



Public Statement in Support of Transportation Investments

Austin Area Research Organization (AARO)¹ believes that investment in mobility infrastructure is critical to the economic and social well-being of the citizens of Central Texas and supports decisions that will increase the capacity of our mobility systems using approaches that are effective, cost-efficient, protect the environment, and maximize mobility throughout the region.

It is noteworthy that:

- Traffic congestion and affordability are the top concerns for Austin residents.
- Efficient mobility is essential to the movement of goods, delivery of public safety and other services, and the ability of residents to go to work.
- Austin's travel time index outpaces peer communities and constitutes one of the worst traffic congestion situations in the U.S.
- Congestion costs commuters lost time, wasted fuel, and increased maintenance and adversely affects air quality and the environment.
- The population of Central Texas is growing and is expected to continue to grow, meaning congestion will only worsen, unless we do something now.

Today, our community stands on the threshold of major transportation decisions. We invite local and regional elected leaders to embrace the following values in their decision-making:

Sustainable environment: AARO considers a sustainable environment to be a fundamental element of the quality of life we all enjoy. We are grateful the Environmental Impact Statement process is integral to all major construction projects and trust the process to protect the natural environment Central Texans treasure.

Roads are not "my" roads; they are "our" roads: Central Texas roadways belong to everyone - not just those who live in close proximity. It is unreasonable to force most north-south traffic onto I-35 when connectivity to MoPac via SH-45 SW would disperse the congestion and permit better mobility for everyone, especially those who cannot afford to live inside the high cost neighborhoods of Austin.

The Need for Transit: AARO supported the 2014 City of Austin transportation bonds that failed to win approval of the voters. We must now regroup as a community (including both those "for" and "against" the 2014 bond referendum) and move ahead aggressively with a transit plan that benefits the entire community. By designing and building new road projects with transit in mind, and putting busses in the managed lanes (on MOPAC north and south and other managed lanes in the future), we will make transit service more reliable and attractive and in turn enable more people - both those with limited resources and those who choose to ride transit - to get out of their cars and use bus transit to commute from outlying areas to jobs in the city core.

Moving forward: Central Texas is behind the game when it comes to transportation infrastructure. We need to move forward on projects urgently and with care, while ensuring the money is spent wisely and in ways that are cost-effective, efficient, and maximize movement of people, goods and services.

Given these values, AARO supports construction of SH-45 SW, 4 tolled lanes on south MoPac to facilitate traffic movement and connectivity to downtown, and inclusion of all projects in the CAMPO 2040 Plan.

Ashton Cumberbatch, President

Clarke Heidrick, Chair
AARO Transportation Committee

¹ AARO, a non-partisan thought leader for Central Texas, has worked behind the scenes in an advisory capacity to decision-makers, and been a part of most major initiatives in the region including construction of the southern extension of MoPac in the mid-80s, the water contract between the City of Austin and the LCRA which secures Austin's 50-year water supply at affordable rates, creation of the Travis County Healthcare District, now known as Central Health, and many others.