



Virtual Public Scoping Meeting

I-35 Capital Express Central Project

Thursday, Nov. 12 at 5 p.m. – Thursday, Dec. 31, 2020

CSJ 0015-13-388



The environmental review, consultation and other actions required by applicable federal environmental laws for this project are being, or have been, carried out by TxDOT pursuant to 23 U.S.C. 327 and a Memorandum of Understanding dated Dec. 9, 2019, and executed by the Federal Highway Administration and TxDOT.



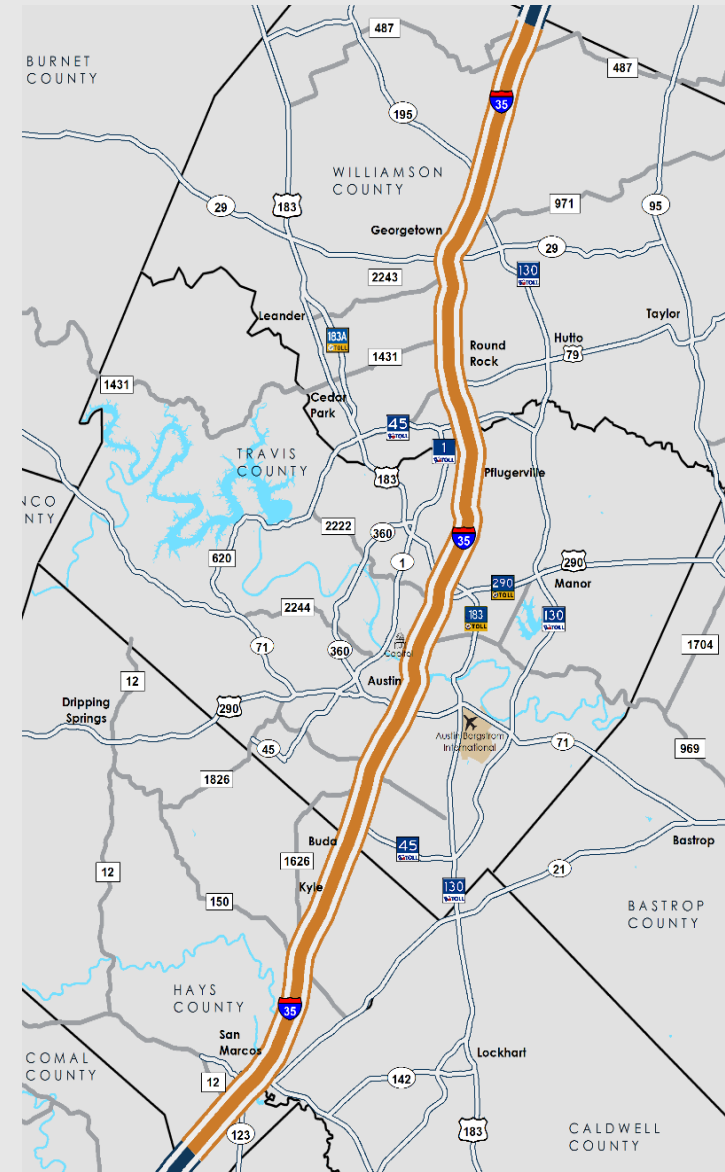
- 1 Mobility35 Program
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MOBILITY35 PROGRAM



- I-35 is one of the most congested highways in Texas. In the Austin area, it is home to five of the 100 most congested roadway segments, according to the Texas A&M Transportation Institute.
- Program Goals and Objectives
 - Enhance safety.
 - Optimize the roadway footprint.
 - Increase capacity.
 - Minimize additional right of way.
 - Manage traffic better.
 - Improve east/west connectivity.
 - Improve compatibility with neighborhoods.
 - Enhance bicycle, pedestrian and transit options.





ENVIRONMENTAL STUDY



Texas Department of Transportation is initiating an Environmental Impact Statement for the I-35 Capital Express Central project in Travis County, Texas.

- An environmental analysis is required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). An Environmental Impact Statement is prepared when it is anticipated that a proposed project could significantly affect the quality of the human and natural environment.
- An Environmental Impact Statement evaluates a range of build alternatives and a no-build alternative.



The analysis presented in the Environmental Impact Statement evaluates impacts to the human and natural environment, including:



**WATER
RESOURCES**



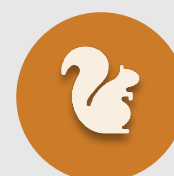
AIR QUALITY



TRAFFIC NOISE



**COMMUNITY
IMPACTS**



**VEGETATION &
WILDLIFE**



**THREATENED &
ENDANGERED
SPECIES**



**INDIRECT &
CUMULATIVE
IMPACTS**



**HISTORICAL &
ARCHEOLOGICAL
RESOURCES**



**HAZARDOUS
MATERIAL SITES**



**LAND USE &
PARKLAND**



ENVIRONMENTAL PROCESS



Scoping

Identify the problem we are trying to solve, and review proposed alternatives and method for analyzing the alternatives.

(Fall 2020-Spring 2021)

WE ARE HERE



Environmental Analysis of Alternatives

Thoroughly analyze the build and no-build alternatives for potential impacts to the human and natural environment.

(Spring 2021-Fall 2022)



Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Public Hearing

The draft Environmental Impact Statement is prepared and reviewed by the public and agencies. The draft Environmental Impact Statement identifies the preferred alternative.

(Fall 2022)



Combined Final Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision

The combined final Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision is completed and reviewed by the public and agencies. It identifies the selected alternative. This milestone signifies the completion of the environmental review process.

(Summer 2023)

STAKEHOLDER AND PUBLIC OUTREACH



PROPOSED PROJECT

I-35 Capital Express Program

- I-35 Capital Express Program is made up of three stand-alone projects from SH 45 North to SH 45 Southeast— North, Central and South.
 - Construction could begin on the North and South projects in 2022.
 - Construction of the I-35 Capital Express Central project could start as early as 2025.
- I-35 Capital Express Program is part of the larger Mobility35 Program.

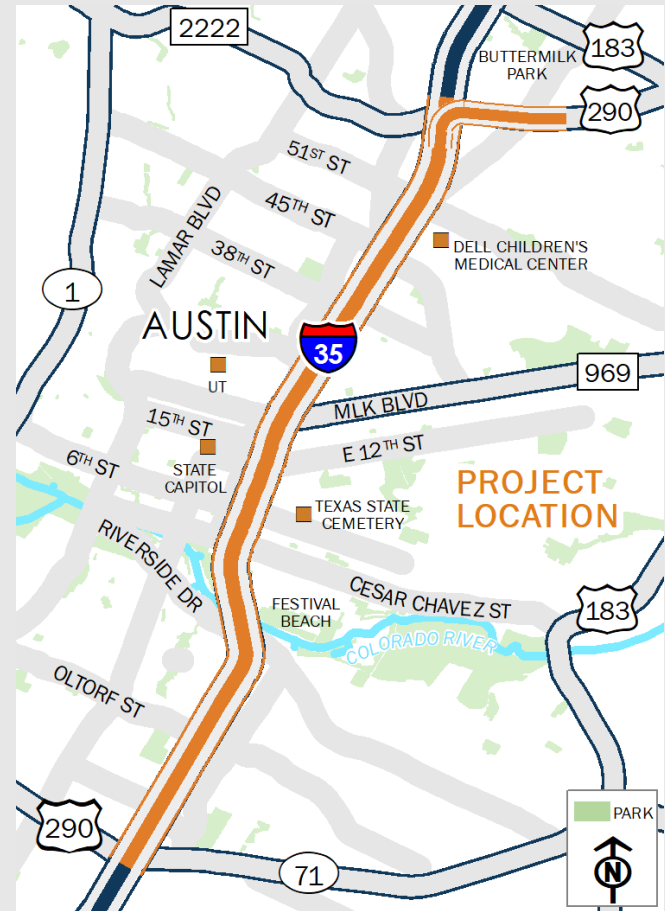




I-35 Capital Express Central Project



- Includes improvements along approximately 8 miles of I-35, from US 290 East to SH 71/Ben White Boulevard, with additional flyovers at I-35 and US 290 East.
- Proposes to add two, non-tolled managed lanes in each direction.
 - Managed lanes, such as high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes, are a set of lanes within a highway that are separated from the mainlanes.
 - Access is controlled by placing restrictions on use.
- Additional improvements include:
 - Reconstructing ramps, bridges and intersections.
 - Improving frontage roads.
 - Enhancing bicycle and pedestrian paths.
 - Accommodating transit routes.





- **2013 – 2014:** The Downtown Stakeholder Working Group, composed of public agencies and community stakeholders, convenes to evaluate concepts for I-35 in Central Austin and downtown. The group releases a report with recommendations, including the preference to lower I-35 through downtown, in October 2014.
- **2014:** Project Planning and Environmental Linkages report is released and advocates the need to increase capacity on I-35.
- **2016 – 2017:** TxDOT hosts public meetings and virtual open houses on proposed improvements for a project in generally the same area but with different project limits as the I-35 Capital Express Central project. Feedback provided during that outreach is being considered as part of the I-35 Capital Express Central project.
- **April 2020:** The Texas Transportation Commission and the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization allocate funding to the I-35 Capital Express Central project.
- **Summer 2020:** TxDOT begins the environmental study process with the publication of the Notice of Intent in the Federal Register, the *Austin-American Statesman* and *El Mundo*.
- **Fall 2020:** TxDOT hosts a virtual public scoping meeting and a virtual agency scoping meeting.

Learn more at My35CapEx.com



SCOPING PROCESS



- Scoping is an open process, involving the public and federal, state and local agencies.
 - Determines range of issues, alternatives and potential environmental impacts to be considered in the Environmental Impact Statement.
 - Identifies significant issues related to the proposed action.
 - Solicits input from the public and agencies to focus the analyses on issues of concern.



- Information available for review by the public and agencies includes:
 - Coordination plan and schedule.
 - Project purpose and need.
 - Range of alternatives.
- These materials are available for review from Nov. 12 at 5 p.m. through Dec. 31 at www.mobility35openhouse.com.
- The public and agencies have 50 days to review information and provide comments. Comments must be provided by Thursday, Dec. 31, to be included in the official record.



COORDINATION PLAN



- As the lead agency, TxDOT has prepared a coordination plan, which establishes a schedule and process for coordinating public and agency participation and feedback during the environmental review process.
- The coordination plan is developed early in the environmental and planning process.
- It will be adjusted and updated as input is received from cooperating and participating agencies, and as environmental issues are analyzed.
- The coordination plan is available for review from Nov. 12 at 5 p.m. through Dec. 31 at www.mobility35openhouse.com.





As lead agency, TxDOT has invited the following federal, state and local agencies and tribal nations to be involved in the project environmental process as cooperating or participating agencies.

WHO THEY ARE		WHAT THEY DO
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development U.S. Environmental Protection Agency U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service National Park Service	Seminole Nation of Oklahoma Caddo Nation of Oklahoma Mescalero Apache Tribe Apache Tribe of Oklahoma Tonkawa Tribe of Indians of Oklahoma Kiowa Indian Tribe of Oklahoma Comanche Nation of Oklahoma Wichita and Affiliated Tribes Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas	Cooperating Agencies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assist in the preparation, coordination and review of the Environmental Impact Statement. Participate in the scoping process. Participate in the NEPA process with regard to development of the purpose and need statement, range of alternatives and methodologies and level of detail for analyzing alternatives. Identify and provide early input on issues of concern regarding the project's potential impacts to human or natural environment.
Texas Commission on Environmental Quality Texas Historical Commission Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority	Travis County Historical Commission University of Texas at Austin Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority Lower Colorado River Authority City of Austin Hays County Travis County Williamson County	Participating Agencies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in the scoping process. Participate in the NEPA process with regard to development of the purpose and need statement, range of alternatives and methodologies and level of detail for analyzing alternatives. Identify and provide early input on issues of concern regarding the project's potential impacts to human or natural environment.



PURPOSE AND NEED FOR PROJECT



- Why is the project needed?
 - To improve I-35 between US 290 East and SH 71/Ben White Boulevard to meet current design standards and current and future travel demand.
 - The existing roadway does not meet current federal and state design standards, and has resulted in:
 - Operational deficiencies.
 - Longer travel times for all users, including transit and emergency response vehicles, particularly during peak hours.
 - The proposed project is also needed to improve bicycle and pedestrian paths within the project limits.



Annual **AVERAGE TRAFFIC** along I-35 from US 290 East to SH 71/Ben White Boulevard is **MORE THAN 200,000 VEHICLES PER DAY**. **BY 2045**, it is expected to reach **MORE THAN 300,000 VEHICLES PER DAY**, an **INCREASE OF MORE THAN 45%**.

DID YOU KNOW?

86% OF THE VEHICLES on I-35 are **LOCAL TRAVELERS**



Of the **14%** of vehicles on I-35 that are through-traffic, trucks account for only **1%**



Source: Texas A&M Transportation Institute, Incentives for Truck Use of SH 130 (2015)

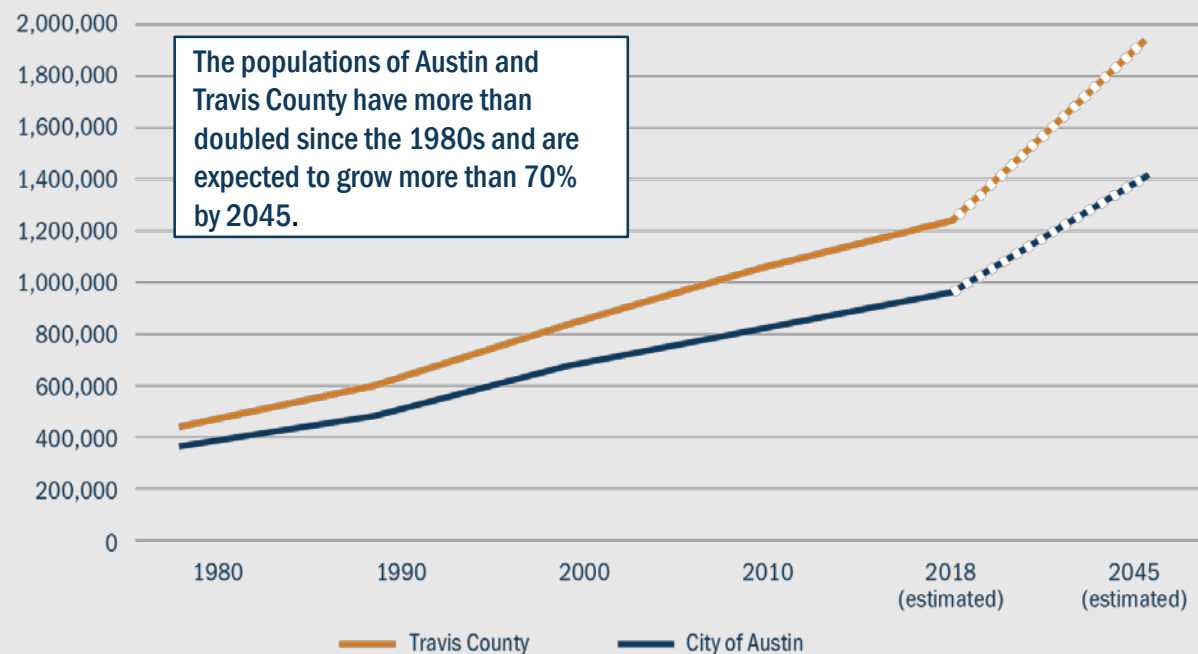


Project Need: Travel Demand and Operational Deficiencies



As population and employment growth continue, current congestion levels along I-35 are anticipated to worsen.

HISTORICAL AND PROJECTED POPULATION GROWTH (TRAVIS COUNTY AND CITY OF AUSTIN)



JOB GROWTH (TRAVIS COUNTY) 2015 >>>> 2045 (PROJECTED)



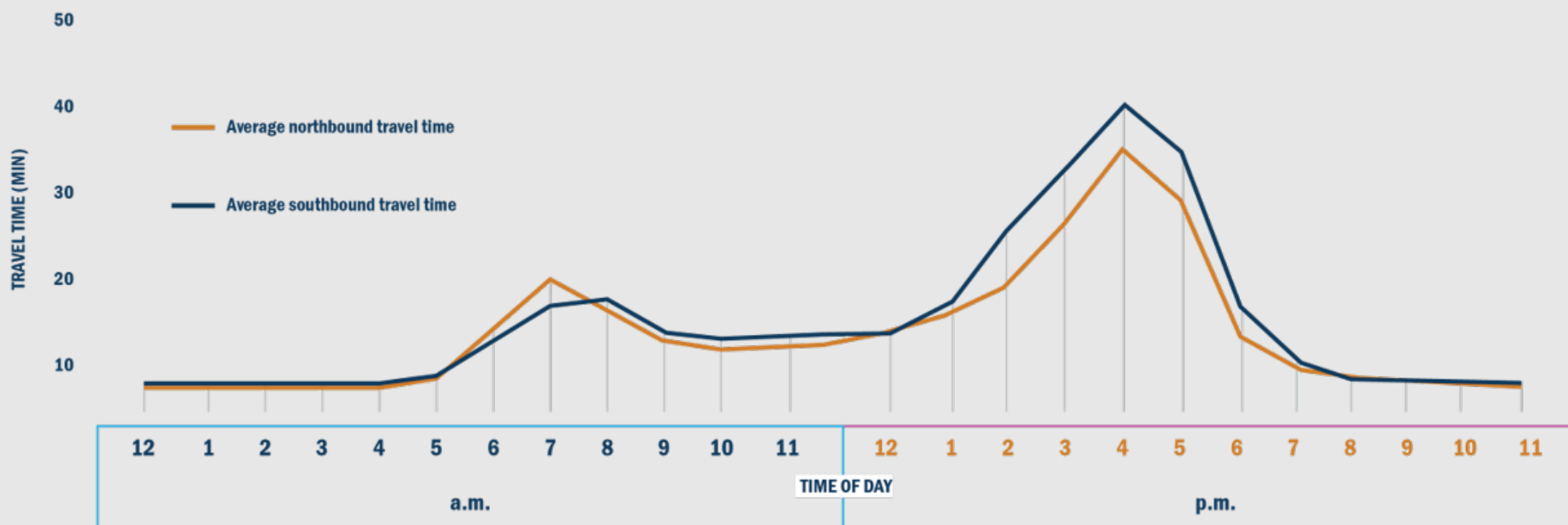
Source: Historical population data from Texas State Data Center; USCB, Census 2000 and 2010 (Table SF1, DP1); Projected population growth and job growth data from CAMPO 2020.



Project Need: Travel Time (2020)



Current travel times between US 290 East and SH 71/Ben White Boulevard show reduced mobility during a majority of the day, not just during peak travel times, demonstrating the need to increase capacity.





- I-35 does not meet current roadway design standards.
- There is a need to improve design deficiencies including:
 - Narrow lane widths.
 - Non-existent or narrow shoulders.
 - Low vertical clearances.
 - Substandard horizontal and vertical alignment.
 - Outdated drainage systems.



To improve safety for bicyclists and pedestrians, there is a need to upgrade bicycle and pedestrian accommodations.

Approximately **75% OF THE STREETS THAT CROSS I-35** in the project area have been identified as being in the City of Austin's **BICYCLE PRIORITY NETWORK**.



Source: City of Austin's 2014 Bicycle Plan, updated in 2019 with the Austin Strategic Mobility Plan

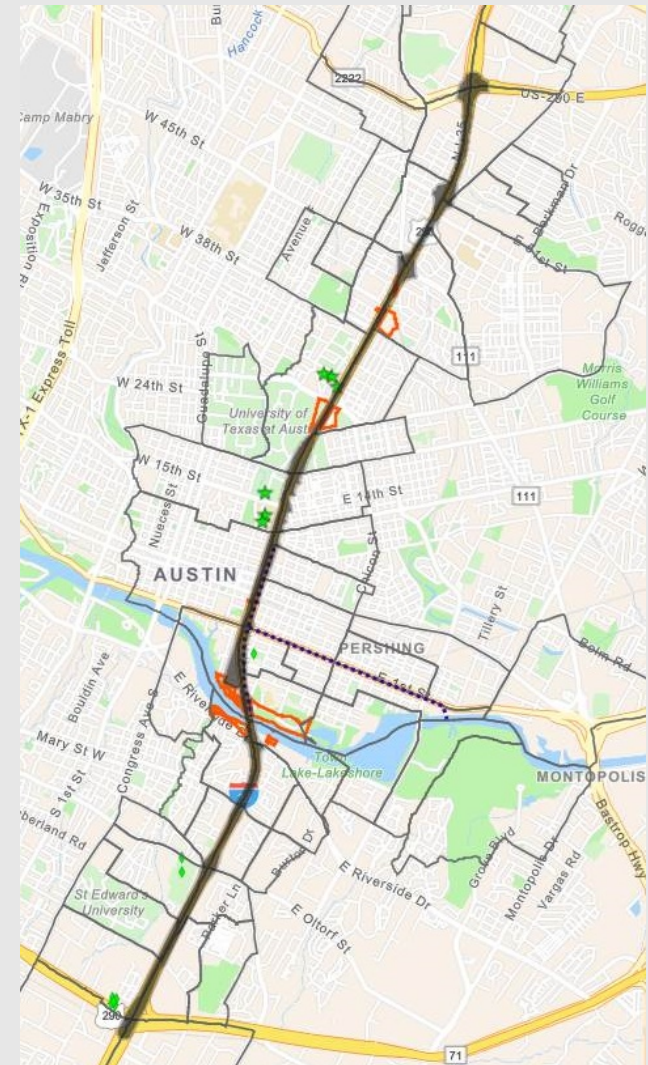


- Purpose of the proposed project:
 - Improve this critical regional, national and international thoroughfare by:
 - Enhancing safety.
 - Managing congestion.
 - Improving operational efficiency.
 - Creating a more dependable and consistent route for the traveling public, including bicyclists and pedestrians, emergency responders and transit.



ENVIRONMENTAL CONSTRAINTS

- The I-35 Capital Express Central project is located in a highly constrained corridor, with limited right of way and buildings or other facilities lining both sides of the roadway.
- Known constraints include, but are not limited to:
 - University of Texas campus and facilities
 - Mt. Calvary Cemetery
 - Parks
 - Historic buildings
 - Neighborhoods
 - Highly urbanized area
 - Waters of the U.S.
- An interactive constraints map is available Nov. 12 at 5 p.m. through Dec. 31 on the virtual public scoping meeting website at www.mobility35openhouse.com. TxDOT is seeking your feedback on additional constraints.





RANGE OF ALTERNATIVES

TxDOT has identified three preliminary build alternatives based on known corridor constraints. The environmental process also includes a “no-build” alternative.

Alternative	Description
No build	Standard, routine maintenance.
Build Alternative 1 Managed Lanes Tunnel Section	Two tunneled managed lanes* and lowered mainlanes in each direction, with additional flyovers at I-35 and US 290 East. Tunnel = two levels below frontage roads and cross streets and one level below mainlanes. *only northbound managed lanes tunneled through downtown.
Build Alternative 2 Managed Lanes Lowered Section	Two lowered managed lanes and lowered mainlanes in each direction, with additional flyovers at I-35 and US 290 East. Lowered = one level below frontage roads and cross streets and same level as mainlanes.
Build Alternative 3 Managed Lanes Lowered Section (Modified at Airport Boulevard and Woodland Avenue)	Two lowered managed lanes and lowered mainlanes in each direction, with additional flyovers at I-35 and US 290 East. Managed lanes overpasses at Airport Boulevard and Woodland Avenue.

Note: TxDOT is seeking feedback on these alternatives. Based on public and agency feedback, these alternatives will be refined and further analyzed as part of the environmental study.



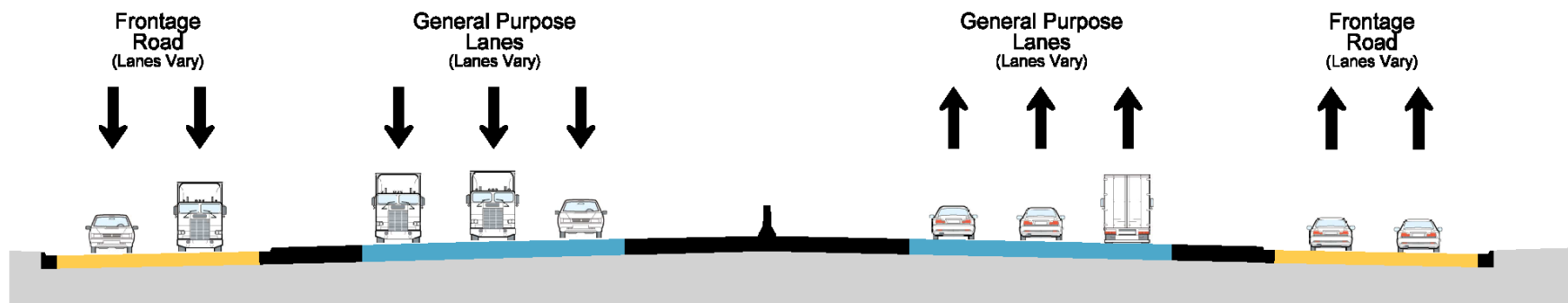
- All build alternatives would include:
 - Removing the upper deck in each direction from Airport Boulevard to Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard.
 - Reconstructing the bridge across Lady Bird Lake.
 - Improving bicycle and pedestrian accommodations.
 - Accommodating current and future CapMetro routes.
 - On-site and off-site drainage facilities.
 - Potentially accommodating a deck plaza in the downtown area funded by others.



- Potential design options currently being considered for all build alternatives include:
 - Downtown bypass system.
 - Downtown access-controlled frontage road.
 - Downtown boulevard concept.
 - Direct transit access at Riverside Drive and Dean Keeton Street.



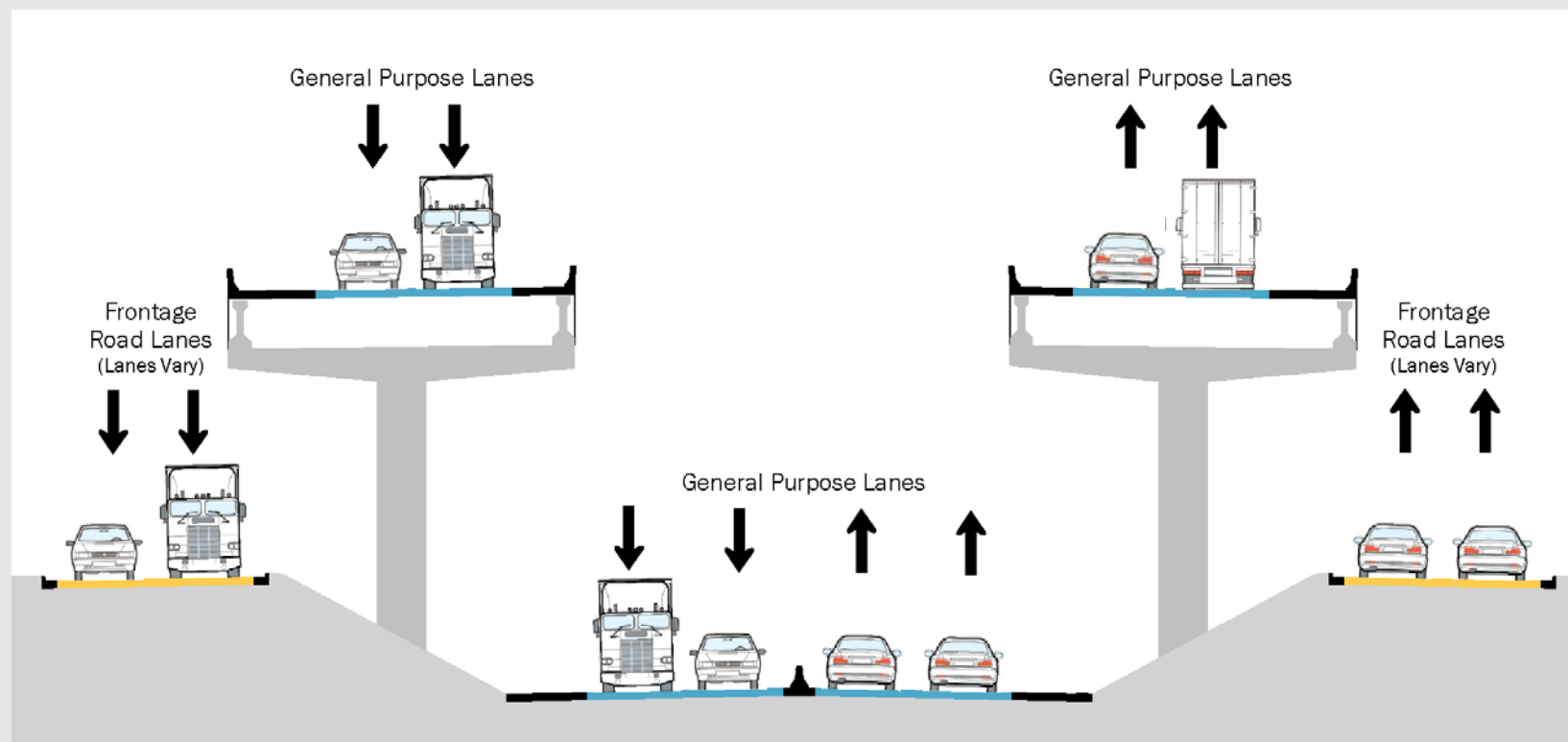
No-Build Alternative: Existing Typical Cross-Section



**I-35 from US 290 East to Airport Boulevard,
Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard to SH 71/Ben White
Boulevard**



No-Build Alternative: Existing Typical Cross-Section

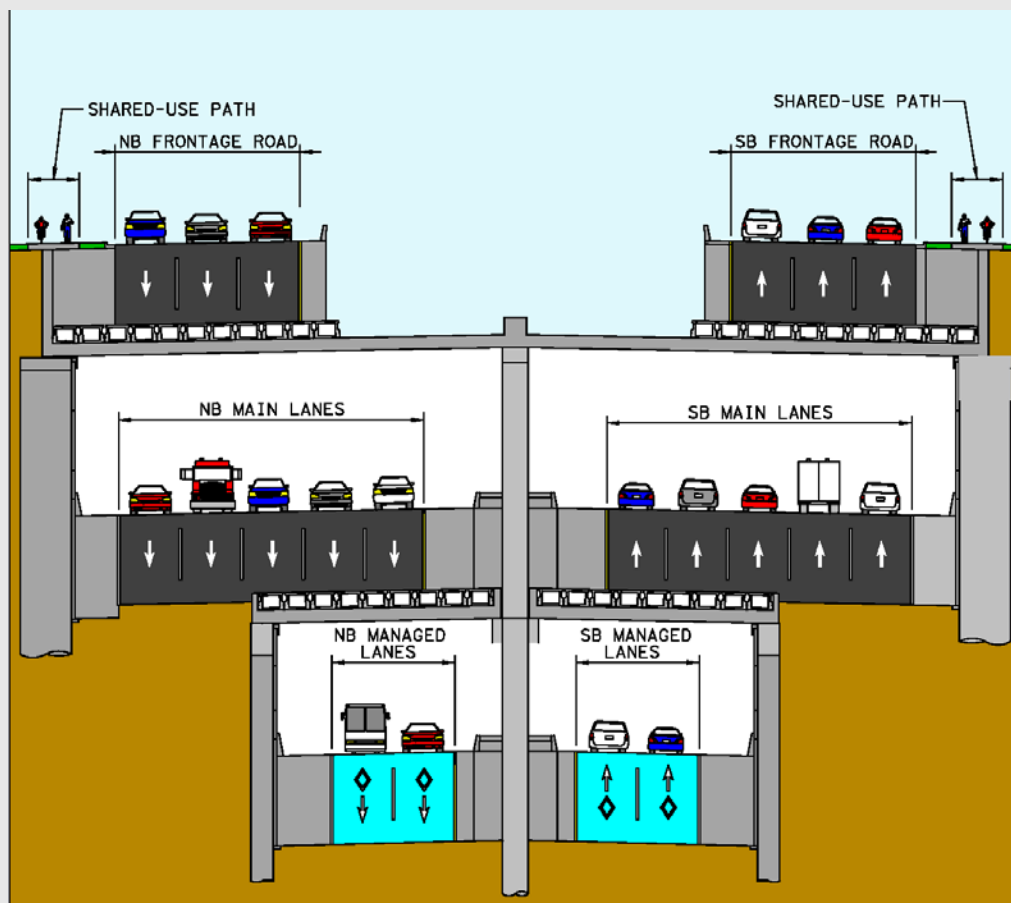


**I-35 from Airport Boulevard to
Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard (Upper Decks)**



Build Alternative 1: Managed Lanes Tunnel Section

Two tunneled managed lanes and lowered mainlanes in each direction, with additional flyovers at I-35 and US 290 East.



Airport Boulevard to Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard

US 290 East

**Airport
Boulevard**

**Martin Luther
King Jr.
Boulevard**

**Cesar Chavez
Street**

Riverside Drive

Oltorf Street

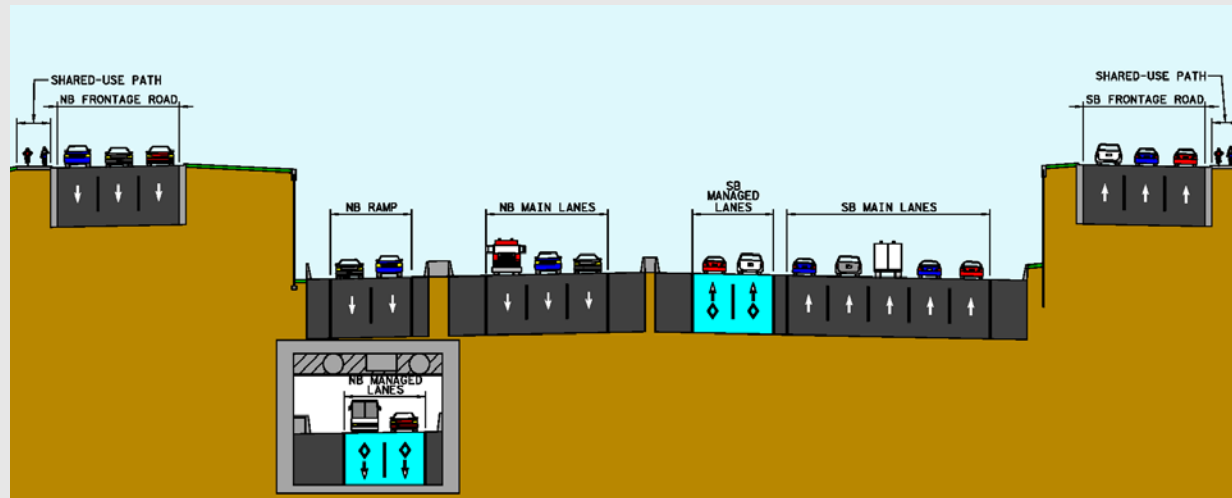
SH 71/Ben White Boulevard



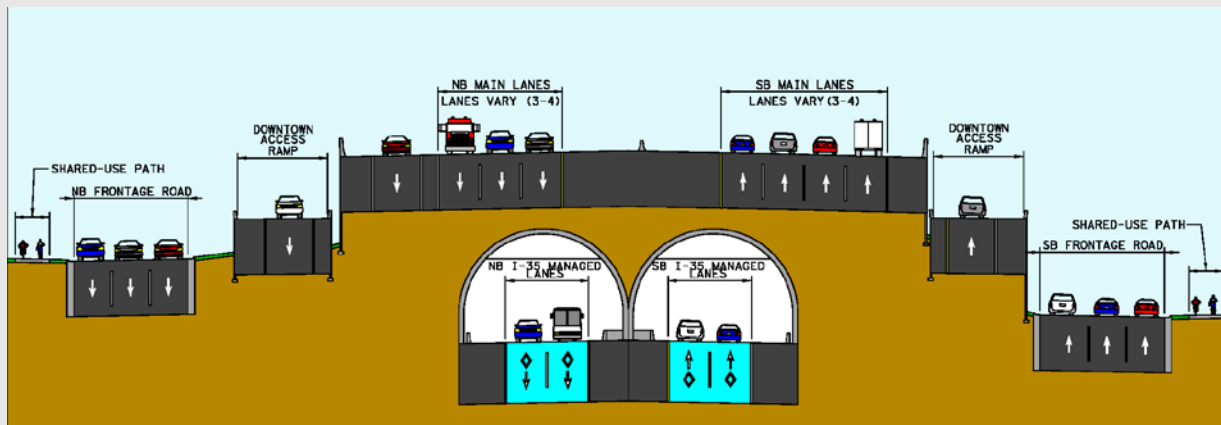
Build Alternative 1: Managed Lanes Tunnel Section



Two tunneled managed lanes and lowered mainlanes in each direction, with additional flyovers at I-35 and US 290 East.



Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard to Lady Bird Lake



Lady Bird Lake to Oltorf Street

US 290 East

Airport
Boulevard

Martin Luther
King Jr.
Boulevard

Cesar Chavez
Street

Riverside Drive

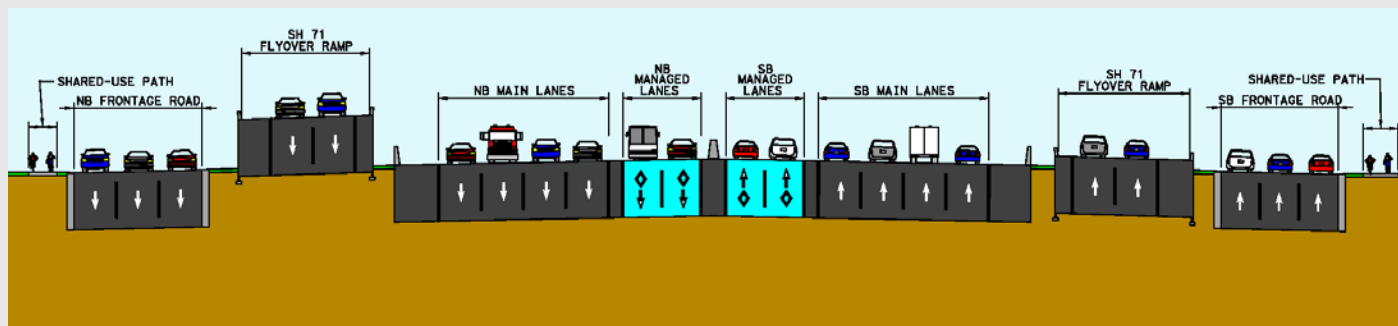
Oltorf Street

SH 71/Ben White Boulevard



Build Alternative 1: Managed Lanes Tunnel Section

Two tunneled managed lanes and lowered mainlanes in each direction, with additional flyovers at I-35 and US 290 East.



Oltorf Street to SH 71/Ben White Boulevard

US 290 East

**Airport
Boulevard**

**Martin Luther
King Jr.
Boulevard**

**Cesar Chavez
Street**

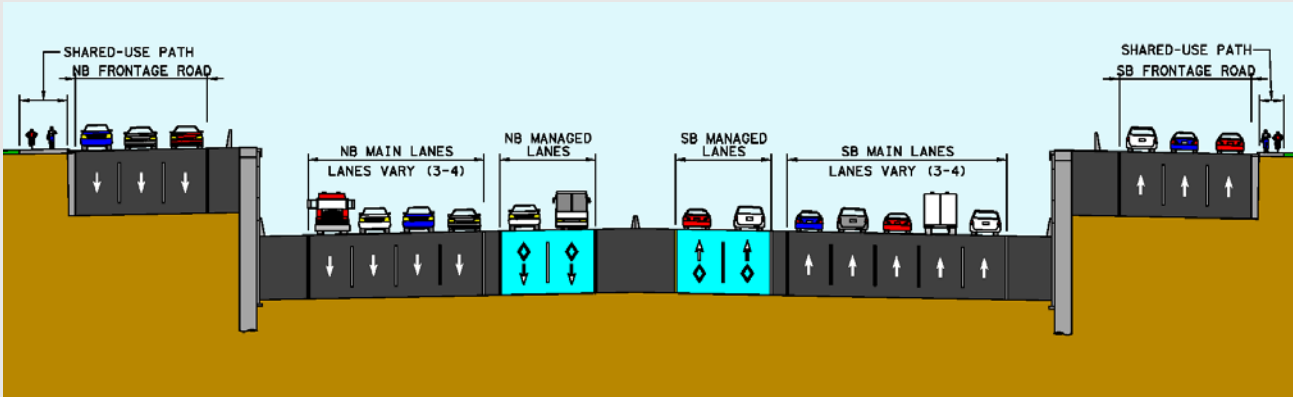
Riverside Drive

Oltorf Street

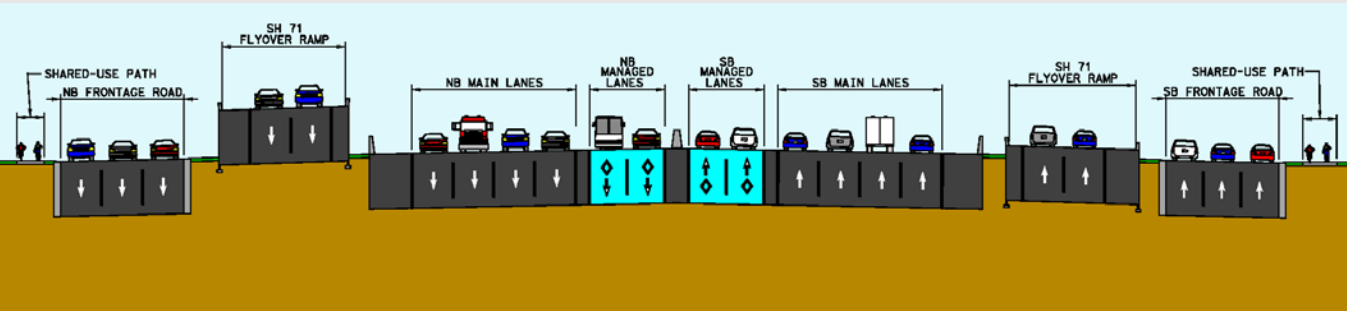
SH 71/Ben White Boulevard

Build Alternative 2: Managed Lanes Lowered Section

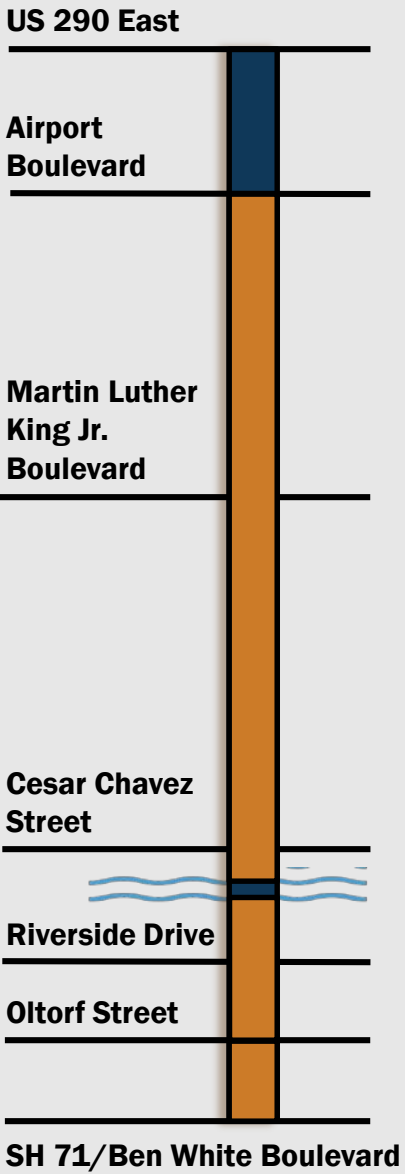
Lowered mainlanes and two lowered managed lanes in each direction, with additional flyovers at I-35 and US 290 East.



**Airport Boulevard to Lady Bird Lake and
Lady Bird Lake to Oltorf Street**



Oltorf Street to SH 71/Ben White Boulevard





Build Alternative 3: Managed Lanes Lowered Section (Modified at Airport Boulevard and Woodland Avenue)



Lowered mainlanes and two lowered managed lanes in each direction, US 290 East, with additional flyovers at I-35 and US 290 East. Managed lanes overpasses at Airport Boulevard and Woodland Avenue.

US 290 East

Airport Boulevard

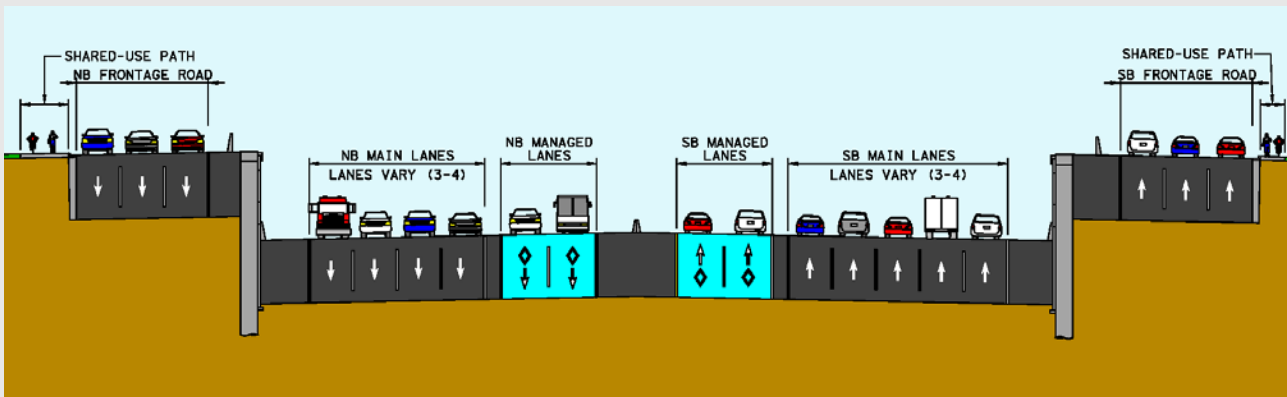
Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard

Cesar Chavez Street

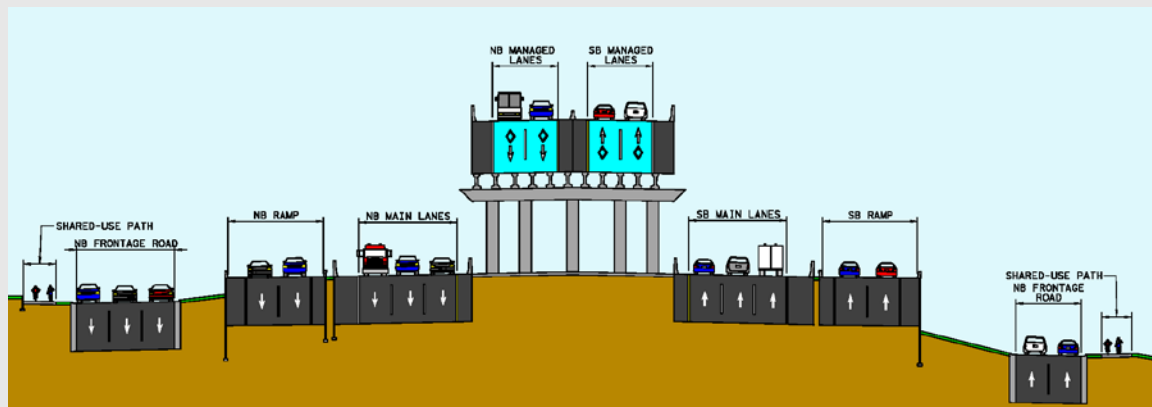
Riverside Drive

Oltorf Street

SH 71/Ben White Boulevard



South of Airport Boulevard to Lady Bird Lake



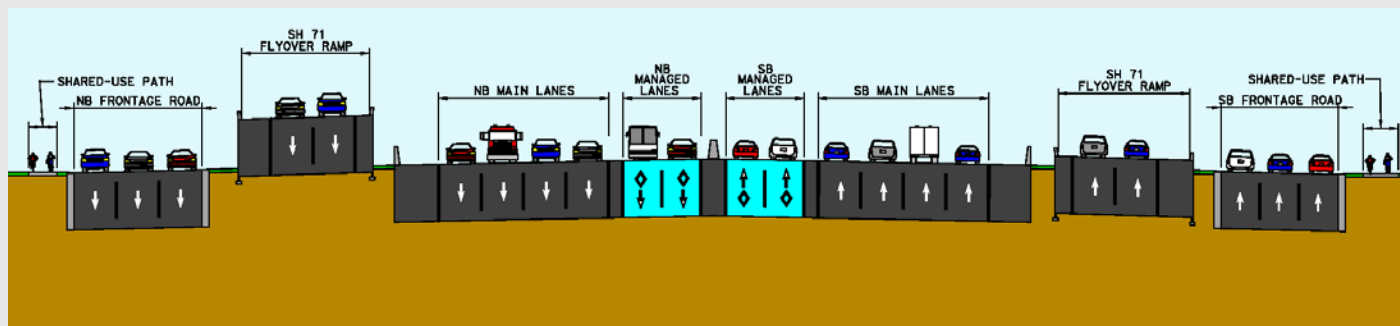
Managed lanes overpasses at Airport Boulevard and Woodland Avenue



Build Alternative 3: Managed Lanes Lowered Section (Modified at Airport Boulevard and Woodland Avenue)



Lowered mainlanes and two lowered managed lanes in each direction, with additional flyovers at I-35 and US 290 East. Managed lanes overpasses at Airport Boulevard and Woodland Avenue.



Oltorf Street to SH 71/Ben White Boulevard

US 290 East

**Airport
Boulevard**

**Martin Luther
King Jr.
Boulevard**

**Cesar Chavez
Street**

Riverside Drive

Oltorf Street

SH 71/Ben White Boulevard



- The I-35 Capital Express Central project proposes to improve safety and mobility on I-35 but does not include a deck plaza.
- The independent, separately funded OurFuture35 initiative is being proposed by the Downtown Austin Alliance.
- The Downtown Austin Alliance began coordinating with TxDOT in fall 2019, and coordination efforts between the Downtown Austin Alliance, the City of Austin and TxDOT are ongoing.



HOW TO PROVIDE FEEDBACK

All feedback must be provided by Thursday, Dec. 31, 2020 to be included in the official record.

■ **Public:**

- EMAIL: my35capex@txdot.gov
- VERBAL COMMENT BY VOICEMAIL: (512) 651-2948
- MAIL: I-35 Capital Express Central Project Team, 1608 W. 6th Street, Austin, TX 78703
- ONLINE: www.mobility35openhouse.com
 - Fill out an online comment form
 - Download a comment form and send by email or mail



- Questions about the project development process may be directed to the following project contact between the hours of 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday:
 - Connie Klose, P.E., I-35 Capital Express Central GEC Project Coordinator, TxDOT Austin District, 7901 N I-35, Austin, TX 78753
 - Phone: (512) 832-7253
 - Email: cklose-c@txdot.gov



THANK YOU