



# MAIN STREET STUDY

MAY 2015



In accordance with City Council direction to the City Manager, staff has reviewed information relating to the concept of approaching TxDOT to gain control of Main Street through the State's roadway Turnback Program. We believe that TxDOT would support and approve such a transfer if requested by the city. The primary reason for this is financial as TxDOT considers some segments of Main Street/Hwy 87 to be stranded or isolated from the rest of their roadway system and ongoing costs of maintenance exceed value gained in their view.

As it stands today, Main Street is subject to the same rules, regulations and restrictions as any other Texas highway and at times that fact is not conducive to adding amenities and improvements that have been contemplated for the downtown/Hill Country Mile area. In addition, interacting with TxDOT is sometimes difficult as it is a large organization with strict bureaucratic processes and rules which can lead to limited flexibility and slow response times.

Consideration for reclaiming Main Street has been a recurring subject over the last decade including during the last master plan process in 2006, the RUDAT effort in 2008, and a city staff study similar to this one conducted in 2012. Some of the information presented in this 2015 analysis is from the 2012 study but has been updated to include newer information and estimates where appropriate. The strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) exercise conducted by staff in 2012 is included as an attachment with this 2015 analysis.

In addition to the "pros and cons" type of analysis we did in 2012 and updates from 2015, we took a new approach which has not been included in any of these recent studies that addresses the issue of rerouting Main Street traffic to other roads and streets and what would be necessary to accomplish this. Staff believes that to make a Main Street turnback option viable for the purposes we have heard proposed (traffic calming, pedestrian safety, parking elimination, sidewalk expansion, etc.), the issue of establishing alternate routes for the 15,000-20,000 vehicles which currently travel that roadway segment today which is very likely to increase in the future, would have to be addressed, planned and funded.

The first section of this report summarizes the positive, desired outcomes of requesting turnback of Main Street from TxDOT and the resulting consequences of those outcomes.

As always, our goal is to present a balanced approach recognizing pros and cons and reporting what we believe to be the facts.



# MAIN STREET TURNBACK

## POTENTIAL POSITIVES AND NEGATIVE OUTCOMES

### JURISDICTION OVER RIGHT-OF-WAY

COULD ALLOW FOR AMENITIES/ENCROACHMENTS NOT PRESENTLY ALLOWED BY TXDOT

QUICKER/FLEXIBLE RESPONSE BY CITY TO PROJECTS AS NO TXDOT APPROVALS WOULD BE REQUIRED

OPPORTUNITY TO IMPROVE MAIN STREET AESTHETICS

- Difficult to measure the value of gains in flexibility and response time vs. potential costs to maintain the roadway including improved areas in what is now restricted right-of-way damaged by vehicular traffic
- Puts City in position of determining aesthetic value of proposed projects and amenities vs. safety/risk from vehicle traffic
- Added costs to install/maintain amenities
- Potential for significant high cost drainage improvement projects become COB responsibility

EASIER TO MAKE NON-VEHICLE MOBILITY IMPROVEMENTS TO IMPROVE PEDESTRIAN SAFETY

ABILITY TO CLOSE MAIN STREET FOR PUBLIC EVENTS WITHOUT TXDOT APPROVAL

CONTROL OF TIMING OF ROAD IMPROVEMENTS

- Some downtown business owners do not favor closing Main Street as often as we do presently and would not see additional closures as advantageous
- Public expectations for maintenance and aesthetic improvements would be higher for COB vs. TxDOT
- Significant new costs to include annual maintenance and resurfacing in 7 year cycles at an average of \$100,000 per year
- New responsibility and associated costs to maintain traffic lights
- No funding for new costs presently included in 5 year financial plan; other significant roadway projects also unfunded (approximately \$21M)
- Potential tax increase for new costs: 1 cent = \$125,000 per year
- COB loses TxDOT expertise for traffic studies and planning

# MAIN STREET TURNBACK

## POTENTIAL POSITIVES AND NEGATIVE OUTCOMES

### MORE CONTROL OF ROUTING/SHAPE OF ROAD/SIDEWALK AREAS FOR MODIFICATIONS

### MORE CONTROL OVER PARKING

### MORE CONTROL OVER TRUCK TRAFFIC AND OTHER TRAFFIC CALMING MEASURES

- No funding for new costs presently included in 5 year financial plan; other significant roadway projects also unfunded (approximately \$21M)
- Proposals to reduce/eliminate parking, currently 95 spaces along Main Street, will likely be met with great concern/resistance
- May necessitate need for additional parking including new garage
- County participation will be required for a centrally located parking garage
- Parking garage cost = \$15K per space
  - 200 spaces = \$3.0M
  - 300 spaces = \$4.5M
- **Tax increase necessary** for new costs associated with parking garage (approximately 3 cents)
- Elimination of street parking alone, without other measures could provide for higher speeds and safety concerns
- TxDOT and COB traffic counts indicate 15,000-20,000 vehicles per day on Main Street in the downtown area (See traffic county study)
- If trucks are rerouted and/or other vehicles in general are slowed, other roadways will be negatively impacted or downtown/Main Street level of service (LOS) will be much worse than today
- Alternate routes must be considered, analyzed, planned and funded before this is possible (See section on potential COB street modifications)

# TXDOT 15 YEAR MAINTENANCE PLAN (ESTIMATED)

RESURFACING (2016?, 2023, 2030)	\$560,000 EVERY 7 YEARS
TRAFFIC SIGNAL MAINTENANCE	\$7,000 PER YEAR
ROADWAY MAINTENANCE (2017, 2019, 2022, 2024, 2026)	\$12,500 EVERY OTHER YEAR

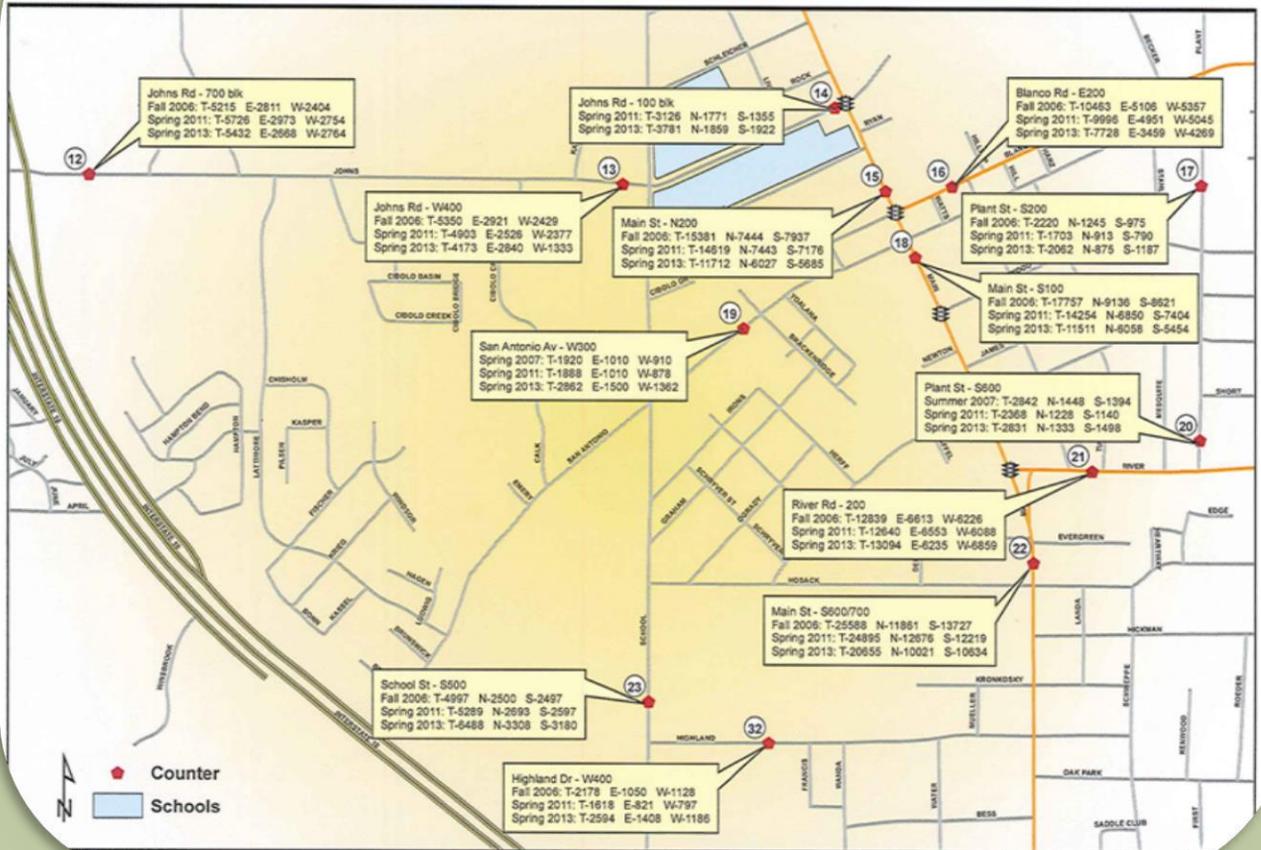
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AVERAGE ANNUAL COST                      \$100,000\*

\*EQUIVALENT TO APPROXIMATELY 1 CENT TAX REVENUE

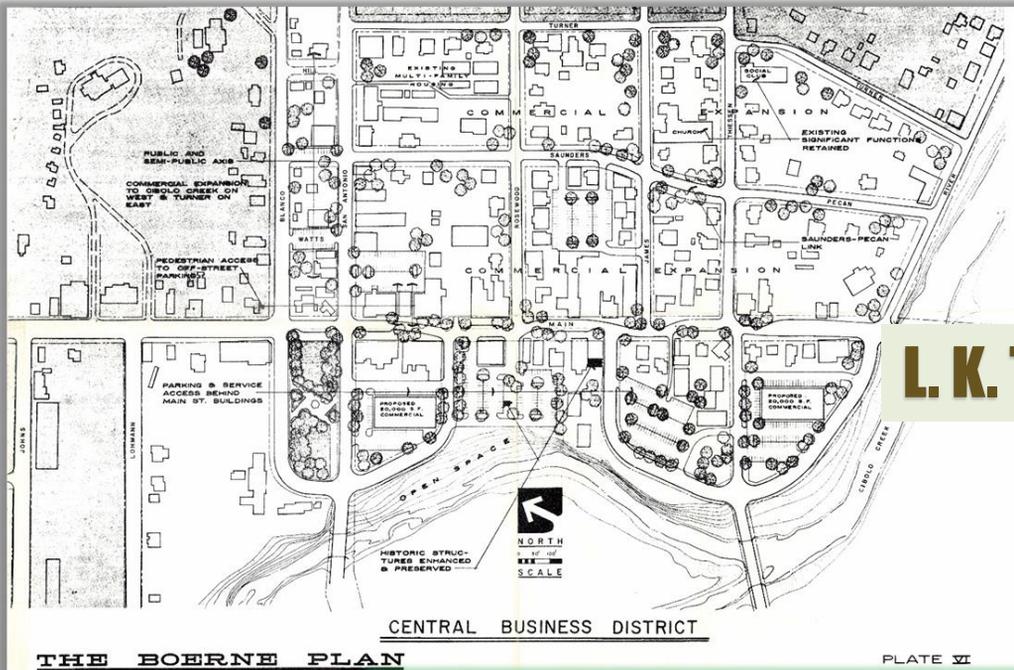


## AVERAGE DAILY TRAFFIC WEST BOERNE AREA

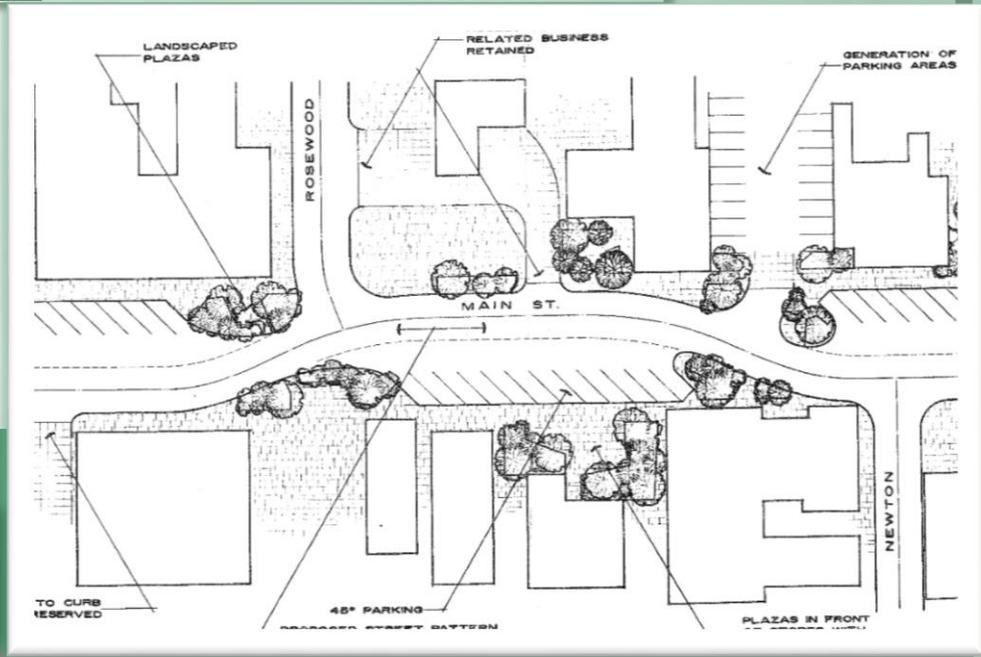


This section of the report contains information gained from a staff effort to “brainstorm” how the issue of high traffic volume on Main Street, which is projected to increase as the city grows, can potentially be addressed.

The ability to change the character and enhance the functionality of Main Street are a couple objectives to consider regarding the turnback of Main St. from TxDOT. We have seen plans over the years on how to improve Main Street and or make it more pedestrian friendly to include the proposal of L.K. Travis that was presented in the City’s original 1972 Master Plan.

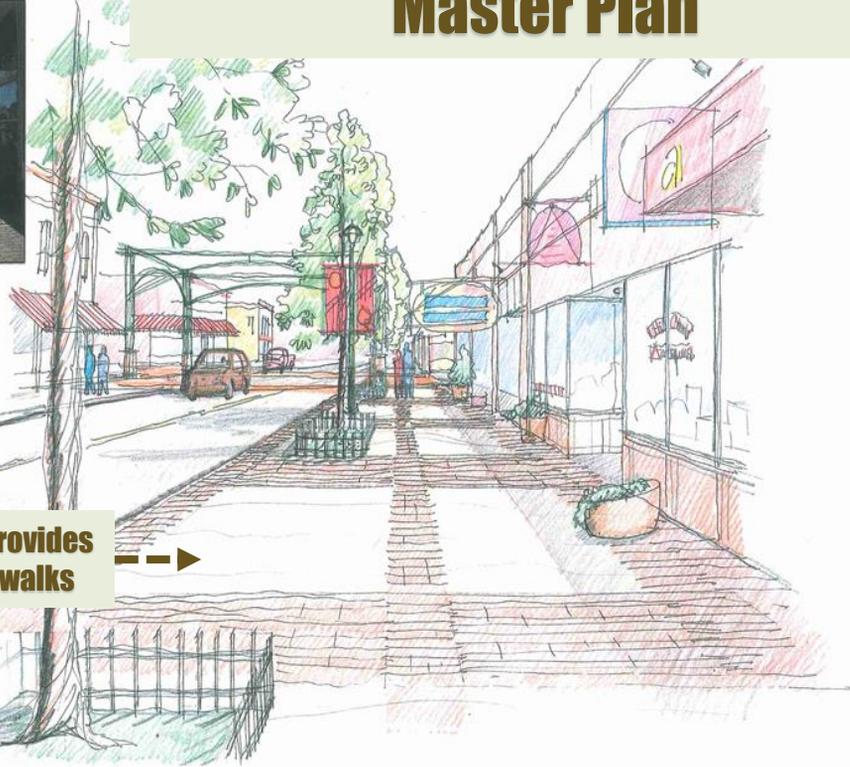


## L. K. Travis Plan



In 2007, a Central Business District Master Plan was done by SA Partnership. The 2007 Plan and the 2008 RUDAT Boerne by Design study each provided excellent examples of how Main Street could be transformed into a "Unique Destination Experience".

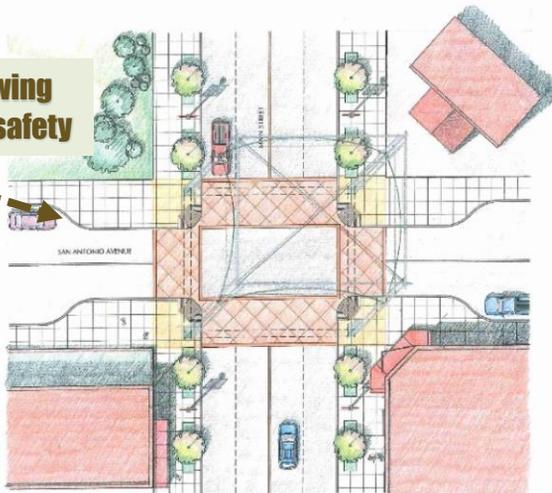
## 2007 Central Business District Master Plan



**Reduction to 2 lanes provides added space for sidewalks**

MAIN STREET PERSPECTIVE  
BOERNE, TX CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT

**Or for "Bulb Outs" or narrowing  
To improve street crossing safety**



MAIN STREET PLAN STUDY  
BOERNE, TX CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT

**T**here is one constant that these plans touch on but do not address that must be accounted for and that is how to accommodate the current and future high volumes of traffic on Main Street. Without any changes Main Street traffic will continue to increase. We will likely see a drop in Main Street traffic when Herff Road is completed but it is not known how long that relief will maintain the drivability of Main Street. A successful downtown destination development will exacerbate traffic congestion and conflicts.

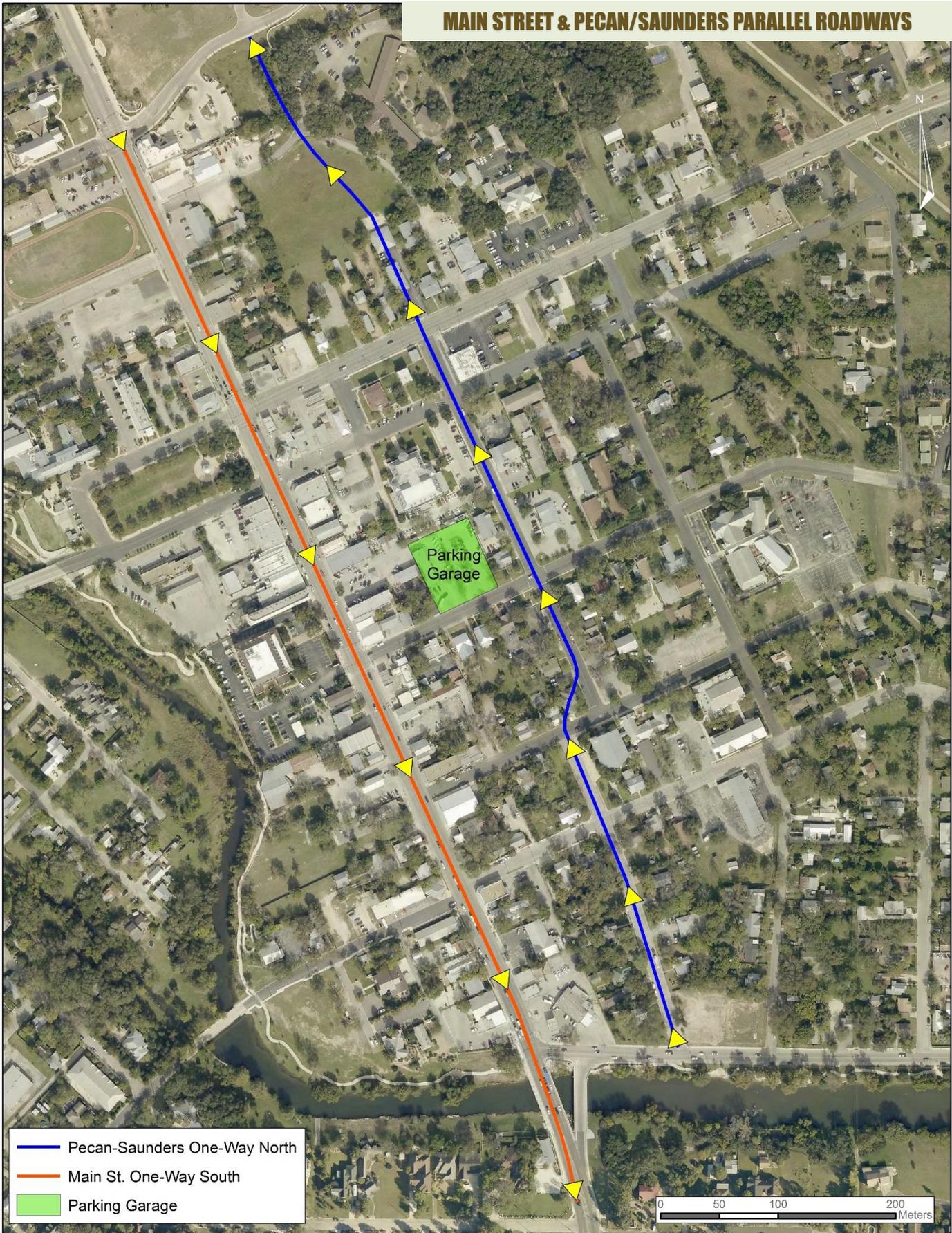
Without considering improvements and additions to our current available traffic routes, any initiative that slows or restricts the expediency of traffic flow through Main Street will result in a multitude of traffic issues in a number of areas including those adjacent to Main Street.

One alternative is to provide alternative parallel routes to Main Street. Making School Street more attractive to through traffic is an option especially for those coming from the north. Another possibility is to make Main Street one way southbound from Blanco Road to River Road and the north bound traffic would travel on Pecan/Saunders to Blanco and in the future terminate at the Johns Road extension which services the Patrick Heath Public Library. This could be accomplished by constructing another vehicular bridge across Cibolo Creek to form an intersection with Pecan Street. The existing right turn bridge could be converted to a one way southbound lane that would facilitate much easier large truck turning movement to enter Main Street/Highway 46.

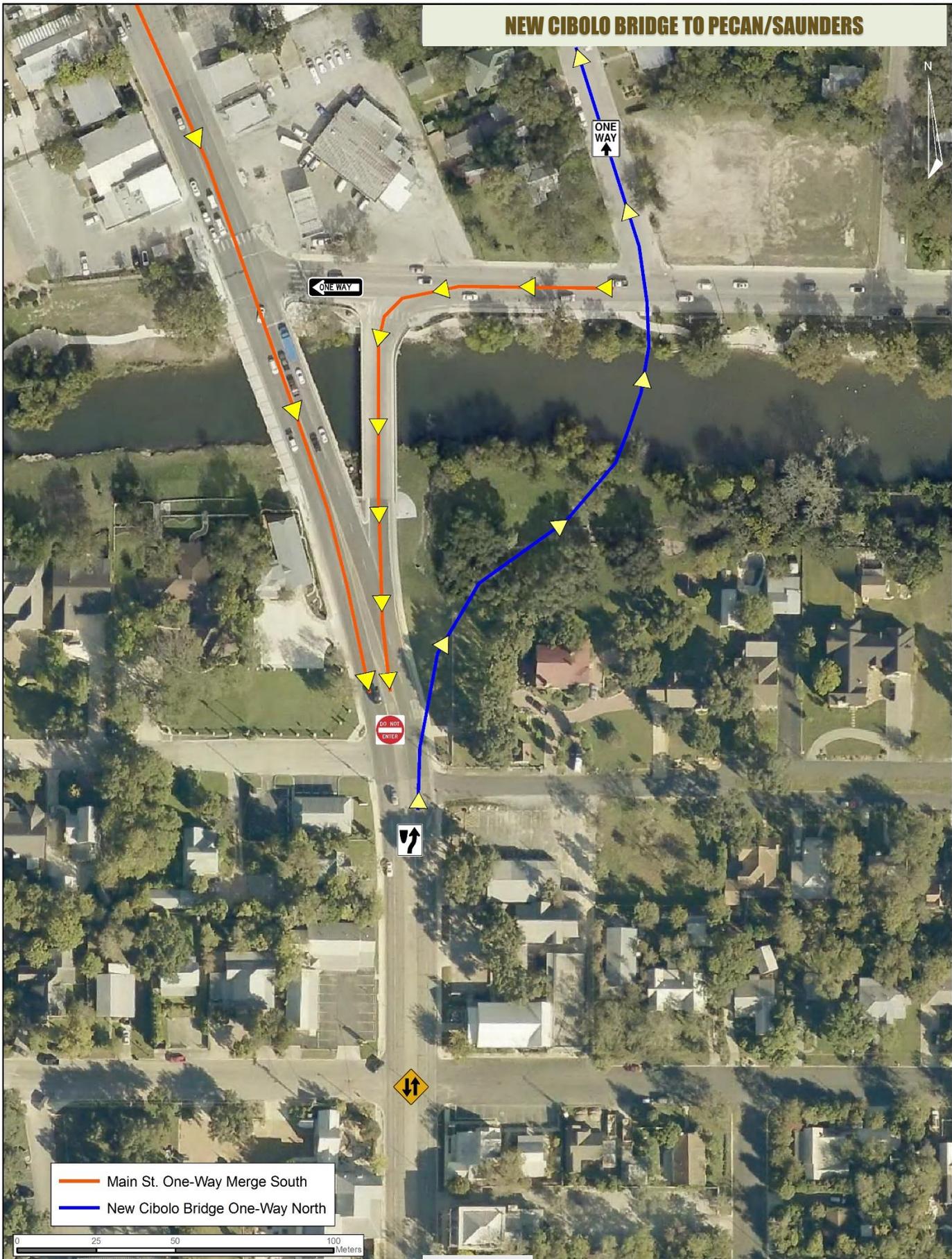
The creation of parallel traffic routing has the added economic development benefit of expanding the commercial downtown footprint eastward of the existing central business district. Westward expansion of the central business district is a much more difficult proposition because of Cibolo Creek and only two roadway connections exist between these two areas.

The property adjacent to and between parallel traffic routing provides new opportunities for infill and redevelopment of lands that would have a greater higher and best use for commercial, mixed-use and higher density residential uses. If one way traffic patterns were implemented, the siting of a future parking garage located on existing Kendall County property fronting on Rosewood would be an advantageous central location between these parallel traffic routes.

# MAIN STREET & PECAN/SAUNDERS PARALLEL ROADWAYS



# NEW CIBOLO BRIDGE TO PECAN/SAUNDERS



**T**hese propositions are neither easy to accomplish or inexpensive, however, unless traffic relief is provided in some form or fashion it will be very difficult to make major modifications to Main Street which stated reasons for the turnback option.

In the meantime, staff believes there are a number of opportunities for improvement to traffic flow and pedestrian safety on Main Street which TxDOT has already expressed a willingness to move forward with along with the city's cooperation. Mario Jorge, San Antonio District Engineer, has stated that alternative routes for trucks off Main Street do currently exist and can be discussed for implementation.

Several years ago TxDOT presented a plan which includes adding raised medians at strategic locations on Main Street (South and Downtown) which would restrict turn movements at certain intersections which cause the most conflicts and traffic impediments (left turns by Main Street northbound traffic into the parking lot next to the Shaved Ice stand for example). These modifications could also allow for traffic calming and improved pedestrian safety such as adding pedestrian activated flashing lights at crosswalks not located at intersections with traffic lights (Rosewood for example) or mid-block crossings. This concept was again presented by TxDOT at the Transportation Planning and Update meeting at the Civic Center on May 21, 2015.

Years ago TxDOT expressed a willingness to consider "bulb outs" at some corners to widen the pedestrian area and shorten roadway crossing distances. This requires a willingness on the part of the city to eliminate some parallel parking spaces, however. Any and all of these types of improvements can be accomplished without requesting the full turnback of Main Street.

# TXDOT MAIN STREET ALTERNATIVE 1



 Raised Island

0 25 50 100 Meters

# TXDOT MAIN STREET ALTERNATIVE 2



In addition to the medians and islands shown on the previous two pages for Main Street north of the Cibolo Bridge, the same type of additions could be utilized on Main Street for several blocks south of the bridge. The benefits of this would include the ability to place seasonal plantings in the medians, create a pedestrian friendlier environment allowing for sidewalks on both sides of the road and a pedestrian crossing at Hickman Street in proximity to the newly renovated Veteran's Park. Staff believes these physical and visual modifications would slow traffic in this area in both directions.

## TXDOT MAIN STREET ALTERNATIVE 3



## CONCLUSION AND STAFF RECOMMENDATION

As recommended in 2012, staff still firmly believes that the city should not consider requesting Main Street turnback until such time as TxDOT budgets for and actually improves the existing Main Street roadway. TxDOT estimates from 2012 indicate a cost of \$581,350 for those improvements to bring the road up to optimal condition. TxDOT plans call for renovations to South Main Street and River Road (Hwy. 46) in the next few years BEFORE UNDERTAKING Main Street/downtown improvements. In 2012, that project was projected for potential funding in 2013, but that did not occur. At the meeting on May 21, TxDOT indicated a desire to upgrade all of Highway 87 (including the Main Street segment) in the 2017-18 timeframe. It is possible that if desired by the city, funding for the other Boerne improvements could be channeled to the downtown Main Street area sooner, but that would leave the other roadway improvements, which are in worse condition, unfunded.

Based on the accommodations awarded to San Antonio in 2014 for taking back 21.8 miles of TxDOT roadways in SA, it is staff's belief that we could/should request more than simply bringing the roadway up to standard as well (see attached Express News article from January 2014. Note the annual cost per mile estimate for maintenance and upkeep by the city of SA from that report is \$114,679 per mile).

In order to seriously consider a request to TxDOT to turnback Main Street to the City, the issue of planning for the traffic movements of Boerne today and in the foreseeable future needs to be studied, analyzed and cost estimated by a professional traffic mobility consultant. This would need to include projected traffic and vehicular movement impacts caused by the changes to Main Street contemplated as positive/pros in this report. The funding for such a study could be added to future budgets in the 5 year plan if desired by the City Council.

Prior to engaging in this study, however, staff believes it would be prudent to have actual data on new traffic movements and vehicle counts after the Herff Road Improvement and Extension Project is completed by Kendall County. The Traffic Impact Analysis performed for Esperanza in 2008 indicated that improvement of that roadway would have the biggest positive impact on traffic flow and movement (including specifically Main Street) than any other and to date we have not seen the actual impact of those improvements.

Furthermore, staff is recommending a study of the downtown area by Catalyst and Gateway Planning for City Council consideration currently projected for completion late 2016. That study should also provide valuable input on what is or is not possible in terms of Main Street modifications and amenities that could further the goal of enhancing downtown as a unique visitor/shopping destination. Gateway has described their successful coordination of main street projects on TxDOT owned roads which have included many of the same amenities we are interested in. It may also provide us with input on what it is the community wants or expects from the downtown/Hill Country Mile.

# FUTURE MILESTONES/ACTION ITEMS REGARDING MAIN STREET

- Completion of Herff Road improvement and extension by the County
- Conduct traffic counts in and around Main street area post Herff Road
- Completion of Catalyst/Gateway studies of Southtown and Downtown
- Engage mobility planning consultant (requires funding in FY 2016 budget) to review concepts for redirection/addressing 15,000-20,000 vehicles per day
- Engage TxDOT regarding improvements/amenities which can be accomplished under present conditions (Main Street as TxDOT highway)
- Re-Examine whether to initiate a turnback request for Main Street in 2017-2018

## Contributors to this Study

*Jeff Thompson*

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# ATTACHMENT

## MAIN STREET TAKEOVER (From 4/24/12 City Council Meeting)

### STRENGTHS/OPPORTUNITIES

- Jurisdiction over ROW (utilities); COB would set the rules regarding construction requirements and limitations
- The City could be much quicker and flexible in responding to proposed projects and construction/improvements that today involve TxDOT permitting and response
- The City may be able to control/limit truck traffic to a greater extent than TxDOT
- The City could control parking along the roadway and be able to make modifications as the community deemed desirable
- The City could control the routing and shape of the road and be able to modify pedestrian crossings as desired
- As a true rural Main Street the downtown District could be made more conducive to a live-work-play environment
- City rules and ordinances would be more conducive to enhancing business frontages such as café style areas and expanded sidewalks
- Improvements to amenities downtown should result in increased revenue from sales tax, ad valorem tax, and utility use if successful (this is difficult to quantify)
- Ownership of the roadway would facilitate grant applications by making projects easier to coordinate and initiate
- The City would have the opportunity to improve Main Street in more aesthetic ways than we do today (gateways, pavers, improvements in the ROW, traffic calming features, creative traffic movement)
- Main Street would be easier to close for public events without having to receive permission from TxDOT
- The City would control timing of road improvements
- The City would have the opportunity to make other mobility improvements for non vehicular traffic such as pedestrians and bikers

### WEAKNESSES/THREATS

- The primary negative impact of the City taking over Main Street is the cost incurred by the City to do so
- Almost everything envisioned as a “Strength/Opportunity” has an associated cost
- Significant funding is required to maintain the roadway and to do improvement projects such as the drainage project completed by TxDOT 2 years ago
- The City would be all responsible for costs of maintenance including costs for traffic signals (see attachment)
- Changes recommended by the City with regard to traffic flows, calming, parking, and so on, may be met with resistance by business owners
- Citizens of Boerne would likely expect quicker and more proactive response to road maintenance from the City vs. TxDOT potentially raising costs above projected levels
- Some Main St. businesses would view traffic calming and reduction measures as a threat of loss of business
- The City would lose access to TxDOT expertise for traffic studies and planning
- Lack of known funding: At present the City doesn't have funding for maintenance costs or any potential improvement projects for Main Street in its 5 current yr capital improvements Plan
- It is likely that a tax increase would be necessary to take over Main St. for O&M, capital and new improvements desired

Local

## NEWS

# San Antonio approves switch in road maintenance

By **Vianna Davila** | January 30, 2014 | Updated: January 30, 2014 10:02pm

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SAN ANTONIO — San Antonio City Council voted Thursday to enter into an agreement with the Texas Department of Transportation to take responsibility for parts of nine roads now maintained by the state.

The city will take over 21.8 miles of roads, including sections of Broadway, San Pedro and Culebra.

The measure passed 10 to 1; Mike Gallagher, who was appointed Thursday to replace outgoing District 10 Councilman Carlton Soules, abstained.

The deal comes with a number of provisos. The city has asked TxDOT to:

## LOCAL



**Investigators on site of Comal County plane crash that killed**



**Resident alleges shelter neglected her pet**



**Chance for rain drops to 20-30 percent**



**Drought still kicking but giving in to El Niño**



**Flaco Jimenez returns**

<http://www.expressnews.com/news/local/article/San-Antonio-approves-switch-in-road-maintenance-5189...> 5/18/2015

Reconstruct a stretch of Broadway as a "complete" street, one that accommodates pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles;

Give the city 4,500 square feet of additional space at the TxDOT TransGuide facility;

Formally cede TxDOT property to the city that's necessary for the convention center expansion;

Provide \$250,000 to improve Military Drive near Lackland AFB;

Provide \$150,000 for a Wurzbach Parkway study.

The agreement also requires TxDOT to repair all of the roads before they are turned over to the city, which estimates it will pay \$2.5 million annually to maintain them.

The Texas Transportation Commission, TxDOT's governing board, still has to approve the deal.

Last summer, TxDOT asked cities and counties across Texas to participate in the so-called "turnback program," a request that reflected the increasing reliance on local governments to tackle the state's own transportation needs.

TxDOT originally asked San Antonio to consider taking over 129 miles of roads, but the city rejected that because it could have cost an additional \$18 million a year in maintenance.



**Rough riders in fancy dresses**



**Family killed in plane crash near Spring Branch**

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Children's Health | UT kids | MAGNET RECOGNIZED | 2014-15 HANOVERS U.S. NEWS & WORLD REPORT #1 HOSPITAL IN SAN ANTONIO #6 IN TEXAS

But negotiations continued as TxDOT and other local entities solidified plans for \$825 million to improve parts of U.S. 281, Loop 1604 and Interstate 10, projects that will include the addition of toll lanes to U.S. 281 and I-10. As part of that deal, TxDOT officials again asked the city to reconsider the turnback deal.

"This is a significant enhancement forward in terms of transportation infrastructure in our city," said Mayor Julián Castro.

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News

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