

CONGRESS FOR THE NEW URBANISM

CENTRAL TEXAS CHAPTER

CHAPTER OFFICE

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DATE: July 8, 2010
FROM: Board, Congress for New Urbanism, Central Texas Chapter
TO: Mayor and Council
CC: Marc Ott, City Manager
Sue Edwards, Robert Goode, Howard Lazarus - Assistant City Managers

SUBJECT: CNU Support for Multi-Modal Mix in 2010 Mobility Bond Package

The Congress for New Urbanism, Central Texas Chapter wishes to voice its support to the City of Austin for the multimodal character of the proposed \$85 million dollar 2010 transportation draft bond package.

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The Charter of The New Urbanism states: “Communities should be designed for the pedestrian and transit as well as the car.” The proposed 2010 bond package is well aligned with this principle, and includes strong bicycling infrastructure as well.

As an organization, we are not taking a position on any of the individual mobility projects. Rather, we wish to register our overall support for the proposed intermodal allocation of transportation investments. We recommend retaining this balance as the package is refined and finalized. In particular, we wish to commend and encourage the city’s focus on “corridor” and “complete streets” projects pursued as part of creating vital neighborhoods, districts, and corridors.

As New Urbanists, we believe investments in multimodal transportation must be made in the larger context of urban design. We see them as sound investments to the degree that they contribute to compact, “walkable” neighborhoods, districts, corridors, communities, great public places, and memorable urban places. We believe this approach is what will continue to keep Austin’s character, reputation, and economy strong. We thus encourage the city to maintain the strongest possible links between its Transportation, Urban Design, and Economic Growth Departments. While new street, sidewalk, bicycle infrastructure, and transit improvements are a very important piece of the puzzle, they must support and be supported by economic planning and overall urban planning.

As the Charter of the New Urbanism states: “Neighborhoods should be compact, pedestrian-friendly, and mixed-use. . . . Many activities of daily living should occur within walking distance, allowing independence to those who do not drive, especially the elderly and the young. Interconnected networks of streets should be designed to encourage walking, reduce the number and length of automobile trips, and conserve energy.”

It further states, “Streets, sidewalks, trails, and street trails, should be safe, comfortable, and interesting to the pedestrian and when properly configured, they encourage walking and enable neighbors to know each other and protect their communities.”

In assembling this transportation bond package, we commend city management and staff on the objective methodology applied. The open and transparent process has done a good job of embracing citizen input, in the identification and selection of transportation gaps. In this and future bond packages, we applaud the inclusion of “catalytic” projects eligible for funding from State or Federal sources, which can continue to be completed through future bond packages.

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We also look forward to supporting in 2012 a robust bond package to fund a significant first phase of an urban rail system.

As the city pursues this package and its successful implementation, we wish to offer our expertise as community volunteers. Please do not hesitate to call on us if we can be of assistance in any way.

Sincerely,



Sean Compton, LEED AP
President, Central Texas Chapter CNU

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