

5.0 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Although improvements to the MoPac corridor were first proposed in 1994 by CAMPO, the proximity of nearby homes, the presence of the Union Pacific rail line and limited funding made it difficult to find a workable solution. An important part of the MoPac Improvement Project includes obtaining community feedback on the improvement alternatives. Ten preliminary alternatives were originally proposed for consideration. These alternatives were presented to the public at Open Houses in 2006 and 2007 and again after the restart of the project at Open Houses in October 2010.

The alternatives were evaluated based on their ability to meet the project's need and purpose as discussed in **Section 2.0**. Four alternatives met each criterion and were carried forward as reasonable alternatives for further study, as well as the No Build alternative. The five alternatives that did not meet the need and purpose were eliminated from further study. The four reasonable alternatives plus the No Build alternative were presented to the public at Open Houses held in December 2010. These alternatives were further evaluated as part of the alternatives analysis in **Section 3.0**, with a preferred alternative selected, which was presented to the public at Open Houses in the Spring 2012. The following describes the public involvement activities in further detail.

5.1 Open Houses

Two sets of public Open Houses were held in the fall and early winter of 2010 and another Open House was held in the spring of 2011, as described below. Open Houses will be held in the spring 2012, prior to the Public Hearing.

5.1.1 Open Houses – October 2010

TxDOT held two Open Houses in October 2010 to discuss the proposed improvements to MoPac. The purpose of the Open Houses was to re-initiate the MIP, present information on previous studies, discuss the need and purpose of the project, explain the environmental study, present the project schedule, and gather feedback from the public on the alternative transportation solutions to be considered for the MoPac Corridor. The first Open House was held on Wednesday, October 6, 2010 in the Murchison Middle School Cafeteria, 3700 North Hills Drive, Austin, Texas. Approximately 95 persons were in attendance, of which 64 attendees were from the general public and two elected officials and/or their staff. The second Open House was held on Thursday, October 7, 2010 in the O. Henry Middle School Cafeteria, 2610 West 10th Street, Austin, Texas. Approximately 153 persons were in attendance, of which 118 attendees were from the general public. Both Open Houses were held from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. where the public was able to review project exhibits and discuss the proposed project with project staff. At 7:00 p.m., a presentation was made describing the proposed project. Following the presentation, the Open House format resumed.

Seventy written comments and fifteen transcribed comments were received during the Open Houses and public comment period. The Summary Report from the October 6 and 7, 2010 Open Houses is available at the Austin District of TxDOT.

Prior to the Open Houses, a Notice of Open Houses was mailed to 832 adjacent neighborhood associations, interested parties, and elected officials. An email was also sent to approximately 551 interested parties and residents.

Legal Notices and Display Ads were published in the *Austin American-Statesman* on Monday, September 6, 2010 and on Sunday, September 26, 2010. Display Ads were published in the *West Austin News* (do not have a legal classified section) on September 2, 2010 and on Thursday, September 23, 2010. Legal Notices and Display Ads were also published in the *Ahora Sí* on Thursday, September 2, 2010 and on Thursday, September 23, 2010. Notices appeared in English in the *Austin American-Statesman* and *West Austin News*, and in Spanish in *Ahora Sí*.

Attendees were asked to register and were provided with informational materials and a comment sheet. The informational materials included a letter, project location map, an overview of the project, and a ROW acquisition/relocation assistance information page.

The proposed project alternatives, designs and location were displayed on easels and walls throughout the cafeterias. Mr. John P. Kelly, P.E. with AECOM hosted the presentation portion of the Open Houses. The presentation contained information on the project background and need, the preliminary alternatives, the general history of the MIP, and the next steps in project development.

5.1.2 Open Houses – December 2010

TxDOT held two Open Houses in December 2010 to discuss the proposed improvements to MoPac. The purpose of the Open Houses was to obtain feedback from the public and present the reasonable alternatives that had been identified to date for the MoPac Corridor based on the project's Need and Purpose. The first Open House was held on Wednesday, December 1, 2010 in the O. Henry Middle School Cafeteria, 2610 West 10th Street, Austin, Texas. Approximately 142 persons were in attendance, of which 113 attendees were from the general public. The second Open House was held on Thursday, December 2, 2010 in the Murchison Middle School Cafeteria, 3700 North Hills Drive, Austin, Texas. Approximately 96 persons were in attendance, of which 74 attendees were from the general public. No elected officials attended either meeting. Both Open Houses were held from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. where the public was able to review project exhibits and discuss the proposed project with project staff. At 7:00 p.m., a presentation was made describing the proposed project. Following the presentation, the Open House format resumed.

The proposed project alternatives, designs and location were displayed on easels and walls throughout the cafeterias. Mr. John P. Kelly, P.E. with AECOM hosted the presentation portion of the Open Houses. The presentation contained information on the evaluation and screening criteria used to select the reasonable alternatives, as well as information on the noise analysis, historic properties, and the next steps in project development.

Attendees were asked to register and were provided with informational materials and a comment sheet. The informational materials included a letter, project location map, an overview of the project, a NEPA information sheet, a ROW acquisition/relocation assistance information page, and a written comment sheet.

Twelve transcribed verbal comments and 104 written comments were received during the Open Houses and public comment period.

Prior to the Open Houses, a Notice of Open Houses was mailed to 1,451 adjacent neighborhood associations, interested parties, and elected officials. An email was also sent to approximately 525 interested parties and residents.

Legal Notices and Display Ads were published in the *Austin American-Statesman* on Friday, October 29, 2010 and on Friday, November 19, 2010. Display Ads were published in the *West Austin News* (do not have a legal classified section) on Thursday, October 28, 2010 and on Thursday, November 18, 2010. Legal Notices and Display Ads were also published in the *Ahora Sí* on Thursday, October 28, 2010 and on Thursday, November 18, 2010. Notices appeared in English in the *Austin American-Statesman* and *West Austin News*, and in Spanish in *Ahora Sí*.

Complete public involvement documentation is available at the TxDOT Austin District Office in Austin, Texas.

5.1.3 Open House – Spring 2011

A public open house was held by the Central Texas Mobility Authority on May 26, 2011. The purpose of this meeting was to provide an opportunity to review and comment on the corridor aesthetic concepts, the Context Sensitive Design process, and more about the upcoming Noise Workshops.

Attendees were asked to register and were provided with informational materials and a comment sheet. The informational materials included a welcome page, station guide, environmental study update, project timeline, project description and location map, information on the noise analysis and upcoming workshops, a preference survey on the context sensitive design and roadway aesthetics, and a written comment sheet.

Prior to the Open House, a postcard announcing the Open House was mailed to 1,582 adjacent neighborhood associations, interested parties, and elected officials. An email was also sent to approximately 767 interested parties and residents.

Display Ads were published by the Mobility Authority in the *Austin American-Statesman*, *West Austin News* and *Ahora Si* on Thursday, May 12, 2011. Complete public involvement documentation is available at the TxDOT Austin District Office in Austin, Texas.

5.1.4 Open Houses – Spring 2012

A fourth set of public open houses were held by the Central Texas Mobility Authority in the spring of 2012. The purpose of these open houses were to present the findings of the study thus far including bicycle and pedestrian coordination, sound walls, aesthetics, signage, access point and an environmental overview. Videos were shown exhibiting different views of potential built improvements. Public notification was completed through mail-outs and emails to the database, posting on the website and press releases. The Open House format was similar to the first two sets of open houses. A summary report was developed after these Open Houses.

5.1.5 Open Houses – Prior Study

Prior to the restart of the current study, five open houses were held regarding the Loop 1 Corridor Project. These meetings were held on:

- Open House 1 – September 19, 2006
- Open House 2 – September 21, 2006
- Open House 3 – February 20, 2007
- Open House 4 – April 10, 2007
- Open House 5 - April 12, 2007

In addition to the Open House Meetings, three informal meetings were held, called *MoPac 1-to-ONEs*. The main purpose of the *MoPac 1-to-ONE* meetings was to facilitate communication between the *MoPac 1* project team and stakeholders with various interests in mobility on MoPac, including individuals, neighborhood groups, and community and business organizations. The meetings were held at different times and various locations throughout the project area to accommodate persons who may have been unable to attend the open houses due to schedule conflicts or other problems. A related purpose is to introduce the project to those who may not have heard about it and encourage them to participate in the process.

Attendees were able to ask questions, share concerns, and discuss other aspects of the project directly with the project managers and other key team members. Written or transcribed comments were not taken at these informal meetings; however, attendees were provided with information on how to submit a written comment to TxDOT via US mail or electronically through the project website. Attendees were also provided with an opportunity to sign up for the *MoPac 1* mailing list. These meetings were held on:

- March 7, 2007 (AM)
- March 7, 2007 (PM)
- March 3, 2007

The Aesthetics Advisory Committee met on six occasions between April and August 2007.

Complete public involvement documentation is available at the TxDOT Austin District Office in Austin, Texas.

5.2 Other Public Involvement

5.2.1 MoPac Express Website (MoPacExpress.com)

A project website was created for the MoPac Improvement Project (MoPacExpress.com) that provides the public with information regarding the project in its entirety. The website is basically broken into four general categories, where the public can view the various areas of the project in more detail. The “About” section provides a general project overview, information on the project history and traffic management, project partner information, and an FAQ section. The “Multimedia” section allows the public to access and view project maps, schematics and videos. The “Latest News” section is where the public can view upcoming events, sign up for and/or access past and current e-newsletters, view project publications, resources and similar project case studies. The

fourth section, “Environmental Study,” provides information on the study, the aesthetics, timeline, resources, Section 106 and historic properties, and the public input process.

In addition to providing the public with project information, the website provides the option for the public to call or email with questions or comments. The public can also subscribe to email notifications or follow the project via Twitter.

A website was developed for the 2006-2007 Loop 1 study titled *www.MoPac1.org*.

5.2.2 e-Newsletters

Six e-Newsletters are being developed and distributed to the email database of approximately 983 persons as well as posted on the MoPacExpress.com website. The intent of the newsletters is to inform citizens and interested parties about the current activities of the project including announcements of Open Houses, Noise Workshops and the project schedule, as well as how people can stay informed about the project and how to contact the project team with questions or comments. The newsletters also provide information about the on-going environmental study with articles regarding historic resources, noise, aesthetics and the process for evaluating and reducing the number of alternatives. The e-Newsletters are being produced quarterly throughout the two year environmental study. The dates of the e-Newsletters developed and sent thus far are:

- e-Newsletter 1 - November 2010
- e-Newsletter 2 - February 2011
- e-Newsletter 3 - May 2011
- e-Newsletter 4 - October 2011

The final two e-Newsletters were distributed according to the following schedule:

- e-Newsletter 5 - Early Winter 2012
- e-Newsletter 6 - Spring/Summer 2012

Prior to the restart of the project, two newsletters were produced and mailed to the Loop 1 database. The dates of these newsletters were:

- Summer/Fall 2006
- Winter/Spring 2007

5.2.3 Stakeholder Meetings

Project team members have reached out to several stakeholders that include neighborhood organizations, business groups, environmental organizations, local jurisdictions and citizens to discuss and obtain input on the project. The stakeholder meetings are summarized into two categories – 1) stakeholder outreach during the project restart in July 2010, and 2) stakeholder outreach done in the prior study (2006-2008). Stakeholder meetings are discussed below.

5.2.3.1 Current Stakeholder Meetings (As of December 12, 2011)

- 9/29/2010 - Meeting with City of Austin, Old West Austin Neighborhood Association (OWANA), West End Alliance and Capital Metro
- 10/04/2010 – Meeting with West Austin Neighborhood Group (WANG)
- 10/19/2010 – MoPac Neighborhood Associations Coalition (MONAC) annual meeting
- 12/07/2010 – Meeting with OWANA
- 12/13/2010 – Presentation to the Austin Landmarks Commission
- 02/02/2011 – Meeting with Dick Kallerman and Sinclair Black
- 02/23/2011 – Meeting with the University of Texas at Austin (see attached minutes in **Appendix H**)
- 03/24/2011 – Meeting with the Context Sensitive Design Advisory Committee (see attached notes in **Appendix H**)
- 03/30/2011 – Meeting with Old Enfield Neighborhood Association (see attached notes in **Appendix H**)
- 04/20/2011 – Meeting with Old Enfield Neighborhood Association (see attached notes in **Appendix H**)
- 04/25/2011 - Meeting with the Context Sensitive Design Advisory Committee
- 05/16/2011 - Meeting with the Context Sensitive Design Advisory Committee
- 06/13/2011 – Meeting OWANA to discuss connections to downtown
- 07/07/2011- Meeting with OWANA and Cap Metro to discuss bus service with new connections to downtown
09/28/11 – Presentation at annual MONAC meeting
- 10/11/2011 - Presentation to COA's Urban Transportation Commission
- 11/03/11 – Presentation to Austin City Council

Interagency Exchange Meetings between TxDOT, the Mobility Authority, City of Austin and Capital Metro occurred on:

- 08/17/2010
- 09/22/2010
- 10/26/2010
- 11/30/2010
- 12/20/2010
- 01/25/2011
- 02/22/2011
- 03/29/2011
- 04/19/2011
- 06/20/2011

- 07/25/2011
- 08/29/2011
- 09/19/2011
- 10/24/2011
- 11/28/2011

Meeting notes, as available, are included in **Appendix H**.

5.2.3.2 Bicycle – Pedestrian Coordination Meetings

The proposed bicycle and pedestrian accommodations, as presented in this EA, are the result of numerous coordination meetings held between January 2011 and November 2011. Based on field observations, feedback from coordination meetings/workshops and presentations, and the City of Austin Bicycle Plan as discussed in **Section 4.5.1.7**, the meeting representatives identified the highest priority needs for the corridor: north/south connectivity north of the US 183/MoPac interchange, north/south movement through the US 183/MoPac interchange, and east/west connectivity across MoPac. The meeting representatives also recognized that south of RM 2222 there are two major parallel bike facilities, Shoal Creek Boulevard east of MoPac and Balcones Drive/Exposition Boulevard west of MoPac as shown in **Figure 6, Appendix G**, that provide connectivity for this portion of the corridor where extremely little ROW is available for use.

There was also discussion at these coordination meetings/workshops and written requests from the bicycling community (included in **Appendix G**) desiring a continuous grade separated SUP for the entire length of the project. The location of this grade separated SUP was preferred by City of Austin Neighborhood Connectivity Division to be between the NB mainlanes and the ROW line and/or NB frontage road. This alternative was evaluated in terms of feasibility and cost. A non-stop bicycling facility would require structures spanning under or over each entrance and exit ramp, connections to cross streets for access (involving retaining walls and bridges), significant barrier separation and fencing due to proximity to high-speed freeway lanes. The project team recommends that due to the high cost and the construction impacts, a facility of this type would best be approached as a stand-alone project once a funding source is identified. It should be noted that construction of the special use lanes in the median of MoPac (included as an element of the currently proposed Project) would not preclude the construction of a continuous grade separated SUP (as a separate and independent project) in the future. Therefore, a continuous grade separated north/south SUP facility was not included in this project.

- 12/15/2010 - bike/ped field visit with City of Austin (COA), Austin Metro Trails and Greenways (AMTG), OWANA, League of Bicycling Voters (LOBV) (see attached minutes in **Appendix G**)
- 01/24/2011 - bike/ped outreach with Councilmember Riley, League of Bicycle Voters (LOBV), Austin Bicycle Advisory Council (BAC), Austin Cycling Association (ACA), Austin Metro Trails and Greenways (AMTG), Bicycle Sport Shop, Mellow Johnny's Bike Shop, TxDOT, COA, and

Mobility Authority and van tour with LOBV, Austin BAC, ACA, Mellow Johnny's Bike Shop, TxDOT, COA, and Mobility Authority to identify opportunities for improving bicycle/pedestrian infrastructure in the MoPac corridor (see attached minutes in **Appendix G**)

- 03/30/2011 - bike/ped interagency coordination mtg #1 between FHWA, TxDOT, CAMPO, COA, and Mobility Authority
- 04/08/2011 - bike/ped interagency workshop between TxDOT, CAMPO, COA, and Mobility Authority
- 04/20/2011 - bike/ped interagency coordination mtg #2 between FHWA, TxDOT, CAMPO, COA, and Mobility Authority (see attached minutes in **Appendix G**)
- 06/02/2011 - bike/ped interagency coordination mtg #3 between TxDOT, COA, and Mobility Authority
- 06/15/2011 - bike/ped interagency coordination mtg #4 between AMTG, TxDOT, COA, and Mobility Authority
- 06/17/2011 - bike/ped interagency coordination mtg #5 between TxDOT, COA, and Mobility Authority
- 07/12/2011 - bike/ped leadership outreach mtg #1 with LOBV, BikeTexas, Austin BAC, ACA, AMTG, TxDOT, COA, and Mobility Authority
- 07/25/2011 - bike/ped leadership outreach mtg #2 with Austin Councilmember Riley's office, LOBV, BikeTexas, Austin BAC, ACA, AMTG, TxDOT, COA, and Mobility Authority
- 08/01/2011 - bike/ped leadership outreach mtg #3 with LOBV, BikeTexas, Austin BAC, ACA, TxDOT, COA, and Mobility Authority
- 08/18/2011 – Presentation at City of Austin Bicycle Advisory Committee
- 09/09/2011 - bike/ped interagency prep meeting for Bicycle Advisory Council (BAC) presentation between LOBV, Austin BAC, TxDOT, COA, and Mobility Authority
- 09/15/2011 - MoPac BAC presentation by Project Team
- 10/13/2011 - bike/ped interagency prep mtg #1 for Austin Cycling Association (ACA) "Ask the Agency" forum between TxDOT and Mobility Authority
- 10/20/2011 - MoPac on BAC agenda (see attached minutes in **Appendix G**)
- 10/26/2011 - Mobility Authority receives comment letter from League of Bicycle Voters (see attached letter and email in **Appendix G**)
- 10/27/2011 - bike/ped interagency prep mtg #2 for Austin Cycling Association (ACA) "Ask the Agency" forum between TxDOT and Mobility Authority
- 10/31/2011 - Mobility Authority receives comment letter from BikeTexas (see attached letter and email in **Appendix G**)
- 11/02/2011 - MoPac ACA "Ask the Agency" forum presentation and participation by Project Team
- 11/17/2011 - BAC passes a resolution on MoPac (see attached e-mail, dated November 22, 2011, in **Appendix G**)

5.2.3.3 Prior Stakeholder Meetings and Survey

Between February and August 2006, the project team conducted 29 stakeholder interviews. These interviews followed a structured format and questionnaire. The purpose of the interviews was to obtain detailed information and feedback about a variety of topics related to the Loop 1 Corridor Project.

Key issues cited by respondents (in order of frequency mentioned) include:

- Congestion, especially when merging at major points along the corridor;
- Alternative transportation options such as HOV lanes and mass transit;
- Noise mitigation; and
- Bike facilities on MoPac.

Key improvements needed include:

- Alternative transportation options including HOV, Managed lanes, or Mass Transit;
- Added capacity to the corridor;
- Improved intersections to accommodate pedestrians and bicyclists;
- Bike lane on MoPac; and
- Alleviate traffic congestion at Southbound US 183 and MoPac.

What Not to Do include:

- Elevated structures;
- Expansion into neighborhoods or the Hill Country; and
- Add lanes

Overall, respondents were wary of lengthy and invasive construction in their communities.

A telephone survey of 510 residents that contribute to traffic on MoPac was conducted at the beginning of the study in July 2006 to determine people's views on transportation. The following are major findings that emerged from the study.

- The vast majority of area residents considered traffic a major problem.
- While none of the possible information sources that were tested had tremendous credibility concerning transportation projects, TxDOT was seen as the most credible source, followed by the news media.
- While relieving traffic congestion was seen as the most important consideration in transportation projects, environmental issues were seen as only slightly less important.

- Public transportation was seen as an essential part of solving the areas traffic problems although a majority of respondents also saw adding GP lanes as part of a solution.
- There was opposition to adding toll lanes to MoPac; it appeared that there was an initial negative reaction to paying to use lanes.
- Resident's perceptions of TxDOT varied depending on what aspect of the agencies performance was evaluated. A majority gave TxDOT favorable ratings on providing quality highways. However, the agency was seen much less positively in areas such as addressing the transportation needs of the region and seeking and using public input.
- Many residents held attitudes about how to relieve traffic congestion that were not consistent with one another. For example, more than half of the respondents believed the best way to relieve traffic congestion was to simply add more GP lanes. However, over three fourths of the respondents believed that improved public transportation was an essential part of solving our traffic problems. These inconsistencies suggested a need for education about how the various alternatives might work to either contribute or not contribute to a solution.
- It was apparent that residents had a strong interest in long term solutions.

Throughout 2006, the *MoPac 1* Project team met with neighborhood associations, stakeholder groups, elected officials, agency staff, and reporters from local broadcast and print media outlets. Presentations to neighborhood associations and stakeholder groups included a uniform overview of the *MoPac 1* project and information about the September 2006 Open Houses, as well as discussions of other topics of interest to the particular audience. All CAMPO board members and other elected officials within the project area were offered a briefing prior to the *MoPac 1* project overview that was presented at the August 14, 2006 CAMPO Board meeting, with the majority accepting the offer. Many of the concerns expressed in the interviews and survey were addressed through the public involvement process that continued through 2007.

5.3 Sound Wall Workshops

TxDOT held seven sound wall workshops between June and August, 2011 along the MoPac corridor. The purpose of the workshops was to present conceptual designs of the sound walls including the proposed locations, heights and constraints. Residents were given the opportunity to view graphic displays of design options and perspective drawings (per Aesthetics Advisory Committee guidelines) for each proposed wall type including surface treatments and color. A total of 387 adjacent property owners eligible to vote received notification of the Sound Wall Workshops and a voting ballot via certified letter. Prior to the workshops, a postcard was mailed to 1690 residents, 30 libraries, and to the cities and counties in the region. Door hangers with information about the workshops were distributed to apartment complexes along the corridor. Additionally, 52 residences received door hangars due to their proximity to the project, although they were unable to vote for or against the sound walls because they were not property owners. An e-mail newsletter including an article about the sound wall

workshops was distributed to 981 people on the project mailing list in the Spring 2011 e-Newsletter³.

The workshops were held close to neighborhoods where sound walls were determined to be warranted (**Table 5.3-1**).

Table 5.3-1: Noise Workshop Locations and Dates

Neighborhood	Date	Location
Old West Austin & Clarksville	Thursday, June 23 rd	O. Henry Middle School Cafeteria 2610 West 10 th Street, Austin
West Austin	Thursday, June 30 th	O. Henry Middle School Cafeteria 2610 West 10 th Street, Austin
Old Enfield & Pemberton Heights	Tuesday, July 12 th	O. Henry Middle School Cafeteria 2610 West 10 th Street, Austin
Bryker Woods	Thursday, July 14 th	Bryker Woods Elementary School Cafeteria 3309 Kerbey Lane, Austin
Allandale	Thursday, July 28 th	Gullett Elementary School Cafeteria 6310 Treadwell Boulevard, Austin
Highland Park West/Balcones	Tuesday, August 2 nd	Murchison Middle School Cafeteria 3700 North Hills Drive, Austin
Oakmont Heights & Westminster	Thursday, August 18 th	Bryker Woods Elementary School Cafeteria 3309 Kerbey Lane, Austin

One-hundred-fifty-eight (158) comments were received via the comment sheets or emails turned in at the workshops or delivered to the Environmental Coordinator at TxDOT's Austin District.

Eighty-nine (89) of the comments indicated support for the sound walls. Thirty-one (31) of the total comments received were in opposition to the sound walls. Thirty-eight (38) comments were miscellaneous and did not indicate support or opposition to the sound walls.

Table 5.3-2: Summary of Total Comments Received

Support	Opposed	Miscellaneous
89	31	38

Of the 89 comments indicating support for the sound walls; 12 indicated outright support; seven (7) supported higher sound walls and 70 supported extending the sound walls.

Table 5.3-3: Summary of Comments Received in Support

General Support	Support - Higher Wall	Support - Extending the Wall
12	7	70

The comments supporting higher walls indicated that additional height was needed to minimize noise in areas where there was a significant grade difference between the roadway and adjacent houses. The comments supporting extending the sound walls centered mainly on extending the wall to the W. 35th Street interchange. Another area where there was support for extending the sound wall was near Susie Court, which is on the east side of MoPac and north of RM 2222.

The 31 commenters in opposition to the sound walls cited several reasons for the opposition (some citing more than one reason): the “prison-like” effect of the walls (8), loss of views (4), distrust of the noise analysis (6), breeze disruption (7), negative impact on vegetation/environment (12), maintenance (3), aesthetics (13), pedestrian/bicyclist issues (3), process (5), hurt property values (2) and cost (14).

While not indicating support or opposition the sound walls, the 38 miscellaneous comments focused on questions or issues related to water run-off/drainage, aesthetics, landscaping, bicycle routes, location as it relates to private property, the lack of a vote by all residents in the neighborhood, the noise analysis, and public notice about the process.

Prior to the first workshop on June 23, 2011, owners of property adjacent to MoPac were sent ballots, via certified mail, allowing them to vote “For” or “Against” the sound wall near their property. Ballots were to be postmarked by August 29, 2011. A simple majority vote (at least 51 percent) of the adjacent property owners was needed for a decision.

By the August 29, 2011 deadline, at least 51 percent of adjacent property owners had not returned ballots on twelve sound walls, and as a result, too few ballots were received to make a decision. In those cases and in accordance with TxDOT’s noise policy, the project team re-contacted, via certified mail, the eligible property owners who had not voted and notified them that the deadline for voting had been extended and ballots must be received (postmarked) by September 14, 2011.

Table 5.3-4: Sound Wall Vote Summary

Wall Segment #	Total # Eligible Voters	August 29, 2011 Deadline		September 14, 2011 Deadline		Total	
		For	Against	For	Against	For	Against
1*	13	3	0	2	1	5	1
2	20	6	10			6	10
3*	45	16	0	10	3	26	3
4	14	9	0			9	0
5	27	23	0			23	0
6	26	14	0			14	0
7*	19	7	0	5	0	12	0
8*	3	0	0	1	0	1	0
10	2	1	0			1	0
11	32	23	0			23	0
12*	5	2	0	2	0	4	0
13*	34	17	0	3	0	20	0
14*	4	2	0	0	0	2	0
15*	36	17	1	2	0	19	1
16	46	31	0			31	0
17*	13	4	2	3	1	7	3
19	2	1	1			1	1
20A	12	3	5			3	5
20B	10	6	2			6	2
21	19	11	0			11	0
22*	8	1	0	1		2	0
23*	13	3	1	2	2	5	3

*Sound walls that had less than 51 percent return of ballots from adjacent property owners and required re-polling.

Adjacent property owners voted against the sound wall are indicated in bold.

Sound Wall Decisions

As an owner of record for a number of properties along MoPac where sound walls are proposed, the City of Austin was asked by TxDOT and the Mobility Authority to indicate its position on the sound wall issue.

On November 3, 2011, the Austin City Council voted to affirm citizen input and the sound wall vote by owners of property adjacent to MoPac.

The resolution states: “The Austin City Council concurs with the affected property owners’ indications and is in favor of sound walls number 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16 and 22 being built if improvements to MoPac are constructed and is not in favor of the construction of sound wall number 2.”

The resolution also permits the Mobility Authority to construct Wall No. 3 inside City of Austin ROW along Great Northern Boulevard. Adjacent property owners approved Wall No. 3 which, if built, would be turned over to the City of Austin to own and maintain pending an agreement that will be presented to the City Council at a later date.

The resolution approved by the City Council noted that TxDOT and Federal planning policy guidelines require input from owners of property abutting the proposed sound wall locations. The resolution also stated “TxDOT and Mobility Authority staff has been meeting with property owners along the corridor where sound walls are currently contemplated and have received the necessary public input.”

Prior to consideration by the City Council, the issue was reviewed by Austin’s Urban Transportation Commission and City staff recommended approval of the resolution.

Sound walls were originally proposed adjacent to Camp Mabry and the Austin Memorial Cemetery. Officials at Camp Mabry opposed the wall and since they represent the sole property owner, no wall will be constructed in this area. In addition, a sound wall was also originally proposed at the Austin Memorial Cemetery; however, constructability issues preclude the feasibility of a wall at this location. In lieu of a noise wall, TxDOT and the Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority have agreed to screen the area with vegetation as part of the project.

5.3.1 Previous Noise Workshops

Three public Noise Education Forums were held in 2006 to discuss the traffic noise and provide a question and answer period. The dates of these Forums were:

- 10/17/2006
- 10/18/2006
- 10/19/2006

5.4 Previous Managed Lanes Open House

TxDOT and the TTI hosted a Managed Lanes Open House on February 20, 2007 to educate the public about managed lanes, including providing information on how they are being used in other parts of the country to address congestion and mobility issues.

Approximately 51 people attended the event, which was open to the public from 6:00 p.m. until 8:30 p.m., with a uniform presentation offered at 6:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. The open house featured five display stations presenting detailed information on managed lane projects in Texas, Colorado, Minnesota and two in California. Each station was staffed by a representative of the project to provide more information and answer questions. An introduction to managed lanes featuring a verbal presentation supplemented by PowerPoint slides was offered twice during the open house.

5.5 Public Hearings

The FHWA approved the environmental assessment for the MIP as “satisfactory for further processing” on April 12, 2012. A Public Hearing was held on May 23, 2012 at the O. Henry Middle School cafeteria, 2610 West 10th Street in Austin, Texas.

Legal Notices regarding the Public Hearing were published in the *Austin American-Statesman* on April 23, 2012 and May 11, 2012 and in *Ahora Si* on April 19, 2012 and May 10, 2012. Display ads were placed in the *Austin American-Statesman* on May 20, 2012 and in the *West Austin News* on May 17, 2012.

Approximately 157 people attended the Public Hearing. Thirty staff members from the MoPac Improvement Team were available during the Public Hearing to assist attendees.

The hearing began at 6:00 p.m. with an open house. The open house was followed by a presentation at 6:30 p.m. and then the public comment period. The Texas Department of Transportation opened the meeting and the Project Manager with AECOM presented information regarding the proposed improvements and the environmental assessment.

The format for the Public Hearing was:

- Greetings and Format of the Hearing - *John Hurt, TxDOT Public Information Officer*
- Description of the Proposed Improvements - *Lorena Echeverria de Misi, P.E., AECOM Project Manager*
- Summary of the Environmental Assessment - *Lorena Echeverria de Misi, P.E., AECOM Project Manager*
- Public Comment Period

Numerous exhibits were on display and available for the public throughout the hearing, including project schematics, typical sections, a 3D simulation and the environmental assessment document. Other displays included information regarding sound walls, historic districts, environmental purpose and need, evaluation criteria, express lanes, access points, bicycle and pedestrian improvements, and context sensitive design.

Twenty-eight citizens commented verbally at the hearing to a certified court reporter. Two hundred ninety four written comments were received. Of the 322 total comments received, 152 comments stated support for the proposed project and 97 opposed the proposed project. Analysis of the remaining 73 comments primarily concerned issues or questions related to the tolling component, downtown connections to the Express lane, funding sources, or potential alternatives to the proposed project.

No verbal comments were made at the hearing by an elected official; however Senator Kirk Watson submitted written comments in support of the project.

For more information on the Public Hearing, please refer to the Public Hearing Summary available at the Austin District of TxDOT.

All comments, both verbal and written, have been adequately addressed. The current design of the project meets the need and purpose, as stated in the environmental document, while avoiding, minimizing and mitigating potentially adverse impacts. No changes to the environmental document are deemed necessary and the project is recommended for approval as a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI).