How walkable is your highway?
How walkable is your highway?

Heyden Black Walker, Urban Planner
Black+Vernooy Architecture and Urban Design
Austin Texas

National Walking Summit
History of Highways
In 1950, the city of Austin was 38 square miles
By 1970, Austin grew to 81 square miles.
Today, Austin stretches over 325 square miles.
The size of Austin compared to the size of Paris
Wider Highways do NOT Solve Congestion

Katy Freeway through Houston, Texas
$2.8 billion spent
26 lanes across
Travel Time Increase : 30%

Cost-benefit of Katy Freeway
I-405 EXPANSION
LOS ANGELES
$1.1 BILLION
“Auto speeds the same or slower...”

I-290 EXPANSION
CHICAGO
“Commute time...is one hour exactly what it was before the Hillside Strangler was repaired...”

Similar stories across America
T-REX (I-70) EXPANSION
DENVER

$1 BILLION

“New lanes on T-REX were congested within five years of construction...”

“Almost $1 billion of new lanes brought little long-term benefit.”


Widening highways is not the solution.
The Scale of Highways
Highways from the Pedestrian Point-of-View

IH-35 at 3rd Street in downtown Austin, Texas
Better Solutions

Embarcadero, San Francisco, California
Boston, Massachusetts
Klyde Warren Park - Dallas, Texas
Klyde Warren Park - Dallas, Texas
Klyde Warren Park - Dallas, Texas
Klyde Warren Park - Dallas, Texas
Opportunity in Austin, Texas

East Avenue, 1940
Downtown, 1952
Present-day IH-35 ROW highlighted
IH-35 traffic, 2015
Walkshed
Reconnect Austin with Great Streets and bridges
Reconnect Austin Cut and Cap proposal
Passage de Gracia
Reconnect Austin Cut and Cap proposal
5th Street: IH-35 is a barrier
5th Street: proposal to Cut the highway
5th Street: proposal to Cap the highway
6th Street: IH-35 is a barrier
Does the TxDOT proposal adhere to local policy?

- Imagine Austin
- Downtown Plan
- Urban Design Guidelines
- Great Streets Master Plan
- Complete Streets Policies
- Vision Zero Action Plan
- Sidewalk Master Plan
- Bicycle & Urban Trails Master Plan
- Austin Strategic Mobility Plan (in process)
RECONNECT AUSTIN

Reconnect Austin Cut and Cap proposal