

Austin Avenue Bridges Project

Public Involvement Plan

Project Overview

The City of Georgetown initiated a study of Austin Avenue from Morrow Street to 3rd Street. The study focuses on the two bridges crossing the San Gabriel River. The bridges were constructed in 1939 and have experienced deterioration with growth and traffic in the area. The City has hired Aguirre Fields and their sub consultants to assess conditions and develop a solution. This project presents an opportunity to include community enhancements such as creating better access to the trails under the bridges. There are also many factors that must be considered for this project, such as the history of the area.

The City and the project team recognize the importance of working closely with the community throughout this project to identify a solution the community values. Below is the Public Involvement Plan for this project. The City and the project team will continually evaluate the approach and opportunities for additional public involvement and update this document as needed.

Public Involvement Goals

The City of Georgetown and the project team will work to ensure an engaging, meaningful, and effective public involvement process for the Austin Ave. Improvements Project. This public involvement plan will guide activities and be evaluated and updated as needed.

The City has established the following goals for public involvement:

- Create public awareness of the Austin Ave. Improvements Project and facilitate active and collaborative participation by the public
- Maintain an open and transparent process with no preconceived notions
- Provide project information to the public in a clear, easy to access format, so they may be engaged in a meaningful way
- Collect meaningful input and feedback, and report how the input is used
- Engage and educate a broad range of diverse stakeholders in the process
- Develop a process with convenient, easily accessible, and exciting opportunities for public involvement
- Build support for the project by educating and working through alternatives and solutions with the public
- Document meaningful public involvement to support NEPA process and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act

The underlying goal of the Public Involvement Plan is to provide opportunities for a wide range of members of the public to be informed of and participate in the study of the project alternatives. The project team will review participation and modify strategies to increase participation in this process as needed. Below are the initial stakeholders and groups that will be contacted:

- Property owners along the project limits
- The community near the project
- Users of the road
- The general public
- Transportation agencies and partners
- Local media
- Community and civic groups (chambers, service clubs, environmental and historic organizations, etc.)

Public Involvement Activities

By using a wide range of activities and tools for public involvement the project team will work to provide opportunities for the public to come to attend meetings, find information from the comfort of their own home/office, see the project team out in the community, and receive project updates. The following activities and tools will be used to help the project team accomplish the public involvement goals.

Public Meetings

Public meetings will be used to present information to interested attendees and collect their input and feedback. When planning these meetings, attempts will be made to plan them at locations and on evenings convenient for the community to attend. All meeting materials will also be available online for those interested and not able to attend.

Tools that will be used to notify stakeholders and promote the meetings are:

- Email announcements to the database of contacts
- Meeting announcement signage located on and near project limits
- Announcement on project webpage
- Phone calls and outreach to associations and community groups that can distribute information to their contacts in the area
- Meeting notices and flyers to distribute throughout the community
- Media Releases distributed prior to meetings
- Social media posts on City of Georgetown accounts

First Public Meeting – Project Overview

The project team will hold the initial public meeting to share an overview of the project including the findings of the forensic report, an overview of existing conditions, environmental regulations including requirements for historic bridges and get feedback on the public involvement process for the project. Input will also be collected from the community on characteristics of the area that they enjoy and opportunities for improvements along with any project concerns.

Second Public Meeting – Themes and Options

At the second public meeting, the project team will work with the community to identify themes and options for improvements. These will be developed into a range of alternatives.

Third Public Meeting – Alternatives

A third public meeting will be held to share the alternative concepts or solutions of the improvements and environmental considerations. Again the project team will collect input and feedback on the concepts.

Fourth Public Meeting – Public Hearing

The fourth public meeting will be a hearing to share the preferred solution for the project and gather input and comments. This meeting will follow the formal hearing planning and execution process to satisfy local and federal requirements.

After each meeting, a summary of the meeting will be prepared, including the public comments and input.

[Stakeholder Meetings and Meetings with Affected Property Owners](#)

The project team will identify stakeholders and property owners that may be affected by the project early on in the process and offer one-on-one meetings. These meetings would provide stakeholders with general information about the project and an opportunity to visit specifically about their concerns and provide feedback related to the potential impact to their properties.

[Community Meetings](#)

There are several organizations and groups that will be interested in the Austin Ave. Improvements Project. In an effort to reach people where they are already gathering, the project team will seek out groups interested in receiving a presentation or update during their meeting. The update will include project and process information and share opportunities to get involved. The project team will reach out to groups such as neighborhood associations and the Chamber of Commerce to schedule attendance. Groups may also request an update and the team will make every attempt to attend. The project team will work to identify those interested in having us attend their meeting and continue to expand this list as new opportunities are identified.

[Agency and Jurisdiction Coordination](#)

The City and project team will continually coordinate with agency partners to provide them updates. The City of Georgetown will share updates with elected officials, staff and the Georgetown Transportation Advisory Board (GTAB). Externally, the team will assist the City in coordination efforts with Agencies such as TxDOT, Williamson County, Georgetown Independent School District, Parks and Recreation Department, along with others as needed. Additional agency coordination might include Texas Historical Commission, Texas Parks and Wildlife, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, or others depending on potential environmental impacts.

Public Involvement Tools

Project Materials

The project team will develop project materials to share specific project information, how to participate in the process, and how to submit comments. Information will be represented in an easy to understand format and when possible in a graphic representation. All materials will include contact information and how to be added to the database to receive email updates. Materials will be updated as the project progresses and be posted on the project webpage and shared at the public meetings. Translation needs will be identified and addresses to the best extent possible as needed.

Project Updates

The project team will distribute email updates to keep project stakeholders and the general public informed on the project. These updates will be distributed prior to the public meetings and as new information is available. Additional updates will be distributed as needed, throughout the course of the project to share information about the progress of the project. The updates will be emailed to contacts in the project database and posted to the project webpage.

Project Webpage

A project webpage will be developed and hosted on the City's website. The page will include a project description, allow presentations and meeting materials to be posted, and provide information on how stakeholders can share comments and input. Meeting notifications, updates, and other project information such as maps and exhibits will also be posted.

Database

An essential component of the public involvement strategy will be the development of a comprehensive stakeholder database of residents, community and civic organizations, businesses, special interest groups, and other interested parties. Emails will be collected throughout the project and the database will be updated as new stakeholders are identified and communication will be logged. All public meeting and hearing announcements will also be shared with the database via email, in addition to periodic project updates.

Media

The project team will work with the City of Georgetown to generate media interest in this project in order to increase public awareness and promote meetings. Media releases and social media posts will be distributed to announce events, updates, and opportunities to participate.

Schedule

Below is an anticipated project schedule. Dates in the schedule are subject to change as the project moves forward and will be updated as the dates are finalized.

Dates	Activity	Details
Jan. – Feb. 2016	Project Kick Off	Develop public involvement plan, build stakeholder database; hold meetings with property owners that may be affected by the project
Mar - Apr	Public Meeting 1 Project Overview	Presentation and open house format to share project overview, the findings of the forensic report, and the public involvement process for the project; public input will be collected
May-Jun	Public Meeting 2 Themes and Options	Presentation and open house format to share a range of thematic/visioning images and representative photos with the intent of collecting public input on the desired direction for the improvements
Summer 2016	Public Meeting 3 Alternatives	Presentation of the range of alternatives and concepts for the improvements; and collect input on themes and options
Fall 2016	Public Meeting 4 Public Hearing	Presentation of preferred alternative and collect feedback
Fall/Winter 2016	Proposed Solution	Recommendation of proposed solution and environmental documentation
Ongoing	Community Meetings	Identify and attend meetings with community and neighborhood groups
Ongoing	Stakeholder and Affected Property Owner Meetings	One-on-one meetings will be offered to all affected MAPOs and interested stakeholders
Ongoing	Updates	Email updates will be sent throughout the process and shared on project webpage