor as well, including hosting an I-35 at SH 29 virtual open house. Visit [My35.org](https://www.my35.org) for the latest on our projects in development.

TxDOT also took advantage of the lower traffic volumes to accelerate construction. Lane closures for construction typically take place between 9 p.m. and 5 a.m. when there is less traffic on the roads, but with lower traffic volumes due to COVID, TxDOT extended work hours to keep projects moving forward.

The 8th Mobility35 project - the [I-35 at Oltorf Street](#) project – was completed this year and three new projects broke ground: [I-35 at Williams Drive](#), [I-35 from Grand Avenue Parkway to SH 45 North](#) and [I-35 from RM 150 to Kyle Crossing](#). Please visit [My35Construction.org](https://www.my35construction.org) to learn more about the individual projects, view our virtual groundbreaking and ribbon cutting videos, and sign up to receive email updates.

In addition to working hard to move projects forward, TxDOT advanced safety programs to protect I-35 users. Last January, TxDOT maintenance crews, HERO drivers and contractors participated in a half-day training to learn how to spot and report human trafficking. The event included a video from Governor Greg Abbott as well as remarks from Texas First Lady Cecilia Abbott and TxDOT Executive Director James Bass.

In the beginning of 2020, the TxDOT Austin District also expanded its Be Safe Be Seen pedestrian safety program to include a new pedestrian barrier along I-35 from 51st Street to Rundberg Lane. The \$700,000 pilot project is designed to deter pedestrians from trying to cross the high-speed highway and instead use intersections that include crosswalks for pedestrian access.

Thank you to all who worked this past year to further the success of the Mobility35 Program and its projects. Here's to continued success in 2021!

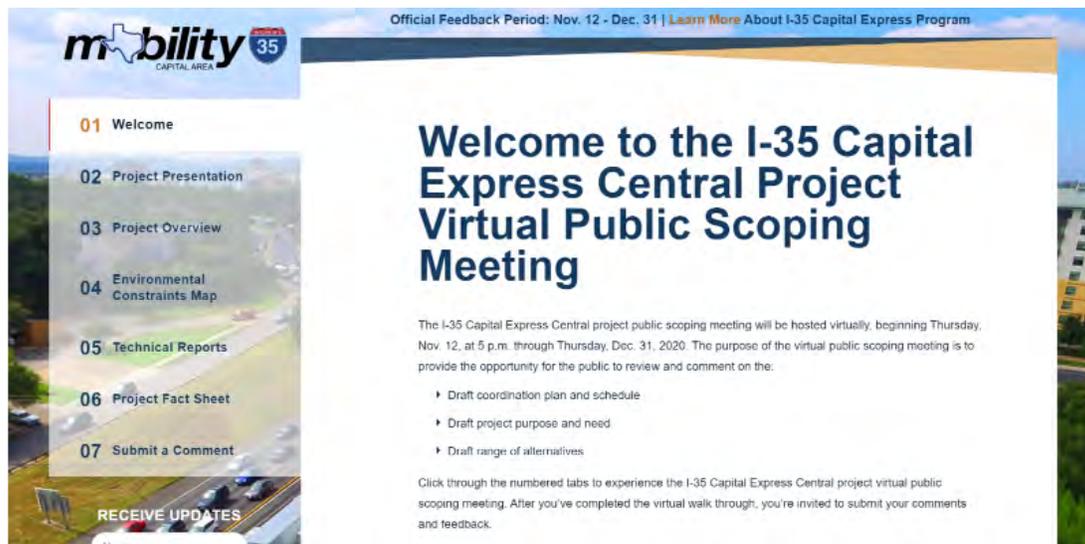
I-35 CAPITAL EXPRESS CENTRAL PROJECT OFFICIALLY KICKED OFF WITH FIRST PUBLIC MEETING

The [I-35 Capital Express Central](#) project proposes a massive redesign of I-35 through downtown Austin. A virtual public scoping meeting was held Nov. 12 through Dec. 31, 2020 to help develop the project's purpose and need. The Central project proposes adding two non-tolled high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) managed lanes in each direction along I-35 from US 290 East to SH 71/Ben White Boulevard, with additional flyovers at I-35 and US 290 East. The project

also includes various operational and safety enhancements that would reconstruct ramps, bridges and intersections, improve frontage roads, enhance bicycle and pedestrian paths and accommodate transit.

TxDOT is reviewing the more than 2,200 comments received. The community will have another opportunity to provide feedback during a second virtual public scoping meeting in early 2021. At the second meeting, TxDOT will present screening criteria that will be used to analyze the range of alternatives.

To see the materials provided during the virtual public scoping meeting or to get the most up-to-date information on the I-35 Capital Express projects, visit [My35CapEx.com](https://www.my35capex.com).



A LOOK AT WHAT'S TO COME IN 2021

Construction Projects to Break Ground

Over the years, increased traffic volumes and backups have caused bottlenecks on I-35 through San Marcos. TxDOT is addressing growing congestion in the area by breaking ground on two new Mobility35 projects.

[I-35 from South of Loop 82 to North of River Ridge Parkway](#) – TxDOT will relocate the existing northbound I-35 entrance ramp from its current location just north of Loop 82 (Aquarena Springs Drive) to just south of River Ridge Parkway. Once the entrance ramp is moved, a new River Ridge Parkway exit (#207) will be constructed north of Loop 82. Additionally, the project will reconstruct and widen the northbound I-35 frontage road. The \$14 million project begins construction this month and is expected to be complete in mid-2022.

[I-35 at SH 123](#) – TxDOT will reconstruct the SH 123/Guadalupe Street intersection, I-35 mainlanes and bridge over SH 123/Guadalupe Street. Additional project improvements include reconfiguring the ramps along the

northbound and southbound frontage roads between SH 80 and RM 12, reconstructing portions of the northbound and southbound frontage roads, adding auxiliary lanes on I-35 and the frontage roads, and improving bicycle and pedestrian paths. The estimated \$113 million project is anticipated to break ground in spring 2021 and to be complete in late 2023.

Public Meetings for Capital Express Projects

The I-35 Capital Express Program is offering several opportunities for public comment in 2021, as all three projects move through the environmental process. Next month, TxDOT will launch a second virtual public scoping meeting for the I-35 Capital Express Central project. The purpose of the second meeting will be to present screening criteria that will be used to analyze the range of alternatives and to gather public feedback.

Later in the year, TxDOT will host virtual and in-person public hearings for both the I-35 Capital Express North and South projects. During each event, the North and South project teams will present a draft environmental document and proposed project design.

Additional information on all Capital Express projects and upcoming events can be found by visiting [My35CapEx.com](https://www.txdot.gov/my35capex.com).

AN INSIDER'S PERSPECTIVE: WHAT IT TAKES TO PLAN CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS FOR THE MOBILITY35 PROGRAM

Meet Heather Ashley-Nguyen, TxDOT Austin District's new director of transportation planning and development. Heather has played a key role in designing projects for the Mobility35 Program, with a focus on the I-35 Capital Express Program. We sat down with Heather to get an insider's perspective on how projects get through development and into construction.



TxDOT Austin District Director of Transportation Planning and Development Heather Ashley-Nguyen

- **How long have you worked for TxDOT?**
 - I have worked at TxDOT for 7 years. Prior to my current role as the director of transportation planning and development, I was the advanced project development director working on projects throughout the Austin District, including the [I-35 Capital Express Program](#).
- **What is your new role and what does it entail?**
 - As director of transportation planning and development, I oversee the offices of design, right of way, project delivery, planning, environmental, survey, bridge, hydraulics and aesthetics along with the Mobility35 and Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority (CTRMA) programs. Each team develops project proposals from concept through final design, then I work with them to submit the projects to TxDOT's annual work program and [long-range transportation plan](#). My position requires close coordination with

both internal and external stakeholders, which has allowed me to hear directly from the community.

- **How long does it typically take for a project to move from development to construction? And why?**
 - Some projects, such as bridge replacements and shoulder widening, have a relatively fast turnaround time and can be ready for construction in as little as 1 or 2 years. Then there are projects that look to add capacity. These require advanced environmental studies, right-of-way acquisition, and utility adjustments, all of which can take 4 to 6 years to accomplish before the projects are ready for construction. Typically, timelines include 2 to 3 years for design and environmental clearance, followed by 2 to 3 years for right-of-way procurement and utility relocation before the project can break ground. Once these activities are complete, construction can begin. Each phase is vital for TxDOT to ensure that our projects are safe, effective and building toward the long-term mobility future of our community.
- **How does TxDOT determine the locations for future projects?**
 - TxDOT continuously monitors our roads based on various safety measures, including the condition of the roads and bridges, the number of crashes and congestion. TxDOT uses these metrics to identify where projects are needed the most throughout the state. Additionally, we work closely with other local transportation agencies, such as metropolitan planning organizations, cities and counties to prioritize projects in their long-range plan for potential funding. Once funding becomes available for certain projects, we work to prioritize those efforts for implementation.
- **What are some of the key engineering features that will define the I-35 Capital Express Central project?**
 - The Central project provides us the opportunity to rebuild I-35 through downtown Austin. While we are still reviewing the community feedback we received through our most recent virtual public scoping meeting, there are a few features, such as the removal of the upper decks, lowering I-35 through downtown, and construction of the signature bridge at Lady Bird Lake, that will redefine the skyline.
- **What is the most exciting part about developing projects for the I-35 corridor?**
 - Cutting the ribbon! This one event represents the culmination of years of hard work and coordination.
- **What was your first job?**
 - I worked at Dow Chemical in Houston for three semesters through a co-op program while getting my Civil Engineering degree at the University of Texas. It was a great experience, and most importantly, it solidified my desire to live in Austin after college!

- **What's the best piece of advice you've ever been given?**
 - Hire people smarter than you. I have a top-notch team with individuals who make my job interesting, exciting and enjoyable.

MY35 CONSTRUCTION UPDATES

[I-35 at Corn Hill \(Bud Stockton Loop\)](#): The new entrance and exit ramps are currently open to traffic. Final paving has begun will continue into spring 2021.

[I-35 at Ronald Reagan Boulevard](#): Construction of the eastbound Ronald Reagan bridge is ongoing. Once the eastbound bridge is open, traffic will be switched to one lane in each direction along the new bridge to allow for the existing Ronald Reagan bridge to be demolished, and a new westbound bridge to be built. This project is expected to complete in late 2021.



Crews working on eastbound approach of the future Ronald Reagan Boulevard bridge

[I-35 from RM 1431 to FM 3406 \(northbound\)](#): Widening of the northbound I-35 frontage road from 2 to 3 lanes continues. After the frontage road is finished, crews will complete project paving and striping for throughout the corridor. This project is expected to complete in early 2021.

[I-35 at Williams Drive](#) – Crews are preparing right of way along the northbound I-35 frontage road, installing utility and water lines on Austin Avenue and completing bridge column work at the San Gabriel bridge. This project will add a diverging diamond intersection over I-35. It is expected to complete in mid-2023.



Southbound I-35 frontage road columns at Williams Drive

[I-35 from Grand Avenue Parkway to SH 45 North](#) – Crews are working on constructing the new entrance and exit ramps, as well as the northbound I-35 frontage road improvements. This ramp reversal project is expected to complete in mid-2021.

[I-35 at Parmer Lane](#): Currently, crews are working on reconstructing the southbound I-35 frontage road between Parmer Lane and Yager Lane. The frontage road is being lowered to connect with the future southbound bypass lane and Parmer Lane entrance ramp. Both the northbound and southbound intersection bypass lanes are under construction and expected to open to traffic in early 2021. Construction also continues on the diverging diamond intersection, and crews are working on the relocation and construction of the future Braker Lane exit. The newly located exit will be opened in early 2021. This project is expected to complete in mid-2021.



Southbound I-35 bypass lane in construction at Parmer Lane

[I-35 from Rundberg Lane to US 290 East](#): Crews will continue constructing the southbound I-35 to northbound US 183 and northbound US 183 to northbound I-35 flyovers. Additionally, crews are planning to demolish a portion of the existing northbound I-35 to northbound US 183 flyover. The demolition and reconstruction efforts are planned for early 2021.

In addition to the flyovers, crews will continue widening work on the southbound I-35 frontage road between St. Johns Avenue and Huntland Drive to allow ample space to connect the future southbound intersection bypass lane, which is currently under construction.

Work on the widening of the I-35 bridge at US 290 East will be ongoing throughout early 2021. A portion of the existing bridge will need to be partially removed and replaced, with plans to complete the widening process in spring 2021. This project is expected to complete in mid-2021.



Installation of overhead sign bridges at Rundberg Lane

[I-35 from Stassney Lane to William Cannon Drive](#): In 2021, the project team will be shifting milling and paving work to the southbound I-35 mainlanes and frontage road. Final paving for the project is planned for mid-2021. Once paving is complete, the final project tasks will include the construction of curb and gutters and installation of shared-use paths. This project is expected to complete in mid-2021.



Paving of the southbound I-35 mainlanes at William Cannon Drive

[I-35 from RM 150 to Kyle Crossing](#) – Crews have started the widening of the northbound I-35 frontage road and installation of high-mast lights throughout

the corridor. This project will reconfigure the northbound entrance/exit ramps between RM 150 and Kyle Crossing and is expected to complete in early [2022](#).

[I-35 at Posey Road](#): Work on the southbound I-35 overpass at Posey Road will continue throughout the new year, with a deck pour planned for early 2021. Additionally, crews will continue widening work on the southbound I-35 frontage road, and the reconstruction of the northbound I-35 Posey Road exit (#199) and southbound I-35 entrance ramp, north of York Creek Road. This project, which takes the I-35 mainlanes over Posey Road, is expected to be complete in late 2021.



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