



# Final Open House Summary and Analysis

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I-35 at 51<sup>st</sup> Street

Austin District, Travis County

September 2015

# OPEN HOUSE SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

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# OPEN HOUSE OVERVIEW

## Proposed Improvements

The proposed improvements for southbound Interstate Highway 35 (I-35) at 51<sup>st</sup> Street include realigning the southbound frontage road, constructing a new southbound collector-distributor road or frontage road bypass lane, adding a roundabout at the southbound frontage road of I-35 and 51<sup>st</sup> Street, reconfiguring ramps, and improving bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

## Purpose and Need

The purpose of the project is to reduce bottlenecks at the southbound frontage road of I-35 at 51<sup>st</sup> Street and for east/west traffic, improve connections at the existing U-turn structure, and improve southbound ramp operations between 51<sup>st</sup> Street and Airport Boulevard. The project is needed due to traffic backups from the 51<sup>st</sup> Street intersection and difficult access to the mainlanes.

## Notices

Display advertisements were published in three local newspapers.

### In English:

*Austin American Statesman* – Feb. 1, 2015

*Austin Chronicle* – Feb. 6, 2015

### In Spanish:

*¡Ahora Sí!* – Feb. 5, 2015.

A two-sided flyer showing both English and Spanish versions of the display ad was also mailed to 60 individuals, including adjacent property owners, within the project study area. Two electronic notifications of the open house were emailed to all individuals on the Mobility35 email distribution, and letters/emails were also sent to city of Austin Mayor Steve Adler, Travis County Judge Sarah Eckhardt, and Texas State Senator Kirk Watson.

## Date and Place

The open house was held on Thursday, Feb 12, 2015, from 5–7:30 p.m. at the Ridgetop Elementary School gym, located at 5005 Caswell Ave. in Austin, Texas. A virtual open house that included all materials displayed at the physical open house was available from Feb. 12–26, 2015, at [www.mobility35openhouse.com](http://www.mobility35openhouse.com).

## **Attendance**

A total of 99 people signed the registration sheets, and 38 signed the mailing list sign-up form.

## **Exhibits and Project Information**

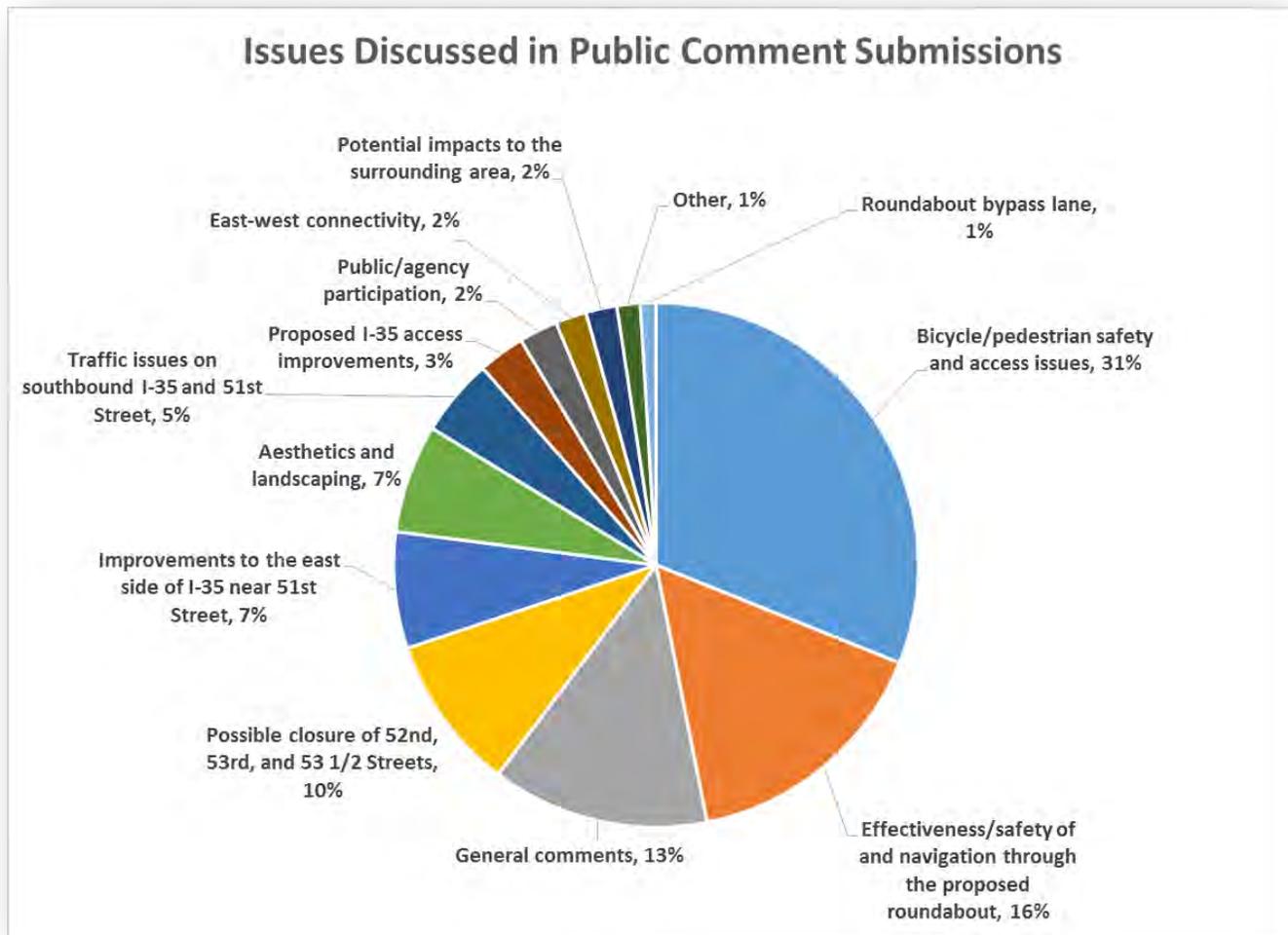
Exhibit boards were displayed to provide information about the overall Mobility35 process and goals; the I-35 at 51<sup>st</sup> Street project area, purpose, proposed improvements, and methods by which members of the public could participate in the process; and an update of the project that is currently being constructed on the east side of I-35 near Cameron Road. Two identical schematic maps of the proposed improvements at southbound I-35 at 51<sup>st</sup> Street were also displayed, as well as a looping video showing a 3-D visualization of the proposed roundabout at 51<sup>st</sup> Street. Handouts included a project fact sheet and a project comment form.

## **Public Comments**

Five people presented their comments orally to the court reporter, and 34 hand-written comment forms were collected on site at the open house. Seventy-four comment submissions were received through the virtual open house, while one was received through the Mobility35 email address.

All comment submissions were received by the close of the public comment period on Feb. 26, 2015. A submission may have included more than one comment/issue.\* The issues are summarized in the following chart and table, while all comments and responses are included in a separate Comment and Response Report.

## Breakdown of Comments Received\*



\*A total of 114 comment submissions were received with 209 total comments/issues.

## Analysis and Recommendations

The majority of comments were related to the proposed roundabout and bicycle/pedestrian safety and access issues and improvements – both within the roundabout and on connecting facilities near 51<sup>st</sup> Street. Other commonly-received comments related to the possible closures of 52<sup>nd</sup>, 53<sup>rd</sup>, and 53<sup>rd</sup> 1/2 Streets, issues on the east side of I-35, traffic congestion issues on the southbound I-35 frontage road and 51<sup>st</sup> Street, project aesthetics and landscaping, and proposed I-35 access improvements such as ramp relocations and the addition of a frontage road bypass lane under 51<sup>st</sup> Street. Many other comments were general in nature, and simply expressed support for the roundabout or other proposed improvement.

All comments were forwarded to the engineering team conducting the study, and will be considered in the final project design.

## Summary of Comments

Issue	Number of Comments	Summary of Comments
Bicycle and pedestrian safety/navigation through the roundabout	30	Specific questions, concerns, and suggestions regarding bicycle and pedestrian safety and navigation through the roundabout.
General comment	28	General statements about the proposed improvements; comments about the materials presented; other general comments/suggestions.
Bicycle and pedestrian improvements	23	Questions, concerns, and suggestions for bicycle and pedestrian improvements in the project area, including suggestions about tie-ins to bicycle/pedestrian facilities on the bridge and east side of I-35 at 51 <sup>st</sup> Street.
Potential closures of 52 <sup>nd</sup> , 53 <sup>rd</sup> , and 53 1/2 Streets	20	Support for closing these streets to the southbound I-35 frontage road to prevent cut-through traffic; opposition to closing these streets due to access issues; and general questions and concerns about these two options.
Effectiveness and safety of proposed roundabout	16	Questions, concerns, and other comments about the effectiveness and safety of the proposed roundabout.
Understanding of navigation through the roundabout	15	Questions and concerns about the ability for drivers, bicyclists, and pedestrians to understand how to navigate through the roundabout; suggestions for signage and other informational techniques.
Improvements to the east side of I-35 near 51 <sup>st</sup> Street	12	Identification of issues/needs on the east side of I-35 near 51 <sup>st</sup> Street; northbound exit and frontage road issues.
Pedestrian signalization	12	Specific questions, concerns and suggestions regarding the use of pedestrian signals at the intersection.
Aesthetics and landscaping	11	Suggestions for landscaping in the center of the roundabout; suggestions for adding aesthetic treatments, including trees and landscaping in open spaces and along bicycle/pedestrian paths.

Issue	Number of Comments	Summary of Comments
Traffic backups on southbound I-35 and 51 <sup>st</sup> Street	6	Comments, questions, concerns, and suggestions about existing and future congestion on southbound I-35 and 51 <sup>st</sup> Street.
East/west connectivity	4	General statements and suggestions about the need to maintain east/west connectivity.
Purpose of the proposed frontage road bypass lane and roundabout	4	Questions and concerns about the proposed frontage road bypass lane; issues related to how these improvements will handle traffic in the project area.
Traffic backups on 51 <sup>st</sup> Street	4	Questions, concerns and statements about traffic congestion and the need for improvements to 51 <sup>st</sup> Street west of the southbound I-35 frontage road intersection.
Curbs and visibility in the proposed roundabout	3	Questions, concerns, and comments regarding the curbing and visibility within the roundabout.
Gooseneck project	3	Specific comments about the project currently being constructed on the east side of I-35.
Public involvement and agency coordination	3	Questions, concerns, and suggestions for coordination between TxDOT and the city of Austin; suggestions for additional public outreach, particularly to the Spanish-speaking community.
Other	2	Comments unrelated to the proposed improvements or project area.
Potential impacts during construction	2	Questions, concerns and suggestions regarding potential construction impacts.
Potential impacts of proposed improvements on local neighborhood traffic	2	Concern about potential impacts on businesses and residents in the area of improvements.
Roundabout bypass lane	2	Comments related to the proposed right-hand bypass lane west of the roundabout.
Roundabout video	2	Questions and comments about the video displayed at the public meeting.

Issue	Number of Comments	Summary of Comments
Accommodation of transit vehicles in the proposed roundabout	1	Questions about transit vehicle navigation through the roundabout.
Highway traffic laws	1	Comment/suggestion regarding traffic law enforcement.
Potential for "queue-jumping" via the proposed frontage road bypass lane	1	Concern about the potential for cars to "queue-jump" using the proposed frontage road bypass lane.
Roundabout size and signage	1	Concern about the size of and navigation through the roundabout.
Proposed ramp improvements	1	Question about the proposed ramp relocations.