

March 29, 2023

**To: City of Austin Urban Transportation Commission**

**From: Austin Outside Trails & Active Transportation Committee**

**Re: Zilker Park Vision Plan trail and active transportation improvements**

Greetings Honorable Urban Transportation Commission Members:

Austin Outside's mission is to champion outdoor places for all throughout Greater Austin. We are a coalition of 61 member organizations focused on parks, open space, active transportation, and the environment.

On behalf of Austin Outside's Trails & Active Transportation Committee, **we write in support of the following significant trail and active transportation improvements in the Zilker Park Vision Plan** which improve access within and to Zilker Park with an "all of the above" approach for parking, transit, trails, shuttles, and increased bike/ped connections:

- The Vision Plan includes **five new bike/ped bridges** to provide active transportation access options into Zilker Park. The proposed new bike/ped bridge across Lady Bird Lake will facilitate access to Zilker Park from the Butler Hike & Bike Trail. In addition, new bike/ped bridges above and below Barton Springs Pool will complete the Zilker Loop Trail – which will link the Butler Hike and Bike Trail to the Violet Crown Trail – by facilitating pedestrian access across Barton Creek where people currently are forced to walk through the water and slippery rocks.
- The Vision Plan also includes an **impressive and appealing nature/land bridge** crossing over Barton Springs Road to provide a natural crossing experience that safely connects the park over Barton Springs Road.
- The Vision Plan includes **6.9 miles of new trails in Zilker Park** providing a 55% increase in trails (19.5 miles) over what currently exists (12.6 miles).
- The Vision Plan includes a **robust and exciting transit plan** that provides improved CapMetro service; internal circulators; improved walking, micro-mobility, and bike connections with wayfinding between internal and nearby transit assets; and external shuttle options.
- The Vision Plan includes a **centralized and consolidated phased parking solution** in a more compact footprint of 1 to 3 buried or green garages to maintain, and not increase, the current total parking capacity while improving the overall ecological health of the park. In addition, the Plan recommends a "phased" approach to parking garage construction to assess demand before investing significant capital in parking capacity, and recommends that the number and size of any parking garages could be reduced IF external parking (with

shuttles to the park), more frequent CapMetro bus service, and future Project Connect light rail stations come online.

- The Vision Plan addresses **numerous priorities from the Austin Strategic Mobility Plan (ASMP)** relating to roads, bicycles, sidewalks, and safety improvements by recommending that (1) Barton Springs Road be reduced to one lane in each direction with protected bike lanes and pedestrian crossings (subject to additional input from Austin Transportation Department), (2) protected bike lanes and pedestrian crossings be added to Barton Springs Road, (3) Stratford Drive be re-routed to create a shared-use path in the park, (4) Andrew Zilker Road and Lou Neff Road be closed to vehicular traffic to create shared-use paths in the park, and (5) adding ADA compliant sidewalks to Barton Springs, Rollingwood Drive, Dellana Lane, Nature Center Drive, and Stratford Drive.

Once again, we wish to acknowledge the significant trail and active transportation improvements proposed in the draft Zilker Park Vision Plan. With these improvements, Zilker Park should become more accessible and enjoyable for all.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to us at [hello@austinoutside.org](mailto:hello@austinoutside.org) with any questions.

Sincerely,

Nina Rinaldi, Chair

Darron Juraida, Vice Chair