

April 2, 2015

From:
AURA
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Delivered electronically to campo@campotexas.org

To: The CAMPO Transportation Policy Board,

AURA is a grassroots organization composed of over 100 community activists in the Austin area. We are dedicated to a vision of a city where everybody is welcome and everybody's interests matter: young and old, rich and poor, renter and homeowner, healthy and sick, citizen and immigrant, lifelong resident and new arrival. The greatest asset our city has is its people, and our city is at its best when it facilitates connections between those people: cultural, economic, and social.

As such, we are writing with concern regarding the draft of the CAMPO 2040 Mobility Plan. The plan lays out the next 25 years of transportation infrastructure and expenditures. It is a blueprint for how Greater Austin will spend \$35.1 billion. CAMPO is right when it says "the CAMPO 2040 plan will shape the region's transportation for our generation and the next." Unfortunately, this shape seems designed to maintain a status quo of sprawling development patterns and limited transit use. Specifically, we are very concerned about the following issues:

- 1) Its unit of transportation demand, Vehicle Miles Traveled, is drawn from thinking about life for people driving cars. When you say VMTs will increase from 41 million to 91 million annually from 2010 to 2040, you have already couched your entire plan in terms of accommodating life for cars. The plan also takes as its principal goal to reduce and manage congestion for cars. Both of these goals show a failure to seriously contemplate what a multi-modal transit system means. Priority should be put on moving people and mobility rather than on vehicles.

- 2) The VMT projections driving the plan are suspect. The VMT calculations are based on static assumptions that do not account for possible feedback loops, such as induced traffic (due to new roads), reduced traffic (due to congested roads) or the possibility of increased transit share. Millennials exhibit a preference for urban living and for driving less that is already causing many traffic engineers to overestimate traffic predictions. These factors consistently lead to overinvesting in road capacity without actually improving mobility of people.

3) Even more critically, there is no consideration of how new roads affect land use. By enabling greenfield development in areas with no transit infrastructure, new roads greatly contribute to sprawl, which puts more cars on the road, creating more demand for roads in a cycle that eats up money and land and contributes nothing. This is how we get to a point where \$18 billion of road projects is "somewhat limited funds." Such incessant road building will be doomed to failure. Every new mile of road built is more road that must be maintained in the future.

4) For the pages and pages about valuing pedestrians and cyclists, it is deeply disappointing that less than 1% of funds are dedicated to pedestrians and bicycles. Pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure has the highest rate of return of all transit infrastructure, and tends to be much less expensive than building new road capacity. Biking and walking promote health, reduce pollution, and create a sense of community: they deserve more investment. Likewise, despite pages of discussion, there are no dedicated funds towards Traffic Demand Management strategies either.

5) The \$8 billion dedicated to transit capital projects are heartening, but we are concerned that the plan does not pay sufficient attention to how transit is operated. Mass transit is effective when it is frequent, reliable, and affordable. The plan should give consideration to how transit is run and how much it adds to mobility.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

The AURA Board:
Eric Goff
Brennan Griffin
Amy Hartman
Susan Somers
Steven Yarak