



Travis County Commissioners Court Agenda Request

Meeting Date: September 30, 2014

Prepared By: Morgan Cotten, P.E. **Phone #:** (512) 854-9434

Division Director/Manager: Steven M. Manilla, P.E.

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 changes to the membership and scope of the Bicycle Safety Task Force to address bicycle safety on Travis County roads in unincorporated areas.

BACKGROUND/SUMMARY OF REQUEST:

In February 2011 the Commissioners Court approved a TNR recommendation to create a Bicycle Safety Task Force chartered with developing recommendations for potential projects to utilize bond funds if they got approved in a November 2011 bond referendum. The Task Force worked to develop a strategy for expending voter approved funds. The Task Force ceased meeting in late 2011 to await the results of the bond election. The bond referendum passed and it provides \$3,333,000 for bike safety projects in all precincts.

The Task Force is ready to begin meetings to complete their original charge but the length of time since they last met may have been too long. TNR is therefore seeking the Court's input on any changes it may desire. The Task Force will be asked to help identify projects for future grant funded project calls such as the Transportation Alternatives Program (old TEP), STP-MM program and for future capital bond elections. The Task Force will be asked to participate and provide information into a future Travis County Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Trails Plan.

The Travis County Joint Task Force is intended only to be supplement to the City of Austin Streets Smarts Task Force Final Report, which is a much greater vision to "transform Austin into a world class bicycling city," and its broader mission "to create and promote environment for the friendly co-existence of bicycle riders and other transportation users in Austin;" rather, while the City's purpose is commendable, the County's more narrow concern is simply to improve safety for cycling on all county roads.

Original Private Sector Members include:

Andrew Willis

James Murff

Kim Wilson

Tom Wald (advisor)

Proposed Private Sector Members:
Erick Benz: eebenz@yahoo.com
Andrew Willis: andaroowillis@gmail.com
Kim Wilson: kimjwilson@gmail.com
James Murff: jmurff@bada-co.com
Chad Cragar (advisor)

Various TNR Support Staff include:
TNR Parks Director Charles Bergh
TNR Assistant Public Works Director Don Ward, P.E.
TNR Traffic Engineer David Greear, P.E.
TNR Transportation Planner Charlie Watts, AICP
David Shore, TNR GIS Program Manager

Bicycle safety is an issue that needs to be addressed. State law allows that bicyclist may ride on public roadways; however, the condition of some of the roads can make bicycling on them risky. As Travis County's population grows, more people are bicycling and using rural roads for recreation and commuting. On the other hand, obtaining funds for roadway construction and maintenance continues to be a challenge; one that results in increased risks for bicyclists.

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

TNR staff recommends the appointment of TNR's Public Works Director Morgan Cotten to replace Steve Manilla and the addition of Erick Benz of Bike Austin. Note that the Task Force may solicit advice and seek help communicating with the biking community on an as-needed basis. These "advisors" will be non-voting participants. Tom Wald served in this capacity for the original Task Force and may continue doing so. Chad Cragar, the Manager of Community Services Division of the City of Austin Public Works Department, has also expressed interest.

ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES:

FISCAL IMPACT AND SOURCE OF FUNDING:

Voters approved \$3,333,000 in 2011 for bike safety projects in all four precincts. Identifying which roads to expend these funds upon is to be determined by the Task Force and presented as recommendations to the Court for final approvals.

Requests to use the 2011 voter approved bonds for various purposes have been received by TNR and forwarded to PBO for analysis. Questions include the following:

- 1) Can the 2011 Bond Funds be used to add bike lanes to State Highways e.g. FM 3238?

2) Can the 2011 Bond Funds be used for bike facility improvements in County parks.

3) Can the 2011 Bond Funds be used to add paved shoulders, seal pavement cracks, re-stripe roadways, provide roadway surface treatments to improve skid resistance and riding comfort, cut back vegetation that may obscure visibility, and install bike warning signs.

4) Can the 2011 Bond Funds be used with other funds. For example use 2011 funds to install paved shoulders on up-hill grades and use other funds to install bike lanes on downhill grades. (Bicyclists have indicated that they only need widened shoulders on up-hill grades but there are safety benefits to motorists for having them on both sides of the road).

5) Can the 2011 Bond Funds be used for city-county participation on projects and county- non-profit participation. (Thinking of the Austin to Manor Trail and the Hill Country Conservancy's Walk for a Day Trail... if a precinct has an interest in seeing projects like those completed, can we use 2011 bond funds to participate?

A product of this committee could be the setting of an expectation that more resources will be allocated to inventorying and maintaining roadways frequented by bicyclist at a higher standard.

ATTACHMENTS/EXHIBITS:

REQUIRED AUTHORIZATIONS:

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

CC:

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