

IH 35

SH 71 (Ben White Blvd) to US 183

Current Conditions

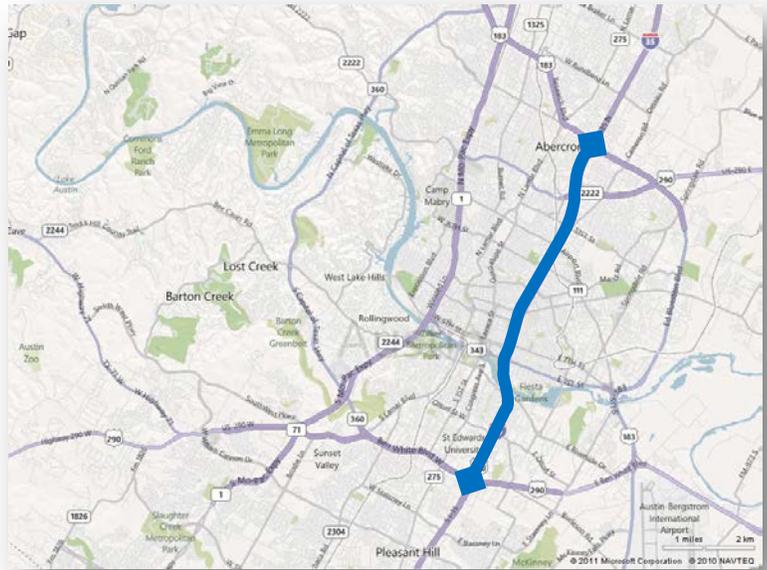
Between US 183 and Airport Boulevard in Austin, IH 35 operates with four lanes in each direction. At Airport Boulevard, IH 35 converts to an upper/lower deck split, with two lanes in each direction on each deck to Martin Luther King (MLK) Boulevard. South of the split, through SH 45 South, IH 35 operates with three lanes in each direction. This portion of IH 35 experiences near equal congestion in both directions throughout the day. Slowdowns are heaviest in both directions during the evening rush hour period with moderate slowdowns in the mornings.

- Segment Length: 9.2 miles
- Road Type: 6- to 8-Lane freeway
- Annual Hours of Delay: 7,231,000
- Texas Congestion Index: 2.47
- Commuter Stress Index: 3.12

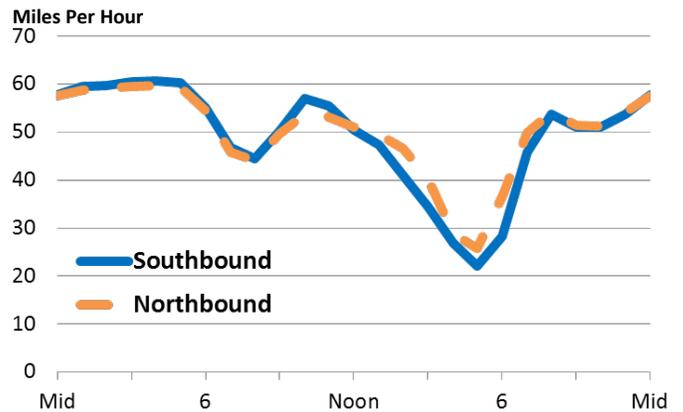
Possible Congestion Causes

Most of IH 35 was originally constructed in the 1950s, and has not been substantially improved since the original construction. In 1975, a second deck was added for a two-mile stretch north of downtown, and lanes were added to the north of the upper/lower split. IH 35 suffers from heavy traffic volumes, poor design, and a large volume of truck traffic. The rapid growth of Austin over the last several decades has exacerbated traffic congestion on IH 35 as the city has nearly doubled in size every 20 years. Land uses, including commercial and retail developments, contribute to the limited right-of-way, complicating expansion plans. Significant choke points exist in the following locations:

- Lower deck (North and Southbound) from MLK to Airport Boulevard.
- Merging of US 290 East onto IH 35 Southbound.



2010 Rank: 4	2013 Rank: 1
Annual Hrs of Delay/Mile:	789,000
Congestion Time:	10 Hours
Annual Cost of Delay:	\$172.1 Million
Average Daily Traffic:	170,000 Vehicles



- IH 35 Northbound from Woodward to Riverside.

Completed Projects

Direct Connector Ramps: Four direct connectors at the IH 35 and SH 71 (Ben White) interchange were completed and open to traffic in December 2011.

HERO Patrols: The HERO patrol aims to minimize congestion and improve safety by clearing damaged or disabled vehicles from the roadway.

Tolled SH 130: Construct a 4-lane tolled freeway with intermittent frontage roads on SH 130 from SH 45 to IH 10 near Seguin.

Planning Efforts to Date

IH 35 Capital Area Improvement Program (CAIP) Corridor Implementation Plan

The City of Austin and TxDOT are undertaking a corridor development study (including public engagement) focusing on transportation management and multimodal treatments between SH 45 North and SH 45 South.

The goals of the CAIP are as follows:

- Increase capacity.
- Minimize additional right-of-way.
- Optimize the existing facility.
- Improve traffic management.
- Improve east-west connectivity.
- Enhance safety.
- Improve compatibility with neighbors.
- Enhance bicycle, pedestrian, and transit options.

The CAIP has five phases; the agencies are currently in Phase 2 of the program—the implementation plan for the corridor. Phases 3 through 5 are contingent upon funding and include environmental/design studies, construction plans, utilities coordination, and construction.

The CAIP is seen as a part of the overall regional system upgrade. The regional system is integral to the corridor implementation plan as it will support the transportation network (i.e. provide a “detour”) once construction begins on the downtown portion of IH 35.

The priority improvement projects are separated into north, south, and central categories. The north projects include US 183 direct connectors, northbound bottleneck improvements on both US 183 and US 290, and a group of projects as it relates to the Future

Transportation Corridor (FTC), which includes an additional lane pair down the center of IH 35. The south projects include improvements to Riverside, Oltorf, and Stassney to William Cannon. The central projects include improvements to 51st Street, FTC improvements, and various proposals for IH 35 through downtown Austin.

My35

The My35 Program uses a holistic approach to addressing needs on the entire corridor:

- Use SH 45SE and SH 130 as alternative routes by converting one general purpose lane on IH 35 in each direction to a dynamically priced managed lane and re-designating IH 35 to a non-interstate facility. SH 130 (from US 195 to SH 45SE) and SH 45SE (from Mustang Ridge to IH 35) will have tolls removed and be re-designated as IH 35.
- Upgrade US 183 from US 290 to SH 45SE to a 4-lane freeway (Total cost: \$550 to \$800 million).
- Widen IH 35 from the Williamson/Bell County line to IH 10 in San Antonio to at least an 8-lane freeway (\$2.7 to \$3.85 billion).

Transit Alternatives

Capital Metro is currently studying transit alternatives to IH 35 including a new spur on the Red Line, managed lanes, Lone Star rail, bus rapid transit, and the MoKan corridor.

Project Connect is the latest project to be formed as a result of the visioning and planning efforts of CAMPO’s Transit Working Group. Project Connect envisions providing connectivity choices for a growing population that also provide for land use considerations. Transit choices include regional rail, bus rapid transit, urban rail, fixed route buses, vanpool, and carpool.



US 183 South Project (Bergstrom Expressway)
Expansion of 7.2 miles of US 183 between Springdale Road and Patton Avenue to a 6-lane turnpike with non-toll frontage roads. TxDOT is overseeing environmental documentation, developing the design schematic, and performing ongoing public outreach.

Travel Options Marketing

The Downtown Transportation Management Association (TMA) has initiated a transportation demand management marketing program to reduce single-occupancy vehicles. The TMA will assist with trip planning and travel coaching.

Land Use Planning

The City of Austin, TxDOT, Capital Metro, and other agencies are evaluating land use along the corridor and parallel routes for accessibility, implementation of form-based code, transit-oriented development, and other bike and transit options. Land use considerations are also a large focus in Project Connect.

IH 35 HOV Lane Study

The IH 35 Major Investment Study (1998) analyzed the construction of HOV lanes (either

separate from the roadway or within the median) and reconfiguring the upper and lower decks.

Public Engagement/Communication in the Austin Region

The Capital Regional Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO) engages in regular public outreach activities when developing and amending the long range plan, the transportation improvement plan, and the unified planning work program. Recently, CAMPO undertook a tiered approach to public input that identifies and refines the best methods to solicit public participation in planning efforts with the intention to more effectively utilize limited resources. A tiered approach allows minor plan, project, or funding changes to be expedited through the planning process, while more concentrated efforts can be focused on projects or plans that have more substantial changes.

Public Engagement in the IH 35 Corridor

The first round of outreach in Austin's IH 35 corridor has benefited from two efforts. The

first effort was the result of action by the Texas Transportation Commission in the formation of an IH 35 Advisory Committee and four segment committees that reported to the Advisory Committee. The segment committees were tasked with examining the corridor challenges from a local perspective, identifying possible solutions and offering recommendations to the committee. The segment committees engaged local stakeholders, citizens and community leaders in developing options and alternatives in the Austin area. This from-the-ground-up approach with significant public involvement activities resulted in a plan which reflects the interests and concerns of citizens through local and regional recommendations for meeting the mobility needs along Texas' IH 35 corridor. The recommendations were documented in the August 2011 IH 35 Corridor Advisory Committee Plan.

The plan began with a needs assessment conducted by key city staff and consultants. In this assessment, problems were identified and key roadblocks were addressed.

In the second effort, the project sponsors held an open house to brief the public on the project in downtown Austin on September 28, 2011. The open house was designed to allow for small group discussion by having people register for group session times that began each half hour. Reservations were requested but not required. This new approach was designed to provide an opportunity for interested participants to engage in a focused discussion regarding potential solutions in the corridor. Using a smaller, more focused discussion elicited more feedback, especially from those who may have been reluctant to speak in a large group setting.

Each of these efforts was a good-practice approach early in a project. However, attendance at this event was very low. An inconvenient location and difficult accessibility may have led to a low turnout. The consultant

has since engaged in several smaller group meetings with representatives from neighborhoods, universities, business, and civic groups. A technical steering committee also guides outreach activities.

Other planned outreach/communication activities include:

- Development of context sensitive solution (CSS) strategy and process.
- Establishment of a stakeholder working group (SWG) representing different travel markets, communities and interests.
- Creation of communication materials – hard copy, electronic, or social media.

In late 2012 through 2013, the City of Austin and TxDOT began the second round of public involvement for the CAIP. This better-targeted public involvement focused on 70 stakeholder meetings, 11 public open houses, and two online open houses, garnering 4,000 visitors. In addition to the outreach efforts, the newly coined "Mobility 35" project, which is what the CAIP is known as, hosted a website, online forum, Twitter account, Facebook page, and was presented at several community events.

Next Steps

- Aggressive incident clearance is one practice that is not sufficiently addressed in the scope of the IH 35 Corridor Development Program. The AIMHigh Program is a locally sponsored effort that has identified tools and strategies for improving incident clearance; however, resources and support for implementation are required to advance the strategies. The AIMHigh Program has identified **development of a pre-positioning plan for incident management equipment and preparation of incident diversion plans for IH 35 and other congested corridors** as a high priority. Additionally, there is a need for integrated system management and operation to ensure that an institutional framework is in place to

operate IH 35 and other congested corridors in a seamless way under both recurring and non-recurring congestion. As a result, TxDOT is using \$800,000 to help fund the Integrated Traffic Management study to further examine the above items.

- Austin is lagging behind its peers in the application of traditional and innovative demand management strategies. The formation of the **Downtown TMA, known as “Movability Austin,” will support employer outreach** for downtown commuters and should be closely linked and coordinated with the University of Texas program, Commute Solutions (to reach employers outside of the central area that may have employees who utilize IH 35 for commuting), and State government (which employs over 24,000 people in the urban core).
- **Promote the use of alternative routes to IH 35, including SH 130, 45SE, and US 183.** US 183 South has the potential to serve as an alternate route to IH 35, as identified in the My35 study, and funding should be dedicated to conduct engineering associated with the planned expansion to six toll lanes and six lanes of frontage roads. Freight moving through Austin should be incentivized to take alternate routes like SH 45SE and SH 130 instead of IH 35. As a potential alternate to IH 35, connectivity to downtown and at north and south ends should be examined and addressed.
- There is an opportunity for **agencies to work together to provide public information and strategic outreach on actions related to the development and potential changes to IH 35 and other congested corridors via web-based strategies.** Sharing project updates between agencies would allow all of the



agencies involved to offer the same level and detail of information at a single source, simplifying the message and ensuring consistent communication.

- TxDOT and the City of Austin have several next steps for the IH 35 CAIP, including further program coordination for a general engineering consultant contract and pre-Phase 3 activities. There is **some remaining Rider 42 funding (\$2.03 million) that can be used for continued planning of IH 35 through downtown and planning and environmental linkages for the future transportation corridor.** If the funding cannot be leveraged for planning purposes of IH 35 through downtown, it may be used for near-term design improvements to William Cannon, Stassney, and Oltorf.
- **The agencies will not be able to move forward on Phases 3 through 5 until further funding is secured.** Phase 3 includes US 183/IH 35 direct connectors (\$5.9 million unfunded), and other priority projects. Phase 4 includes TxDOT indefinite deliverables, for which \$10 million has been funded and other priority projects that are unfunded.