

**State of Texas County  
of Bexar City of San  
Antonio**



**Meeting Minutes City  
Council B Session**

Council Briefing Room  
City Hall  
100 Military Plaza San  
Antonio, Texas 78205

**2023 – 2025 Council Members**

Mayor Ron Nirenberg  
Dr. Sukh Kaur, Dist. 1 | Jalen McKee-Rodriguez, Dist. 2  
Phyllis Viagran, Dist. 3 | Dr. Adriana Rocha Garcia, Dist. 4 Teri  
Castillo, Dist. 5 | Melissa Cabello Havrda, Dist. 6 Marina  
Alderete Gavito, Dist. 7 | Manny Pelaez, Dist. 8 John  
Courage, Dist. 9 | Marc Whyte, Dist. 10

**Monday, December 11, 2023**

**2:00 PM**

**Council Briefing Room**

The City Council convened a B Session meeting in the Council Briefing Room beginning at 2:06 PM. City Clerk Debbie Racca-Sittre took the Roll Call noting a quorum with the following Council Members present:

**PRESENT: 11** – Nirenberg, Kaur, McKee-Rodriguez, Viagran, Rocha Garcia, Castillo, Cabello  
Havrda, Alderete Gavito, Pelaez, Courage, Whyte

**ABSENT:** None

**ITEMS**

1. Briefing on the City's efforts over the past year to improve communication with businesses and residents impacted by construction projects including a Capital Program Dashboard, detailed information on SA Speak Up and social media, and refined project signage. [Roderick Sanchez, Assistant City Manager; Razi Hosseini, Director, Public Works]

City Manager Erik Walsh introduced the Item noting that it was an effort to improve communication related to City of San Antonio construction projects. Brian Chasnoff, Communications & Engagement Department, provided an overview of the City's efforts to improve communication through four principles: transparency, innovation, support and accountability.

Chasnoff reported that the Public Works Department had created a specific webpage for each of the 2022 General Obligation Bond Projects and in January 2024, the department would launch five more dashboards each with an overview and a map of projects, streets, sidewalks, alleys, drainage, parks and facilities. He indicated that all pages were regularly updated with maps, renderings, communication flyers, detours, parking, amenities, and a phone number to responsible city staff. Chasnoff stated that new project signage would include more information about the project and a QR code to the project webpage which would also collect feedback.

Brenda Hicks-Sorensen, Director of the Economic Development Department (EDD), mentioned that \$400,000 was allocated in FY 2023 and another \$500,000 in FY 2024 to create a Construction Toolkit, provide custom signage, complete 582 business site visits, digital marketing campaign with 600,000 connections, and implementation of the Buy Local Savings Pass.

Hicks-Sorensen provided information on financial support provided to businesses with \$5.57 million provided in FY 2022 and \$2.45 million in FY 2023. She stated that the 2024 Construction Financial Assistance Program was in development with \$1.4 million to be available.

Razi Hosseini, City Engineer and Director of Public Works, reported that two new boards had been established to oversee delivery of streets and drainage projects; these two boards would begin meeting in January 2024. Additionally, Hosseini cited the Responsible Bidder Ordinance and the Job Order Contract Staff approval level increase to \$500,000 as major Ordinance improvements and a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with San Antonio Water Systems (SAWS), review of alternative delivery methods, liquidated damages and incentives.

Hosseini reviewed the FY 2024 Adopted Budget amounts for traffic safety including \$1 million for traffic calming, \$700,000 for up to 100 radar feedback signs, \$300,000 for up to 100 flashing stop signs and \$550,000 for each council district to help improve traffic. He noted that neighborhood traffic calming projects included: curb extensions, roundabouts, bulb-outs, chicanes, medians and speed humps. Hosseini outlined changes to the speed hump program qualifications which included a shorter minimum uninterrupted street segment length (from 1,320 feet to 700 feet), reducing the average speed from 35 mph to 32 mph, removing minimum traffic volume requirements and reducing the requirements for resident signatures from 67% to 52%.

Hosseini proposed that any existing all-way stop could qualify for flashing signs; on non-all-way intersections a flashing stop sign could be installed if the average daily traffic exceeded 1,500 per day or the location had three crashes within the past three years. He added that the program would also add new all-way stop signs to the City's top 100 most highly travelled street corridors.

Hosseini stated that criteria for traffic signals, as defined in the Texas Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices for traffic volumes and crashed must be met to consider installation and required 600 vehicles per hour on main streets and 200 vehicles per hour. He reported that the proposed criteria would reduce thresholds for traffic volumes by 30%, extend the evaluation period for crashes from one to three years. He added that the required vehicles per hour were proposed at 420 on main streets and 140 on cross streets.

City Manager Walsh lauded the efforts of the team to create the online dashboard but stated that it was no substitute for in person community outreach. City Manager Walsh stated that staff were studying best practices and would make further recommendations for improvements.

Mayor Nirenberg reminded everyone that unforeseen conditions were common within older streets where the utility infrastructure could be aging as well and recommended an MOU not only with SAWS but with the telecommunication companies or place conduit proactively.

Mayor Nirenberg asked if the traffic calming recommendations were approved by the Transportation Committee. Hosseini stated that the new plan was approved by the Committee and noted that the new thresholds were in effect for both new and existing projects. Mayor Nirenberg recommended a review of all projects to determine if they were eligible for the City's Complete Streets Program. Rod Sanchez stated that the policy would be implemented in all projects where feasible.

Mayor Nirenberg recommended including future projects in the dashboard such as the list of Infrastructure Maintenance Program (IMP) within the five-year plan. Hosseini stated that the dashboard would be completed late next year and would include the past five years as well as the future. Mayor Nirenberg recommended a dashboard of dashboards so that people could find the information more easily.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia asked if the contractor's contact information was also included on the project pages. Chasnoff stated that the pages would only include staff contact information. Councilmember Rocha Garcia recognized that the Construction Toolkit was in English and Spanish but noted that sometimes businesses still had to close due to construction and asked what happened when small businesses called for help. Hicks-Sorensen reported that the business outreach specialists answered calls, provided referrals with many going to LaunchSA which was managed by Geekdom, but she recognized that some businesses never reached out so there was an Ecosystem Mapping Program planned and LiftFund was getting more small business loan funding.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia recommended that after the construction was complete, a small business should be eligible for a grant because even after the street was reopened, businesses still suffered from residents continuing to use a detour that they got used to using. Councilmember Rocha Garcia asked whether the grants were available to businesses impacted by Texas Department of Transportation (TXDOT) projects, not just City. Hicks-Sorensen stated that the grants were only for City projects. Councilmember Rocha Garcia supported the change in requirements for speed humps and traffic signals.

Councilmember Kaur liked the four key communication pillars, particularly transparency. She asked if there would be more user experience testing on the Dashboard. Chasnoff reported that there had been many improvements made after the focus groups and feedback would be collected even after the dashboard went live. Councilmember Kaur asked how often the dashboard and webpages would be updated. Chasnoff stated that the updates would be made "as needed" but not less than monthly. City Manager Walsh agreed that it would need to be real-time updates. Councilmember Kaur requested an outreach and promotion plan for the dashboard and recommended a series of community/neighborhood meetings. Chasnoff stated that there would be a link on the homepage and a press release. Councilmember Kaur asked if there were enough staff to manage the dashboard and the outreach. Hosseini stated that they had sufficient staff but sometimes vacancies got in the way. Councilmember Kaur recommended more user-friendly maps and the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) that connected back to council district offices for feedback.

Councilmember Kaur requested a plan for the \$500,000 which would be spent by EDD and

recommended inclusion of helpful hints and specific assistance programs in the Toolkit. Councilmember Kaur recommended improved coordination with the telecommunication companies and recommended contract bonuses for early completion within the construction contracts.

Councilmember Castillo requested inclusion of the name of the Contractor on the dashboard and a way to filter projects by contractor as well as inclusion of information related to coordination with other entities such as the Union Pacific Rail Road (UPRR). Councilmember Castillo recommended sending out direct mail to residents for projects. Hosseini stated that Public Works usually communicated prior to project start.

Councilmember Castillo suggested an art installation signage like footsteps to follow down to the businesses, not simply using the QR code. Chasnoff stated that the QR code on Broadway linked to the businesses but was not currently on the signage itself. Councilmember Castillo supported decreasing the required street length to get stop signs and speed humps.

Councilmember Courage noted that the current construction signs provided good information and recommended new signage to be included in addition to the current signs. Councilmember Courage asked how many flashing stop signs Public Works had budgeted. Hosseini stated that the department would provide 10 flashing stop signs per council district (up to 100 total) and any additional flashing stop signs would need to be funded by the council district as well as the speed humps which were funded by the Neighborhood Access and Mobility Program (NAMP).

Councilmember Courage noted that speed radar signs collected information that should be reported to SAPD for analysis of enforcement as well as for PW to reengineer the street or traffic measures.

Councilmember Alderete Gavito recommended that the dashboard include the immediate next steps for the project and regular email updates. Chasnoff clarified that this information would be on the individual project pages and updates were provided through email and SA SpeakUp. Councilmember Alderete Gavito supported Councilmember Kaur's suggestion to take the dashboard to community meetings in the neighborhoods.

Councilmember Alderete Gavito noted that there were many TXDoT projects that people did not know or care who owned but residents expected to be able to get information. Chasnoff said they would discuss options with TXDoT. Councilmember Alderete Gavito asked if the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) and NAMP projects would also have the new signage and suggested more signage for those projects as well. Hosseini stated that the focus was on Bond projects or those projects with a duration of over one year but not for short-term projects.

Councilmember Alderete Gavito supported Councilmember Courage's recommendation to send the speed radar data to SAPD. Hosseini stated that their approach was to design roadways that did not encourage speeding. Councilmember Alderete Gavito supported the removal of barriers to get a speed hump noting it could be difficult to get the neighbor's signature and if they were elderly or disabled, they could call the council district office for assistance. City Manager Walsh noted that often people on a street would want speed humps but did not really want them right in front of their house.

Councilmember Cabello Havrda supported the relaxed criteria for flashing stop signs, speed humps and other traffic calming efforts. She noted that there had been concerns about the lack of communication on previous projects such as the Old Highway 90 Project and asked how often the

dashboard would be updated. Chasnoff stated that the dashboard would be updated as timelines and information changed but not less than monthly.

Councilmember Cabello Havrda was pleased that the Responsible Bidder Ordinance was working as it was her Council Consideration Request (CCR) that initiated the program but suggested more two-way communication between the resident and staff/contractors rather than just updates. Sanchez stated that there was a meeting every other week on the Broadway Project that included conversation with the community and he offered to discuss ideas with the Councilmember. Chasnoff described the feedback loop in the individual project pages as a means to communicate with everyone on the project.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez recommended a special signage and QR Code for the North New Braunfels projects. He supported the revised guidelines for traffic calming solutions noting that speed humps put a burden on residents to get signatures and recommended applying the new criteria to requests from the past two years.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez requested that his CCR on a citywide traffic analysis still be completed and agreed with Councilmember Alderete Gavito that increased enforcement would result in traffic calming. Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez supported provision of information on non-city projects as well and suggested inclusion of more information on the signage rather than just a QR code because older residents did not always use technology.

Councilmember Whyte supported the transparency of the dashboard and project pages but expressed concern that projects were taking too long and it was impacting businesses.

Councilmember Whyte requested a report on the average construction mitigation grant to small businesses. Hicks-Sorensen stated that the average 2023 grant was \$26,000. Councilmember Whyte recommended development of ways to encourage contractors to complete projects more quickly. Hosseini suggested that alternative delivery methods and early completion incentives were key to increasing quality of work while moving more quickly.

Councilmember Viagran asked how many staff were on the Communication Team and suggested that more staff might be needed as often public works was not responsive, so her office would get the complaints. Hosseini stated that there were four staff on the Public Works Communications Team in addition to the Capital Projects Officers. Hicks-Sorensen stated that EDD had three staff in Public Relations (PR) and four in small business outreach. Chasnoff assured Councilmember Viagran that there was a coordinated and enhanced effort between Public Works and the Communications & Engagement Department.

Councilmember Viagran suggested that the reduction of traffic volumes for signals meant that Council District 3 would get more signals and recommended more traffic calming on the south side streets.

Councilmember Pelaez commented that no matter how much outreach was provided, some individuals would still not get the message so while more creative means to provide information online was good, he recommended traditional methods such as door hangers, mailouts, or phone calls. Chasnoff stated that block walking and door knocking had already occurred and if someone was not home a door hanger was left. Councilmember Pelaez suggested more outreach through phone and suggested the councilmembers could do videos about the projects coming up in their council district. Councilmember Pelaez recommended a video tutorial on how to use and navigate the dashboard.

Councilmember Kaur noted that there was a lot of work to be done to make projects more transparent and to communicate better. She recommended a standardized metric for communication and a way to solicit community feedback on construction schedules. Hosseini stated that the department already had standard communication plans for different length of project schedules and offered to provide this information to the City Council.

Councilmember Kaur offered to host community project meetings in her council district office, promote affected businesses, as well as a host project analysis or a survey of the community after the project was completed. Councilmember Kaur supported traditional means of communication such as door knocking as well as the new internet and technology forms. Councilmember Kaur recommended that Public Works analyze the street for other features before the resident tried to get the signatures required for a speed hump. Hosseini stated that due to the volume of requests for speed humps, the engineering work would be a challenge to do before there was community support.

## **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Executive Session was not held.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:50 p.m.

**Approved**

**Ron Nirenberg  
Mayor**

**Debbie Racca-Sittre  
City Clerk**