



## Travis County Commissioners Court Agenda Request

**Meeting Date:** August 20, 2013

**Prepared By/Phone Number:** Edith Moreida

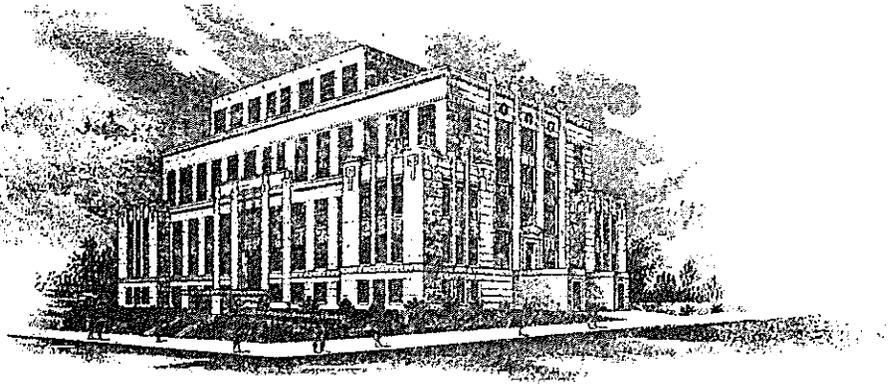
**Elected/Appointed Official/Dept. Head:** Commissioner Margaret J. Gómez

**Commissioners Court Sponsor:** Commissioner Margaret J. Gómez

### **AGENDA LANGUAGE:**

**DISCUSS AND TAKE APPROPRIATE ACTION ON PHASE I OF THE ACCELERATED ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY AND MOBILITY/ TRANSPORTATION STRATEGY FOR SOUTHEASTERN TRAVIS COUNTY (PRECINCT 4), INCLUDING:**

- A. Approval of the construction of a five (5) lane road from Pearce to SH 71 effectively extending Kellam to SH 71 to be completed by May 1, 2014.
- B. Approval of the expansion of Elroy Road to a four(4) lane road from McAngus to Kellam by May 1, 2014.
- C. Approval of a Resolution for an Interlocal Agreement with Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority (CTRMA) for Planning, Design, Engineering and Construction of the road plan.
- D. Discussion of the County's Intent to Issue Certificates of Obligation to fund the planning, Right of Way Acquisition, Engineering and Construction of the roads.



MARGARET J. GÓMEZ  
COMMISSIONER, PRECINCT 4

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**To: Commissioners Court**

**From: Margaret J. Gómez, Commissioner, Precinct 4**

**Date: August 20, 2013**

**MOTION: DISCUSS AND TAKE APPROPRIATE ACTION ON PHASE I OF THE ACCELERATED ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY AND MOBILITY/ TRANSPORTATION STRATEGY FOR SOUTHEASTERN TRAVIS COUNTY (PRECINCT 4), INCLUDING:**

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- C. Approval of a Resolution for an Interlocal Agreement with Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority (CTRMA) for Planning, Design, Engineering and Construction of the road plan.
- D. Discussion of the County's Intent to Issue Certificates of Obligation to fund the planning, Right of Way Acquisition, Engineering and Construction of the roads.

**BACKGROUND/SUMMARY OF REQUEST:**

County governments are statutorily limited in many areas, but they have statutory authority with regard to the construction and maintenance of roads in the unincorporated areas of the county. Fundamentally, the lack of road infrastructure and connectivity is a disincentive for economic expansion and business attraction that would lead to job creation.

This plan starts with an aggressive plan for road construction beginning in the areas in SE Travis County that have the highest potential for attracting new or expanded businesses most quickly.

**(A)** Approving the construction of a five (5) lane road from Pearce to SH 71 will take financial advantage of the offer of landowner contributions for total donation of Right of Way, open up significant opportunity for economic development and increased values on that roadway, and increase the safety of school children by offering a bypass from Ross Rd (3 DVISD schools and School Administration Offices) to SH 71, increase mobility of residents and improve traffic management of event traffic. This road needs to be completed expeditiously. The project is shovel ready and will enhance commercial development in the area with access to SH71. In addition, due to the location of Circuit of The Americas and its ability to grow and attract feeder businesses, the greatest potential for near term development and job creation as well as increased property values will be in this region. The road is needed and both interest rates and construction costs are escalating.

**(B)** Approving the expansion of Elroy Road to a four(4) lane road from McAngus to Kellam will enable mobility of residents and event traffic and replace a 2 lane bridge that is too low and is subjected to flooding. It is a narrow 2 lane road with deep ditches on both sides of the road. This expansion was approved on CAMPO prior to COTA. The need for this road is compelling and waiting will only perpetuate the unsafe conditions. Waiting will also cost taxpayers more money as both the interest rates and construction costs are escalating.

**(C)** Approval of a Resolution for an Interlocal Agreement with Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority (CTRMA) for Planning, Design, Engineering and Construction of the road plan allows us to partner with the CTRMA which has expertise in planning and executing regional transportation plans. There are tremendous opportunities for the residents and businesses in this region if the planning and execution of those plans are successfully and expeditiously implemented.

**(D)** Discussion of the County's Intent to Issue Certificates of Obligation to fund the planning, Right of Way Acquisition, Engineering and Construction of the roads. Certificates of obligation are a viable method for financing road construction. In addition, because of the county's excellent AAA bond rating interest rates will be on the lowest end of market rates.

#### **ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES:**

This strategic initiative will focus primarily on three basic economic opportunity areas- Roads, Education and Jobs. Focusing attention on these three fundamental areas that the county can directly and/or indirectly impact has the greatest chance of success in providing the foundation for meaningful economic opportunity in both the short term and the long term.

Precinct 4 has a disproportionate number of citizens that are economically disadvantaged. 27% of the population is living in poverty compared to 15% in Travis County and 17% in the State of Texas. The average per capita income is only \$19,293 compared to \$25,548 in the State of Texas. 30.2% of Precinct 4 residents did not graduate high school compared to 19.6% in the State of Texas.

When it comes to children, the numbers are even more dire. 85% of the students in Del Valle ISD are considered economically disadvantaged. 80% of the students are Hispanic/Latino.

In the Elroy area because of the lack of development, residents do not have access to basic services that residents in other parts of the county enjoy. This is an area of the county that needs immediate help. Some of these strategies will have to be implemented not consecutively, but concurrently. Business as usual is not good enough. In terms of prioritization, it is time for SE Travis County Precinct 4 to be in the front of the line—not at the end.

A large concentration of Hispanic /Latino residents live in SE Travis County. “The Hispanic Quality of Life Report” although commissioned by the City of Austin and related to the City of Austin, certainly documents that there is a need for action and that the Hispanic/Latino community feels left out. In the introduction to the Report it states “ When it comes to the economy, we can feel marginalized when we see new construction, development and prosperity around us, yet don’t feel this progress reflected in our neighborhoods or communities.” The Report further goes on to say “Hispanics sometimes say they feel invisible, on the outside looking in.” It is time for this to stop. Unfortunately, there is no instantaneous magic bullet. The longer we wait and do little or nothing, the longer the cycle of invisibility persists. The cycle of invisibility for children is especially damaging.

This plan provides an accelerated economic opportunity and mobility plan for the residents of SE Travis County in which a foundation is created for economic growth and development including the quality of life for constituents by assessing the assets the area currently has and leveraging those assets.

Assets in the unincorporated areas of SE Travis County that can be leveraged quickly to get results--

- ✓ Residents with a strong willingness to work and entrepreneurial spirit
- ✓ Landowners committed to economic opportunity that have voluntarily come forward to donate Right of Way to build a major 4 lane road plus a turn lane
- ✓ Circuit of the Americas, an internationally recognized entertainment and motorsport venue, providing resources, jobs, and educational partnerships chose to locate in Precinct 4
- ✓ Circuit of the Americas, an economic catalyst for attracting new ancillary businesses
- ✓ A significant amount of underutilized undeveloped land
- ✓ Proximity to SH 130 section 4
- ✓ Proximity to SH 71 and potential to connect
- ✓ Proximity to Austin-Bergstrom International Airport

The spin-off developments specifically because of the proximity to COTA will likely generate sales tax and property taxes for DelValle ISD, Travis County, the Central Health District, Austin Community College, and The Elroy Library. This leverages the County's and

States' investments in road infrastructure. This heightened interest in development is a momentum that needs to be capitalized upon before it dissipates.

The road situation for visitors and residents is just "make do". If we want robust economic opportunities, we need to invest in a road system that serves our citizens as well as providing mobility and a platform for new businesses and business expansion. Our road system should signify that we are proud of SE Travis County and that we welcome visitors to it.

**FISCAL IMPACT AND SOURCE OF FUNDING:**

The county could issue CO's in March at its usual issuance date. This would result in no tax increase for FY 2014 in that the first debt service payment would be due in 2015.