

LOOP 343 (South Lamar & Cesar Chavez)

US 290 to IH 35

Current Conditions

Loop 343 is a combination of two major streets in central Austin—Cesar Chavez from IH 35 to South Lamar and South Lamar from Cesar Chavez to Ben White Boulevard (Highway 71) on the south. Cesar Chavez is a four-lane street with left turn lanes at some intersections; Lamar is a five-lane arterial with two lanes in each direction and a center turn lane. Much of the streets are flanked with commercial development. South Lamar remains congested for most of the day rather than experiencing the lower midday congestion typical of freeways.

- Segment Length: 5.0 miles
- Road Type: 4- to 5-Lane arterial
- Annual Hours of Delay: 972,000
- Texas Congestion Index: 1.49
- Commuter Stress Index: 1.58

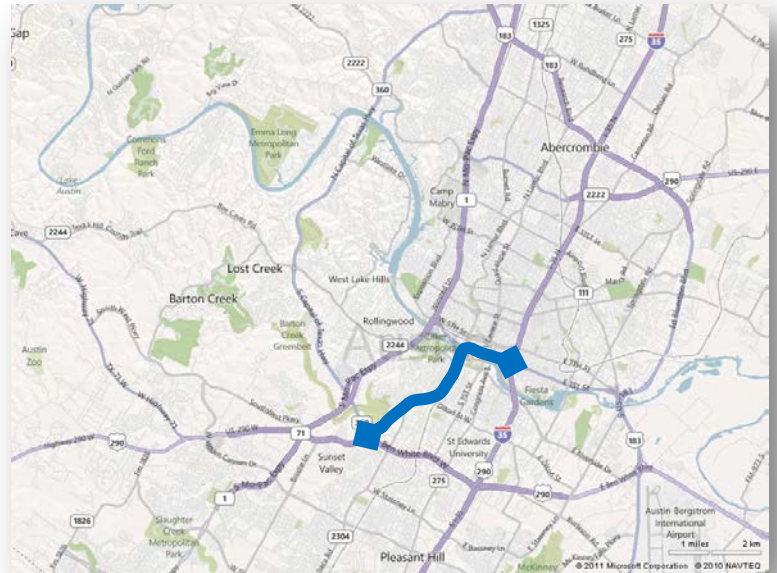
Possible Congestion Causes

Lamar is a viable alternative to MoPac through Central Austin, although the roadway experiences heavy congestion throughout the day, particularly during the morning and evening commuter rush. Additionally, the section of South Lamar from downtown to Ben White Boulevard. (Highway 71) has limited potential for expansion due to abutting commercial development. Numerous driveways that serve the commercial developments also create congestion points.

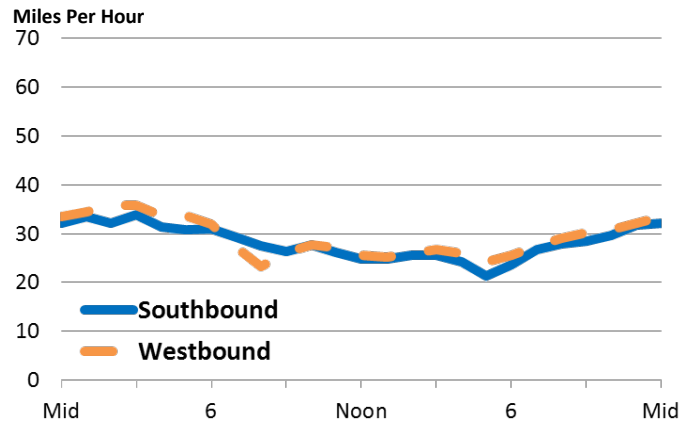
Projects in Progress or Completed

Bus Rapid Transit

A bus rapid transit line is being developed on North Lamar running from Burnet Road through downtown. The project includes traffic signal priority, limited stops, and larger capacity buses. Capital Metro expects service to begin in 2014.



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| 2010 Rank: 44 | 2013 Rank: 42 |
| Annual Hrs of Delay/Mile: 193,000 | |
| Congestion Time: 12 Hours | |
| Annual Cost of Delay: \$18.9 Million | |
| Average Daily Traffic: 37,000 Vehicles | |



Signal Timing

The city has made downtown signal timing improvements that will alleviate some congestion.

Innovative Intersection Improvements

Implementation of “jughandle” intersections on North Lamar at 5th and 6th Streets can assist

with left-turn movements; turning traffic is moved to sections of road with more capacity.

Downtown Austin Developments

Several developments are planned along the north segment of SL 343 (known as Cesar Chavez). Projects include new convention hotels, a green water treatment plant, a new library, and the Seaholm development. All of these new developments will be impacting throughput on Cesar Chavez from 2014 to 2017. The number of lanes will be the same post-construction; however, the City is anticipating decreases in lane widths.

South Lamar Developments

Several mixed-use and multi-family developments on South Lamar are either under construction or in development. The ongoing construction should continue for the next five years, and while the current projects are not impacting the right-of-way, the new projects, once fully developed, are predicted to considerably impact traffic congestion on the road. The city is currently working on a means of measuring the impact each individual development has on traffic counts.

Planning Efforts to Date

MoPac Express Lanes

The Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority (CTRMA), in partnership with TxDOT, is sponsoring an environmental and preliminary engineering study to add northbound and southbound express lanes from FM 734 to the Cesar Chavez interchange, with project letting anticipated in 2014 (\$253 million).

Transit Service Options

The City, in conjunction with Capital Metro, is studying curbside loading areas for buses and bike/pedestrian management as a means to improve traffic flow along the corridor. Much depends, however, upon the re-design of the constrained Cesar Chavez/Congress intersection in downtown to address high turning volumes.

Bus Rapid Transit is slated to begin running on South Lamar in late 2014. The stations for the new mode are already under construction. The City of Austin is doing what it can to support Capital MetroRapid development and is working with all stakeholders to create a sense of place on South Lamar.

Travel Options Marketing

The Downtown Transportation Management Association (TMA) has initiated a demand management marketing program to reduce single occupancy vehicles. It will also assist with trip planning and travel coaching. Movability Austin operates as a “transportation concierge,” connecting interested parties with alternatives to driving a single-occupancy vehicle.

Signal Timing & Bike Lanes

The City of Austin plans to improve signal timing for the corridor from downtown to Ben White Boulevard and install full bike lanes (currently,





bike lanes do not run the full expanse of South Lamar). The city is examining what can be done to provide complete bike lanes throughout the facility.

Next Steps

- The adjacent urban development limiting any expansion of South Lamar suggests that **Loop 1 (MoPac) could be a preferred and logical improvement alternative**. Plans for managed lanes and congestion management on South MoPac, however, are still in the early stages.
- The City of Austin could also consider the following **supplemental strategies**:
 - Access management.
 - Reversible lanes.
 - Traveler information.
 - Overnight truck deliveries.
 - Intersection improvements.
 - Super street arterials.
 - Bicycle and pedestrian improvements.
- Austin lags behind its peers in the application of traditional and innovative travel option strategies. The **formation of the Downtown TMA** will support employer outreach for downtown commuters and should be closely linked and coordinated with: 1) the University of Texas program, 2) Commute Solutions (to reach employers outside of the central area that may have employees who utilize South Lamar for commuting), and 3) State government, which employs over 24,000 people in the urban core.
- The Central Texas Working Group recommended an **engineering study for integrated system management and operation on the congested corridors**, to ensure that messages from the agencies involved in the construction, operation, and maintenance of South Lamar have a consistent message. The City of Austin has already begun to implement smart signage on South Lamar, which communicates travel times; it is important to tie these signs into the overall system.
- The City of Austin also has plans to use STP-MM funding to **make improvements to South Congress**, which is a viable alternative to South Lamar. The funding is planned to increase throughput on the arterial.