

To: Travis County Commissioners Court

From: Austin Outside

Re: AO Statement on CBAC Recommendations to Travis County Commissioners Court

Date: June 8, 2023

Honorable Commissioners:

Austin Outside's (AO's) mission is to champion outdoor places for all throughout Greater Austin. We are a coalition of 69 member organizations focused on parks, open space, active transportation, and the environment.

We thank the 14 citizen volunteers on the Citizens Bond Advisory Committee (CBAC) for the 4+ months of work and deliberation they have put into their parks and transportation bond recommendations to Travis County Commissioners Court.

AO strongly supports the CBAC's park bond recommendations for \$200 million for parkland acquisition and conservation, and \$70 million for park projects that add facilities and access, like soccer fields and greenway trails. As property values continue to rise, land acquisition throughout Travis County is a solid strategy for improving future access to outdoor and green spaces for residents. The \$70 million set aside for shovel-ready projects are key improvements to Travis County parks and instrumental in building out 70 miles of a trail network that links to our regional network.

AO fully supports the following components of the CBAC's transportation bond recommendations:

- the critical recommendation that the Court create a Travis County multimodal connectivity plan (for pedestrians, bike, ADA, & trails) and a Vision Zero plan, to be funded in the County's next operating budget;
- \$15 million for active transportation, safety, & safe routes to school
- Shared Use Paths or sidewalks and bike lanes on Cameron Road, Arterial A, and South Pleasant Valley proposed projects; and
- the adoption of the SAFE-2 design for the Bee Creek Road and Rowe Lane transportation projects.

We respectfully ask that the Court add these active transportation and safety projects to the transportation bond package:

- Add \$5 million for County participation funds to the FM 812 (US183 to County Line) TxDOT project.

- Add at least \$5 million to the \$15 million for active transportation, safety, & safe routes to school bucket.
- Add the \$11 million Howard Lane shared use path, which provides access to CapMetro Rail Howard Station and McNeil High School, and helps complete the regional 36-mile Red Line Parkway.

Furthermore, we ask staff to analyze and present SAFE-2 options to the Court for each of the expansion and extension projects, choosing SAFE-2 designs whenever possible. And we encourage the Court to take a holistic approach when considering road projects, which should include robust public outreach conducted by mobility staff, protections for workers during construction, and measures taken to avoid community displacement resulting from the public improvements.

AO retained leading Austin-based polling firm JTX Strategies, Inc. to conduct research related to the potential November 2023 Travis County bond election. JTX Strategies conducted a live call professional survey based on a random sample of likely November 2023 voters during the third week of May, primarily via cell phone with a small number of landline respondents. The sample size was 400 with a margin of error of 4.9% at a 95% confidence level. Two potential bond packages were tested: a parks bond at \$280 million and a transportation bond at \$220 million. The poll results show that Travis County voters are enthusiastic about authorizing this level of investment in their community now, particularly when it comes to parks, open space, and safe mobility for all.

Given all of this, in sum, AO supports the CBAC recommendations with our additions and respectfully requests the Commissioners Court take the next steps to give Travis County voters the opportunity to support these propositions in November.

Sincerely,



Joanna Wolaver, Board Chair
Austin Outside