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Dear TXDOT staff:

Thank you for taking the time to review my comments. Most of the points made here are not new to you as I've shared them over the last several years as a member of the Texas House of Representatives and actively engaged with you on issues around transportation technology, mobility and safety.

Early versions of IH35 had assets I truly appreciated. We were at one time looking at dedicated bus lanes through the heart of this project. That was scrapped in subsequent planning efforts. While other improvements have been done I wish I could say we have a plan that would help with the climate crisis we are now in and would give incentives for transit which would help with throughput. We are not there yet.

Here are my thoughts in summary:

Air quality - in an environmental review in which you are doing your own self assessment and NOT sending this to USDOT for review, I would hope you were planning on going above and beyond with air quality assessments. It's baffling to see your assessment that with more lanes and more impacts - even after construction - that our air quality will not worsen. Over the last few years we've seen studies showing our air quality worsen, our situation is tenuous with non-attainment and public health impacts show up in worsened allergies and childhood asthma. There is a direct impact to public health and I suggest you start with air quality studies.

Water quality - I'm hearing more and more concerns about direct runoff into the source of our drinking water. Let's be the best! If other projects don't do this then let's be the one to say we did. With more severe weather events we should anticipate flooding that addresses capture and treatment of this runoff.

Transit priorities - We are now an urban state with more density and more potential for us to correct the planning sins of the past and use walking, biking and transit to help us be more connected and less reliant on a one-person one-vehicle scenario. We need to incentivize multi-modal solutions whether they be small or large vehicles carrying our neighbors whether they are living in Hays County or Williamson County and trying to get to the heart of the city.

- Why was the bus priority lane scrapped from earlier versions?
- What percentage of this project is going towards transit?
- Please research dedicated bus only entry and exits.
- I don't see evidence of long range planning with Capital Metro and CARTS for future transit forecasting. Transit ridership will grow when we plan assets like a new freeway so seeing your interface with Capmetro on North South potential vs. only "project connect" potential is in order.

Alternate routes - with my leadership and the help of former State Senator Kirk Watson, the legislature passed two pilot programs to look at removing the tolls for multi-axle vehicles to encourage them to utilize SH130. The reviews were mixed. I encourage you to pick up where that left off and let's do scenarios now that we have an additional bypass in the form of the Bergstrom Expressway. Connect with CTRMA and dig deep into alternatives for drive through traffic - especially now that trucks can use the Bergstrom Expressway to get to destinations between North Austin and Round Rock.

Safety - Speed and distracted driving continue to cause death and severe injury to so many Texans and in this case visitors streaming through Austin to get to South Padre or an Astros game or other parts of the state. We need modeling on how lowered speeds on the highway as well as on the planned frontage roads would help save lives. I always appreciated the TXDOT voice when it comes to traffic safety. Let's let this highway be a beacon to safety around the country.

Connection/Equity - I believe we should engineer a longer 'canyon' to connect East and West to one another and repair the damage of the past. We should be able to engineer that canyon and look to IH35 as a model for how we can accommodate the concerns about safety, equity and building community.

I believe if we build any of the solutions you have drawn up thus far we are only wasting our public funds and squandering an opportunity to build an asset that could be bold and visionary.

I've always appreciated your work during our time working together, but I've also always given you my upfront opinion without filters. Thank you for your work, your professionalism and the time you've taken with me over the years now and in my role as a public official.

Sinceramente,



Celia Israel

- CC: CTRMA
- Austin City council
- Travis County Commissioners
- Central Texas House members
- Central Texas Senate members
- Capital Metro Board
- City of Austin Transportation Staff
- Austin City Manager