Notes from Design Workgroup Meeting
Tuesday, February 19, 2013
Austin Community College - Pinnacle Campus

A Design Workshop was held to allow the community to provide ideas and concepts that meet the proposed purpose and need of the project and gather initial reaction to general alternative concepts.

The team reviewed the proposed purpose and need statement for the Oak Hill Parkway project.

The proposed purpose of the project is to:

- Improve safety and emergency response;
- Improve mobility and operational efficiency; and
- Facilitate long-term congestion management in the corridor by accommodating the movement of people and goods for multiple modes of travel.

The need for improvements are based on five fundamental criteria:

- Improvement of safety within the Oak Hill Parkway corridor;
- Congestion within the corridor which has been brought on by steady population growth in the Austin metropolitan area;
- Improvement mobility and system connectivity in a corridor that has a substantial level of roadway congestion;
- Reduction of traffic and congestion; and
- Reduction in time delay and improvement of level of service (LOS).

The team also provided participants with the survey results from the November Open house in ranking order, the public stated the following:

1. There is a need to relieve congestion on US 290 through Oak Hill (+63)
2. There is a need to reduce travel delay within the US 290/71 Corridor (+57)
3. A goal of any proposed improvements should be to reduce congestion and manage traffic better (+56)
4. Traffic congestion in the area is a serious problem (+51)
5. There is a need to relieve congestion on SH 71 through Oak Hill (+44)
6. A goal of any proposed improvement should be to protect and improve water quality (+44)
7. There is a need to protect trees in Oak Hill (+39)
8. There is a need to improve pedestrian safety on US 290/71 through Oak Hill (+37)
9. There is a need to improve access to public transit service in Oak Hill (+36)
10. A goal of any proposed improvement should be to reduce response times for emergency vehicles (+35)
11. There is a need to improve highway safety on US 290 through Oak Hill (+35)
12. There is a need to improve highway safety on SH 71 through Oak Hill (+34)
13. There is a need to improve bicycle safety on US 290 and SH 71 through Oak Hill (+32)
14. The focus should be on moving more people, not just more vehicles (+32)

15. A goal of any proposed improvements should be to create a non-stop express route through Oak Hill (+25)
16. There is a need to increase economic development in Oak Hill (+12)

The project team described different types of roadways including freeways, express lanes and boulevards.

The participants were seated at tables and asked the following questions. The participants also drew concepts and routes on constraint maps.

Questions:

1. If you were choosing a type of road that would improve mobility and operational efficiency, what would it look like and why?
2. If you were choosing a type of road for long-term congestion management in the corridor by accommodating the movement of people and goods for multiple modes of travel, what would it look like?
3. If you were choosing a type of road that would improve safety and emergency response, what would it look like?
4. How would you pay for any improvements and why?
5. What are your thoughts regarding how to provide improved mobility between the Y and east of William Cannon?
6. How can we provide for through movements while maintaining access to local businesses and roads?
7. What are your thoughts regarding connecting two major highways at the Y?
8. How would you move large volumes of traffic to and from US 290 and SH 71, i.e. signals, round-abouts, fly-overs?
9. What are your thoughts on how far the transition section of US 290 to the existing highway west of RM 1826 should go?
10. Are there other modes of transportation (other than frontage roads and mainlanes) that you would like to see considered in the project that would not only enhance mobility but benefit your community?

Table 1 Responses

Road Concepts:

Consider a Boulevard:

- It will handle the traffic;
- "If you build it they will come"…in other words, whatever you build will be used.

Toll through traffic (not local traffic):

- Toll road for through traffic could be one level (above);
- Road for local traffic (no toll) could be below.

Local traffic:

- It should be able to move, have access and remain toll free;
- Local mobility is indirect now – major concern about local mobility;
- Consider location of exits (from future roadway) for local traffic.

One opinion: Not in favor of making it easy for through traffic:

- Let through traffic find another way around Oak Hill;
- Build SH 45 from 1826 to US 290.

At William Cannon:

- Build a simple grade separation at William Cannon and the "Y";

- Consider building William Cannon over US 290;
- Consider a partial cloverleaf at William Cannon.

Consider designing other roads to go over US 290.
Locals are cut off by existing roadway system, and better local mobility should be considered in future planning.
Moving people is more important than a Town Center.

Project should include:

- Green space;
- Hike and Bike facilities;
- Projection of Williamson Creek;
- A freeway means lots of concrete, and whatever is built needs to look nice.

Modes:

- Better safety for bike use;
- Consider HOV and HOT lanes:
  - Consider making them reversible to keep the footprint smaller;
- Transit needs to be part of long-range planning;
- Have better access on and off the roadway for transit.

Financing:

- Local option gas tax (Most people at the table said they did not drive on toll roads)

Table 2

Road Concepts:

- Lower US 290 at the "Y";
- Keep main lanes lower from the "Y" to the west;
- Consider William Cannon over US 290;
- Consider turnaround (west to eastbound) at Patton instead of at Joe Tanner:
  - Would there be overall benefits to having the turnaround at Patton?
  - May have to improve Patton Ranch Road.
- Transition down east of El Ray – keep it simple;
- Can we get traffic counts to see how much traffic gets off US 290 at 1626?
- No signals;
- No frontage road;
- No flyovers or spaghetti bowl;
- Lane management;
- Cable barriers;
- Emergency shoulders/inside emergency shoulders;
- Managed lanes;
- Standard lane widths;
- Occasional access/very limited;
- No frontage roads;
- Existing grade or grade depressed;
- Make the median work;
- Eliminate possibility of head-on collision;

- Access for emergency vehicles.

Project should include:
- Be civilized;
- Well-maintained landscaping;
- Oaks;
- No billboards or distractions;
- Quiet road surface;
- Road medians;
- Alternative access;
- Stone or concrete enhancements.

Modes:
- Accommodation for pedestrians and cyclists;
- Rail or bus built-in;
- Mass transit incentives.

Financing:
- No tolls

Table 3 Responses

Road Concepts:
- No Triple Decker Flyover;
- Through traffic should be separated from local traffic;
- Like the Boulevard look- David Richardson brought an example from San Francisco;
- 290 is Oak Hills Main Street, and we should make it work that way;
- Make local access to local businesses easier;
- You don't need to go speeding through Downtown – 45 mph is fast enough;
- Expressway on 71;
- There should be a narrow footprint;
- Separate frontage road from main lanes;
- Sink highway;
- Fix the problem at William Cannon;
- Split highway around creek for local and through traffic;
- Lower or depress the road;
- Consider purchasing businesses on the bluff to be able to use that space and protect Williamson Creek.

Project Should Include:
- Natural Elements.

Modes:
- We need to ensure that it is multi-modal;
- Ensure bike/ped and car east west access.

Financing
- Toll funding should be used to mitigate by purchasing open space.

Table 4 Responses

Road Concepts:

- Enough capacity to prevent cut-through traffic;
- Terminus past Circle Drive;
- Limited access in Oak Hill;
- Non-tolled, non-elevated;
- Small footprint;
- Focus on capacity;
- Elevated/local connectivity;
- Safety is a priority;
- Bridge intersections;
- Acquire additional row;
- No exits off elevated highway;
- Express lanes;
- Spot improvements;
- Widen bridge over Williamson Creek;
- Overpass at William Cannon;
- At grade/bridge intersections/low elevation at the "Y";
- Freeway without frontage roads;
- Maintain neighborhood access and evacuation routes;
- Bridge over William Cannon and keep 290 at grade;
- Separate through traffic from local traffic.

Project Should Include:

- Oak Hill Parkway concepts;
- Maintain Williamson Creek greenbelts.

Modes:

- Integrate transit.

Financing:

- Chase all funding types (State/Federal/County/City);
- Tax funding.

The suggestions drawn on the maps are outlined on the attached spreadsheet.

Email Responses after the meeting:

From: David Richardson [mailto:david.78737@gmail.com]
Sent: Wednesday, February 20, 2013 6:03 AM

To: James Williams; wstrong@ctg-texas.com
Subject: 290 / 71

Hi Wade and James

I took another stab at the design (attached) originally proposed by Steffan Waltz with 290 elevated from just east of Convict Hill to Joe Tanner where the 290 main lanes would merge with current 290 main lanes and 71 would merge as it does today (as 290 / 71)

I drew in the Octavia Blvd concept as well as a traffic circle suggested by one of the women at my table last night. The distribution of left hand turn traffic is considerably simplified and right turns for frontage roads are also simple albeit slower and continuous flow - desirable elements.

This schematic puts the WB 290 frontage road on the north side of Wmson Creek near Wm Cannon. Old Bee Caves Road intersects this one way WB frontage road. That traffic is able to head east passing through the traffic circle.

The 71 overpass at Wm Cannon provides continuous flow and obviously no lights for through traffic. The EB frontage road at the bluff could be tucked under the support structures for the overpass to minimize the ROW between the bluff and the creek where it is very constrained. That maintains existing business access to all businesses on the S side of 71 and Hill Oaks. It eliminates direct connects and offers just 290 as an elevated roadway through Oak Hill.

I'm aware driving Loop 1 north of Enfield that efforts to reduce road noise with newer pavement surfaces have improved considerably as well as reduce tire spray during storms improving safety. I don't know if that type of surface is appropriate for elevated roadways but it would address safety with tire spray and address community interests to reduce road noise.

Thanks to TxDOT and CTRMA for meeting with the community. As you heard last night it is a departure from past experience and much appreciated.

Thanks!

David Richardson
Granada Hills
Oak Hill