

*An inclusive voice for
Austin neighborhoods.*

Felicity Maxwell
Zilker
President

Roger L. Cauvin
Downtown
Treasurer



June 17, 2020

City Council and Leaders of the City of Austin
301 W. 2nd Street
Austin, Texas 78701

RE: Project Connect and Street Impact Fees

City Council, commissioners, and transportation staff,

Friends of Austin Neighborhoods (FAN) members recently voted on two resolutions regarding the future of transportation in Austin.

FAN represents about 3,000 neighbors (homeowners, renters, and small business owners) among its 19 member neighborhood associations and individual members living in 203 other neighborhoods throughout the city. A complete [list of member neighborhood associations and individual members](#) is on the FAN website.

After thorough discussion in the FAN forum, a supermajority of voting members approved each of the following recommendations in a secure online vote. Full results of these and all other online votes are on the [Votes page](#) of the FAN website.

Project Connect and High-Quality Transit

FAN supports the Project Connect plan for a high-quality, high-capacity transit system, and calls for:

1. Dedicated pathways for high-ridership corridors to improve travel times, frequency, and predictability for passengers.
2. Rail on Austin's proven, highest-ridership transit corridors, prioritizing Guadalupe-Lamar.
3. Design characteristics that foster a quality passenger experience and high ridership, such as:
 - a. Smooth, quiet rides.
 - b. Station platforms with all-door, level boarding.
 - c. Simple and convenient fare structures and ticketing options (including on platforms).
 - d. Safety, comfort, and accessibility for passengers throughout their journeys, especially passengers connecting on foot, bicycles, scooters, or wheelchairs.

- e. Maps, schedules, and real-time information readily accessible to passengers as they make their journeys.
4. Capacity that meets future ridership demand and does not create “choke points” for transit.
5. Current and future expansion plans that benefit all kinds of riders.

FAN’s vision calls for improved and more widely accessible transit. By prioritizing corridors and a quality passenger experience, the Project Connect plan helps us get closer to making this vision a reality.

Street Impact Fee Changes

FAN calls for the following changes to the city’s proposed street impact fee:

- The “street impact fee” should be renamed “automobile impact fee”.
- Base automobile impact fees for an individual project on the amount of parking in the project.
- Eliminate minimum parking requirements citywide (a position FAN has previously adopted).
- Base the maximum impact fee for a service area on automobile-oriented growth projections and capacity needs.
- Consider incorporating the number of added curb cuts in the fee calculations for individual projects.

FAN is concerned that some aspects of the current proposal will have effects contrary to FAN’s vision for “a diverse, abundant, and affordable choice of housing options” and greater transit accessibility. For example, under the city’s current proposal:

- Replacing a single family home with a duplex will incur a fee, but tearing down the same single family home and replacing it with a single family home twice the size will not.
- A downtown high-rise apartment complex with 300 residential units and zero parking would incur the same fee as one with 300 parking spaces [unless the developer negotiates special reductions].
- The formula has some of the service areas on the periphery of the city paying less than some of the interior zones.
- The formulas use ITE trip count estimates, which a growing consensus of planners believe are inaccurate and do not take into consideration factors (nearby transit, bike lanes, mixed use) that can cause people to take fewer automobile trips.

Since the impact fee is supposed to be for automobile impacts, the city should base it on factors that more accurately reflect the impacts on automobile infrastructure. The number of parking spaces (or the square footage of parking) is a proxy for the extent to which visitors and occupants of a development will

impact nearby streets with automobiles and potentially require automobile infrastructure upgrades.

We invite you to review these recommendations from our membership, and we are happy to meet (virtually) with you and your staff and discuss them.

Respectfully,

Board of Directors of Friends of Austin Neighborhoods (FAN)

Cc: liane.miller@austintexas.gov
richardv.mendoza@austintexas.gov
rob.spillar@austintexas.gov
jackie.nirenberg@capmetro.org
randy.clarke@capmetro.org

Friends of Austin Neighborhoods (FAN) is a coalition of neighborhood associations and residents reclaiming the word “neighborhood” to include the full diversity of voices, moving beyond neighborhood protectionism.