

North Central Expressway Landscaping

Council Transportation and Environment
Committee

February 11, 2008

City of Dallas – Public Works and
Transportation

Texas Department of Transportation





Purpose of Briefing

- Update the Committee on TxDOT's plans to reduce landscaping on North Central Expressway between Woodall Rodgers and LBJ Freeway
- Identify possible strategies to maintain a strong amenities package on North Central and the potential cost impact to the City
- Obtain Committee policy direction on which strategy to pursue with TxDOT



North Central Reconstruction

- Texas Highway Commission approved Minute Order 84045 on February 13, 1986
- City Council accepted provisions of the Minute Order on May 7, 1986 – Resolution #86-1441
- Minute Order stipulated that:
 - State and City would each pay half of a \$10.1 million amenities package
 - State would “maintain that portion of the work which is its responsibility in accordance with applicable maintenance agreements”



Original Amenities Package

- The amenities package for North Central included:
 - Landscaping for medians, window boxes in retaining walls, bridges and service road parkways
 - Pavers on transitions for cross streets
 - Architectural treatment of bridges and retaining walls



TxDOT Position on North Central Expressway

- North Central is the only enhanced landscaping program in the Dallas District that does not have a local partner for maintenance
- TxDOT is primarily interested in reducing/eliminating landscaping maintenance costs associated with the median, window boxes and bridges
- TxDOT removed some decorative architectural features on bridges beginning in 2003-04
- Under current maintenance contract, landscaping was removed from the median between Woodall Rodgers and Mockingbird – no additional landscaping is scheduled for removal during the term of the current maintenance contract (January 2009)



TxDOT Position on North Central Expressway

- Unless there is some agreement to share landscape maintenance expenses, TxDOT has indicated that the remaining median landscaping between Mockingbird and LBJ Freeway will be removed with a new contract in early 2009
- TxDOT is willing to pay initial costs associated with the design/installation of a landscape/hardscape program for median and window boxes provided that there is some agreement from the City to maintain the investment for at least five years
- TxDOT thinks there are private sector partners that would be willing to maintain the bridge landscapes



Current TxDOT Landscape Maintenance Policy

- In general, TxDOT seeks to utilize plant materials that can establish and sustain growth within several years of planting with minimal maintenance
- TxDOT installs enhanced landscapes when long-term maintenance is addressed by other parties; otherwise, enhancements are limited to architectural treatments and hardscape items
- Typical roadside maintenance on a TxDOT facility in the Dallas district includes four mowing cycles per year, herbicide program to limit johnsongrass, and tree trimming about every five years

Typical TxDOT Landscape

- Examples

- Loop 12 @ IH 35E & US 67
- IH 20 @ IH 35E & US 67
- IH 30-Canyon, Ferguson, Jim Miller



Typical TxDOT Landscape

- More Examples
 - US 80 @ Town East
 - IH 635 - Various Interchanges
 - US 59, Houston



Typical City Maintained Landscape

- Examples

- SH 183 Irving
- IH 30 Rockwall
- US 377 Denton
- US 75 Richardson





Current TxDOT Landscaping Partnership Programs

- Green Ribbon Program – TxDOT pays for initial design/construction of landscaping and irrigation and local government pays full maintenance costs
- Cost Share Program – design, construction, and two years maintenance are split 50/50 between TxDOT and local government; local government is responsible for maintenance after initial two-year period



TxDOT Partnerships with Other Cities in the Region

- 26 cities in the TxDOT Dallas District have agreements to assist with landscape maintenance
- Richardson (1993) and Plano (1997) have taken over landscape maintenance responsibility along Central in their cities
- Mesquite, Duncanville, Irving, Carrollton – have agreed to provide mowing on certain highway facilities in exchange for increased mowing frequency on another facility



Current TxDOT-Dallas District Landscaping Budget

- Annual budget is approximately \$3 million
- About \$2.2 million of this is provided through the Green Ribbon Program leaving \$800,000 for landscape Cost Sharing Program – about $\frac{3}{4}$ goes to Central Expressway
- Current landscape maintenance contract for North Central is \$1.2 million for two years (\$600,000 annually) with about half dedicated to maintenance on median and window boxes; contract expires in January 2009
- Maintenance on other TxDOT District facilities including mowing, litter collection, etc. comes from a separate maintenance budget



City Strategies

- Do Nothing
- Maintain Current Program
- Native Grasses Program
- Hardscape Program



Do Nothing

City Strategy 1

- The City does not partner with TxDOT on North Central landscaping program
- Remaining median and window box landscaping will be removed in subsequent maintenance contracts
- TxDOT will seek private sector partners to maintain bridge landscaping; without partners bridge landscaping will likely be reduced over time
- Reduced mowing/pruning cycles for areas between main lanes and frontage roads
- TxDOT could install some type of hardscape median treatment in response to community concerns
- City of Dallas cost: None



Maintain Current Program

City Strategy 2

- City partners with TxDOT and makes a five year financial commitment with subsequent option to renew annually
- TxDOT repairs/replaces irrigation system and dead/dying plant material with existing plant types
- Maintain existing mowing/pruning cycles for parkway area between main lanes and frontage roads
- City of Dallas cost: \$750,000/year

Maintain Current Program

City Strategy 2



Dwarf Burford Holly

Primrose Jasmine



Honeysuckle



Red Yucca



Abelia



Purple Wintercreeper



Native Grasses Program

City Strategy 3

- TxDOT conducts a trial to determine if a program of native grasses and plants could survive without irrigation resulting in lower maintenance costs
- If successful, City partners with TxDOT and makes a five year financial commitment with subsequent option to renew annually
- TxDOT replaces plant material with a program of native grasses and plants
- Maintain existing mowing/pruning cycles for parkway area between main lanes and frontage roads
- City of Dallas cost: \$375,000/year

Native Grasses Program

City Strategy 3



Maiden Grass



Myhy Grass



Fountain Grass



Love Grass



Hardscape Program

City Strategy 4

- TxDOT replaces landscaping in the median and window boxes with a “hardscape” element such as a fence, rail, screen or sculpture.
- Reduce mowing/pruning cycles for parkway area between main lanes and frontage roads
- City of Dallas cost: None



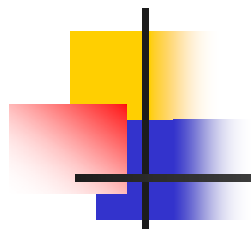
Recommendation

- TxDOT conducts a trial with low maintenance native grasses to determine if they can survive in the median without irrigation – thru July 2008
- TxDOT/City develop detailed hardscape proposals with illustrative graphics
- TxDOT/City work to develop a recommendation that combines hardscape treatments and native grasses – combination of Strategies 3 & 4
- Bring a recommendation back for Committee consideration August 2008

Recommendation

- TxDOT trial using low maintenance native grasses is being set up at the northwest corner of US 75 and Churchill Way





Questions/Discussion