



Austin Avenue Bridges Project



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is the purpose of this project?

The purpose of this project is to address deterioration and safety and mobility needs for the bridges. This project will investigate rehabilitation and replacement options while considering maintenance of the bridges, inspection ratings, restrictive load requirements, and the potential to improve bicycle and pedestrian accommodations.

The project goals are to:

- Ensure safety of traveling public including
 - Traffic on Austin Avenue
 - Trail users under the bridges
 - Pedestrian elements connecting to both downtown and the trail
 - Limited ability for City to enforce load restrictions
- Ensure structure meets public needs considering
 - Main North/South thoroughfare
 - Goal to remove load restrictions that currently limit essential and commercial services
 - Pedestrian access to downtown and trails
 - Maintain aesthetics to provide gateway to Georgetown
- Determine a cost effective solution considering timeline and impacts
- Minimize adverse impacts to the human and natural environment

What tasks will be completed as a part of this project?

The Austin Avenue Bridges Project will assess a range of possible solutions, identify a preferred solution, and provide engineering and other support services required to develop 30% plans. The project includes:

- Conducting a public involvement process with stakeholder outreach and communication, media relations, and public meetings
- Initiation of environmental services required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)
- Collection of survey data, right-of-way mapping and utility locating
- Preparation of preliminary design alternatives and cost estimates
- Landscape architecture and concept rendering
- Identification of a preferred solution



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Will the bridges be replaced?

That is what this process will determine. The City is working to identify a solution while balancing considerations such as safety, mobility, public input, impacts to property owners, and costs. This process includes environmental research and documentation as well as a thorough public involvement process. These steps will add time to the schedule but are important components in working through alternatives and ultimately identifying a preferred solution.

Are the bridges safe for daily use by the average citizen?

Yes, the bridges are structurally safe for standard vehicles, and pedestrian and bicycles. However, under the bridges, there is currently a potential for falling debris causing hazards for trail users.

Why is there a load limit on the Austin Avenue Bridges? What do those limitations mean?

A load restriction is currently in place on both bridges due to the bridge condition ratings as assigned per the 2013 and 2015 TxDOT Bridge Inventory, Inspection and Appraisal Program (BRINSAP) findings. The load restriction limitation indicates that loading from vehicle weights exceeding the posting will accelerate deterioration of bridge but do not pose imminent danger.

The bridges are currently load restricted for vehicles 48,000 pounds or heavier. An average vehicle typically weighs 6,000 pounds or less. Some delivery and trash vehicles do exceed the load limit and are not permitted on the bridges.

How long will the load limit be in place?

Load restrictions will remain in place as long as the TxDOT BRINSAP ratings for the bridges remain in the "fair" category, or if ratings worsen.

Removal of load restrictions on the existing bridges will likely only occur with significant bridge rehabilitation or bridge replacement. This is a driving factor for the City to determine the appropriate options at this time.

Are fire trucks and emergency vehicles allowed on the bridges?

Fire trucks and emergency vehicles are allowed on the bridges as needed (as declared in the Texas Administration Code). Typical fire trucks do exceed the load limit for daily traffic. However, they do not exceed the limits allowed for occasional use and do not pose imminent danger to the bridges.



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How are the existing bridges rated by the federal and state government?

There are many different ratings and evaluations considered for the Austin Avenue bridges. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) ranks the bridges as functionally obsolete due to their width and travel lanes, and load restriction, but structurally adequate with posted load restrictions. Per the FHWA, “functionally obsolete” classification is defined as failure to meet design criteria by deck geometry, load-carrying capacity, vertical or horizontal clearances or the approach roadway alignment.

The current TxDOT BRINSAP ratings are:

- Deck = satisfactory condition

- Superstructure (beams, bearings) = fair condition

- Substructure (abutments, bent caps, columns) = fair condition for North bridge, good condition for South bridge

- Channel = satisfactory condition

(Note: good condition = some minor problems; satisfactory condition = *limited* minor deterioration; fair condition = *extensive* minor deterioration)

Are the bridges historic or have historic significance?

The bridges have historic value as they are representative examples of their type as designed and constructed during the 1930s/1940s. The bridges have previously been determined to be eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (NHRP) list.

What is the life span of the bridges in their current state?

Currently the bridges have adequate structural capacity to continue functioning as safe crossings of the San Gabriel River. However, maintain their function for the next 20-40 years, they will require significant maintenance. The bridges will continue to deteriorate, rideability will continue to decrease, visible distress will be apparent, and falling debris will continue to pose a potential hazard to the general public under the bridges.

Has concrete fallen from the Austin Avenue Bridges onto the trails below?

Yes. Concrete spalling from substructure distress was observed in 2014 when concrete fell from the South Bridge to the area adjacent to the trail below. This area of deterioration has been addressed with a temporary repair. The risk from falling debris hazards will increase in the near-term and may create potential safety hazards for users below.



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Are the trails under the bridge safe to use? What is currently being done to enhance safety on the trail from falling debris?

Generally, the trails are safe under the bridge, but the risk from falling debris hazards will increase over time. However, the probability of direct safety hazards for users below is low.

Areas of visible deterioration and possible falling concrete have been addressed by covering the areas with wire mesh at this time. City maintenance staff is aware of the potential debris issues and monitors the accessible areas of the bridge.

What is the current traffic count of vehicles crossing the Austin Avenue bridges? What is the projected traffic count in future years?

Traffic counts taken by the City in July 2014 indicate approximately 12,600 vehicle northbound and 14,000 vehicle southbound trips per day across the bridges.

City traffic modeling efforts completed in 2010 indicate Austin Avenue traffic counts may exceed 50,000 daily trips by 2035.

If repair or replacement work was required along Austin Avenue, what environmental and/or historical procedures would be necessary at the State and Federal level?

Environmental compliance for infrastructure projects has many components. The environmental process includes complying with the National Environmental Policy Act (an umbrella rule that encompasses the project development process) plus resource-specific laws and regulations, including but not limited to the Endangered Species Act, Clean Water Act, National Historic Preservation Act (Section 106), Edwards Aquifer Protection, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, and other procedural requirements specific to the agencies that participate in the process.

How is this project funded? Is there any federal money available?

The City is funding Phase 1 of this project (Public Involvement, Environmental Process Initiation, 30% Design) from City general revenue.

Federal funding is available. In August 2014 the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO), the region's long-range transportation agency, awarded the City of Georgetown \$1.3M in Surface Transportation Program Metropolitan Mobility (STPMM) monies for construction of the repairs or replacement.

Once a solution is identified along with cost estimates, the City will look into all funding options.



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If I have questions, or concerns about the project, who do I contact and how do I get involved?

The City of Georgetown and the project team are looking forward to working closely with the community throughout this project. If you have questions and comments, you can contact us:

Via phone: call the City of Georgetown Project Manager, Nat Waggoner at (512) 930-8171

Via email: reach the team at AustinAve@georgetown.org

Visit the website: <https://transportation.georgetown.org/austin-avenue-bridges/>

Sign up for project updates: We will continue to share project information as it is available. If you are interested in receiving email updates, please send an email to AustinAve@georgetown.org with "Updates" in the subject line.

Attend a public meeting: We will share meeting information via email and the website. Here you can visit one-on-one with City staff and the project team.

Set up a meeting with us: If you want to meet the team, please reach out to us as we are looking forward to working closely with you.

Schedule us to attend your community meeting: We are happy to attend your neighborhood group meeting or community meeting. Please reach out to us to schedule a speaker for your meeting.