

August 21, 2019

Travis County Commissioners Court  
700 Lavaca St  
Austin, TX 78701

Attn: Judge S. Eckhardt, Commissioner J. Travillion, Commissioner B. Shea,  
Commissioner G. Daugherty, Commissioner M. Gomez

**Re: 2019 Budget Request for Traffic Enforcement Unit Constable Precinct 3**

Dear Judge/Commissioners,

Pursuant to the public comments provided on behalf of Safer71 to the Commissioners Court on August 20, 2019, please find attached supporting data and arguments related to the requested funding for the traffic enforcement unit in Precinct 3.

As detailed in the attached tables, we would submit that the data shows the enforcement efforts over the last 9 months on SH71 demonstrate the safety benefit they can deliver to the County when compared to roads that had no targeted programs (US290 and RM620). All three of these roads have histories of driver danger, have similar geographies, lengths, speed limits, and traffic counts. For context, it is worth reviewing the three elements of road safety on these roads to date: engineering, education, and enforcement.

From an engineering standpoint, TxDOT has deployed similar measures on these roads to date to address road safety such as additional signage, dedicated center-turn lanes, resurfacing, restriping, etc. 620 and 290 have also been identified as justifying significant improvements that will be implemented in coming years. 71 has no current engineering enhancements planned at this time.

From an education standpoint, these roads currently receive equal exposure to TxDOT safety programs, County education initiatives, and city initiatives (where applicable). These areas are all within a similar media metro in terms of coverage for road safety and awareness initiatives.

This leaves enforcement. While each of these roads fall into various municipalities within the County, all of them have stretches of road within ETJ (some more than others). Since the founding of Safer71, we have worked closely with every enforcement agency at the state, county, and city levels. In addition to increased presence from TCSO HEAT, DPS, and Bee Cave City (within their jurisdiction), Constable Pct. 3 devoted a significant portion of a single deputy to SH71.

Unfortunately, TCSO HEAT resources need to support the entire County, and while DPS work with us to provide increased coverage when they can, they are outside the control of the County or community advocacy groups to guarantee their presence in ETJ and County areas. For their part, Bee Cave continues to maintain a sustained presence within their territory on SH71 and 620.



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The TCSO HEAT unit has had virtually no additional headcount dedicated to it in more than a decade; with only the addition of 2 deputies for the commercial vehicle enforcement (CVE) unit in 2012. This is despite population growth of over 28% in Travis County and average growth in excess of 90% in Western Travis County.

The limited number of TCSO HEAT resources means any dedicated effort in any single part of the County removes those resources from availability to other areas and thus can't be guaranteed over time. As such, the placing of these resources within the Constable Precinct is needed to have assurance as to their utilization.

From a data perspective, the results of increased enforcement presence on SH71 show a direct correlation to reduced injuries and deaths. Despite the stretch of SH71 that has been the focus of these efforts having higher average and peak vehicle traffic counts than its comparable 620 and 290 stretches, the year-over-year analysis shows a dramatic reduction in deaths, injuries, and accidents across the board. Sadly, this cannot be said for 290 and 620 where total crashes and injuries are up, and deaths are the same or higher year-over-year.

By funding this request, the Constable will have increased resources to support 290, 71 and the area of 620 within their precinct. This will also free up TCSO HEAT units to for other areas of requiring their presence.

With no current engineering projects identified to support increasing traffic on SH71 from the new Bee Creek Sports complex and LTISD Elementary School, planned LTISD High School, ongoing residential and commercial development, and significant commercial traffic from quarries in Burnet county, SH71 needs dedicated County support via enforcement presence in order to have any hope of maintaining current safety levels.

Further, we would propose that the net cost to the County should also take into consideration factors beyond the revenue contributed from enforcement activities. These include:

- The **net savings to from reduced EMS support**. Currently traffic injuries are the largest dispatch call for Travis County EMS. Any reduction in these is a significant savings to the County (\$3,000 - \$5,000 per incident) and ensures these already stretched EMS resources are available for other needs.
- The **net improvement to transit** within the County from crash reductions given the lack of alternate routes on these corridors.
- **Increased property tax revenues** that come from desirable areas with safe roads and communities.
- The **lives that will be saved** - and injuries avoided - as a result of increased safety.

I hope the court can see that the funding of this request, which will have very little net impact to the budget when all factors are considered, can have an enormous positive impact on the lives of residents in Travis County.

Sincerely,



**Greg Short**  
President, Safer71



## Year over Year Crash & Injury Data

Source: TxDOT CRIS Query

2018 Range: 11/1/2017 – 8/19/2018

2019 Range: 11/1/2018 – 8/19/2019

### SH71 from Southwest Parkway to County Line

Year	Total Crashes	Fatal Crashes	Serious Injury Crashes
2018	137	5	3
2019	117	1	3
Delta	<b>-20</b>	<b>-4</b>	<b>No Change</b>
% Delta	<b>-15%</b>	<b>-80%</b>	<b>No Change</b>

Year	Deaths	Serious Injuries	Total Injuries
2018	7	21	67
2019	1	20	44
Delta	<b>-6</b>	<b>-1</b>	<b>-23</b>
% Delta	<b>Down 86%</b>	<b>Down 5%</b>	<b>Down 34%</b>

### RM620 from SH71 to County Line

Year	Total Crashes	Fatal Crashes	Serious Injury Crashes
2018	326	3	13
2019	344	3	7
Delta	<b>+18</b>	<b>No Change</b>	<b>-6</b>
% Delta	<b>Up 6%</b>	<b>No Change</b>	<b>Down 46%</b>

Year	Deaths	Serious Injuries	Total Injuries
2018	3	79	141
2019	3	57	144
Delta	<b>No Change</b>	<b>-22</b>	<b>+3</b>
% Delta	<b>No Change</b>	<b>Down 28%</b>	<b>Up 2%</b>

### US290 from West of Oak Hill Y/SH71 to County Line

*Restricted to west of Y for more accurate comparisons with RM620 and SH71.*

Year	Total Crashes	Fatal Crashes	Serious Injury Crashes
2018	55	2	6
2019	79	4	1
Delta	<b>+24</b>	<b>+2</b>	<b>-5</b>
% Delta	<b>Up 44%</b>	<b>Up 100%</b>	<b>Down 83%</b>

Year	Deaths	Serious Injuries	Total Injuries
2018	3	26	34
2019	4	15	49
Delta	<b>+1</b>	<b>-11</b>	<b>+15</b>
% Delta	<b>Up 33%</b>	<b>Down 42%</b>	<b>Up 44%</b>



## Traffic Count Data

Source: TxDOT Transportation Planning Maps.

2019 data estimated based on applying 2017-18 Growth Rates on same road stretches.

Peak values represent the largest traffic count recorded on the stretch.

All other values are averaged across the measured length.

- SH71: Southwest Parkway to County Line
- RM620: SH71 to County Line
- US290: West of Oak Hill Y/SH71 to County Line

Road	2017	2018	2019*	Growth Rate	2018 Peak	2019 Peak*
US290	31,318	34,898	38,887	11.4%	48,197	53,706
SH71	35,626	38,877	42,425	9.1%	51,884	56,618
RM620	38,449	40,202	42,035	4.6%	50,317	52,611