



## Travis County Commissioners Court Agenda Request

**Meeting Date:** November 19, 2013

**Prepared By:** Cynthia C. McDonald **Phone #:** (512) 854-4239

**Division Director/Manager:** Carol B. Joseph

*Carol B. Joseph*

**Department Head:** Steven M. Manilla, P.E., County Executive-TNR

**Sponsoring Court Member:** County Judge Samuel T. Biscoe

**AGENDA LANGUAGE:** Consider and take appropriate action on the following requests:

- A) Approve the issuance of \$315,000 in Certificates of Obligation to replace the restroom at Hamilton Pool Park;
- B) Approve the issuance of \$200,000 in Certificates of Obligation to upgrade sidewalks at Southeast Metropolitan Park, East Metropolitan Park, and Northeast Metropolitan Park;
- C) Approve the issuance of \$80,000 in Certificates of Obligation to replace playscape equipment at Richard Moya Park; and
- D) Approve the issuance of \$341,000 for rebuilding and relocating the maintenance building at Richard Moya Park

### **BACKGROUND/SUMMARY OF REQUEST:**

As part of the FY2014 Budget process, TNR included requests for the Hamilton Pool Park restroom replacement, metropolitan park sidewalk upgrades, and the Moya Park playscape replacements. Only 50% of the playscape replacement costs (\$80,000) were recommended and approved during the budget process. Each of these park requests result from concerns regarding public health and safety issues. (Please see below, along with the attachments provided.) Item D is a new request to rebuild the maintenance building at Richard Moya Park in an area with higher elevation, which should help reduce the impact of any future floods. Therefore, TNR recommends the approval of items A through D above, at a total cost of \$936,000.

### **STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:**

While TNR understands the fiscal constraints and concerns expressed by PBO during the budget process, we believe that these projects are critical for FY2014. Providing funding this year would allow TNR to mitigate the existing hazardous conditions. In addition, it would be prudent to relocate the maintenance building at Moya Park to an area that should be high enough to avoid flooding during most storm events. Therefore, we are asking the Court to approve the issuance of a total of \$595,000 in Certificates of Obligation for the park projects listed above.

## **ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES:**

Hamilton Pool Restroom -- Over the last 25 years, visitation to Hamilton Pool has nearly doubled. The existing composting restroom is not designed to handle the number visitors to the park, and frequently has to be closed for pumping. Visitors are regularly subjected to noxious odors that result from the inadequacy of the overloaded composting process. Because the composting restroom is consistently being used beyond its capacity, staff is required to service the restroom more frequently, creating a hazardous work environment for park staff who must maintain the restroom. The proposed project would replace the existing system with a standard restroom, septic system, and potable water.

Parks staff will be proposing an increase in park entry fees for Hamilton Pool and other parks in early January, 2014. However, with the current lake levels and the effects of the drought impacting visitation at our Lake Travis parks, these revenues are not anticipated to fully offset the cost of the Hamilton Pool restroom. Also, visitation levels and revenues usually drop off initially when fees are increased. After time, fee increases would raise revenues to offset the added expense of park improvements.

Metropolitan Park Sidewalk Upgrades -- This request is to continue to address major cracking in the concrete hike and bike trails in the metropolitan parks. In FY2012, the Court approved \$310,675 for the most serious problems. However, there is still approximately 3,995 feet of trail that requires upgrading to eliminate not only the existing cracks, but to allow maintenance and emergency vehicle use.

Moya Park Playscapes -- The FY2014 budget includes \$80,000 for replacing existing playscape at Moya Park. The total cost of the replacement is \$160,000, and PBO had recommended using the Parkland Dedication fund for the other \$80,000. Parks management has already earmarked those funds for other purposes, including the BMX track at Northeast Metro Park, and therefore, does not have suitable funding for the remaining \$80,000.

Moya Park Maintenance Building -- The maintenance building at Moya Park was submerged and damaged during the October 31, 2013 flood event. While the cost to repair/rebuild in the current location is approximately \$50,000 to \$75,000, staff believes that it would be best to relocate the building to higher ground so that it would suffer less damage in future flood events. The current estimated cost of relocating the building is \$340,975 with the breakdown detailed below. If Risk Management pays for any of the loss sustained, then TNR expects that the CO issuance could be reduced by that same amount.

- Building \$150,000 (\$65 per SF)

- Concrete slab \$29,000
- Fence \$30,000 (3,000 LF X \$10 per LF)
- Driveway \$87,500
- 15% Contingency \$44,475

**FISCAL IMPACT AND SOURCE OF FUNDING:**

The proposed source of funding is through the issuance of Certificates of Obligation for FY2014. The fiscal impact will be to increase outstanding obligations by a total of \$936,000, and therefore will affect the County's debt model.

**ATTACHMENTS/EXHIBITS:**

Detail Project Descriptions:

- 1) Hamilton Pool Restroom Replacement
- 2) Metropolitan Park Sidewalk Upgrades
- 3) Moya Park Playscape Replacement

**REQUIRED AUTHORIZATIONS:**

Cynthia McDonald	Financial Manager	TNR	(512) 854-4239
Steven M. Manilla	County Executive	TNR	(512) 854-9429

**CC:**


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**0101 - Administrative -**

<b>FY 2014 BUDGET SUBMISSION CAPITAL PROJECTS BUDGET REQUEST</b>
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**Project Name:** Hamilton Pool Preserve Restroom Replacement

**Description:**

This proposal requests funding to replace the existing 25 year old Clivus composting restroom at Hamilton Pool Preserve with a standard restroom and septic system, and upgrade the existing water well to a TCEQ approved potable water supply.

**Timeline:**

If funded, staff will proceed with the design process of the restroom, septic system and water system upgrades in winter 2013-14. Construction on the facilities would start in late summer, 2014. The projected completion date is fall 2014.

Because Hamilton Pool Preserve is a part of the Balcones Canyonlands Conservation Plan (BCCP) and is the spring/summer home for the Golden Cheeked Warbler (federally listed as endangered species), construction cannot take place during their nesting season which is from March 1<sup>st</sup> through mid-August.

**Why project is needed? What is the benefit, and to whom?:**

This proposal would provide the public with sanitary, flush-toilet restroom facilities and potable water at Hamilton Pool Preserve for the first time since the preserve opened to the public. The new restroom and upgrades to the water system would provide restroom facilities similar to those in all other improved parks in Travis County.

Travis County purchased Hamilton Pool Preserve in the mid 1980's with voter approved bonds. When the preserve was originally Master Planned, the Plan included constructing a composting restroom facility for visitors. The existing composting restroom was designed for, and provided for; levels of visitation experienced at that time but can no longer meet the demands of increased use seen over the past few years.

Over the last 25 years, visitation to Hamilton Pool has grown along with the entire Travis County population. In FY-1993 (The first park visitation data that has been documented), Hamilton Pool experienced 54,585 visitors. In FY-2012 Hamilton Pool experienced 91,982 visitors. Because of the increase in visitation over this time period, the composting restroom has become less and less efficient; to the point where it can no longer function as designed. On a regular basis the restroom needs to be closed to the public and pumped out because the amount of human fecal matter continues to build at a much more rapid rate than can decompose. Closing the restroom is a significant inconvenience for the public and staff. We have experienced increased costs due to the need for frequent pumping of the waste collection bins as well as additional costs to rent portable toilets while the restroom is closed for pumping. Visitors are regularly subjected to noxious odors that result from the inadequacy of the overloaded composting process.

In addition, as the existing facility has no running water, visitors cannot wash up after using the restroom except by using gel hand sanitizer.

**Issues and opportunities:**

By funding this request, Travis County Parks will be able to provide our preserve visitors sanitary and functioning restrooms as well as potable water to wash with or drink as there is currently no potable water on site. Travis County Parks will be able to provide restroom facilities at service levels comparable to those in other improved Travis County parks.

Once opened, the new restroom will free up park staff time from having to stir the fecal matter composting bins, which is done several times a week. It will also reduce the need and costs associated with routinely pumping out the composting bins and portable toilet rentals.

Additionally, because the composting restroom facility is consistently being used beyond its designed capacity, staff needs to service the restroom more frequently. This is a safety concern as in order to service the facility, staff needs to access the fecal composting matter under the restroom vaults and physically stir the fecal solution and solids. They must also mix in water and biodegradable wood chips to try to maintain a uniform decomposition slurry or "paste". This requires staff to wear protective garments, gloves and other personal protective equipment to avoid contact with the fecal bacteria that is present.

**Options:**

1. No action: If the proposal is not funded, visitors to Hamilton Pool Preserve will only have access to the composting restroom at limited intervals, would still not have the ability to wash after using the restroom and would not have potable drinking water available. Additional costs would be needed for additional portable toilet rentals and waste collection bin pumping. Some park maintenance may have to be deferred because of staff time required for maintenance of the fecal matter composting bins.
2. If funded: This proposal would provide the public with sanitary, flush-toilet restroom facilities and potable water for the first time at Hamilton Pool Preserve. The new restroom and upgrades to the water system would provide restroom facilities similar to those in all other improved parks in Travis County.

**What is the recommendation and why:**

Staff recommends funding this proposal so that Travis County Parks will be able to provide restroom facilities and potable water at service levels comparable to those in other improved Travis County parks.

**Cost Information:**

The following cost information was estimated by Chiddi N'Jie (854-7585), an engineer for TNR, Engineering Services, and is based on similar project costs.

Prefabricated Restroom Structure (installed)*	\$ 235,000
New Septic System and Septic Field	25,000
New TCEQ Approved Public Water System	35,000
<u>Old Restroom Demolition and Site Preparation</u>	<u>20,000</u>
Total Estimated Cost	\$ 315,000

\*This includes the building design and engineering costs, delivery and setup of the new building, connecting the facility to water, wastewater and electrical services. The prefabricated restrooms are designed with a projected life of 30-40 years, are built to more rigid commercial grade standards than our current site built units, meet all ADA requirements, utilize standard plumbing and lighting fixtures that match our other restrooms in our parks, are designed to be vandal-resistant and are more utilitarian for both the public as well as for maintenance.

The cost for the prefabricated restroom structure (only) is comparable to a site built structure (example: the new restrooms at Northeast Metro Park were \$199,000 and \$203,000 each, plus design and engineering costs of approximately \$20-30,000 each).

Capital Projects Budget Request  
Transportation and Natural Resources  
FY 2014

**Parks Concrete-Hike & Bike Trail Upgrade**

**\$200,000**

TNR Parks is requesting addition funds in our operating budget in the amount of \$200,000 to cover the cost of maintaining the parks' concrete hike & bike trails. Many of the concrete hike & bike trails, specifically in eastern Travis County, have become safety hazards due to the uneven surfaces of these damaged trails (see photos below).



This request would allow us to replace and upgrade approximately one half mile of concrete hike & bike trails in our Metro Parks in eastern Travis County. The most urgent need will be some areas of concrete trail at Southeast Metro Park that would be upgraded with this funding. (see below)



In 2012, Commissioners Court approved a \$310,675 package to upgrade many of the worst sections of concrete trail at the three Metro Parks. These concrete trails will be upgraded to accommodate vehicles (for maintenance and emergency access purposes) and to hold up under the expansive and contractive soil conditions that predominate eastern Travis County. Below are the estimated quantities that will be repaired with this year's funding:

Northeast Metro Park	1722 sq. yds.	@ \$70/sq. yd.	= Estimated cost of \$120,555
Southeast Metro Park	1661 sq. yds.	@ \$70/sq. yd.	= Estimated cost of \$116,270
East Metro Park	1055 sq. yds.	@ \$70/sq. yd.	= Estimated cost of \$73,850

These quantities will upgrade approximately 1,550 feet of trail at Northeast Metro Park, 1,495 feet of trail at Southeast Metro Park and 950 feet of trail at East Metro Park. Below are a couple of examples of concrete trails that will be replaced with this year's funding:



Since last year's request, park staff have inventoried the concrete hike & bike trails at Mansfield Dam, Richard Moya, and at East, Northeast and Southeast Metropolitan Parks. These are the five county parks that currently have extensive concrete hike & bike trails. Below is the approximate length each trail systems, along with the year the trails were constructed:

Mansfield Dam:	1.5 miles (7,866 linear feet)	completed in 2000
Richard Moya:	2.5 miles (13,533 linear feet)	completed in 2001 & 2007
East Metro:	5.0 miles (26,568 linear feet)	completed in 2006
Northeast Metro	5.4 miles (28,618 linear feet)	completed in 2000 & 2012
Southeast Metro	3.2 miles (16,883 linear feet)	completed in 1999

**Total: Approximately 17.6 miles of concrete hike & bike trails**

Most of these concrete trails were designed and constructed with standard sidewalk specifications. We have realized over the past ten to fifteen years that these concrete trails have a lifespan, we estimate twenty plus (20+) years, on the western side of the county; However in eastern Travis County we are seeing a ten to fifteen (10-15) year lifespan, at best, on these concrete trails.

The soils on the eastern portion of the county are comprised of high amounts of clay that expand when wet and contract during dry periods as compared to the limestone soils in the western portion of the county, which are solid. The elasticity of the clay soils causes the soil compaction of the foundation of the sidewalks to fluctuate, thereby causing the sidewalks to crack under different weather conditions.



We would like to continue this program of replacing damaged sidewalks using upgraded specifications that will accommodate vehicular traffic and the expansive/contractive soil conditions.

Based on an approximate cost of \$70 per square yard, we can replace between 2,100 and 3,150 linear feet of trail depending upon the trail width. Our concrete trails range between 8' and 12' in width.

We anticipate that, if approved, the project would go out for bid in early summer of 2014 and the work would be completed in the fourth quarter of 2014. The project would be one hundred percent funded in the FY14 Q4.

Capital Projects Budget Request  
Transportation and Natural Resources

**FY 14 Playground Safety Request**

**Project Description and Justification**

This request is placed in response to inspections completed by TNR's Safety Officer, Dennis Miller, in December of 2012. Mr. Miller is a Certified National Playground Safety Inspector. Many of the minor problems itemized during the inspections are being repaired by park staff with funds from our operating budget; however, the recommended replacement of the Richard Moya Playscape will require Capital funding.

**Equipment Replacement at Richard Moya Park (\$160,000)**

Richard Moya Park has four (4) playscapes. The playscape pictured below is over 15 years old and is located in a low area of the park; consequently, it has suffered through several floods. Much of the deck coating has been damaged and is severely rusted. Two of the slides and one of the hoods are in need of replacement. The TNR Safety Officer recommends replacing the equipment in lieu of making expensive repairs that will not necessarily extend the life of the equipment



Our recommendation is to replace the playground equipment and relocate it to an area of the park less prone to flooding. We also recommend replacing the existing wood mulch with synthetic rubber surfacing, and providing a shade cover for the area. The estimated costs are as follows:

Play equipment	\$50,000
Rubber surfacing with concrete border	\$55,000
Shade cover	\$45,000
Handicap access	\$10,000

The following information explains the advantages of rubber surfacing and the benefits of shade cover.

### **Synthetic Rubber Surfacing**

This funding would replace the wood fiber surfacing at the Richard Moya Playscape with rubber surfacing. Playground surfacing is perhaps the most important area of playground safety because it is inevitable that children will fall while climbing, swinging and sliding at the county's playgrounds. Our experience demonstrates that most loose fill surfacing, especially wood fiber, presents the largest part of our playground maintenance.

Research indicates that synthetic surfacing and wood fiber are by far the safest materials currently being used in playgrounds. Both these materials exceed the **ASTMF 1292 Standard** for impact attenuation. However, wood fiber, being loose material, does have the potential for concealing foreign objects such as broken glass, or other sharp objects. And wood fiber, if not properly maintained, loses its impact attenuation through material displacement.

#### **Installation Cost:**

The average cost for synthetic surfacing installed is \$11/square foot.

The average cost for wood fiber surfacing installed is \$2.5/square foot.

#### **Maintenance Cost:**

The synthetic surfacing generally comes with a ten-year warranty and for the most part is maintenance free. Wood fiber surfacing requires periodic maintenance, including redistribution of material in high use areas such as underneath swings and slides. Wood fiber will deteriorate and settle over time, and is prone to being thrown or carried out of the fall zone by visitors. Wood fiber also has a slight flammability risk. Historically, we have had to replace approximately 20% of wood fiber fall zone material every year, with total excavation and replacement needed every 10 years due to decomposing material.

#### **Accessibility:**

Both types of surface are currently accepted as meeting wheelchair accessibility standards. Synthetic surfacing has superior accessibility due to its inherent and durable smooth surface, and there is a possibility that the wood fiber could lose "wheelchair accessible" status in the future.

## **Shade Covers**

This request will include a shade structure for the new Richard Moya Playscape. Shade structures provide park visitors and the playscapes themselves protection from the elements.

Providing shade and weather protection to our visitors is an important service our park system can provide the public. The Skin Cancer Awareness Foundation claims that just one blistering sunburn during childhood nearly doubles the lifetime risk of melanoma. Research also indicates that shade structures reduce the quantity of UV radiation children receive, and another important advantage of shade is the relatively cooler play structure surfaces.

We have installed a shade structure over many of our other playscapes. We have realized the following benefits:

- The structure allows heat to escape, thus providing a cool, shaded area for children to play and for all park visitors to relax
- The structure protects the equipment color from fading
- The structure is an attractive addition to the park.
- The structure reduces the cost of playscape maintenance due to wear from weather conditions, especially exposure to intense sunlight that breaks down plastics

## **Staff Recommendation**

Play apparatus for children are one of the most used features in our parks. National statistics show that over 200,000 children are injured on playgrounds in the United States each year. As stewards of Travis County Parks, one of our primary goals is to provide safe recreational opportunities for children visiting our parks. The elements of this request will promote the following:

- Safe areas for children to play
- Physical challenges that promote childhood fitness
- A positive public image of TNR and Parks
- Improved accessibility
- Lower maintenance costs

Creating a safe environment for children's play does not mean that we produce a "risk free" environment. Learning and play involves *risk taking* on the part of our visitors. Our duty is to remove or control all recognized *hazards* in the play area.

Over 70% of children's playground injuries result from falls. Therefore, the primary consideration for playscape safety is ensuring the ground surface is designed to absorb the shock of a child's fall.

Providing shade and weather protection to our visitors is an important service our park system can provide the public. If funded, this request will result in creating play areas that are safe and enjoyable for our park visitors.