

Travis County OKs gravel quarry permits

County, short on authority, acts on long-delayed plan by TXI.

By [Suzannah Gonzales](#)

AMERICAN-STATESMAN STAFF

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After weeks of delay, Travis County commissioners narrowly approved permits Tuesday for a sand and gravel mining operation on 2,000 acres east of Austin.

Commissioners also approved, by the same 3-2 vote, a road improvement agreement between the county and the project's operator, Texas Industries Inc.

Commissioners Ron Davis and Karen Huber voted against the permits and the agreement.

Commissioners voted 4-1 to pursue environmental monitoring partnerships for future industrial projects, including the proposed gravel operation. Davis abstained from that vote. The county does not have the authority to enforce environmental regulations.

Before the votes, Huber asked those present in the commissioners' courtroom to raise their hands if they would like to live next to a gravel operation.

"Let the record reflect that I saw no hands raised," Huber said. "Not even from TXI," she added, referring to company representatives at the meeting.

"Not a one. Not a one," Davis said.

This was the final large hurdle for TXI to clear.

The project would be near several growing subdivisions, and many of their residents oppose it. Neighbors again urged commissioners not to vote, saying residents haven't been apprised of the project and have concerns about truck traffic.

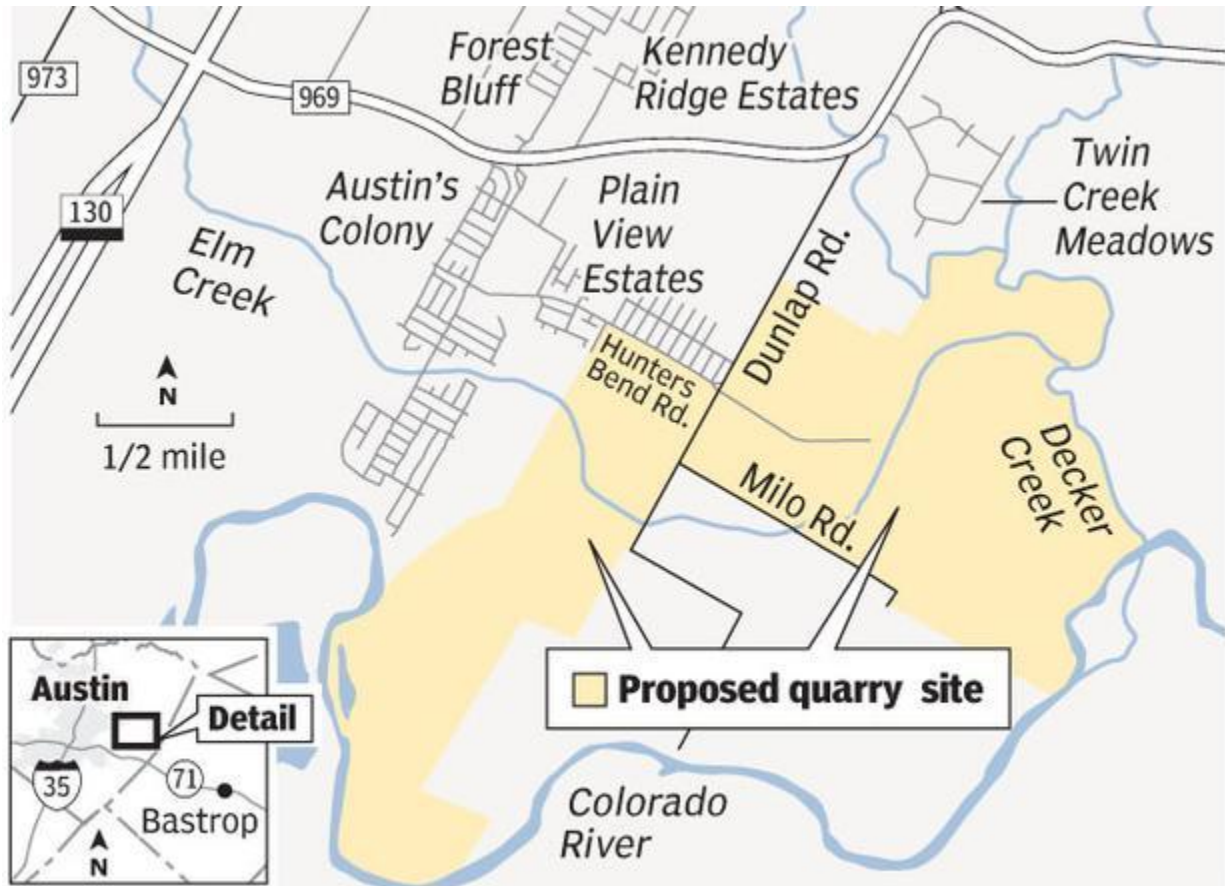
County Judge Sam Biscoe and Commissioner Margaret Gómez spoke about the county's lack of authority on land use and zoning issues. Even if they had voted against the measure, Biscoe said, they wouldn't have been able to block the project in the end.

Before the vote, county staff members confirmed that TXI's permit applications met all county requirements.

"The lack of having that authority creates a conflict," Gómez said, noting that counties have asked for this authority from the state for years. The only way to resolve the conflict is negotiation, she said.

Maurice Osborn of TXI told commissioners that TXI prides itself on being "good corporate citizens" and noted that the company has set up a Web site and direct lines to address concerns.

"TXI is certainly willing to continue that communication," he said.



Linda Scott AMERICAN-STATESMAN

Courtesy of JB Goodwin