



Travis County Commissioners Court Agenda Request

Meeting Date: January 20, 2015

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

Division Director/Manager: Public Works Director

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

Sponsoring Court Member: Commissioner Shea, Precinct Two
County Judge Sarah Eckhardt

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

- A) Proposed changes to the membership of the Bicycle Safety Task Force; and
- B) Policy questions pertaining to the use of 2011 Bond Funds for bike safety projects.

BACKGROUND/SUMMARY OF REQUEST:

State law allows that bicyclists may ride on public roadways. However, the condition of some of the roads can make riding on them risky. As Travis County's population grows, more people are bicycling and using rural roads for recreation and commuting. Voters approved \$3,333,000 in 2011 to address bike safety issues in all four precincts. Determining which roadways these funds should be spent upon, and how they should be spent, is the charge of a Bicycle Safety Task Force that was appointed by the Court to improve bike safety in unincorporated areas of Travis County. After Court approval, a Task Force meeting will be scheduled to build upon what the original Task Force accomplished when they were meeting. Deliverables include a list of safety improvements for popular bike routes in unincorporated areas. The 2011 bond funds will be used to pay for these improvements and they should be distributed roughly equally among the four precincts. In the event there are not enough funds to pay for all improvements, the unfunded ones will be submitted for consideration in future bond referendums. The Task Force will also be asked to develop a list of bike projects for completing gaps in existing bikeway networks and completing entirely new bikeways. A third area for consideration by the Task Force will be design policy (e.g. shared-use paths vs shared lanes; concrete vs asphalt; shoulder width). Task Force recommendations will be presented to the Court for approval prior to expending 2011 Bike Safety Project funds. These lists will also be used to develop projects and cost estimates for future bond referendums.

Policy questions about the use of 2011 Bond Program funds have arisen during internal discussions about the recommendations to be provided by the Task Force. The questions and responses have been vetted by PBO, the County Attorney's Office, and the Auditor's Office and is included below.

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

TNR staff recommends the appointment of TNR Public Works Director Morgan Cotten as the County point-person and Erick Benz of Bike Austin as a fourth stakeholder member. Note that the Task Force may solicit advice from leaders of the biking community 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 is recommended to continue doing so. Chad Crager, the Manager of Community Services Division and Nadia Berrera, both from the City of Austin Public Works Department, and Preston Tyree, a nationally recognized bike safety expert, have also expressed interest and are recommended to function as advisors as well. The current pool of potential Task Force members is shown below. These individuals were either part of the original Court-approved Task Force or recently recommended by Precinct Commissioners. TNR recommends appointing or re-appointing these individuals.

Original Stakeholder Members include:

Andrew Willis
James Murff
Kim Wilson

Original Task Force Advisor:

Tom Wald

Proposed Stakeholder Members:

Erick Benz: Austin Cycling Assoc/Bike Austin
Andrew Willis: Texas Bicycle Racing Assoc/Holland Racing, LLC
Kim Wilson: Austin Flyers Women's Cycling
James Murff: 787Racing/Team Brain & Spine Cycling/League of Bicycling Voters
Joe Gieselman: former TNR Executive Manager and avid cyclist

Proposed Advisors:

Preston Tyree: Bike Safety Expert; League American Bicyclist; TX Bicycle Coalition;
Tom Wald: Bike Austin
Chad Crager: Austin Community Services, Bicycle & Urban Trail Program Manager
Nadia Barrera: City of Austin Public Works

Proposed Support Staff include:

TNR Public Works Director Morgan Cotten
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
TNR GIS Program Manager David Shore

TNR agrees with the responses to the fund policy questions discussed in the Fiscal Impact section; Part B of this request.

ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES:

The Travis County Bicycle Safety 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 safety for cycling on accepted county roads.

FISCAL IMPACT AND SOURCE OF FUNDING:

Voters approved \$3,333,000 in 2011 to address bike safety issues in all four precincts. 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.

Policy questions regarding the use of 2011 voter approved bonds for various purposes have been received by TNR and forwarded to PBO, the County Attorney’s Office, and the County Auditor’s Office for analysis. Responses to those policy questions are as follows:

1) Can 2011 Voter approved Bond Funds be used to improve State Highways; such as adding bike lanes to FM 3238?

RESPONSE: As long as the State is agreement with the projects we suggest, then it is acceptable to use the 2011 Prop. #1 Bond Funds on State Highway improvements that make it safer for bikes.

2) Can Prop 1 2011 Voter Approved Bond Funds be used for bike facility improvements in County parks?

RESPONSE: It cannot be supported to use 2011 Prop I funds for these types of improvement in County parks.

3) Can 2011 Voter Approved Bonds for Bike Safety projects 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 for motorists, and install bike warning signs? Also, can 2011 bike safety funds be used in conjunction with other funds? For example, can 2011 bike funds be used 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).

RESPONSE: Yes. This is the clearest use of the funds for bike purposes. Each of the examples described in the question are road construction or in aid thereof.

4) Can 2011 Voter Approved 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?

RESPONSE: Yes, with the permission of the City given by an Interlocal Agreement, allows the County to spend road bond money on road improvements, including improved shoulders, striping for bike lanes, and similar improvements. Cost sharing would be encouraged. Off road projects like bike trails within a city would not be allowable using the road bond funds.

ATTACHMENTS/EXHIBITS:

N/A

REQUIRED AUTHORIZATIONS:

Cynthia McDonald	Financial Manager	TNR	854-4239
Steve Manilla	County Executive	TNR	854-9429

CC:

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