

Please Sign In and use this article's on page print button to print this article.

TRANSPORTATION

SPONSORED CONTENT BY CENTRAL TEXAS REGIONAL MOBILITY AUTHORITY

# Mobility director's insights on how the 183 Toll Road is an economic boon for Central Texas



In the 50 years since the U.S. 183 corridor was originally constructed, it has grown from a rural thoroughfare to a major traffic artery.



By Mike Heiligenstein  
Executive Director, Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority  
Sep 17, 2020

Whether you've just moved to Austin or have been here awhile, you'll discover that our mobility solutions connect you to the people and places that matter most. That was true prior to Covid-19, remains so today, and into the future.

For nine consecutive years, the five-county Austin metro area has been named the fastest-growing major metro area in the country.

Much of that growth has taken off in the growing suburban areas of Travis, Williamson, and Hays counties. This has placed an even greater strain on our already overburdened roadway network, crowning Austin yet another title as the 18th worst city in the country for traffic congestion.

Prior to Covid-19, all indications showed these growth trends would continue, attracting more and more newcomers to our strong local economy. However, six months in, we know the full extent of the global pandemic on our region's economic and population growth has yet to be realized.

While recent travel patterns show that Central Texans are beginning to return to the roads, traffic volumes remain well below average, lending credibility to the prediction that economic uncertainties will impact Texas and states across the U.S for years to come.

Despite these uncertainties, the Mobility Authority remains committed to building for the future. We're moving toward completion of the 183 South Project in East Austin during these unprecedented times, when reliable travel options are more critical than ever to ensure our collective safety and mobility.

We know that significant development is planned or already in progress along the U.S. 183, adding to the demand for this long-awaited mobility solution. For example, Velocity, a more than 5.5 million-square-foot development of apartments, offices, retail, hotels and light industrial space is set to break ground just east of Austin-Bergstrom International Airport in early 2021.

On the 124 acres adjacent to Velocity, Austin Community College is planning to build a regional workforce center for automotive technology and construction training. Furthermore, construction of a 221,000 square foot office space has already begun near the U.S. 183 corridor. To be known as "Eastbound," the project is noted to signify the beginning of an "office boom" in East Austin.

Finally, the electric car manufacturer Tesla will construct a \$1.1 billion factory on a 2,100 acre site off SH 130 just north of SH 71 near Austin-Bergstrom International Airport. The plant will employ 5,000 people.

In 2019, the Mobility Authority opened Phase I, or the North End, of the 183 Toll Road in East Austin. With the option to bypass the traffic signals between U.S. 290 and Techni Center Drive, drivers are already experiencing travel time savings. We look forward to expanding that same relief along the southern end of the U.S. 183 corridor when the project is fully complete in early 2021.

The 183 South Project has been a massive undertaking. At \$743 million, it's the largest single roadway project in the history of Central Texas led by a local entity, which will improve quality of life for the entire region. In the 50 years since the U.S. 183 corridor was originally constructed, it has grown from a rural thoroughfare to a major traffic artery.

Improving this critical gateway is a major step forward when it comes to delivery of a transportation network that enhances mobility, reliability and affordability. And it ensures that an aging infrastructure does not stifle our region's economic recovery.

We know that improving Central Texas mobility is a big job, one that requires the collaboration of state, regional and local agencies. As TxDOT embarks on the Capital Express Project to improve the congested I-35 corridor north and south of downtown, the newly upgraded 183 corridor will serve as an alternate route for commuters to avoid the multi-year reconstruction efforts on I-35.

When the 183 South Project is complete, drivers will have a non-stop, signal-free route option to reach their destination without delay. Non-tolled travel and local access will also be significantly improved, with the number of traffic signals along the corridor reduced from five to two.

This project is not just an expressway, it's eight miles of tripled capacity, about half of which is non-tolled, plus shared use paths, pedestrian bridges, and aesthetic enhancements. This new mobility option sets the stage for long-awaited revitalization, and will ensure that East Austin has access to equitable development opportunities and a stronger connection to the wider community.

That's a win for all Central Texas residents.

Completion of the project will spur economic development for our entire region at a time when we will need all of the help we can get to rejuvenate the economy. We're committed to keeping our region connected, and to ensuring that reliable mobility solutions are in place to help make the Central Texas of tomorrow is as vibrant as it ever was.

*[Learn more about the Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority.](#)*

*The Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority is an independent government agency created in 2002 to improve the transportation system in Williamson and Travis counties. Our mission is to implement innovative, multimodal transportation solutions that reduce congestion and create transportation choices that enhance quality of life and economic vitality.*

*Mike Heiligenstein has a career in the development of infrastructure in Central Texas and currently leads the Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority. Heiligenstein also serves on advisory council of the Texas A&M Transportation Institute and Texas Department of Transportation's Technical Task Force.*

---

[Back to Top ▲](#)

## AUSTIN **BUSINESS JOURNAL**

[User Agreement](#) | [Privacy Policy](#)

[Your California Privacy Rights](#) | [Ad Choices](#)

© 2020 American City Business Journals. All rights reserved. Use of and/or registration on any portion of this site constitutes acceptance of our User Agreement (updated 1/1/20) and Privacy Policy and Cookie Statement (updated 1/1/20). The material on this site may not be reproduced, distributed, transmitted, cached or otherwise used, except with the prior written permission of American City Business Journals.



















