



# Agenda Item Report

**Legislative Board:** City Council  
**Date:** December 16, 2025  
**Contact:** Wendy Smith  
**Agenda Item ID / Number:** 2025-1119- / G.9

**ITEM TITLE:** Adoption of a Resolution authorizing the submittal of an application to the Off-System Grade Separation State Fund Program for the Union Pacific Railroad Crossing of Onion Creek at Garison Road (Assistant City Manager Wendy L. Smith)

## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The project includes planning and design for .12 miles of 10' concrete trail beneath an existing railroad trestle in the City of Buda. In addition to the trail, the project will plan and design for countermeasures required by the railroad, including debris canopies and vandalism mitigation features. Deliverables include design documents, which will be submitted to the railroad owner for formal review through their Public Projects Process, and cost estimates, defined data needs, and other materials that will result in construction of this critical rail-pedestrian grade separation.

A support letter has been requested of Union Pacific Railroad.

## 2. BACKGROUND/HISTORY

For decades, trail and greenway along Onion Creek has been a community priority. At the local level, City of Buda plans identify the Onion Creek trail as high-priority mobility and connectivity resource that “connects several key parks and destinations,” making the trail a focal point of the city’s Capital Improvement Plan. At the regional level, Travis County and City of Austin developed a shared concept for a regional Onion Creek Trail (2011) that would connect Buda and the Onion Creek-Colorado River confluence. At the state level, the Onion Creek Greenway is a key segment of the Texas Bicentennial Trail, established by HB4230 (2025) as a state priority for promoting Texas’ rich historical and cultural heritage, providing for increased outdoor recreation, and enhancing economic development in the state. HB4230 calls for the Bicentennial Trail to be completed by 2036.

Achieving this local, regional, and state connectivity priority is complicated by the trail’s interaction with railroad infrastructure. The Onion Creek Greenway crosses an existing rail trestle over Onion Creek, which bifurcates existing trails in Garison and Stagecoach Parks. The trestle undermines both local connectivity between these two community assets and the larger priority of regional greenway connectivity from Buda to the creek’s terminus.

Despite the lack of a formal trail connection beneath the trestle, informal access is common. This results in trespassing, vandalism, and an unsafe environment where out-of-bounds trail users are exposed to rail hazards like debris from trains passing overhead.

The challenge is to establish a safe, grade-separated crossing that facilitates local, regional, and statewide trail connectivity priorities through the Onion Creek corridor. Meeting this challenge requires resources to plan and design infrastructure that complies with railroad policies related to underpass access and floodplain/riparian impacts.

## 3. ANALYSIS

As described in the City of Buda’s Trails Plan (2024), “(t)rails provide not only essential recreational and health benefits, but also significant economic development, environmental, and transportation

benefits.” By enabling trail connectivity in the City of Buda, and by facilitating implementation of the Bicentennial Trail, the project will result in a range of civic benefits that are well aligned with the Off-System Rail Grade Separation State Fund Program.

By establishing continuous trail connectivity from downtown Buda to existing city park assets, the railroad grade separation promotes safe active recreation and mobility. This results in physical health benefits related to cardiovascular and pulmonary health, and mental health benefits related to increased access to outdoor environments. Expanded trail connectivity will result in fewer local vehicle miles traveled, leading to environmental health benefits such as improved air quality and reduced greenhouse gas emissions. Establishing a safe, separated rail-trail interaction in this location will also reduce the safety risks associated with unauthorized trail use.

This project also offers substantial economic benefits. First, the Onion Creek Greenway will also increase local livability, resulting in higher property values and increased property tax revenue for the City of Buda. Second, as part of the Bicentennial Trail, the Onion Creek Greenway will be connected to one of the premier long-distance bicycle routes in the state, connecting the Alamo to the Capitol by way of the Edwards Aquifer regions’ four great springs. Numerous studies, including several developed by state agencies like TxDOT (Bicycle Tourism Trail Study [2018]) and TPWD [2022]), long-range bicycle tourism trails are significant economic drivers for diverse communities. This connection will contribute to an iconic outdoor recreation resource, with the potential for transformative economic benefits at the local, regional, and state levels.

#### **4. FINANCIAL IMPACT**

The total project cost for the Planning/Feasibility Study and design is \$175,000. Local match would be 10%, which is \$17,500.

#### **5. STRATEGIC PLAN/GOALS**

FUN EXPERIENCES FOR ALL

#### **6. STRATEGIC PLAN OBJECTIVES**

Develop a connected recreational, multi-use trail system.

#### **7. PROS AND CONS**

Pros: The project aligns with City, regional, and state master plans. Additionally, 80% of the cost would be paid through grant funds.

Cons: The local match is \$17,500, which will need to be budgeted if the grant is awarded.

#### **8. ALTERNATIVES**

The City Council may decide not to authorize submission of the application.

#### **9. REQUESTED ACTION / SUGGESTED MOTION / RECOMMENDATION**

Adopt a Resolution authorizing the submittal of an application to the Off-System Grade Separation State Fund Program for the Union Pacific Railroad Crossing of Onion Creek at Garison Road

#### **Attachments:**

[Resolution - Rail Grade Separation.docx](#)