



“The CITY of AUSTIN PLAN to LOWER IH-35 THROUGH DOWNTOWN AUSTIN”

TxDOT’s IH-35 Project through Downtown Austin

“The Texas Department of Transportation’s Austin District in August 2013 completed an exhaustive study about what to do about I-35 from Georgetown to San Marcos and has updated it several times since then. That 65 mile stretch includes **the state’s most congested section of highway - the part going through the center of Austin.”**

TxDOT has come up with \$7.5 billion for that project which will include lowering IH-35 through Downtown Austin from U.S. Hwy 290 East on the north to Town Lake on the south that will have two “managed lanes” and three regular traffic lanes in each direction.

The sad part of this proposed project is that it’s being driven by politics. Downtown property owners and real estate investors have been pushing to lower IH-35 through the Downtown area for years as they continue their gentrification of East Austin in order to further their expansion of Downtown Austin east of IH-35 to Pleasant Valley Road.

"It's a natural evolution," former Mayor Gus García says of East Austin's growing connection to downtown and the rest of Austin. "Once we as a city decided that we wanted a vibrant downtown (and the Council voted on this issue several times in the 1990s), many of us knew that development was going to move east of downtown. It was — and still is — the most logical option."

[SOURCE: “A plaza apart: Take a walk through the short history of sometimes-controversial Saltillo”, Austin American-Statesman August 24, 2010]



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The most logical option? Who says?!! Why is it that throughout the history of Austin every time an area of Austin becomes attractive to the rich and powerful, Austin’s minority communities end up being relocated to another part of town? The Black community has been relocated a number of times over the course of Austin’s history. Now



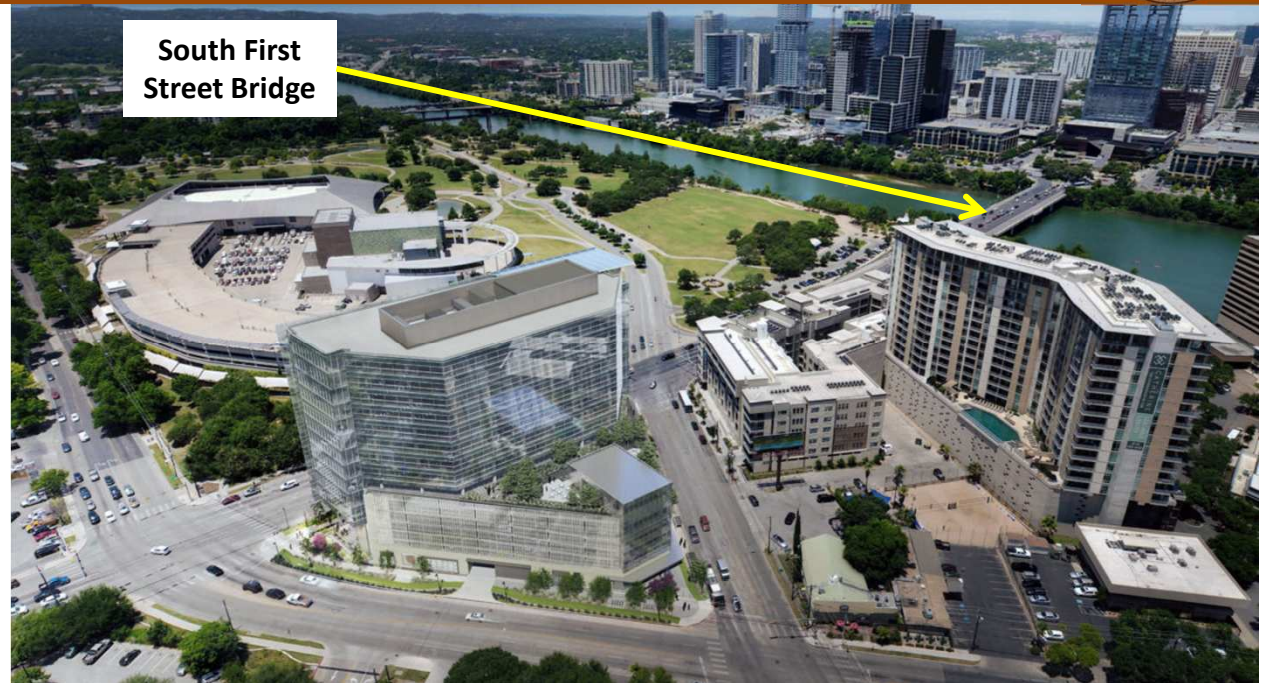
the Latino community is being displaced from East Austin just as they were from the Boulden Creek area in order for the rich and powerful to expand Downtown Austin.

But it doesn’t end there. If one looks at the plans for the South Central Waterfront area one would see that the Downtown Austin expansion effort is jumping Lady Bird Lake and moving south taking in the area of Barton Springs Rd and South First St and running along Riverside Dr down to Joe’s Crab Shack as well as running along South Congress Ave. Why aren’t they expanding west of Guadalupe to North Lamar Blvd? Is it too political!!!?



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Will they be dislocating the white Austinites in South Austin from Barton Springs Road and Riverside Drive to Oltorf Road with their Downtown Austin expansion or is their no political support for that either? Is the Bouldin Creek area part of this Downtown Austin expansion? Why not? Why is the Downtown expansion focused only on going east instead of south or west?

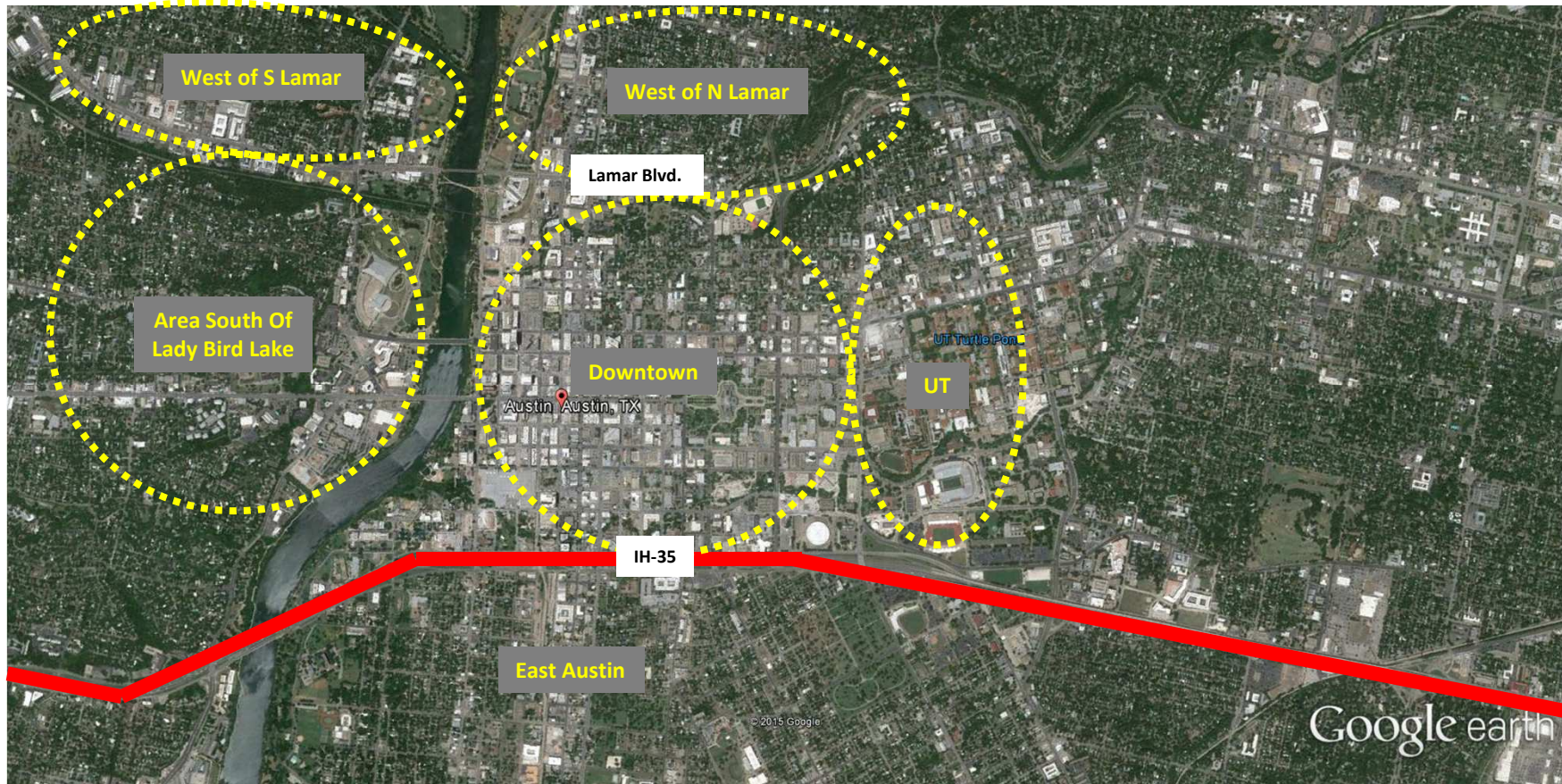


Why not finish off the area west of Guadalupe to North Lamar Blvd and then move further west into the old Clarksville and old Enfield areas from North Lamar Blvd to Mopac Blvd between 6th Street and 24th Street? No, those were gentrified years ago so they can't displace those white Austinites. OK. How about south into The Bouldin Creek area between South Congress Avenue and South Lamar Blvd? No, that, too, was gentrified years ago. So they can't displace those white Austinites either. At the rate Austin is going there just won't be any heritage left of our minority communities.



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Why not **STOP PUSHING** the Latino Community out of East Austin and expand Downtown Austin starting on the southern banks of Lady Bird Lake and move south between South Congress and South Lamar? Is it because the residents of that area are not minorities? **Is it possible the people driving the Downtown expansion east are racists?!!** Austin has a history of moving minority communities out of their neighborhoods when those neighborhoods become attractive to the rich (i.e. white Austinites). Why not expand Downtown Austin west of Guadalupe St to Mopac from 6th Street to 24th Street?





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Why is it that anything developers want the Austin City Council is happy to provide? The Austin metropolitan population is approx. 2.0 million people. That’s about the same as Pittsburgh, St. Louis and Cincinnati. And all three of those cities have a downtown that covers the same approximate area as does Austin. And all three downtowns abut a river as does Austin. So why the obsession to continually expand Downtown? The Downtown area



of those three cities seems to be enough for them. Why it is not enough for the greedy real estate investors of Austin?

**Ah, that’s it...GREED!
As long as they have friends at City Hall, there is no limit to what they might do to Austin’s minority communities in their quest to expand Downtown Austin.**



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Cincinnati

The area of Downtown Cincinnati is less than the area of Downtown Austin.

And as can be seen, there is a major highway running thru Downtown Cincinnati splitting the Riverfront from Downtown.



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Pittsburgh

The area of Downtown Pittsburgh is less than the area of Downtown Austin.

And as can be seen, there is a major highway running along Downtown Pittsburgh just like IH-35 in Austin.



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St. Louis

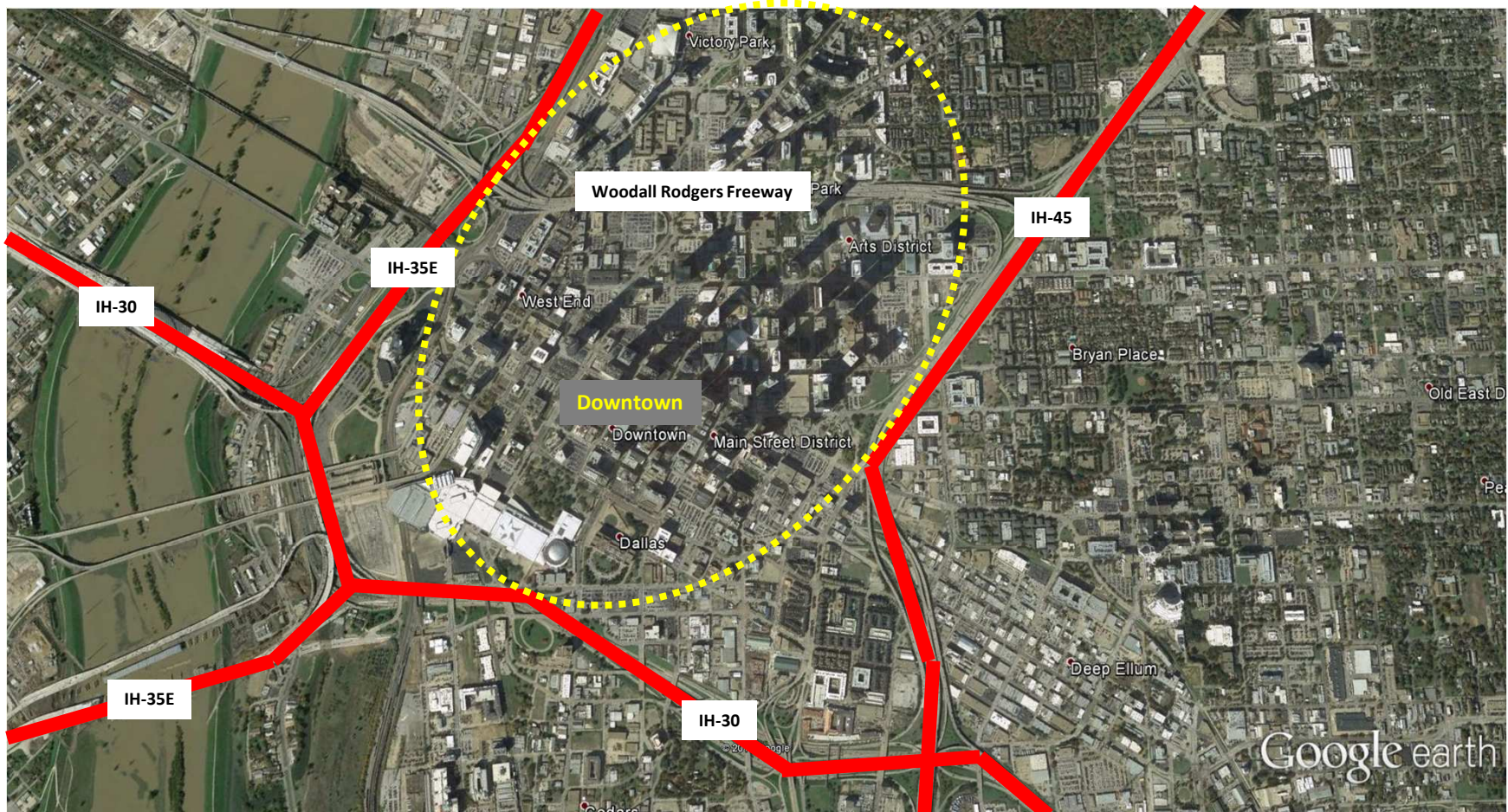
The area of Downtown St. Louis is less than the area of Downtown Austin.

There are two major highways running thru Downtown St. Louis. One is elevated like Austin and the other splits the riverfront from the Downtown.

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Dallas, Texas Interstate Highways Located Next to Downtown

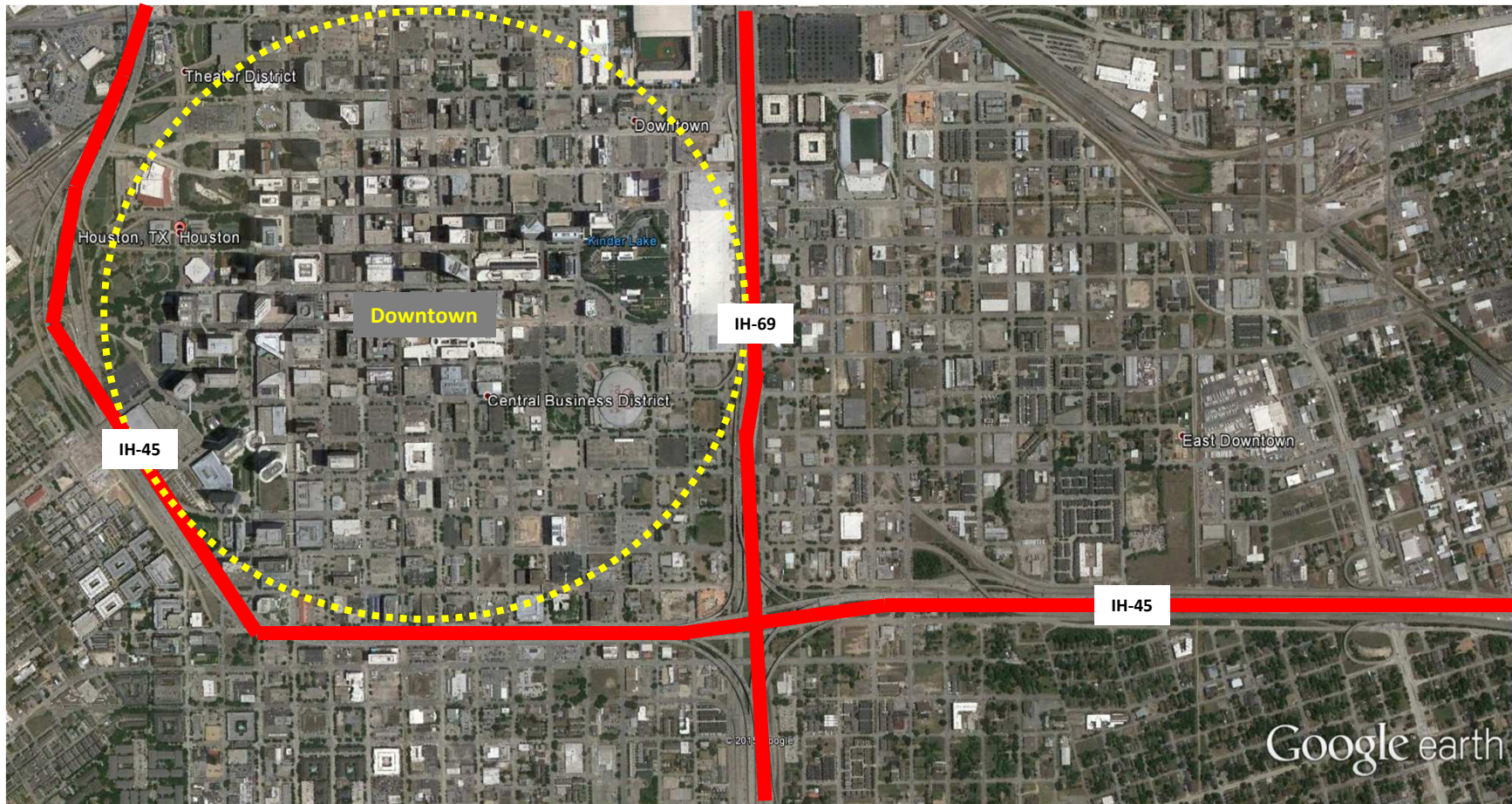
An above ground Interstate Highway running through or next to a city’s Downtown area is not a phenomena unique to The City of Austin



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Houston, Texas Interstate Highways Located Next to Downtown

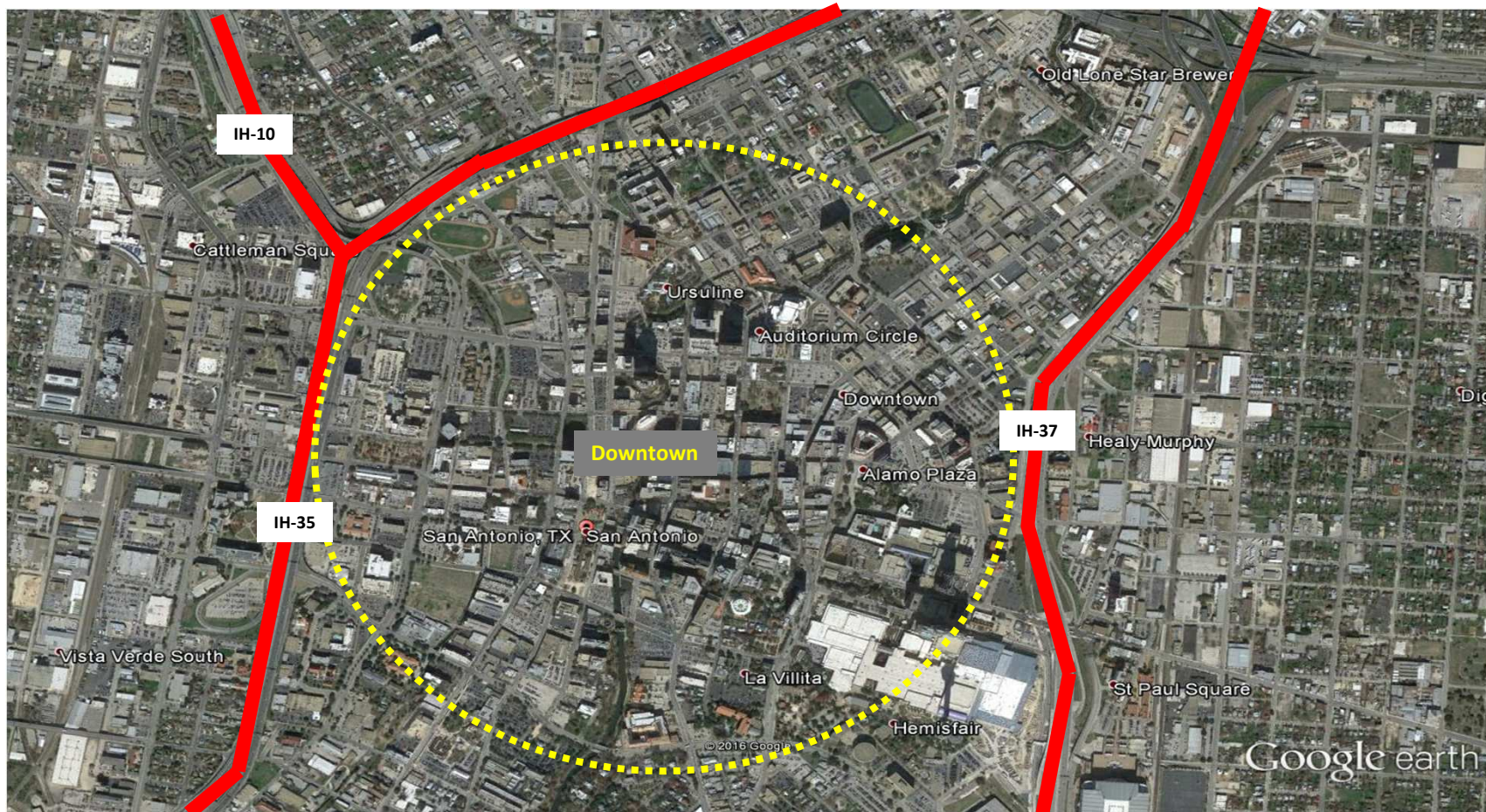
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San Antonio, Texas Interstate Highways Located Next to Downtown

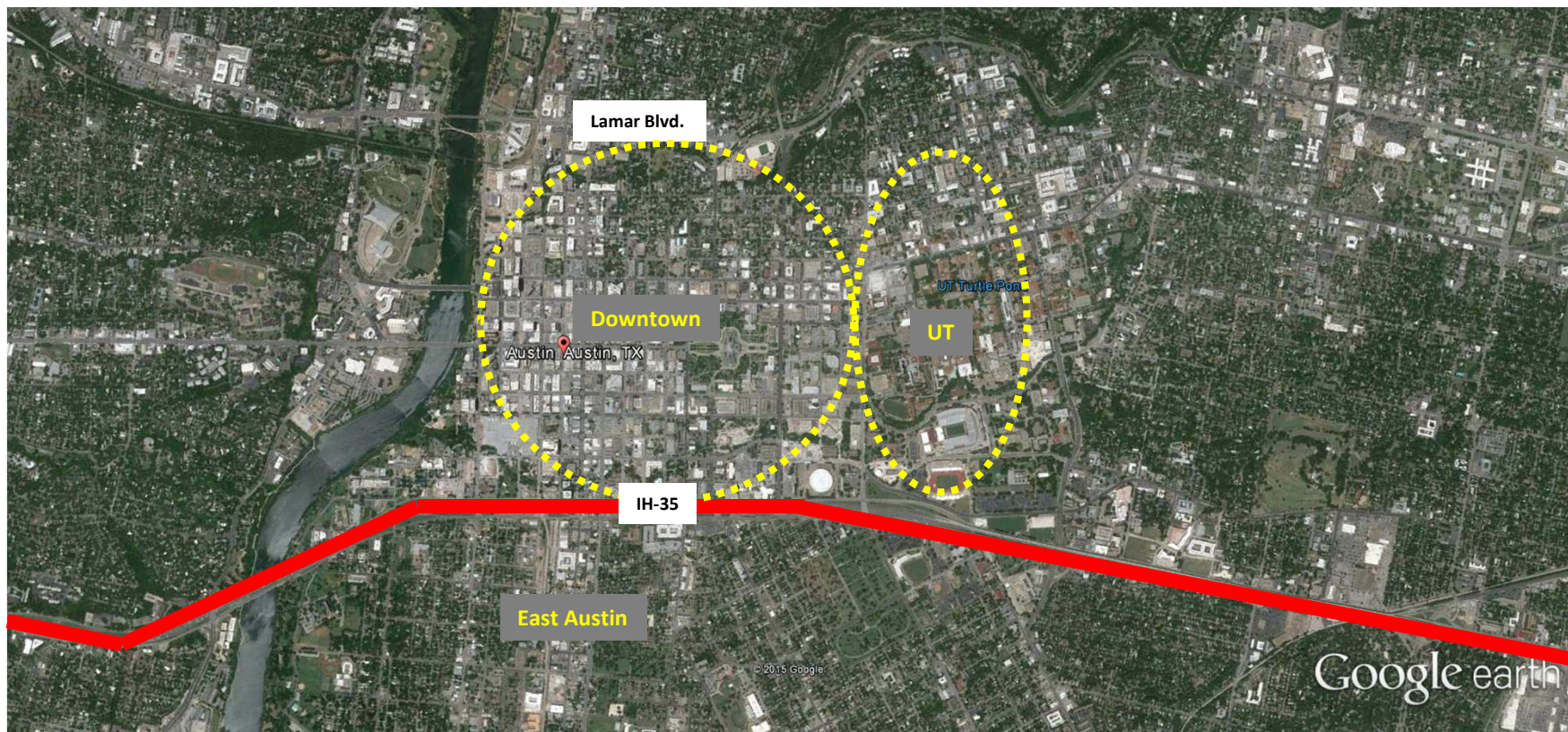
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Austin, Texas Interstate Highway located Next to Downtown

The “truth” is this: If the IH-35 “dividing line” between downtown and East Austin was such a genuine concern to Politicians, then why didn’t it happen a long time ago and before gentrification of the East Austin neighborhoods began to accelerate? For at the same time as this gentrification is the fact that opportunities for new development Downtown west of IH-35 have begun to diminish. So let’s stop this charade. Lowering IH-35 through Downtown Austin is not about removing the “dividing line”. It’s about creating an opportunity for more Downtown Real Estate Development.





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So now lets turn our attention back from this push to lower IH-35 through Downtown Austin and, instead, to the obvious need for expanding the capacity of IH-35 in an effort to relieve what is the worst traffic congestion in the United States. Currently there are three traffic lanes flowing in each direction through Downtown Austin from Ben White Blvd on the south to U.S. Hwy 183 on the north. TxDOT is proposing adding two “managed lanes” in each direction primarily for use by trucks.

As it is, 6,000+ trucks cross the border in Laredo each business day with destinations all over the United States. So TxDOT’s approach appears to be that by separating those trucks from non-truck vehicles, traffic congestion relief would result. But that would leave today’s non-truck vehicular traffic and the next 20 years in the growth of that traffic to have only today’s three existing traffic lanes. In other words, there would be no additional non-truck traffic lanes between Ben White Blvd and U.S. Hwy 183 well into this 21st Century.

With any degree of common sense, clearly that approach is not going to work. For even if one could snap their finger and two additional traffic lanes appeared today, it wouldn’t be enough to relieve the horrendous traffic congestion on IH-35 through Downtown Austin.

So what might work? In March of 2015, then Texas House Transportation Committee Chairman Pickett suggested eliminating tolls on SH 130 to create a “by-pass” of Austin for all those trucks and non-truck vehicles traveling to destinations north of Austin.



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Clearly an idea that may just have some merit. As one can see, expanding SH 130 to accommodate future traffic could be easily achieved. Doing so on IH-35 not so easily done.

But the idea gets better. There are six exits off of SH 130 that lead into Austin. So even trucks with Austin destinations could use SH 130 and those exits to deliver their goods to their Austin destinations without

having to deal with the traffic congestion of IH-35 through Downtown Austin. Taking this approach would allow TxDOT to expand IH-35 through Downtown Austin for non-truck vehicular traffic by adding three new traffic lanes thereby doubling the number of traffic lanes. By taking approx. \$1 billion from TxDOT’s \$7.5 billion budget for IH-35 expansion and paying off the debt of SH 130 (sections 1-4), a toll free by-pass of Austin could be created and additional traffic lanes added to IH-35 through Downtown Austin.





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That would leave \$6.5 billion for expanding IH-35 through Downtown Austin. Couple that with expanding Austin’s Downtown west and south and just maybe the effort to gentrify East Austin would stop. TxDOT would then be free to use the right-of-way it controls through Downtown Austin to expand IH-35 in whatever manner best results



in maximizing the creation of at least three additional traffic lanes. For estimates are that “capping” a lowered IH-35 through Downtown Austin would cost approx. \$600 million. Money that would be better spent removing the tolls on SH 130 and enforcing an IH-35 “by-pass” of Austin for those 6,000+ trucks traveling IH-35 from Laredo each & every day.

Remember the prior examples of Texas cities with Downtowns that function within the construct of elevated highways abutting their Downtowns? Austin would be no different. And if that doesn’t work for the greedy Downtown real estate investors....too bad.



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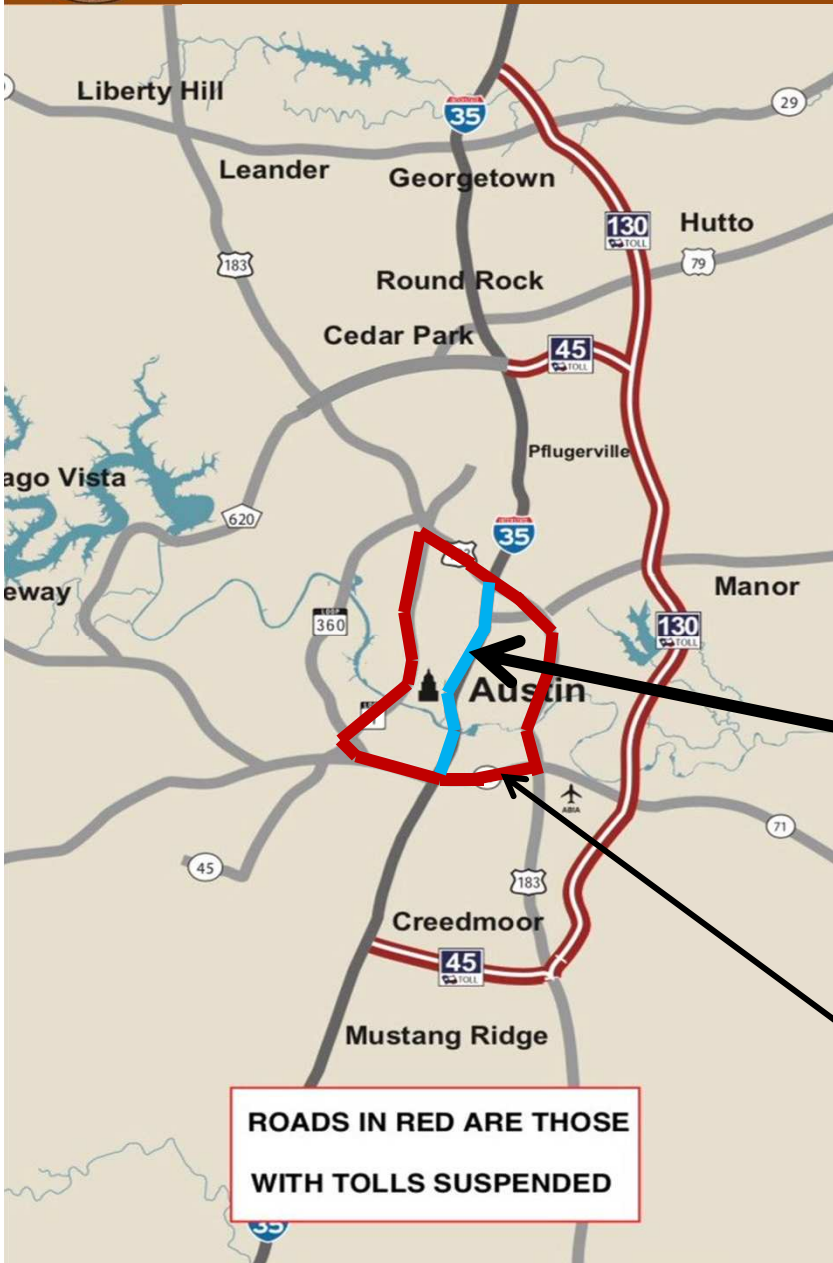
For there is a dirty little secret those greedy Downtown real estate investors don't want you to know. Lowering IH-35 through Downtown Austin not only comes with a big price tag, it comes with a lot of misery. Imagine having IH-35 through Downtown Austin shut down for years!! Yes, for years. And all that traffic detoured to U.S. Hwy 183 south and Mopac Blvd. Adding traffic lanes to IH-35 through Downtown Austin would be messy, but it doesn't need to create widespread misery. Messy would be associated with expanding in an elevated manner as pictured in the prior slide while misery would be associated with lowering IH-35. How selfish of those Downtown real estate investors to put Austinites through years of miserable traffic congestion, much worse than what we see today, in order to feather their own nest.

Imagine traffic on Mopac with half of IH-35's traffic added to it along with the increase in traffic that will occur over the next 20 years. And imagine traffic on U.S. Hwy 183 south with half of IH-35's traffic added to it along with the increase in traffic that will occur over the next 20 years. And why 20 years? Because TxDOT's estimate for expanding IH-35 through Downtown Austin is 17 years. Yes, 17 years of misery.

Austin already has some of the worst traffic congestion in the United States. And God knows Mopac isn't going to get any more traffic lanes in the next 20 years and the same is true for U.S. Hwy 183 south. Imagine what your quality of life would be like sitting in traffic for twice as long or longer than you do today? It's not a pretty thought.



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The pain of Traffic Congestion would get even worse:

“An extreme overhaul of I-35 between Round Rock and Buda will take a massive amount of effort by the state and a massive amount of patience by the traveling public. Not to mention a massive amount of time: an estimated 17 years.”

“The highway's improvements would first require improvements on Mopac and 183 east of town, to absorb traffic detours. It would also mean a major disruption in downtown Austin.” [The implication here being that the Toll Lanes built in North MoPac and proposed in South MoPac and those being built in U.S. Hwy 183 East will provide the alternative for detouring IH-35 for a significant number of years.]

[SOURCE OF QUOTES: KLBJ News Radio, 9/11/13, “I-35 fix to cost at least \$2 billion”]

■ IH-35 from U.S. Hwy 183 on the north and Ben White Blvd on the south will be shut down for at least 7 years to complete construction.

□ Consequently, IH-35 traffic will be detoured to U.S. Hwy 183 South on the east and Mopac Blvd on the west using U.S. Hwy 183 central and Ben White Blvd on the south to connect back to IH-35 north of U.S. Hwy 183 & south of Ben White Blvd.



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For those who may believe that we’ve been too hard on Downtown real estate investors, let’s look at some facts.

On February 27, 2020, the Texas Transportation Commission stated its intention to provide an additional \$4.3 billion in funding for the IH-35 improvements project bringing the total funding to \$7.5 billion. The next day, the Downtown Austin Alliance (i.e. DAA - Downtown real estate investors) once again showcased their "cap-and-stitch" vision of parks and boulevards to be built over the lowered IH-35 through Downtown Austin as a means to **“make the new I-35 less of a scar and barrier between East and West Austin”**.

If the intent is to erase the “scar and barrier” between East and West Austin, then the implication is they intend to preserve the cultural heritage of East Austin. But that is not what is happening in East Austin. Real estate investors are using gentrification to move the Latino community out of East Austin in order to expand Downtown Austin to Pleasant Valley Road. And they don’t want a “scar and barrier” dividing what will become the new Downtown Austin so they want IH-35 lowered from Airport Blvd to Town Lake.

DAA President Dewitt Peart describes lowering IH-35 through Downtown Austin as **"a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to transform one of Austin's biggest community barriers into a valuable regional asset for generations to come."** [What a joke.](#) For by moving the Latino community out of East Austin, there won’t be any community left. And the “asset” he’s talking about is an expanded Downtown Austin and the enriching real estate values.



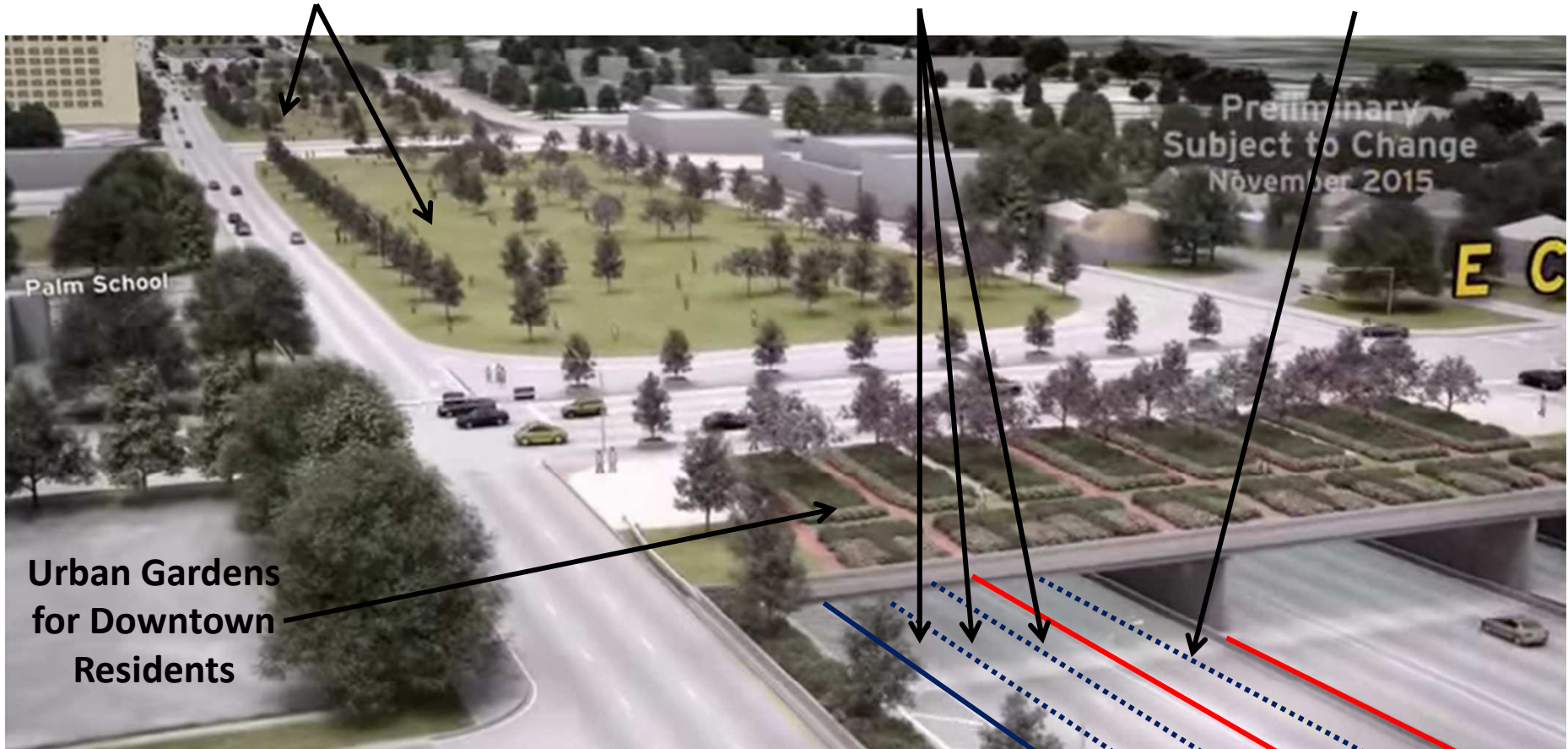
"The CITY of AUSTIN PLAN to LOWER IH-35 THROUGH DOWNTOWN AUSTIN"

What Downtown Property Owners Want IH-35 To Look Like thru Downtown Austin

Parks for Downtown Residents

3 Existing Travel Lanes

2 Managed Lanes



Today, there are three lanes of traffic on IH-35 through Downtown Austin. This model would only create two additional lanes but reserve them for trucks. Therefore, after \$7.5 billion and 7 plus years of shutting down IH-35 thru Downtown Austin, the result would be only 2 additional lanes. If those two added lanes existed today, it wouldn't be enough to handle today's traffic load and no chance of handling the traffic load of 2040.



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So lets be clear. Lowering IH-35 through Downtown Austin has nothing to do with erasing the “scar and barrier” between East and West Austin. It’s about money. About enriching a small group of real estate investors at the expense of East Austin’s Latino community. **And that, folks, is what makes it about racism!!!!** For you can bet your you-know-what if the East Austin community was not a minority community and, instead, an upwardly mobile white community, they wouldn’t even think about moving those people out of East Austin to expand Downtown Austin. “Money talks and BS walks.”

We digress. It turns out the DDA has very little regard for “the little people” of Austin as well who are being pushed out into the suburbs via our Affordability Crisis and, thus, forced to commute to work each and everyday in some of the worst traffic congestion in the United States. Remember, IH-35 through Downtown Austin will be shut down for 7+ years with traffic being detoured to U.S. Hwy 183 south and Mopac Blvd. Just imagine how bad that daily commute is going to be for Austin’s suburbanites while the Downtown real estate investors further enrich themselves by expanding Downtown Austin into East Austin.

But keep in mind one thing: they wouldn’t be able to move the Latino community out of East Austin, expand Downtown Austin and lower IH-35 through Downtown Austin without the support and help of The Austin City Council. Yes, it seems the City Council has the same disregard for “the little people” and are just as much racists as the real estate investors.

How do we know this? Because **you judge people by what they do not by what they say.**



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TxDOT’s IH-35 Project through Downtown Austin

No Practical Benefits will Result from this Project

The following is taken from:

The Texas A&M Transportation Institute’s August 2013 Mobility Investment Priorities Project’s Long-term Central Texas IH-35 Improvement Scenarios, Executive Summary, August 2013:

KEY FINDINGS

Central Texas cannot simply build its way out of congestion on IH-35. The **only build-only option to have a substantial congestion reducing effect is the addition of three tolled express lanes in each direction. And any substantial improvement must come from adding capacity together with efficient toll lanes operation, new development patterns and travel behavior changes.**

WHAT WOULD IT TAKE? A HYBRID STRATEGY

- 1) Adding Express Tolled Lanes;
- 2) Shifting 40% of region-wide commuters to work-at-home jobs (telecommuting 5 days/week);
- 3) Shifting 30% of university classroom commuters to distance learning from home;
- 4) Shifting 10% of retail in-store shopping to online shopping;
- 5) Shifting additional trips to off-peak periods (non-rush periods); and,
- 6) Increasing HOV, Bicycling, Walking and Transit Use by 25% each.



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TxDOT’s IH-35 Project through Downtown Austin

No Practical Benefits will Result from this Project

WHAT WOULD IT TAKE? A HYBRID STRATEGY [Taken from the prior slide]

- 1) Adding Express Tolled Lanes;**
- 2) Shifting 40% of region-wide commuters to work-at-home jobs (telecommuting 5 days/week);**
- 3) Shifting 30% of university classroom commuters to distance learning from home;**
- 4) Shifting 10% of retail in-store shopping to online shopping;**
- 5) Shifting additional trips to off-peak periods (non-rush periods); and,**
- 6) Increasing HOV, Bicycling, Walking and Transit Use by 25% each.**

In the wake of this Covid-19 virus, it’s very possible that items #2 thru #5 may become a reality. That would leave items #1 and #6. As for item #6, people are more reluctant with the Covid-19 virus to ride public transit and until the virus is under control (which may not ever happen), public transit ridership probably won’t come close to increasing by 25%. [see the last slide for what it will take in lieu of that]

As for item #1, the added toll lanes on Mopac Blvd have not resulted in reducing the daily traffic congestion and there is no additional room for more lanes. As regards U.S. Hwy 183 south, that project is just being completed and will probably not see any additional lanes for decades to come. That would leave IH-35 through Downtown Austin and the priority for that project should be how best to maximize the number of additional main traffic lanes. And if that means an elevated IH-35 and not a lowered IH-35 through Downtown Austin then so be it. Screw the Downtown Austin Alliance.



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TxDOT’s IH-35 Project through Downtown Austin

The IH-35 Downtown Austin “Cut & Cap” Project

“IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS”

In exchange for moving the Latino community out of East Austin, lowering IH-35 through Downtown Austin and expanding Downtown Austin east to Pleasant Valley Road, The Taxpayers of Austin will receive the following:

- 1) **Not enough additional traffic main lanes** on IH-35 will be constructed to relieve traffic congestion;
- 2) **17 years** of construction and **shutting down IH-35** from Airport Blvd on the north and Town Lake on the South **for 7+ years**
- 3) **Detouring** IH-35 traffic to **MoPac Blvd and U.S. Hwy 183 South** when IH-35 is shut down;
- 4) Making it **very unlikely that the horrendous traffic congestion** on IH-35 through Downtown Austin **will ever be resolved**; and
- 5) **Not creating the lanes that are capable of handling the IH-35 traffic of today**, 2040 and beyond.

We hereby nominate this IH-35 Project for our Annual Forrest Gump Award

“Stupid Is As Stupid Does”



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IT’S NOT ABOUT MOBILITY....IT’S ABOUT POLITICS

The Big Picture is being drawn by the Downtown Austin Alliance (Downtown real estate investors)

What they WANT is the following:

- 1) IH-35 lowered through Downtown Austin so when they expand the Downtown to Pleasant Valley Road the Downtown won’t be divided by IH-35**
- 2) A Light Rail system serving the Downtown with service from ABIA because this enhances the value of their property and increases their retail, office and residential rents**
- 3) gentrification of East Austin to move out the Latino community and make way for their Downtown expansion to Pleasant Valley Road**
- 4) Waller Creek Park and Riverwalk that will further enhance the value of their property**



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IT’S NOT ABOUT MOBILITY....IT’S ABOUT POLITICS

The Big Picture is being drawn by the Downtown Austin Alliance (Downtown real estate investors)

What they NEED from Austinites is the following:

1) a 25% increase in your property taxes and resident rents

2020 Taxes will.....double in just 6 years

....triple in just 10 years

....and quadruple in just 14 years

2020 Rents will.....double in just 7 years

....triple in just 12 years

....and quadruple in just 16 years

2) Austin taxpayers to approve their \$7.0 billion Light Rail Proposal

3) Austin Commuters to put up with years of IH-35 being shut down from Airport Blvd to Town Lake and IH-35 traffic detoured to Mopac Blvd and U.S. Hwy 183 south



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IT’S NOT ABOUT MOBILITY...IT’S ABOUT POLITICS

Remember this: The Downtown Austin Alliance is making out like bandits using taxpayer money. Taxpayers have spent over \$500 million on the Waller Creek Tunnel, Park and Riverwalk with more millions to complete the project. They would spend another \$600 million capping a lowered IH-35 through Downtown Austin to create more parks.

They expect you to approve spending \$7.0 billion of your tax money to create a Light Rail network to serve Downtown Austin with a subway and underground retail plaza as well as Light Rail service to/from ABIA that would require a new rail bridge across Town Lake. A \$600 million bridge only necessitated by the decision to serve an ____ city block area known as the Rainey Street Neighborhood. When it’s all totaled up it comes to \$8.1 billion dollars worth of enhancements for the Downtown property owners which results in raising the value of their property.

Ask yourself this question: when was the last time the Austin City Council made a significant investment in your neighborhood??!!

As of right now, in the wake of this Covid-19 virus, Austinites have no idea whether they can afford a 25% tax increase. **So why not out it off until next year? You can do just that, folks. Just VOTE “NO” this November 3rd for both the 25% tax increase and the \$7.0 billion Light Rail proposal and we’ll see where we are this time next year.**



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WHAT WILL IT TAKE TO SAVE OURSELVES?

The Only Real HOPE for Austin to resolve its horrendous traffic congestion on its highways is to DO ALL OF THE FOLLOWING:

- 1) Create a Commuter Rail network serving U.S. Hwy 183 north, IH-35 (north & south), Mopac Blvd (north & south), and the MoKan right-of-way (for a total of 8 Commuter Rail lines)**
- 2) Build a Grand Central Rail Station abutting IH-35 between 3rd and 4th streets to serve the Commuter Rail lines of Mopac, IH-35 (north & south), and the Red & Green lines**
- 3) Build a Grand Rail Station just west of North Lamar Blvd at Cesar Chavez Street to serve the Commuter Rail lines of Mopac (north & south) and U.S. Hwy 183 north**
- 4) Pay off the debt of State Highway 130 (sections 1-4) and create an IH-35 “by-pass” of Downtown Austin making its use mandatory for trucks with two axels or more**
- 5) Add as many traffic lanes as possible to IH-35 through Downtown Austin in an elevated manner building out main lanes over the frontage roads to maximize the number of lanes**
- 6) Abandon the gentrification of East Austin leaving the Latino community to their heritage and expand Downtown Austin to the south by expanding the South Central Riverfront**

Good Luck, Austin!!