

RESOLUTION NO. 20260423-064

WHEREAS, the Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority (CTRMA) is conducting the MoPac South Environmental Study as part of the required federal review process under the National Environmental Policy Act for a major highway project, and the Draft Environmental Assessment (DEA) for the MoPac South Project (Project) has been released with a proposed Finding of No Significant Impact; and

WHEREAS, throughout the environmental review process, hundreds of community members have submitted comments expressing concerns about the proposed Project, including the Recommended Build Alternative selected in 2015 to widen MoPac South Expressway from Slaughter Lane to Cesar Chavez Street with up to four new tolled express lanes and additional general-purpose and auxiliary lanes in certain locations, but the current Recommended Build Alternative has not changed substantially in size or capacity since 2015; and

WHEREAS, in the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO) 2035 Regional Transportation Plan, the Project was described as an expansion with only one additional lane in each direction; and

WHEREAS, in 2015, the City expressed serious concerns about changing the description of the Project in the CAMPO 2040 Regional Transportation Plan from an expansion consisting of two toll lanes to four toll lanes, highlighting issues related to the Project's technical feasibility, impacts on connecting roadways, and environmental impacts; and

WHEREAS, a decade of smart-growth planning has changed Austin's future and, in November 2020, Austin voters approved Project Connect, creating

dedicated funding for a citywide high-capacity transit system to offer mobility options not reliant upon personal vehicles; and

WHEREAS, in support of the public's vote to transform the transportation network, the City has also transformed its land use regulations, embracing density within the urban core of the City and along transit corridors; and

WHEREAS, highway expansion projects are associated with increased sprawl, higher traffic volumes, and elevated levels of air pollution and carbon emissions; and

WHEREAS, on August 8, 2019, City Council declared a climate emergency; and

WHEREAS, transportation is responsible for the largest share of carbon emissions in Travis County; and

WHEREAS, the DEA states the proposed expansion is anticipated to increase vehicle miles traveled (VMT), placing it at odds with the City's adopted sustainability, mobility, and climate goals, including targets in the Austin Strategic Mobility Plan (ASMP) and the Austin Climate Equity Plan to reduce VMT by 20 percent and achieve a 50 percent mode share of non-single-occupancy vehicle trips by 2039; and

WHEREAS, the proposed highway expansion would be constructed over the environmentally sensitive Edwards Aquifer Recharge Zone, which serves as a crucial water source and supports unique karst features and sensitive ecosystems, including Barton Springs and Cold Springs; and

WHEREAS, this area provides critical habitat for several endangered and threatened species, including the Austin blind salamander, Barton Springs salamander, Bee Creek cave harvestman, tooth cave spider, golden-cheeked

warbler, monarch butterfly, tricolored bat, and bracted twistflower, all of which are listed in the DEA documents as species that may be adversely affected by the project; and

WHEREAS, the construction and operation of the proposed highway project has a high potential to disrupt these habitats and negatively affect water quality within the Edwards Aquifer and Barton Springs, thereby directly threatening the survival of these species and the ecological integrity of the creeks, caves, and springs that rely upon the continuous flows of clean water; and

WHEREAS, the Environmental Protection Agency has recently strengthened the National Ambient Air Quality Standards for particulate matter (PM) 2.5 due to its harmful effects on respiratory and cardiovascular health, especially for children; and

WHEREAS, Travis County's PM 2.5 levels already exceed the safe threshold of 9.0 micrograms per cubic meter, putting the region at risk of a "nonattainment" designation if air quality does not improve; and

WHEREAS, the construction and operation of the Project are expected to increase PM 2.5 emissions and other air pollutants due to higher vehicle volumes and construction activity, exacerbating air quality issues and increasing exposure to harmful pollutants in sensitive areas, including Austin High School and adjacent neighborhoods; and

WHEREAS, the Project would require temporary closures, detours, construction easements, and other non-recreational uses across multiple protected park and recreational lands, including Zilker Metropolitan Park, the Ann and Roy Butler Hike and Bike Trail, the Roberta Crenshaw Pedestrian Bridge, the Barton Corridor Trail, Volma Overton Sr. Shores at Town Lake Metropolitan Park, Dick

Nichols District Park, the Violet Crown Trail, and the Williamson Creek West Greenbelt; and

WHEREAS, the Project will also potentially impact access to the Austin Nature and Science Center and two boating concessions (Rowing Dock and Texas Rowing Center); and

WHEREAS, the use of parkland for the Project may trigger protections under Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act, Section 6(f) of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act, and Chapter 26 of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Code, all of which limit the use of parkland for non-recreational purposes; and

WHEREAS, on December 12, 2024, City Council adopted Resolution No. 20241212-066, which directed the City Manager to collaborate with CTRMA to ensure that the proposed Project aligns with the City's environmental and mobility goals as outlined in the ASMP, the Austin Climate Equity Plan, the Watershed Protection Strategic Plan, and the Project Connect System Plan; and

WHEREAS, the resolution specifically called for a refined Project proposal that supports express transit service, provides safe and continuous pedestrian and bicycle crossings, reduces or does not increase vehicle miles traveled and greenhouse gas emissions, reduces or minimizes increases in impervious cover, minimizes the loss of tree canopy, and minimizes roadway widening; and

WHEREAS, on February 2, 2026, the Urban Transportation Commission (UTC) recommended that CTRMA pause the Project given the lack of alignment of the project with the ASMP, City Council's and Travis County Commissioners Court's requests and guidance, and community feedback; and

WHEREAS, the UTC also recommended that the Project be paused until the I-35 Capital Express Central Project, Austin Light Rail Phase 1, and 2016 Bond Corridor Program planned construction for South Lamar Boulevard are complete, and CTRMA can reassess the community need for the Mopac South Expressway expansion after the addition of these three large infrastructure projects; and

WHEREAS, the UTC recommended that should CTRMA move forward on the Project without a pause, a full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), and not just an Environmental Assessment, should be completed to help the community understand the project's potential impact on VMT, carbon emissions, safety, impervious cover, and tree canopy, among other impacts; and

WHEREAS, the Travis County Commissioners Court also sent letters to CTRMA on July 31, 2024 and January 28, 2025, requesting that CTRMA perform a full EIS for the Project, emphasizing the significant environmental impacts of the Project on local air and water quality, including impacts to the Edwards Aquifer Recharge Zone, impacts to endangered species and important ecological resources in the area, and impacts to unique geographic features such as Lady Bird Lake and Zilker Park; and

WHEREAS, City Council desires to echo these concerns regarding the environmental, public health, and community impacts of the proposed project and believes that a thorough and transparent evaluation of alternatives and potential impacts, with the highest level of scrutiny, is necessary to build public trust and ensure that the Project aligns with our region's collective vision for a sustainable future; **NOW, THEREFORE**,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF AUSTIN:

City Council formally requests that CTRMA reevaluate its proposed Finding of No Significant Impact in the Draft Environmental Assessment for the MoPac South Project on the grounds that the Project is likely to have significant environmental effects on air and water quality, endangered species, caves and karst features, public parkland and community spaces, and vulnerable school-aged communities, and that CTRMA commence preparation of a full Environmental Impact Statement under the National Environmental Policy Act to ensure a thorough, transparent, and legally compliant evaluation of all potential impacts and alternatives.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

City Council formally requests that CTRMA revive consideration of a project alternative that adds no more than one lane in each direction and incorporates targeted modifications designed to alleviate known problem areas and improve overall traffic flow, while minimizing environmental and community impacts. City Council requests that the project alternative align with the goals and intent of the Austin Climate Equity Plan, the Watershed Protection Strategic Plan, the Project Connect System Plan, the Austin Parks and Recreation Long Range Plan, and the Austin Strategic Mobility Plan, including the Urban Trails Plan. Per the goals of these Council-approved plans and existing City policy, the alternative should:

- add no more than one lane in each direction;
- support express transit service to one or more park and ride facilities;
- provide continuous, safe pedestrian and bicycle trails and crossings;

- achieve City water quality treatment standards at a minimum, with the goal of achieving Save Our Springs non-degradation water quality treatment levels where possible;
- meet City geologic void mitigation standards;
- minimize and mitigate impacts to adjacent City parkland and recreation facilities, including Zilker Metropolitan Park, Austin Nature and Science Center, Rowing Dock, Zilker Botanical Garden, the Roberta Crenshaw Pedestrian Bridge, the Barton Corridor Trail, Volma Overton Sr. Shores at Town Lake Metropolitan Park, Texas Rowing Center, Dick Nichols District Park, Eilers (Deep Eddy) Neighborhood Park and Pool, Deer Park at Maple Run Preserve, Circle C Ranch Metropolitan Park on Slaughter Creek, the Johnson Creek Greenbelt, the Williamson Creek West Greenbelt, the Barton Creek Greenbelt, the Violet Crown Trail, the Ann and Roy Butler Hike and Bike Trail, and the Balcones Canyonland Preserve;
- reduce or not increase vehicle miles traveled and greenhouse gas emissions;
- reduce or not increase air pollution;
- reduce or minimize increases in impervious cover;
- minimize the loss of tree canopy; and
- minimize the widening of the existing roadway.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager is directed to work with CTRMA to help facilitate development of this alternative for the Project and ensure its alignment with City goals, plans, and policy.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager is further directed to help identify and advance targeted, interim infrastructure improvements that could improve road function, address mobility and safety concerns, and mitigate the need for or reduce the scale of the Project.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager is further directed to continue to work collaboratively with Capital Metro Transportation Authority and CTRMA to identify locations for one or more new park and ride facilities along MoPac South Expressway to be served by Express bus, per the Project Connect System Plan and in fulfillment of the Project Purpose and Project Goals and Objectives. The new park and ride facility location(s) should preferably utilize existing or planned impervious cover, such as through a shared parking agreement or beneath elevated highway lanes. This work should be undertaken with urgency to ensure the final design of MoPac South can be as transit-supportive as possible, ideally including one or more park and rides as part of CTRMA's project.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager is directed to leverage the expertise of City departments, including but not limited to Austin Watershed Protection, Austin Climate Action and Resilience, Austin Parks and Recreation, Austin Water, Austin Energy, Austin Planning, and Austin Transportation and Public Works, to submit comprehensive,

official staff comments for the MoPac South Draft Environmental Assessment Public Hearing by the May 3, 2026 deadline. The City Manager is also directed to submit a copy of this Resolution as Council's official comments by the deadline.

ADOPTED: April 23, 2026 **ATTEST:** Stephanie Hall for
Erika Brady
City Clerk