



May 26, 2026

Honorable Mayor Honorable City Council Members

Re: Cap and Stitch Funding for I-35

Dear Mayor Watson and City Council Members,

A year ago, my colleague and predecessor Burton Baldrige, FAIA, wrote to this body (letter [here](#)) in strong support of funding for Phase 1 of the I-35 Cap and Stitch project. That letter articulated something true then and still true now: Austin is a city shaped more by people than plans and policies, and the choices we make about public space embody our values.

On behalf of AIA Austin and our more than 1,300 local members, architects, and urban designers, I write today to reaffirm that position. AIA Austin maintains our strong support of City Council's commitment to fund all future-proofing roadway elements — for the full 14-acre vision of caps and stitches over the reconstructed Interstate 35. The case has not changed. Without the full investment, an expanded I-35 will deepen the divide between East and West Austin rather than heal it. With it, we have a rare opportunity to reclaim the center of our city for people, parks, and community — and to align this investment with our major policy commitments including ASMP 50/50, Climate Equity, and Project Connect.

As Burton noted, moments like this are rare in the life of a city. Dallas continues to advance. The University of Texas has already committed \$106 million toward roadway elements for their proposed caps. Austin should rise to meet that same vision.

We urge you to keep the full vision alive. Fund all Phase 1 roadway elements between Cesar Chavez and Airport Boulevard.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "N Gelles".

Nkiru Gelles, AIA
AIA Austin President, 2026