



# AIA Austin

October 11, 2016

Karen Lorenzini  
I-35 Program Manager  
Texas Department of Transportation. Austin District

Re: Mobility 35 Central 7-Mile Comments

Dear Karen Lorenzini,

The American Institute of Architects is committed to creating great communities, as expressed below in our national policy:

“The AIA believes that planning and design that integrates transportation, housing, and land-use policies at the neighborhood, community, and regional scales are prerequisites to the creation of safe, attractive, walkable, and sustainable communities. The AIA supports governmental policies, programs, and incentives that promote well-designed communities and maximize public participation in a community planning process.”

For this reason we wish to express our support for not only lowering Interstate 35 through downtown Austin but also for the development of street-level public and perhaps commercial space above it. With many current, similar efforts to re-vision and reconstruct highways that effectively and historically divided cities and disenfranchised entire communities across the US, TXDot and Austin have the opportunity to address that issue now with the lowering of IH-35. I would specifically stress that unless the scope includes a “cap” across IH-35, the resulting gorge will be no more safe or less a division across the city than the structure we now have. The AIA Austin Chapter of Architects emphatically supports this effort which it sees as fully consistent with TXDot’s expressed:

- Values statement which focuses on the “...well-being, safety and quality of life.....”
- Vision statement commitment to “....enabling economic opportunity and enhancing the quality of life for all Texans” and
- Mission statement that calls for “collaboration and leadership” to “deliver a safe, reliable, and integrated transportation system...”

It is unquestionably a large vision but certainly one with significant opportunities (1) to address serious current life-safety issues, (2) to provide abundant economic opportunities for our entire community and (3) to heal an artificial wound cut across the bonds of our community years ago. We strongly encourage TXDot to develop plans, budgets, and a timetable for this transformative improvement. If we can provide any support along the way, please do not hesitate to call upon us for assistance as a Chapter and individually. Thank you for this consideration.

Sincerely,

Jim Susman  
AIA Austin 2016 Board President

The American Institute of Architects

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