

February 10, 2015

Dear Ms. Hensley,

We are writing to inform you of our extreme dissatisfaction with both the lack of progress and irresponsible execution of the Walnut Creek Greenbelt Trail Project (Balcones Park to Walnut Creek Parks) and to request action to complete this project without further delay.

As you know, the project was started sometime in 2010 but halted in 2011 due to multiple problems including a contract dispute and problems with construction plans. One section of trail was completed east of Mopac, south of Cedar Bend. A bridge in Balcones Park has been left with exposed rebar that is a safety hazard to park users and traps flood debris. The trail east of Mopac was never properly backfilled and has been defaced with graffiti.

The project was eventually redesigned and rebid with a contract awarded on 2/14/2013. Shortly after construction began, Walnut Crossing and Milwood Neighborhood Associations negotiated a commitment from project management to redesign the section of the trail through Balcones Park to minimize effects on adjacent homeowners and to eliminate an elevated section of trail that was completely out of scale with the park. As a result, a sidewalk was reconstructed to provide ADA access from the Balcones Park Trailhead to a trail head on Scribe Drive. Meanwhile, a section of the trail was completed in TXDOT's ROW and was opened to the public approximately 1 year ago. Work then began in Walnut Creek Park with large sections of the park including the Log Loops and the Tar Branch Trails closed off from public access. Two bridges over the small creeks and a parking lot have been completed with a short section of trail opened. The trail section by the Log Loops and main bridge over Walnut Creek is still unfinished, yet now the contractor has begun clearing between Metric and the park and started another bridge over Walnut Creek east of Mopac. The slow pace of this project defies explanation and it is unfathomable as to why the contractor was not required to complete the Walnut Creek Bridge and trail in Walnut Creek Park before being allowed to move into new areas. We are concerned that if there is another contract dispute, an even larger area of unfinished construction will be left without proper safety and environmental protections (it took the neighborhood months of repeated requests to City staff to maintain safety and environmental controls in 2011 when the previous contractor walked off the job.)

Last fall, after promised status updates were not provided, MNA pressed project management staff and were then told that the redesign and construction of the Balcones Park section of the trail would be delayed due to Federal Endangered Species Listing of the Jollyville Salamander and a wastewater project. We were told this section of the trail would be incorporated into the wastewater project, for which the schedule and funding are both unsecured, to the best of our knowledge. The overlap in projects given as an excuse for delaying the trail; is a false pretense. The overlap in the project only involves access for construction for an approximate 425 foot section. In this area, there is an existing roller compacted concrete trail constructed in the 1980's

for sewer access and as a neighborhood amenity. To delay the approximately 1800 feet needed to connect the trail from the trailhead at Balcones Park is a disservice to the community who have been waiting for this project to be completed for over 5 years now. Ironically, a sign has been erected at the Balcones Park Trailhead giving the distance to Walnut Creek Park. Yes, you can get to Walnut Creek from the trailhead, but not on the trail this project was intended to deliver, and from the way things are going; not anytime soon.

We believe the salamander listing, while important, is not a significant impact to project completion. The watershed from the proposed trail area bypasses the spring where the salamanders are found. Curiously, the asphalt accumulations in the rock berms installed in a tributary that does drain to the stream above the salamander's habitat have not been removed, despite notification to the City's project staff.

The prospect of another year or more before the project completion and park restoration is untenable to the neighborhoods. The park receives regular use by hikers, trail runners, cyclists and is used as an outdoor classroom by Summitt Elementary. Additionally, the dam for Waters Park, an important historical site, is nearby.

Quite simply, the neighborhoods want the project completed and the park restored. MNA and WXNA and members of the community volunteer every year to clean up litter and help maintain the park. Over the past two years we have removed years of accumulated trash in the Mopac area to begin reclaiming the trail area from the dumping ground it had become. However, the never-ending construction remains an obstacle to this effort. Community members are concerned about safety in the Greenbelt area due to the unfinished project. Construction sites are magnets for trash; safety fence, silt fence remnants, rebar protective caps and mulch sock netting litter the creek downstream of the project area. We all know that neglect breeds more neglect. Impromptu campsites and graffiti along the trail east of Mopac are evidence of this. When the project is complete, regular use by hikers and bikers will deter illicit activity and result in less litter and graffiti in the park and greenbelt.

Action requested by the Neighborhood Associations:

- Instruct project management to take steps to accelerate completion of the entire project, including the Balcones Park section. Require the contractor to furnish additional resources such as extra crews or weekend work to complete paving without further delay.
- Initiate design of the Balcones Park section immediately, present the design to the neighborhoods for review, and proceed to complete construction without further delay. If any overlap of the wastewater project is an issue, make a temporary repair of the existing trail to enable use of the entire trail from Balcones Park to Walnut Creek Park.
- Restore the eroded hillside on the abandoned trail in Balcones Park

- East of Mopac – complete the section of trail installed by the first contractor that walked off the job. Portions of this trail have unsafe drop-offs at the edge of the trail where the concrete forms were removed – these areas need to be backfilled to eliminate the drop-offs. Additionally, an old asphalt road and gravel pile next to the trail should be removed. Trees near the trail should be pruned for proper clearance for cycling.

We look forward to your response to our letter and request a meeting with you to further discuss our concerns.

Sincerely,



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