



TRAVIS COUNTY, CHANGING FOR THE BETTER

Travis County is changing. But, we are changing for the better. Here's what's new in Travis County:

*We are changing how we deliver civil justice*

We are starting fresh, without a specific site in mind nor set notions of the kind of building we need. County staff have sifted the “must haves” from the “want to haves.” Our Citizens Advisory Committee is challenging our assumptions. And, we are challenging our colleagues in the judiciary to reimagine and reinvent how we deliver justice by looking at operational changes in the Court system, how we use our space in the old Heman Marion Sweatt Courthouse and how we might use refurbished space in the old Federal Courthouse if we are able to acquire it.

*We are changing how we deliver criminal justice*

After making some systematic changes, the Sheriff's office is once again providing families and friends Face-to-Face visits with their loved ones. TCSO has provided more than 500 face-to-face visits since late April and will be able to provide more per day with new scheduling software later in the year.

*We are changing into an international community*

We are looking at the legal issues faced by our international immigrant population. We are coordinating locally, regionally and across peer urban counties in Texas to ensure our communities are safe and welcoming for everyone, regardless of their immigration status.

Last Thursday evening I hosted another meeting with local and regional stakeholders to discuss the DAPA/DACA case currently before the Supreme Court and local steps we can take now. A ruling on the DAPA/DACA case is expected in June and is likely to be a 4-4 decision leaving us in limbo on meaningful immigration reform. So, we are looking at developing the following to reduce confusion and anxiety among our foreign born community:

- Video Public Service Announcements and tutorials addressing frequently asked questions
- A County-sponsored Consolidated Calendar of immigration-related events and workshops (launched last week at <https://www.traviscountytexas.gov/health-human-services/immigration-legal-resources/calendar>)
- Provide assistance gathering important documents – birth certificates, utility and rent history, use of the matrícula consular and other forms of ID.

*We are changing the way we move through our sensitive environment*

I continue to work with the CTRMA and CapMetro to make sure that CTRMA projects on MoPac and 183 are designed for park-and-ride, buses, bikes and pedestrian access. And, I continue to urge the CTRMA to dedicate now some portion of future toll revenues off of its projects to the operation of the transit system that will be embedded in our highway network.

I continue to urge TxDOT to address the very real environmental concerns inherent in the CTRMA projects over the critical recharge zone of the Edwards Aquifer and passing through endangered species habitat including managed lanes on MoPac South and the rightfully embattled 45SW.

And don't forget Lone Star Rail. Lone Star Rail as an organization suffered a blow to its credibility when Union Pacific recently stepped away from negotiations. But, Lone Star Rail as a project is a crucial part of our transportation solutions. I am working with TxDOT, the Alamo Area MPO and CAMPO to get us back on the rails.

*We are changing where we live, how we live and increasing access to prosperity for more Travis County residents*

We are proactively reaching out to communities that may not know what Travis County is planning and the services we offer. In addition to my monthly coffee jolts in coffee shops around the county, we are adding quarterly Travis County Community Fairs in each quadrant of the County. We will host our first Travis County Community Fair in the southeast quadrant of the County on Saturday, June 4th from 10am-2pm at Creedmoor Elementary School in Del Valle. As we rotate through the county we will check back in on progress we've made and services that may be of use to friends and neighbors such as job opportunities and workforce training, meals for seniors, emergency rent and utility assistance and in-home parenting support.

#### HOW DO WE PAY FOR ALL OF THIS?

Through careful planning and relatively small property tax adjustments up and down over the years we have met and even anticipated the needs of a growing county. Although we raised taxes in FY09 to meet increasing need in the face of economic downturn, we responsibly adjusted the tax rate downward in subsequent years and decreased County property taxes for the average homestead owner by \$5 in FY 2015 and \$1 in FY 2016. We already employ the most generous homestead exemption allowed by law – 20%. And for our senior and disabled residents we currently exempt the first \$75,000 of value from taxation and are considering raising that exemption to \$80,000.

But, we anticipate some cost drivers that will make it unlikely we will be able to decrease the County property taxes for the average homestead owner again this year. Those cost drivers include:

- Increases to our interlocal agreements with the City of Austin (\$2.1M)
  - Health and Human Services Interlocal
  - Emergency Medical Services Interlocal
- Increases in costs for indigent defense and Morton Act discovery on criminal cases (\$1.5M).
  - Looking at whether we can improve the delivery of justice for the poorest among us by changing the way and the amounts we pay for indigent defense.
  - Adding staff to comply with Michael Morton Act and new rules re: DNA evidence

These combined with the personnel costs necessary to provide baseline county services will likely result in a tax increase. But, I promise you we can keep it under 4% as we have for almost every year for the last 10 years. I am a Social Liberal. But I am also a Fiscal Conservative.

#### THANK YOU

To my friends & family, and especially my children, for supporting my work as a public servant.

To my staff and all the employees of Travis County. I am grateful to work every day with dedicated public servants committed to making Travis County a more resilient community.

Most importantly, thank you to the residents of Travis County for making this such a wonderful place to live and work.