

T R A V I S C O U N T Y

**LWTP**



LAND, WATER & TRANSPORTATION PLAN

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ADOPTED DECEMBER 2, 2014

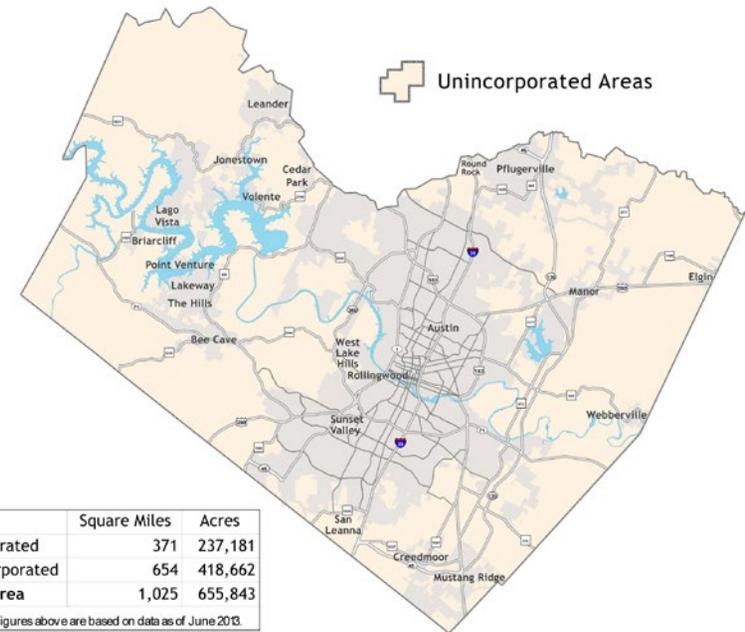


# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR TRAVIS COUNTY

The Travis County Land, Water & Transportation Plan (LWTP) is a framework for formulating and enacting policies and capital improvement programs to guide growth while protecting critical natural resources in unincorporated Travis County.

The Travis County Commissioners Court adopted the LWTP in an effort to guide the extraordinary and continuous population growth occurring throughout Central Texas and more efficiently and effectively provide county services to keep up with the corresponding demand. Joining with other local elected officials in the region, the county commissioners and county staff want to minimize conventional urban sprawl. The goals and resulting policies of the LWTP should encourage more efficient and less expensive development patterns similar to those when the region was initially urbanized.



### The plan specifically addresses county services provided through the Travis County Transportation and Natural Resources (TNR) Department, including:

- Planning, building, and maintaining roads, parks, and drainage systems
- Regulating the subdivision of property; construction of streets and drainage in subdivisions; and development in floodplains
- Mitigating the impacts of wildfire, flood, and other natural hazards
- Protecting natural resources within the county's jurisdiction



## BALANCING DEVELOPMENT & CONSERVATION

The LWTP seeks to balance development with natural resource conservation by combining the County's Development Concept with its Land Conservation Concept to create an overarching Growth Guidance Concept.

TNR staff combined all TNR plans, regulations, and other programs that had been previously vetted by the public and adopted by the Commissioners Court as the basis for the Development and Land Conservation Concepts. Once integrated, staff analyzed the resulting groups of policies to identify where there were gaps; and, given the constraints, priority areas where the county can most efficiently make investments in the near future to obtain long range goals. The Growth Guidance Concept also highlights where the Development and Land Conservation Concepts are in harmony and where they conflict. As a result of this analysis, the LWTP identifies 33 actions the county can take, working with other public and private stakeholders in the region, to ensure that county infrastructure projects and incentives help steer growth in the region to more closely coincide with the Growth Guidance Concept.

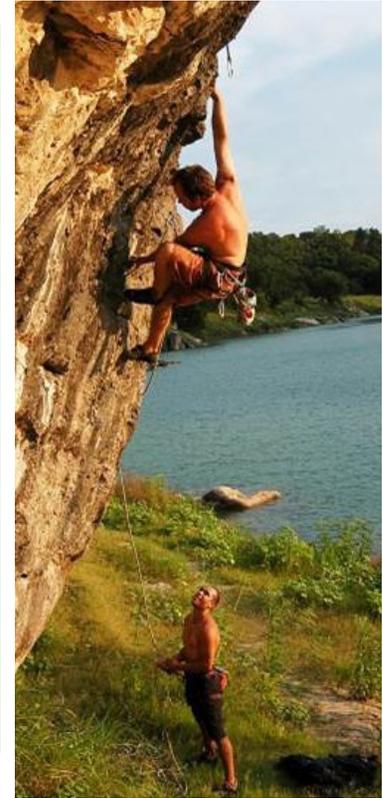
## LWTP GOALS

- Help establish priorities for the transportation and conservation-related Capital Improvement Programs (CIPs)
- Guide the formulation of growth-related policies and practices
- Guide long-range, collaborative planning efforts
- Guide transportation and conservation-related public/private partnerships
- Inform the county's legislative program
- Guide annual work plans and budgets
- Foster meaningful public engagement in all of the above

Austin/Travis County Community Wildfire Protection Plan  
 Balcones Canyonlands Conservation Plan (BCCP)  
 Conservation Development Ordinance  
 County Parks and Natural Areas Master Plan  
 Lake Travis Parks Master Plan  
 Plan for Onion Creek Greenway  
 Colorado River Corridor Plan  
 Travis County Drainage Basin Study 2009  
 2010/2011 Hazard Mitigation Plan Update  
 Travis County Storm Water Management Program (SWMP)  
 Water Availability Rule  
 Water Quality Protection Rule



CAMPO 2035 Plan  
 Development Permits and Regulation  
 Floodplain Management  
 Rules for Onsite Sewage Facilities  
 Travis County Pavement Management Work Plan  
 Travis County Sidewalk Policy



# DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT

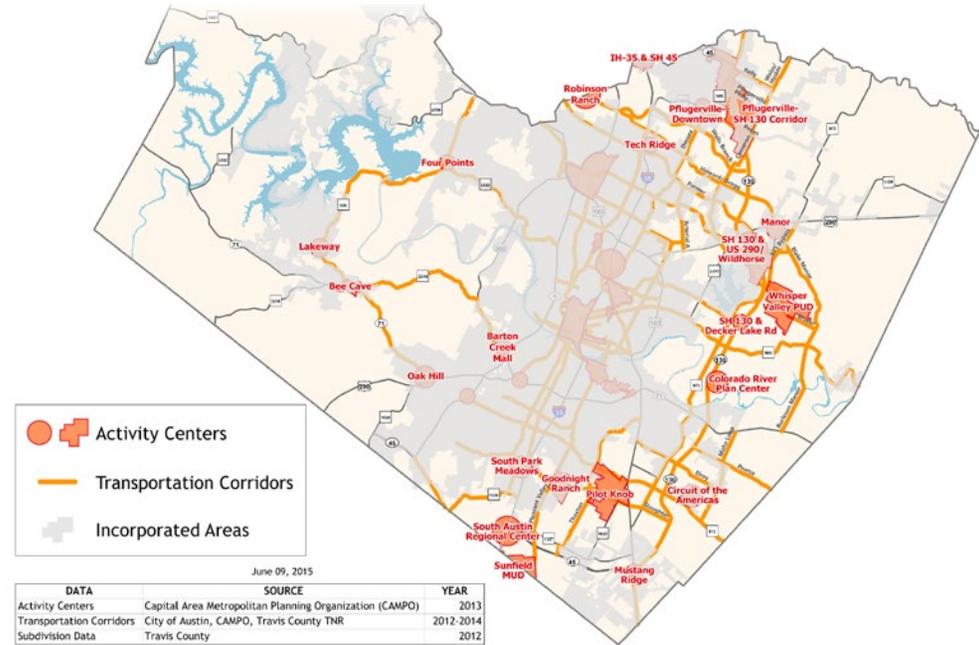
*The Development Concept encourages and supports new growth in the unincorporated areas of Travis County to be more compact and connected. The Development Concept offers residents living in “activity centers” more housing and transportation choices by encouraging alternatives to single-family only land development patterns and mobility options for all ages beyond the automobile.*

The Development Concept is built around the same future development patterns envisioned in the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization’s (CAMPO) 2035 Regional Transportation Plan and the transportation corridors in the City of Austin’s Imagine Austin comprehensive plan. If implemented properly, activity centers and multi-modal transportation corridors produce more dense development and reduce the number of miles residents must drive each day, thereby requiring less roadway infrastructure, and smaller infrastructure footprints that negatively impact land and water resources.

**Activity Centers** are mixed-use developments with density and design attributes that accommodate vehicular traffic, support walking and biking, and are conducive to transit options. The county does not develop activity centers but is involved in supporting and regulating this development. The county can encourage activity centers by providing public infrastructure such as multi-modal roads, drainage features, parks, trails, and county facilities within them as well as expediting development permits when possible.

**Transportation Corridors** accommodate multiple modes of transportation including automobiles, pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit, as well as connect activity centers. Transportation corridors also provide opportunities to add automobile lane capacity or other modes of transportation choices while guiding new growth in specific areas.

The Development Concept promotes various housing options (low density, single-family, townhomes, and apartments), including those for low-to moderate-income working families, in mixed-use, compact, and walkable developments. It also encourages transportation systems that accommodate multiple ways for people of all ages and abilities to travel.



## TRANSPORTATION CORRIDOR PRIORITIES

### EAST PRIORITIES – SH 130 CORRIDOR

The LWTP identifies the need for additional road capacity and transportation corridors such as a new crossing of the Colorado River to support new developments including single and multifamily subdivisions and large mixed-use activity centers.

### WEST PRIORITIES – RM 620 CORRIDOR

Planned activity centers in this area will require improvements to all transportation modes along RM 620 and connections to RM 620 (RM 2244, RM 2222, SH 71).

# LAND CONSERVATION CONCEPT

*Travis County's conservation efforts are built upon 20 years of preserving habitats of endangered species and acquiring parkland in unincorporated Travis County.*

In more recent times, the county has participated in buy-outs of residential properties in flood prone areas, adopted a parkland dedication ordinance, and established a Conservation Easement Program for preserving farmland and natural areas in partnership with landowners, other governmental agencies, and land conservancies. The Land Conservation Concept strives to connect Conservation Areas via River and Creek Corridors.

**Conservation Areas** are comprised of contiguous, uninterrupted tracts of land that have characteristics prioritized for conservation. Such tracts help preserve water resources, reduce wildlife and ecosystem fragmentation, increase opportunities for natural recreational experiences, and enhance property values of residences with scenic views.

**River and Creek Corridors** are minimally developed lands following waterways, often used for passive recreation or agriculture. Such parcels help reduce water pollution, reduce land erosion, and accommodate wildlife corridors and recreational trails while also enhancing property values.

## CONSERVATION PRIORITIES

- Prime Farmland



- Post Oak Savannah



- Threatened and Endangered Species Habitat



- Barton Creek and Little Barton Creek Watersheds



- 100-year Floodplain



- Natural Springs



## EAST PRIORITIES

- Complete Colorado River, Onion Creek, and Gilleland Creek corridors conservation
- Initiate Wilbarger Creek corridor conservation
- Initiate Prime Farmland and Post Oak Savannah conservation

## WEST PRIORITIES

- Complete Balcones Canyonlands Preserve acquisitions
- Complete Pedernales River corridor conservation
- Initiate Barton Creek and Little Barton Creek Watershed conservation

# GROWTH GUIDANCE CONCEPT

*The LWTP Growth Guidance Concept integrates the land conservation and development goals, objectives, concepts, and policies already adopted by Travis County and identifies areas in unincorporated Travis County where the two underlying concepts may benefit one another or be in conflict. This umbrella concept provides a framework for developing TNR's annual work plans, setting budget and capital improvement priorities, developing growth-related policies and practices, and informing the county's legislative agenda.*

## DEVELOPMENT AND CONSERVATION INTERESTS

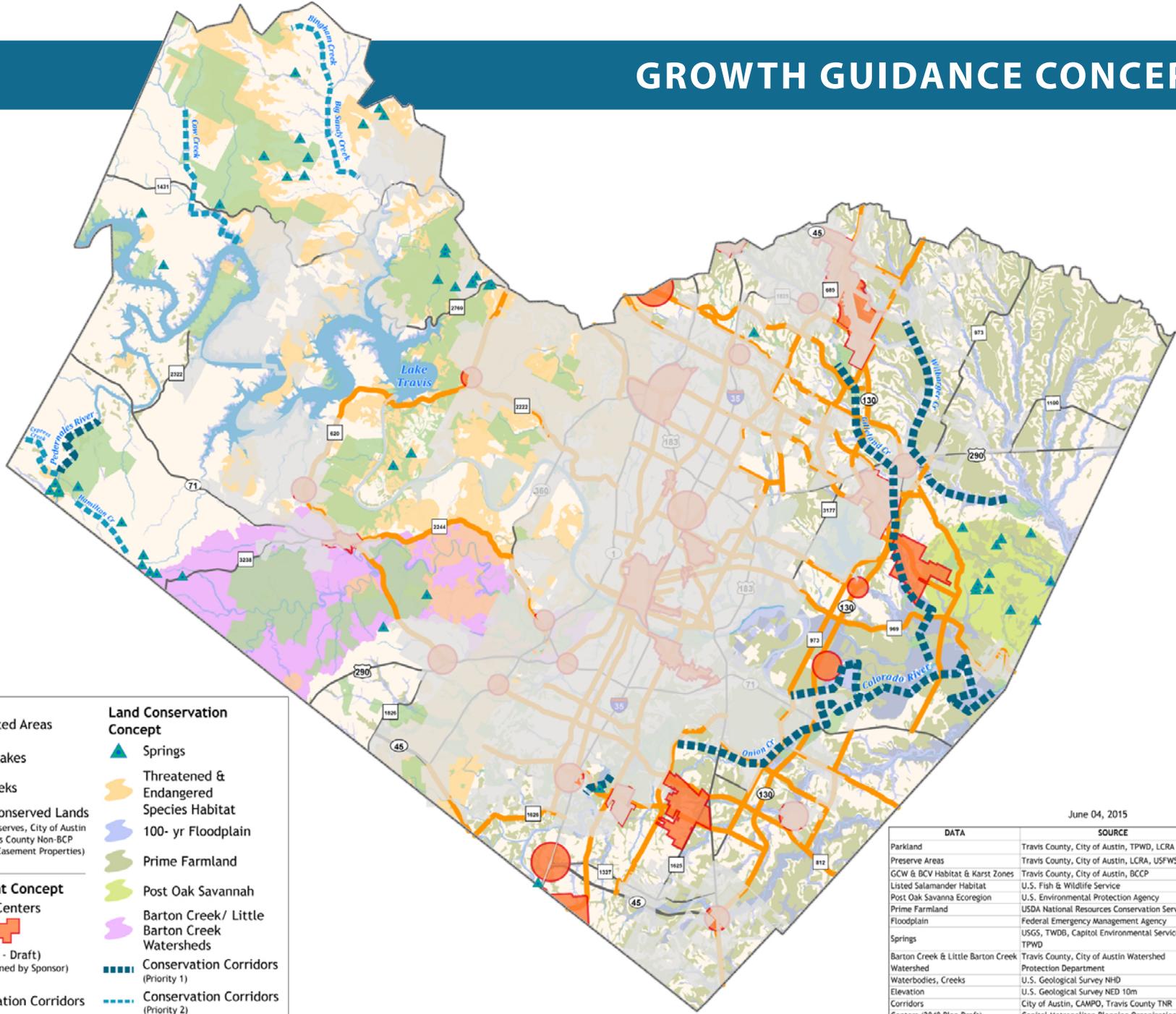
**The Growth Guidance Concept identifies areas of unincorporated Travis County where both development and conservation interests need to be considered. For example:**

- More intense development pressure on land and water resources is occurring in the eastern half of the county than the western half. Supporting compact development along the SH 130 corridor would allow stakeholders to implement more conservation measures ahead of development.
- Conservation of the Post Oak Savannah and adjacent Blackland Prairie and Colorado River Floodplain is time sensitive because development is encroaching from the west.
- Development in the Elgin activity center in Bastrop County affects the county's ability to conserve prime farmland and potential conservation corridors in northeast Travis County.
- The Manor activity center is notable because it is a bridge between the Wilbarger Creek conservation corridor to the northeast and the Gilleland Creek conservation corridor to the southwest.
- A comprehensive bike and pedestrian trail system – interconnecting transportation and conservation corridors – can be developed in the SH 130 corridor.



- The Colorado River and eastern creek corridors connect to several activity centers and help mitigate the environmental impacts of development while offering natural recreational opportunities close to where people live.
- Planned transportation corridors cross numerous floodplains, including the Colorado River's broad floodplain, and are areas of potential conflicts.
- Topography, conservation lands, and the location of the Balcones Canyonland Preserve limit new transportation corridor development options in western Travis County.

# GROWTH GUIDANCE CONCEPT



Incorporated Areas	<b>Land Conservation Concept</b>
Rivers & Lakes	Springs
Major Creeks	Threatened & Endangered Species Habitat
Existing Conserved Lands (Parkland, Preserves, City of Austin WQPL, & Travis County Non-BCP Conservation Easement Properties)	100- yr Floodplain
<b>Development Concept</b>	Prime Farmland
<b>Activity Centers</b>	Post Oak Savannah
(2040 Plan - Draft) (Boundaries as defined by Sponsor)	Barton Creek/ Little Barton Creek Watersheds
Transportation Corridors	Conservation Corridors (Priority 1)
	Conservation Corridors (Priority 2)

June 04, 2015

DATA	SOURCE	YEAR
Parkland	Travis County, City of Austin, TPWD, LCRA	2012-2013
Preserve Areas	Travis County, City of Austin, LCRA, USFWS	2011-2012
GCW & BCV Habitat & Karst Zones	Travis County, City of Austin, BCCP	1996
Listed Salamander Habitat	U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service	2013
Post Oak Savanna Ecoregion	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency	2005
Prime Farmland	USDA National Resources Conservation Service	2002
Floodplain	Federal Emergency Management Agency	2008
Springs	USGS, TWDB, Capitol Environmental Services, TPWD	2013
Barton Creek & Little Barton Creek Watershed	Travis County, City of Austin Watershed Protection Department	2013
Waterbodies, Creeks	U.S. Geological Survey NHD	2003
Elevation	U.S. Geological Survey NED 10m	2002
Corridors	City of Austin, CAMPO, Travis County TNR	2012-2014
Centers (2040 Plan Draft)	Capital Metropolitan Planning Organization	Draft 2013

# ACTION PLAN

	CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING	REGULATION AND PERMITTING	NEW PROGRAMS AND SERVICES
LAND	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete a new Parks and Land Conservation Master Plan</li> <li>• Prepare the Parks and Land Conservation Bond Program</li> <li>• Update the Conservation Easement Program</li> <li>• Issue a call for applications to the Conservation Easement Program</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update the Conservation Subdivision Ordinance</li> <li>• Complete Single Office Agreements</li> <li>• Monitor Threatened and Endangered Species</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assess feasibility of a Dark Skies Initiative</li> <li>• Assess feasibility of a Farmland Preservation Initiative</li> <li>• Assess feasibility of a Scenic Roadways Initiative</li> <li>• Propose a public outreach program for promoting Best Land Conservation Practices</li> <li>• Propose a public outreach program for promoting FireWise practices</li> </ul>
WATER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare the Drainage Bond Program</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitate establishment of Trinity Aquifer Groundwater Conservation District</li> <li>• Assess impact of growth on Colorado River Alluvial Aquifer</li> <li>• Support Commissioners Court participation in regional water issues organizations</li> <li>• Evaluate adequacy of water supply along SH 130 transportation corridor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assess feasibility of adopting Sustainable Roadside Protocols</li> <li>• Consider implementation of an integrated storm water, floodplain management, and water quality program</li> <li>• Research and report on water supply service issues</li> </ul>
TRANSPORTATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete a Travis County Transportation Plan</li> <li>• Complete Bike/Pedestrian/Trail Plan</li> <li>• Update the High Accident Study</li> <li>• Prepare the Transportation Bond Program</li> <li>• Assess Extreme Weather Vulnerability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with City of Austin to update Transportation Criteria Manual</li> </ul>	
INTER-RELATED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update the Natural Disaster Mitigation Plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify growth guidance issues that require legislative action</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research and report on implementing a resource leveraging program</li> <li>• Research and report on opportunities to partner on public needs and preference studies</li> <li>• Assess feasibility of using CAPCOG's Prosperous Places Program</li> <li>• Assess feasibility of participating in the Central Texas Sustainability Indicators Project</li> <li>• Research and report on growth in unincorporated Travis County</li> </ul>

## PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Travis County implemented a public involvement program to share the draft LWTP and collect feedback. This feedback was shared with the Commissioners Court, used to refine and shape the draft document, and included in the updated LWTP. This feedback was integral to creating a long-range plan that reflects the values and concerns held by Travis County residents.



### TOP ISSUES NOTED IN PUBLIC INPUT:

- Traffic congestion (emphasis on 620/2222)
- Prioritizing roadway improvements
- Increasing alternative modes of travel
- New development – compact growth and limiting growth
- Existing developments – address existing transportation infrastructure before additional growth
- Support land conservation, particularly to protect water resources
- Balance conservation and development without sacrificing improvements for congestion relief, safety, and mobility



## FUNDING

Due to the unprecedented growth and limited state and federal funding, Travis County is evaluating both traditional and innovative funding sources. Another key to funding future improvements will be close collaboration between the county and other Central Texas counties, cities, state and federal agencies, and other public entities, as well as public and private developers.

### POTENTIAL REVENUE SOURCES

- General Funds
- Certificates of Obligations
- General Obligation Bonds (require voter approval)
- Participation Agreements (public/private partnerships)
- Tax Abatements
- Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Bonds
- Transportation Infrastructure Reinvestments Zones (TIRZ)
- Economic Development Agreements
- State and Federal Grants
- Developer dedicated parkland and right-of-way
- Federal transit funding that could be used to improve infrastructure such as sidewalks that support transit, walking, and biking

# 2014 Travis County Commissioners Court

**Judge Samuel T. Biscoe, Travis County Judge**

**Commissioner Ron Davis, Precinct 1**

**Commissioner Bruce Todd, Precinct 2**

**Commissioner Gerald Daugherty, Precinct 3**

**Commissioner Margaret Gomez, Precinct 4**

*The Land, Water and Transportation Plan was prepared by the Travis County Transportation and Natural Resources Department*

Steven M. Manilla, P.E., County Executive and Joseph P. Gieselman, Executive Manager:

## *Plan Development*

Project Management: Randy Nicholson and Wendy Scaperotta; Development and Transportation Planning: Charlie Watts; Land Conservation Planning: Wendy Scaperotta; GIS Mapping and Analysis: Sara Dillbert. Policy and Technical Advisors/Contributing Writers: Robert Armistead, Anna Bowlin, Charles Bergh, Wendy Connally, Peter Einhorn, Melinda Mallia, Steve Manilla, Bob Moore, Edith Moreida, Stacey Scheffel, Thomas Weber, Deone Wilhite, Jon White, and Melissa Zone. Legal Counsel: Tom Nuckols.

## *Public Engagement Process*

Project Management: Melissa Zone; Public Outreach Services: Concept Development & Planning, LLC (CD&P); Presentations and Planning Information: Wendy Scaperotta and Charlie Watts

## *Executive Summary Layout and Production*

Project Management: Scheleen Walker; Graphic Layout and Production: CD&P; Text and Graphic Contributions: Sara Dillbert, Wendy Scaperotta, and Charlie Watts

## *Photo Credits*

- Cover:** Land Development – photograph courtesy of Bosse & Associates (Colorado River Plan); Pogue Springs – photograph courtesy of Travis County
- Page 1:** SH-130 Bridge at the Colorado River – photograph courtesy of Bosse & Associates (Colorado River Plan); Aerial view of highway near Austin, Texas at dusk – photograph by David Sucsy; Halloween Flood 2013 – photograph courtesy of Travis County; Hamilton Pool – photograph courtesy of Travis County
- Page 2:** Climber at Reimers Ranch Park – photograph courtesy of Travis County; Fishing at Southeast Metro Park – photograph courtesy of Travis County
- Page 4:** Gilleland Creek Greenway at Taylor Lane and FM 969 – photograph by Wendy Scaperotta; Post Oak Savannah – photograph by Wendy Scaperotta; Black Capped Vireo – photograph by Bret Whitney; Water falls over a row of rocks near Barton Springs in Austin, Texas – photograph by David Gilder; Colorado River Floodplain – photograph courtesy of Travis County; Hamilton Pool – photograph courtesy of Travis County
- Page 8:** AISD Back To School Bash – photograph courtesy of Travis County

## GET INVOLVED

Travis County wants to work closely with residents and interested stakeholders in planning and implementing projects of all types. If you are interested in updates from the TNR department:



Send your email address, with "TNR Updates" in the subject line to:  
[tnrweb@traviscountytx.gov](mailto:tnrweb@traviscountytx.gov)



Like us on Facebook: [www.facebook.com/TravisCountyTX](http://www.facebook.com/TravisCountyTX)



Follow us on Twitter: @TravisCountyTX



Give us a call: (512) 854-9383

Free language assistance can be provided upon request. / A petición se puede proporcionar ayuda gratuita en su idioma.

This document is available in Spanish at: / Este documento está disponible en español en el siguiente sitio web:

<https://www.traviscountytx.gov/tnr/lwtp/espanol>

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Please visit our webpage for the complete Land, Water & Transportation Plan:  
[TravisCountyTX.gov/tnr/lwtp](http://TravisCountyTX.gov/tnr/lwtp)