Strategic Outcome:
Getting us where we want to go, when we want to get there, safely and cost-effectively.

Council Indicators:
- System efficiency and congestion
- Transportation cost
- Accessibility to and equity of multi-modal transportation choices
- Safety
- Condition of transportation-related infrastructure

Challenges (DRAFT):
1. How do we lower the risk of travel-related injury and protect and promote public health?
2. How do we supply a multimodal transportation network (for driving, walking, biking, and taking transit) that can meet the demands of a growing region while providing equitable access to transportation choices, opportunities, and services?
3. How do we prepare for and lead in leveraging rapidly evolving technology in transportation?
4. How do we ensure a financially and environmentally sustainable transportation network?
5. How do we effectively collaborate with agencies, organizations and the Austin community around mobility decision-making?
MOBILITY CHALLENGE #1
How do we lower the risk of travel-related injury and protect and promote public health?

Nature of the Challenge
Safety is the most important consideration in transportation decision-making. Even with that mission defining much of the work of the Austin Transportation Department, dozens of people die each year on Austin’s roads. Our transportation network’s most vulnerable users, people who walk, bike, and ride motorcycles, as well as people of color, people with lower incomes, and those experiencing homelessness are disproportionately affected. People traveling by modes other than driving account for only 6.5 percent of Austin commuters, yet they represent half of traffic fatalities. And for each person killed, eight more victims of crashes are seriously injured, changing their lives forever.

In addition to protecting Austinites from serious injury and death, transportation can affect public health in other ways. For instance, reducing vehicle-miles traveled reduces emissions associated with automobiles. Emissions, specifically ground-level ozone, have health effects on vulnerable populations, including children and seniors. Transportation can also promote public health by increasing access to healthy food, healthcare, recreational opportunities, and active transportation options for commuting or meeting daily needs that can allow for physical activity as part of a daily routine - one of the leading ways to incorporate daily physical activity.

Evidence
- On average, 64 people lose their lives on Austin streets each year. The most common causes of crashes are caused by human factors, such as distracted driving, speeding, drug impairment, and failing to yield or stop. (Vision Zero Action Plan, 2016)

- Regional data confirms that automobiles account for nearly 50 percent of ozone-forming emissions released within Central Texas. Unhealthy levels of ozone can lead to increased respiratory ailments, especially in young children, older adults, asthma sufferers, and those with chronic conditions. (City of Austin Air Quality Program Website, 2017)

In 2015, the deadliest year in recent history, 102 Austinites were killed in traffic collisions. The City of Austin has committed to Vision Zero, saying that any traffic death or injury is too many.
MOBILITY CHALLENGE #2
How do we supply a multimodal transportation network (for driving, walking, biking, and taking transit) that can meet the demands of a growing region while providing equitable access to transportation choices, opportunities, and services?

Nature of the Challenge
Transportation Demand - With Austin’s population doubling approximately every 20 years, our region struggles with the demand that growth has on our transportation network. The challenge is furthered by the fact that 74 percent of Austinites drive to work or school alone. The demand on our roadways is especially evident in the traffic congestion we see during peak hours. Traffic congestion can lead to unreliable and slower travel times, as well as other critical externalities such as inefficiencies in goods movement, emissions from vehicles idling in traffic, and reduced access to jobs and services.

Transportation Supply - While growth can bring economic vibrancy to the city, the supply of an efficient and accessible multimodal transportation network is required to capitalize on these benefits for all Austinites. Adding supply to the transportation network for all modes, including driving, walking, biking and taking transit, is a desire of the community. Participants in Mobility Talks, the public engagement initiative in 2016, indicated their top choice for congestion management was to increase public transportation options and services and the third-highest priority was to add capacity to existing roads where possible.

This is a complicated challenge. Providing multimodal transportation infrastructure requires prioritization and tradeoffs, as space is finite and resources are limited. Additionally, while the community supports adding supply to the transportation network, supply for what mode or where is often debated.

Evidence
• “The regional transportation network is built for cars, and the growing congestion we see is the direct result of increasingly distant growth with few transportation options. Too many people live and work in places where densities are too low to support regular transit service or are outside of a transit agency’s service area.” (Imagine Austin, 2012, pg. 74-75)

• There are approximately 32 centerline miles of new arterial roadways identified in the 2025 Austin Metropolitan Area Transportation Plan (AMATP) remaining to be built.

• As of November 2015, there were 2,580 miles of absent (missing) sidewalks in the citywide sidewalk system. (City of Austin Sidewalk Master Plan/ADA Transition Plan Update, 2016)

• As of the end of Fiscal Year 2016, 62 percent of the City’s arterial roadways did not have bicycle facilities. (City of Austin ePerformance Measures)
MOBILITY CHALLENGE #3
How do we prepare for and lead in leveraging rapidly evolving technology in transportation?

Nature of the Challenge
The mobility landscape is changing due to rapidly evolving technology and its use in transportation. Organizational connectedness amongst City departments, other agencies, and private partners as well as advances in legal and regulatory areas are essential for successful implementation of these new technologies.

While many of the barriers in our existing transportation systems, like congestion, affordability, accessibility, and environmental concerns, can be mitigated by technological advances, there may also be unintended consequences. These consequences could include increased single-occupancy vehicle trips and vehicle-miles traveled on city roadways as a result of autonomous vehicle use. Additionally, access to mobility services that rely on smartphones or other technology might not be available to all residents. There are also likely to be workforce and land use impacts of autonomous technologies and shared mobility services. Gaining value from new technologies in a way that integrates well with our existing infrastructure and continued development of basic transportation systems, such as our pedestrian, bicycle and public transit systems, will be important to success.

There are “unknown unknowns” about what is to come and how society will respond to and adopt new technologies. Additionally, there is a need to balance government resources on technology while continuing to complete our traditional transportation systems (roadway connections and active transportation systems).

Evidence
• “In the near future, self-driving cars will simply circulate through cities, freeing road space and liberating millions of acres of parking lots for more useful purposes. Combine that with the ongoing electrification of the vehicle fleet, and it might look as if we are nearing an urban transportation utopia. But the dream of cheap, clean mobility in cities might run up against some harsh realities—soaring energy consumption, supercharged sprawl, and intensified traffic congestion—if AVs [autonomous vehicles] are simply deployed to encourage more driving.” (The Self-Driving Dilemma, CityLab, 2017)

• 17 percent of Austinites do not have a smartphone, 4.4 percent do not own a cell phone at all, and 8 percent do not have Internet at home. (Digital Inclusion in Austin, Results of 2014 Citywide Survey, pages 1 and 2)
MOBILITY CHALLENGE #4
How do we ensure a financially and environmentally sustainable transportation network?

Nature of the Challenge
Efficient, strategic and targeted mobility investments are needed to ensure the financial sustainability of the City, environmental protection, and delivery of more affordable transportation choices for residents. Today, transportation agencies are called upon to design, implement, and operate transportation systems that, in addition to providing mobility and safety, are also socially, environmentally, and economically sustainable. With constrained financial resources, the City has the challenge of most efficiently using public resources to invest in infrastructure for more affordable mobility systems.

Many factors impact the implementation, operations and maintenance of our transportation network. This includes not only maintaining the integrity and useful life of infrastructure, but also environmental stewardship. Balancing trade-offs with limited resources is challenging.

Evidence
- 21 percent of streets are in poor or failing condition; 16 percent of traffic management devices, such as traffic signals, pedestrian hybrid beacons, school zone beacons, closed-circuit television cameras, and emergency vehicle preemption devices are in poor or failing condition; and 14 percent of aviation assets are in poor condition. (City of Austin Comprehensive Infrastructure Assessment, 2014)

- Almost 30 percent, or 117, of the 412 major bridges are past their currently accepted design life of 50 years. (Public Works Department, Critical Infrastructure Assessment - Bridges, 2017)

- 10 percent of the 705 creek crossings are at high risk for flooding, 13 percent at very high risk. (City of Austin Comprehensive Infrastructure Assessment, 2014)
MOBILITY CHALLENGE #5
How do we effectively collaborate with agencies, organizations, and the Austin community around mobility decision-making?

Nature of the Challenge
Collaboration with the community, partner agencies and the private sector is vital to planning for our future mobility needs, yet remains a major challenge. Multiple communities within Austin and in the Central Texas region, including communities of color, people with disabilities, seniors, youth, and communities impacted by poverty are often underrepresented in processes leading to important decisions. We must find creative ways to remove barriers to engagement that commonly prevent historically underserved and underrepresented community members from engaging in mobility decision-making.

To the community, it often does not matter who manages or implements a project. Therefore, it is also important to find common ground among the multiple agencies and private sector companies that directly or indirectly impact transportation, such as the Texas Department of Transportation, Capital Metro, Travis County, and others. These challenges are different than the community challenges in that they can include regulatory barriers, varying levels of responsibility, and different views of what to prioritize.

Evidence
- Despite customized and enhanced efforts in Council Districts 2 and 4 to encourage and provide ample opportunities for public involvement in the 2016 Mobility Talks citywide engagement effort, those Districts had the lowest levels of participation. ([2016 Mobility Talks Public Engagement Report, Table 1.2, page 6](#))

- “Many people expressed the perception that only certain people really have a voice in civic decision-making and that too many don’t.” ([Task Force on Community Engagement Report, 2016](#))

- In 2016, the need to overcome public engagement barriers to hearing different voices led to enhanced coordination between the Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority’s Project Connect initiative and the City of Austin’s Strategic Mobility Plan. The two projects formed a joint community advisory committee to ensure coordination.

Photo Credit: Austin Transportation Department

Through the Austin Strategic Mobility Plan staff is “doing things differently for different results” when it comes to engaging underrepresented members of the community. In 2017, Austin Transportation Department staff visited with members of ADAPT of Texas to hear their priorities for mobility.