



Road improvement projects to create connectivity in Pflugerville

Written by Terry Hanley Friday, 06 February 2009

Development in Pflugerville is moving forward as construction cones and detoured streets show signs that local transportation projects are progressing.

One major project underway that is expected to be complete by April includes extending Heatherwilde Boulevard south past Wells Branch Parkway to Howard Lane, and extending Wells Branch Parkway to connect the eastern and western sections of the road. Both roadways will be four lanes, and Wells Branch Parkway will have a median.

Extending and expanding two of the major thoroughfares in Pflugerville — Heatherwilde Boulevard and Wells Branch Parkway — will give residents more routes in and out of the city while also alleviating traffic

Street and drainage improvements

The map shows the layout of the road improvement projects. It includes labels for Wells Branch Pkwy., Heatherwilde Blvd., Wells Branch Pkwy. extension, Heatherwilde Blvd. extension, Howard Ln., and Tudor House Rd. A north arrow is located in the bottom right corner of the map area.

Phase one
New sections will connect Heatherwilde Boulevard to Howard Lane and connect the east and west portions of Wells Branch Parkway. The project is scheduled for completion in April.

Phase two
The City of Austin will widen Wells Branch Parkway from Heatherwilde Boulevard to IH 35. The project was bid in January, and construction is expected to begin this year.

Wells Branch Parkway extension looking west from Tudor House Road

bottlenecks. Pflugerville City Engineer Joe Carpenter said he thinks a new route to IH 35 will help economic development efforts, too.

“With that new way to get to IH 35, we anticipate creating additional commercial development along Wells Branch Parkway and Dessau Road [FM 685] in Pflugerville’s jurisdiction,” Carpenter said.

About the project

The \$10.8 million project includes the Wells Branch Parkway and Heatherwilde Boulevard extensions. It was funded through Travis County bonds and a public-private partnership in which three landowners donated the right-of-way, easements, cash and in-kind engineering contributions.

New Wells Point Partners, the Sealy-Heatherwilde Partnership and The Village at Northtown are the developers representing the landowners, which make up the private side of the public-private partnership with Travis County.

Connecting Heatherwilde Boulevard to Howard Lane allows traffic to flow to Howard Lane without having to get on IH 35.

“It’s providing another arterial outlet for folks to get around without having to get onto the interstate,” said Shannon Martinez, president of Spertus Investments representing New Wells Point Partners, a developer of the property on which the road will be built. “We think it’s ultimately going to be a benefit for the community, and we are hoping that it creates a business corridor of sorts for Pflugerville that will continue to drive some positive revenue potential.”

Official perspective

“If we can get that [traffic] flow better, and get the kind of grid necessary to support good habits and a comfortable lifestyle, that is what government is for. I am pleased ... that we had this incredible and unprecedented partnership. This is a really good example of what a metro government approach can bring.”

— Sarah Eckhardt
Travis County Precinct Two Commissioner



Martinez said the road project could spur development in an area that was previously untouched.

“If you look at an aerial map of this particular part of the county, and

that part of the City of Pflugerville and north Austin, it’s really what’s referred to as the hole in the donut,” she said. “Everything has developed up around this area, and these roads have really been an element of diminished capacity for this area.”

The City of Austin is also working on its portion of Wells Branch Parkway. The road will be expanded to four lanes with a median from IH 35 to Heatherwilde Boulevard. Bids were open for the project in January, but a date has not yet been set for ground to break on construction. The project is estimated at \$7.5 million and is expected to take about a year to complete.

No longer delayed

The Travis County bond passed in 2001, but complications arose that delayed the project's progress until June 2008, when work on the roadway began.

Cash Construction was hired for the project, and project manager Nathan Gentry said construction was delayed because of utility relocation holdups and redesign work that was needed to coordinate with the City of Austin's widening of Wells Branch Parkway.

"It's not unusual to run into design delays," Martinez said. "We ran into some of those and we ran into some permitting issues. We got through all of those problems, and we are very glad to have started construction when we did."

Wells Branch phase three

Travis County Precinct Two Commissioner Sarah Eckhardt said that Travis County is planning a phase three for the Wells Branch Parkway project that would extend the road to Toll 130, but a funding mechanism is not in place for it. The third phase is still in the planning stage, but it will be broken up into two parts — Wells Branch 3A and Wells Branch 3B.

Wells Branch 3A will extend from the western part of Killingsworth Lane to the street's eastern side. Money from 2005 Travis County bonds will be used for 3B, which will begin where Killingsworth Lane and Wells

Branch Parkway meet Cameron Road.

A public private-partnership is needed to fund

"Everything has developed up around this area, and these roads have really been an element of diminished capacity for this area."

— Shannon Martinez
President, Spertus Investments



A Looking east from Greenlawn Blvd.



B Widening of the current Victoria Station Blvd.



C Corner of Pflugerville Pkwy. and Heatherwilde Blvd.



D Low-water crossing just east of FM 685

the entire project, but Eckhardt said an agreement has not been reached to bridge the funding gap.

“One of the peculiarities of transportation funding is that you do have one transportation shed that falls in many different governmental jurisdictions,” Eckhardt said. “So, you have to work with all of them to cobble together funding and control of the project.”

Other road projects in the design phase include widening Kelly Lane from Murchison Ridge Trail to Villamoura Street, and widening Heatherwilde Boulevard north between Toll 45 and Wilke Ridge Lane. No timeline is set for these projects.

Pflugerville Parkway expansion

JC Evans Construction Company of Leander started work on the Pflugerville Parkway project Nov. 15 and is expected to be complete by December 2010.

The project includes widening Pflugerville Parkway from Great Basin Avenue and extending it to Greenlawn Boulevard. The road will be four lanes with a raised median



and will create a continuous roadway from Greenlawn Boulevard to Weiss Lane.

“This will greatly enhance the

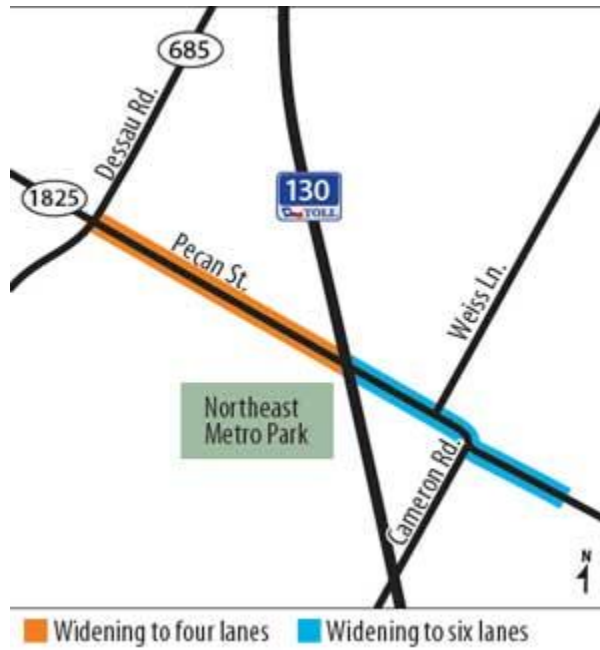
connectivity of Round Rock and Pflugerville,” Pflugerville City Engineer Joe Carpenter said. “It will offer an alternative to taking the tollway ... to get to Round Rock and Pflugerville. And it will also generate a lot more traffic for new commercial developments that are existing, as well as being built, in the Pflugerville Parkway-FM 685 corridor.”

The engineering design for phase two of the Pflugerville Parkway project is complete, and Carpenter said it would go to bid after right-of-way is acquired and utilities are relocated.

The portion of Pflugerville Parkway from FM 685 to Toll 130 will be widened to four lanes with a raised median. A new bridge will also be built over Wilbarger Creek to alleviate the low-water crossing.

A traffic signal at the intersection of Pflugerville Parkway and FM 685 was installed by the Texas Department of Transportation six months ago. Another traffic signal at the intersection of Pflugerville Parkway and Grand Avenue Parkway will be completed along with the project in 2010.

Funding for the first phase of the project totals \$10.5 million, which was divided between the City of Pflugerville and \$4.5 million federal funding. The City of Pflugerville issued bonds from 2005 to 2007 and will issue bonds in 2009 and 2010 to cover their \$6 million part of the project.



East Pecan Street widening

East Pecan Street is being widened from FM 685 to Toll 130, which will help ease several traffic hotspots, including a weekend bottleneck coming out of Northeast Metro Park.

“A majority of the growth in Pflugerville is to the east of Toll 130 and just north of Pecan Street, which presents a general population issue for people trying to get to Toll 130 from Pecan Street and vice versa,” said Sarah Eckhardt, Travis County precinct two commissioner.

The \$7.3 million project is a joint effort by the City of Pflugerville and Travis County —

Pflugerville contributed \$4.6 million and Travis County \$2.7 million.

The western end of Pecan Street will be widened to four lanes with a raised median from FM 685 to Toll 130. The eastern 4,500 feet of the road near the Toll 130 intersection will be widened to six lanes.

Courtesy of JB Goodwin