Transforming South Congress in Austin, Texas

Gary W. Schatz, P.E., PTOE, PTP
South Congress Improvement Project

(Image from MapQuest)
South Congress Improvement Project

- Pedestrians, Bicyclists, Transit
- Shopping, Dining, Clubs, Live Music
- Churches, Apartments, Businesses, Hotels, Fire Station
- Special Events (First Thursday, SXSW, ROT Rally)
- Texas School for the Deaf, Fulmore Middle School
South Congress Improvement Project

- 36,000 ADT, 38 MPH 85%ile Speed
- Signal Cycle Lengths: 135s – 135s – 150s
- 90 Feet Curb to Curb
- ~ 300 Head-in Angle & Parallel Parking Spaces
- 24 Parking-related crashes 2006 – 2011
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(Image from Google Earth)
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Vendor Backed In for Unloading
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Jaywalking; Illegal Parking
South Congress Improvement Project

Illegal Parking
South Congress Improvement Project

Illegal Parking
South Congress Improvement Project

Auto-Centric ➔ People-Centric

- Bulb-outs
- Crosswalks
- Traffic Signals
- Sidewalk Repairs
- Uphill Bike Lanes
- Street Resurfacing
- ADA Improvements
- Consolidate Bus Stops
- Increase Parking Spaces
- Motorcycle Parking; Bike Racks
South Congress Improvement Project

Dimensions

Lanes
- Travel/Turn – 10 Ft.
- Shared – 13 Ft.
- Bike – 5 to 6 Ft.

Angled Parking Stalls
- 45° and 60° Angle
- 9 Ft. Wide
- 16 to 18 Ft. Deep

Parallel Parking Stalls
- 8 Ft. Wide
- Limits defined; stalls not defined
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- Existing Signal
- New Signal
- New PHB

(Image from MapQuest)
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Original Conditions
South Congress Improvement Project

(Photograph courtesy of Nathan Wilkes)
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(Photo by author)
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Driver Education for Back-In Angle Parking
South Congress Improvement Project

- 25 – 30 MPH Progression Speed
- Signal Cycle Lengths: 90s – 120s – 135s
- 57 Feet Curb to Curb
- 370 Back-in Angle & Parallel Parking Spaces
- 16 Accessible Spaces
## South Congress Improvement Project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenario</th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>Parking-Related</th>
<th>Parking-Related (Involving Bike or Ped)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Installation (August 2006 - July 2011)</td>
<td>32.8</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>1.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Post-Installation (August 2011 - December 2012)</td>
<td>21.9</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>0.7</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

- Overall rate reduced by 33%
- Parking-related rate reduced by 13%
- Parking-related rate for bikes or peds reduced by 50%
• MV/MV and MV/FO are leading type of crash
• Total crashes peaked in 2008 and began decline
• Decline continued after improvements implemented
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As a driver, South Congress' formerly free-and-easy feel has given way to a more frenetic, video game mode, like something problematic could pop up at any second. It produces a low-level anxiety, twitchy eyes — and slower speeds.

Ben Wear, Austin American-Statesman
South Congress Improvement Project

Even though merchants didn't welcome this change, do know that … your patience in putting up with our fears of the unknown is GREATLY appreciated. ...You guys often have a very thankless job and take heat from all sides, but know that the South Congress merchants, as well as myself, thank you for a great job well done.

Brandon Hodge, President
South Congress Merchants Association
South Congress Improvement Project

The Austin Chronicle

October 14, 2011

Best Assbackward City Project
Back-in Angle Parking

Pulling out of a South Congress or Dean Keeton parking spot into oncoming traffic is no longer a daredevil feat, thanks to new (required) back-in-angle parking “stalls” along the busy strip. Okay, we know it’s hard to change our parking habits, but an informal observation informs us that most drivers back in without a hitch. The payoff comes in the pullout: Just turn your ignition and drive gaily forward.

Austin Transportation Department, 974-1465.
www.cityofaustin.org/transportation.
South Congress Improvement Project

Motorized Wheelchair User in Bike Lane
South Congress Improvement Project

Skateboarder in Shared Use Lane
South Congress Improvement Project

Successes

• Informed Leadership = Political Will
• Leveraged Multiple Funding Sources
  • Remaining Bond Funding $1.0 million
  • Other Sources $1.2 million
    • Street Maintenance Program
    • Intersection Improvement Program
    • Bicycle & Pedestrian Program
    • Signals Operations
    • Signing & Markings Operations
• Consistent message; continuous communication
South Congress Improvement Project

Challenges

• Driver inattention remains leading contributing factor
• Are benefits from safety improvements being offset by this?
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Nathan Wilkes – First to Back-In Angle Park
Questions?
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