

## **Austin Neighborhoods Council Resolution Supporting Alternative Plans for I-35 through Central Texas**

**Whereas, congestion continues to mount on the I-35 corridor in Central Texas and it is no longer adequate to support the economy and culture of the region; and**

**Whereas, the current critical situation has historically evolved and been fostered by ineffective, outdated transportation concepts that overly rely on highways and private passenger vehicles; and**

**Whereas, highway and real estate interests have contributed heavily to election of state and local officials to the point that many are predisposed to support only highway-based transportation measures; and**

**Whereas, TxDOT, CAMPO, Project Connect member agencies, and other local governmental entities have failed to provide a viable, cost-effective, and long-range plan for the corridor that fully considers mass transit options such as light rail and commuter rail to serve the I-35, U.S. 290, HWY 183, Texas 71, Lamar/Guadalupe and other potential corridors; and**

**Whereas, current efforts to address the situation by TxDOT and their consultants focus solely on adding highway lanes, reconstructing interchanges and other features that only invite more vehicular traffic and perpetuate the problem; and**

**Whereas, the process used by TxDOT and its consultants, Project Connect and Imagine Austin, for obtaining public input is flawed and filters-out any suggestions that do not fit their plans, and**

**Whereas, “revolving door” hiring policies by TxDOT and their consultant, HNTB, have muddled their organizational lines and muted consideration of innovative transportation solutions; and**

**Whereas, the “highway-centric,” projects proposed by these organizations, if executed, will conflict with yet-developed, long-range plans and thwart development of a truly multi-modal transportation system that integrates commuter transit with rubber-tire modes; and**

**Whereas, the local TxDOT district has historically constructed poor designs such as the “jug handle” at 51<sup>st</sup>/I-35 and the flyover from northbound I-35 to U.S. 183 that worsen congestion; and**

**Whereas, current efforts do not consider conversion of Texas 130 from tolled to free lanes; and**

**Whereas, the “cap and cut” proposal for downtown Austin is largely cosmetic; offers no significant increase in capacity; and will accelerate displacement of low-income, heritage households from East Austin; and**

**Whereas, the current effort to provide inter-city commuter rail by local entities could be greatly enhanced by integration with a regional transportation system that embraces commuter rail on all major corridors to include I-35, U.S. 290 and Texas 71; conversion of TX 130 to a free public road; and**

**Whereas, on June 26, 2014 the Austin City Council endorsed \$400 million in highway projects contained in the recommendations of the 2014 Austin Strategic Mobility Plan without adequate prior review by a citizen commission, with the stated intent of combining highway projects and urban rail in the same bond measure; and**

## **Austin Neighborhoods Council Resolution Supporting Alternative Plans for I-35 through Central Texas**

**Whereas, on June 30, 2014 the City of Austin Transportation Department rescinded its Notice of Intent to conduct a public involvement process under the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA), thus terminating the federal planning process for urban rail that Project Connect had utilized to collect public input between 2011 and 2014 and triggering another round of public hearings, should the effort be continued; and**

**Whereas, the major stakeholders and benefactors of Project Connect, downtown developers, the hospital district, the University of Texas at Austin, and Austin Community College, have not been forthcoming with financial contributions to the projects; and**

**Whereas, citizens will be asked to support bonds for intercity commuter rail lines, intra-city light rail lines, such as Project Connect, and other local highway projects, that, without integration into a regional transportation system will be ineffective and fail to serve the needs of the area; and**

**Whereas, the present efforts by discordant entities will be insufficient to accommodate future movement of people and goods through the Central Texas I-35 Corridor, result in a futile waste of transportation funding and time, and jeopardize the economic and cultural vitality of the region; Now, Therefore,**

**Be It Resolved, the Austin Neighborhoods Council finds that the IH-35 Corridor planning process has failed to produce plans or proposals that address the transportation needs of our region and that are sensitive to the concerns of our population; and**

**Be It Further Resolved, the Austin Neighborhoods Council finds that the Project Connect planning process has been unduly influenced by political considerations, ignored public input, compromised with highway projects that are entirely unrelated to urban rail, and its process with regard to NEPA protections regarding public involvement has been terminated; and**

**Be It Further Resolved, the Austin Neighborhoods Council asks for the support of the Austin Neighborhoods Council and calls on the U.S. Department of Transportation, its divisions and agencies, to intervene to assume oversight and planning for a comprehensive regional plan utilizing a citizen-derived Public Involvement Process which embraces all transportation modes for the near and long-term and to place a freeze on the acceptance of new letters of intent, approvals, applications, or federal matching funds for any major Central Texas transportation projects or their related planning and;**

**Be It Further Resolved, the Austin Neighborhoods Council withholds endorsement of any transportation bond measures until such time as a comprehensive regional transportation plan is created that integrates intra-city, intercity and regional transportation modes that may include light rail, commuter rail and mass transit; fully assesses economic, cultural and environmental impact under a restored NEPA process; and that fosters a vibrant economic and cultural future for all counties, cities and neighborhoods in the region.**

**Presented to ANC Membership: July 23, 2014**

**Membership Approved: [date]**

**Sponsor Contact: Dr. Bo McCarver, ANC VP 2, [BMCCARVER@austin.rr.com](mailto:BMCCARVER@austin.rr.com)**