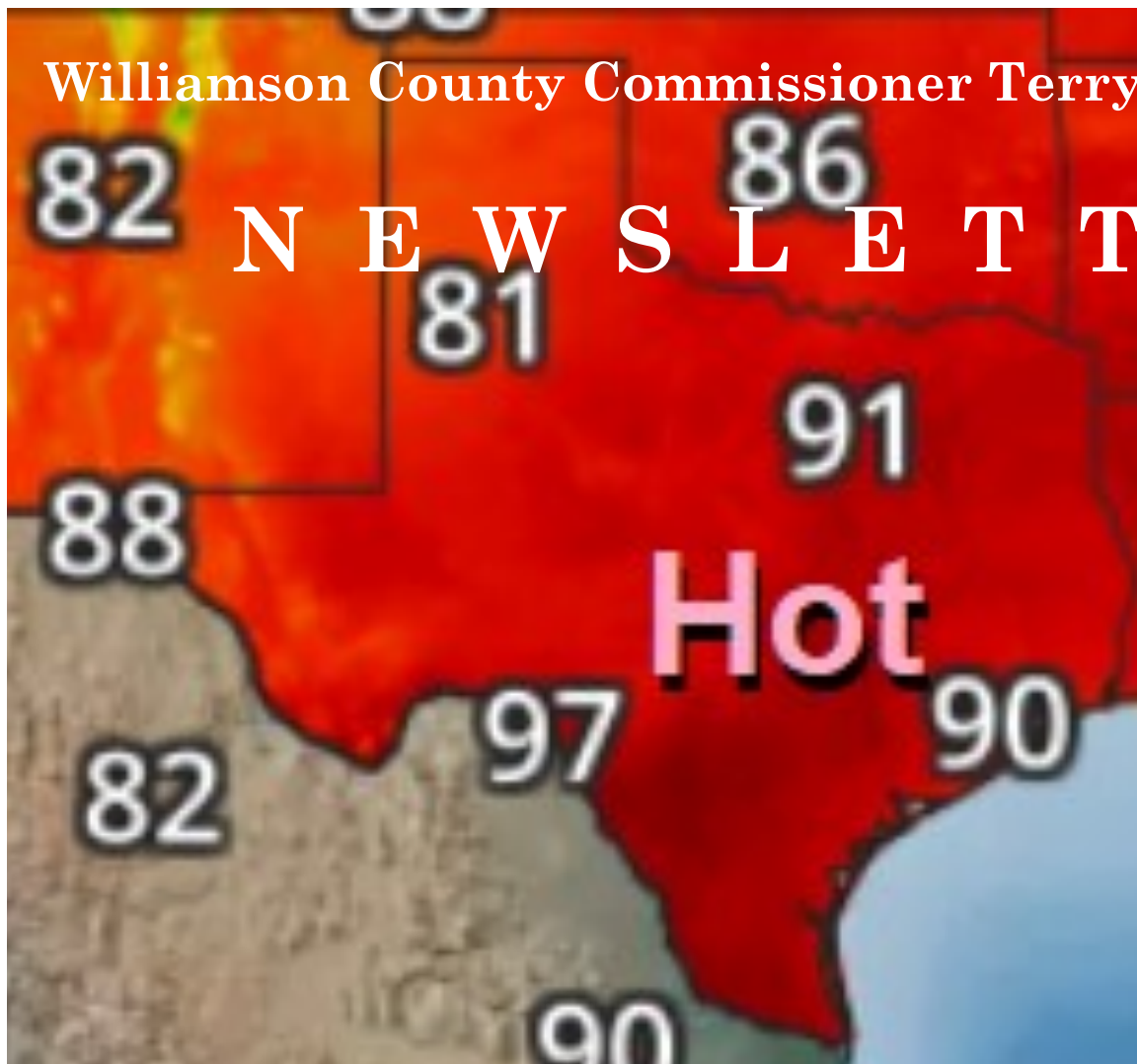


**Williamson County Commissioner Terry Cook**

# **N E W S L E T T E R**

**July 2020  
Volume 4  
Issue 7**



## **In This Issue**

**Coronavirus Information**

**In Commissioners Court**

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(Virtual Fun!)**

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**The Last Page and sign up for the  
WILCounty Line E-newsletter**

# CORONAVIRUS

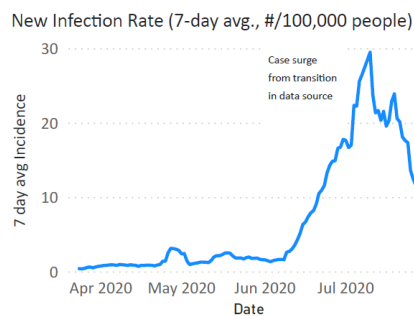
**Bad news first:** As of July 28 there has been a total of 5,433 reported cases of COVID-19. 3,202 of those have been reported in July alone, a 143.5% increase in known cases. There are only 16% ICU beds and 22% hospital beds available.

**Hopeful news:** The rate of infections has gone from a high of 30% on July 9 to 11% on July 28. That's lower than both Bell and Travis Counties. We have an 17.19% 7-day rolling average of positive tests (there's been 31,003 of all reported tests done so far), which seems high, but this is the lowest it has been since June 14th. Even though deaths have reached the 100 death milestone, deaths have slowed to go along with the lower infection rate. *Maybe most important, there's been a 48% drop in cases jut in the last week!*

Various cities in Wilco put in place mask-wearing ordinances on July 2. Is this hopeful news a response to those mask ordinances? Only time will tell, but **Wilco residents have been ranked near the top of the list in traveling less and staying home more. Around 21% of our population has stayed home, rarely venturing out.** Furthermore, the number of available hospital beds might be worse if Governor Abbott had not put a moratorium on elective surgeries. This was a good move, especially in the face of government skeptics, but wish more would have been done, but I digress.

**More information from the health district:** There is still quite a bit of disease transmission in the community, again above state and national rates, which is of particular concern as we work with school districts on reopening plans. Given our still high disease transmission and new infection rates and high positive testing rate, school openings are of great concern.

**I hope our school districts will closely take into account the advice from the health district.**



So here you can approximate July 2 and then proceed 10 days more and the drop in cases becomes real once the exposures up to July 2 are exhausted. The drop is evidence that spread is being mitigated—keep those masks on in public, stay away from crowded situations and wash, wash those hands.

Secondarily, the Central Texas network for gathering information went down last week. Consequently some hospitals were not able to report their daily information and the WCCHD dashboard and reports could not include their information. We are in catchup mode—I have not updated my facebook page on Covid-19 since I

went on vacation July 17. Lastly, death data is now going to be reported by the state using death certificate numbers. Those determinations requiring autopsies can add significant delays.

**Click on the logos to get more information.**



**Williamson County & Cities Health District**



**TEXAS**  
Health and Human Services



**ROUND ROCK TEXAS**



For their statewide dashboard click [HERE](#). Information includes, but is not limited to, cases and facilities by county and region, and numbers of hospital beds and ventilators.

**DID YOU KNOW** that Commissioner Cook has a Facebook page? Other information regarding responses during this pandemic can be found [here](#) once the data is whole again.



# The Message



I'll start this message with good news of the Wilco Forward Program for small businesses in Williamson County (100 or less employees). Final numbers are as of July 27:

4,194 Applications Submitted

3,684 Applications Approved

18 in last 2 weeks

496 Applications Denied

Many were duplicates

Some didn't qualify

5 Applications are Pending

\$34,279,492.35 grants given

\$6,056.87 in last 2 weeks

\$9,304.97 is average grant given

This was accomplished with 4 persons in Auditing and the small Treasurer's office—this was a one-time deal for these folks—they are exhausted. The Commissioners Court dedicated \$25M of the \$93M CARES funds to this, and within the first month needed to add \$10M more due to high number of applications and demonstrated need of our business community.

The approximate precinct breakdown is:

- Precinct 1 with 28% of the grant money (thanks to Round Rock Chamber advertising)
- Precinct 2 with 31% of the grant money (thanks to Cedar Park and Leander Chambers advertising)
- Precinct 3 with 22% of the grant money
- Precinct 4 with 19% of the grant money (thanks to Taylor Chamber advertising)

And the grant dispersals of the CARES money to businesses to regions by zip code were approximately:

Round Rock \$9.5M	G'twn \$7M	Cedar Park \$6.9M	Austin \$3.9M
Leander \$2.6M	Hutto \$1.5M	Taylor \$1.1M	Liberty Hill \$900k
Jarrell \$400k	Florence \$134k	Granger \$41k	Thrall \$35k
Bartlett \$10k			

Williamson County's internal allocation during the initial phase of CARES funding was \$11.55M. Note that all grant money required documentation to show losses or costs due to Covid-19 only. This program ended officially on June 30, but some remaining applications need some clarification.

Next, **Phase 2**—direct funding to entities. In some counties, one or more cities may have significant populations and qualify for direct government funding for CARES money. In Williamson County, no cities were large enough to qualify. Phase 2 funding is approximately:

Cities \$20M

Health District \$1M

Emergency Service Districts \$500k

Bluebonnet Trails \$500k YMCA \$750k

Phase 2 Reserve \$3M

Then, with an additional \$933,000 of Community Development Block Grant added to the mix, **Phase 3** has \$5M being dispersed through three organizations to help families and individuals with rent, mortgage payments and/or utilities for no more than 3 months. The organizations are [Georgetown's Caring Place](#), [Round Rock's Serving Center](#) and the [Salvation Army](#). Why these 3 organizations? They already were the centers with programs to help people in housing and utility payments.

The contracts are nearly in place. Salvation Army and Serving Center already have on-line applications ready to be accessed; the Caring Place asks that you call them. The financial need must be due to the negative impact of Covid-19. The approximate geographical areas of responsibility include:

- Round Rock Area Serving Center: Round Rock, Hutto not covered by GISD, and Fern Bluff and Brushy Creek MUDs
- Georgetown Caring Place: Georgetown, Andice, Bartlett, Florence, Granger, Jarrell, Jonah, Schwertner, Walburg, Weir and the part of Hutto within GISD
- The Salvation Army: Cedar Park, Coupland, Leander, Liberty Hill, Taylor, Thrall, Austin (outside of its incorporated city limits in zip codes 78629 and 78650) in Williamson County, and all other areas of Williamson County not served by the other two agencies—this should include MUD 1 (Rattan Creek) as of now

For those of you facing August payments due, let your landlords, banks, or utility companies know you have, or will be applying as soon as the application is available to you.

### **Back to School or Not...**

Such a tricky decision. Our infection rate is lower but still high. Europe has shown the failures of trying to start up schools before the conditions are right. Parents trying to work, or go to work, with young children at home are struggling. Schools did give parents around 6 hours of kid-free time then private daycare covered the rest of the parents' working hours. Well, much of our daycare world has been shattered by this pandemic. And yeah, the kids don't tend to get as sick as the adults, but some sure do. Those adults who had a serious, lasting illness from Covid-19 are often showing lasting, negative impacts. What happens when we start losing teachers, administrators and staff? How do you package kids on a school bus for social distancing—not enough busses nor drivers to go around on that one. How do kids keep their hands to themselves? How much space is there really for social distancing in the classrooms, hallways, gym and lunchroom? How much longer must we endure the pandemic impact to our lives?

I am heartened by the drop in infection rate from doubling in 2 weeks to doubling in about 10 now—we aren't going out less, but we are wearing masks—the toxic vapors are staying with us rather than being released to the world by those shedding the virus, often before there are any symptoms. Just remember to actually wash the reusable masks! I handwash mine and hang them from the umbrella on my patio with clothespins (yep I still have those).

I will tell you that I am working with our GIS department and one private entity right now to map our county for incomes, towers—including water towers, and populations to work on expanding internet access to as much of the county as possible. This goes past where copper and fiber extend today and aren't showing earnings potential to common providers. Oh for 5G and affordable rates for decent upload and download speeds! Meanwhile, we must deal. Learning remotely on a large scale has really exposed the negative impact of disparities between the haves and the have nots. There are federal dollars awaiting good plans in this arena! I just need to find more time in a day.



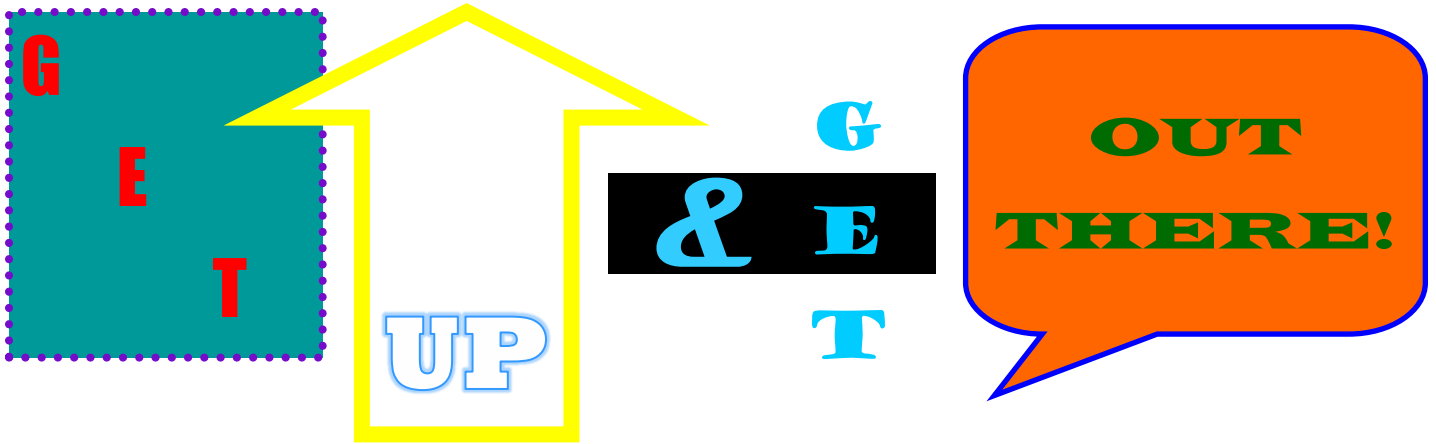
## CONSTRUCTION IS DONE AND THE TRAIL IS OPEN!!!

This section is only 0.9 miles long and runs from an area near 620 and Chisholm Trail Rd. and dead-ends at a private property...for now. When taking this trail, you'll have to come back from the end, thereby making a 1.8 mile trek.

Parking is tricky. The trail begins behind the strip center where Velocity Credit Union is located at 900 Round Rock Ave. (aka 620), just west of Chisholm Trail Rd. The parking lot around there is NOT officially parking for the trail, although the county did negotiate a handicap parking space right next to the trail. Official parking is entered into from Chisholm Trail Rd. at Crossing Park just north of 620. The current end of the trail comes close, but doesn't go all the way there. Round Rock's Heritage Trail will join it from the east one day— we will work on right-of-way for extending it to the current trail to the west.

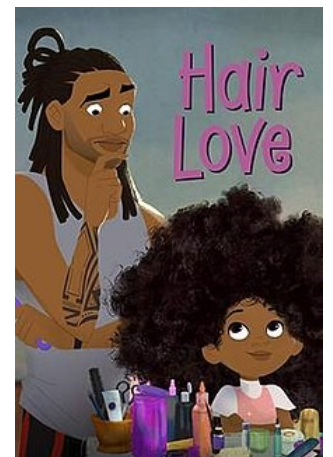
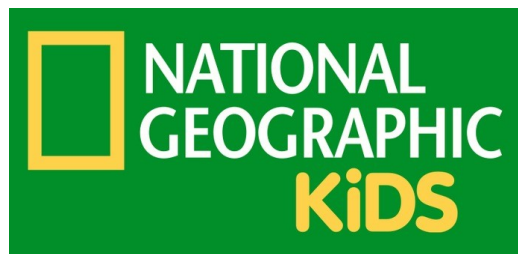
Because of the pandemic, we couldn't have a public ribbon cutting, so we did a virtual one instead. You can watch it and sing along by clicking on the picture below. We even gave credits at the end for those who invested so much work in making this beautiful, ADA-compliant trail a reality. Hope you enjoy, not only the ribbon cutting, but this new exciting trail! Note: I re-wrote the words to the song, but our Lauren Gammon in the county's Public Information Office was the creative genius behind the video as Cathie Sheridan's voice graces the song. Get up, get out, and check out the trail—you won't be sorry!





Commissioner Cook was tasked with keeping up the spirits of the Williamson County staff. She has put together a weekly flier that contains a number of links to things that make you laugh, music, art, virtual tours of all kinds, activities for kids, workouts, and moments of zen. **NOTE from Terry: OK—enough. I don't do this flier—GARRY does—I sometimes send him links! I don't think the Wilco employees are going to ever let him stop!**

On this page are some of those links. Click on the logos or pictures. Hope you enjoy! If you would like to receive these weekly fliers, please email Garry Brown at [garry.brown@wilco.org](mailto:garry.brown@wilco.org), and he will send you a couple.



## Cook: Health district guides county through pandemic

<https://www.statesman.com/opinion/20200714/commissioner-cook-health-district-guides-county-through-pandemic?rssfeed=true>

No one imagined in 1943 when the Williamson County Health Department was established that it later would become a health district, and one day be at the forefront of preserving our public health against a worldwide pandemic.

In 1989, under the Texas Local Public Health Reorganization Act, the county and the cities of Round Rock, Cedar Park, Georgetown and Taylor established the Williamson County and Cities Health District through a cooperative agreement. The agreement was revised and re-adopted in 1992 and again in 2007, when Liberty Hill and Hutto joined the health district. In 2013, Leander enlisted. Any incorporated city in the county with a population over 15,000 may apply to join.

The Williamson County Board of Health, as the administrative authority for the health district, sets policies to promote and preserve public health and safety. The Williamson County Commissioners Court appoints two directors, while each participating city appoints one board member.

Executive Director Derrick Neal said the health district allows each participating city to customize its own services to better meet the needs of its residents, especially with COVID-19's challenges.

Of the district's 92 full-time employees and eight contractors, roughly 70 perform COVID-related work. Its 58 investigators include 41 epidemiologists, nurses, surge volunteers and staff, six contact tracers and 11 call center volunteers.

There are three types of investigations. An epidemiological investigation occurs when individual cases of possible COVID illness or exposure are reported to the health district. A staff member then calls those individuals and interviews them about their symptoms, where they've been and their close contacts over a specific time. Contact tracing team members call the person's contacts identified during the epi investigation, informing them they probably were exposed to a COVID-19 case and should stay home for 14 days.

The health district recently transitioned to state contact tracing, which will provide additional resources with the tremendous growth in new cases.

For clusters — sites with two or more positive cases — public health staff conduct on-site assessments, offer education, consulting and other services. One or more cases at a long-term care facility, such as a nursing home, is considered a cluster. Wilco EMS and firefighters investigate these clusters and establish safety controls through isolation and testing everyone.

The health district also has run a public testing drive-through at a Georgetown middle school that offered at least 60 tests every weekday from April 30 until it closes July 17. Seven staff members, seven volunteers, five Georgetown firefighters and one Weir firefighter tested people through their car windows as they drove up.

The health district partnered with Austin Public Health to use their online screening and scheduling system for these tests. A \$100,000 grant from St. David's Foundation helped fund kits for the Georgetown testing site and pay Austin Public Health. The health district expected to administer about 5,000 tests at the Georgetown site. At the testing site, volunteers checked people in and performed logistics such as planning, setting up the site, training volunteers and stocking supplies. Others called the elderly to check in on them. The volunteers included school nurses, community members and even former district employees/retirees.

The district has spent over \$500,000 for COVID services. A million dollars recently awarded from the state may help the coronavirus operations through December. About 1,000 test kits can cost \$100,000 and last 15 to 16 days, depending on the number of tests performed.

While health districts aren't required to conduct testing, state law mandates that they continue investigating and reporting COVID cases because it is a public health crisis. (continued next page)

The National Guard began opening testing sites July 6 in advance of the Georgetown site closing. The Round Rock and Cedar Park Family Emergency Room clinics will continue their free testing for the uninsured, in this great example of public/private partnership, and will bill insurance companies for those insured.

The level of leadership and organization the Williamson County and Cities Health District has shown is evident not only with COVID but through its Public Health Board accreditation. It is only one of five nationally accredited health districts in Texas, and it is applying for its second accreditation to be designated in 2021. It has shown resiliency, flexibility and adaptability in working with its small numbers of staffing and recruiting, training and accommodating all the volunteers from within county government and from Central Texas.

## In Commissioners Court



**Lt. James Cervenka was recently honored upon his retirement after 31 years of service to Williamson County EMS. Amazing job! Good luck Lt. Cervenka on your next stage in life!**

Can anyone guess where this is?



If you guessed the Apple expansion site on Parmer Ln., you would be correct!

Looks like construction is in full swing. Remember, they need to surpass \$50M in property improvements by Dec. 31, 2022 as one of the milestones to receive a tax rebate from the County.



**DID YOU KNOW** that you can see the events that were attended by Commissioner Cook on her official Williamson County office's web-site? You'll also be able to read her poems, too. Although she's not attending anything right now, you can see all past events [here](#).

Where is Commissioner Cook?



Since Williamson County closed most of its buildings to the public in mid-March, county government has continued to function and be highly responsive to its citizenry, traits that you expect us to uphold. The Commissioner 1 Office has been no exception.

We continue answering emails and returning calls in a timely manner and virtually holding meetings (sometimes too many meetings). The important work on behalf of our constituents does not stop. The only difference is that my staff and I have been doing it from our respective homes.

As you may know, Williamson County has reopened all of our buildings to the public with the exception of meeting rooms. If you have watched recent Commissioners Court proceedings, you know that I am very hesitant on this point, because Williamson County, much less the State of Texas, has not flattened the curve of new COVID-19 cases. The rate is coming down, but far from manageable.

I have one staff member who is in a high-risk group for contracting the virus and another who lives in a multigenerational home with an 11-year-old and an 85+ year old. Taken together with the steady increase in new COVID-19 cases, I have chosen to keep my office working remotely.

You can still expect that we will continue answering your emails and phone calls in a timely fashion. We can still meet, too. Just virtually. Thank goodness for Zoom, GoTo Meetings, WebEx, Teams, Google Meet, and all of the other virtual meeting platforms!

We will announce when we reopen.

I hope you understand why I have made this choice. Please be safe and keep our Williamson County neighbors safe by going out only when you need to wearing a face mask.

# ROAD UPDATES

**620 at Railroad/Chisholm Trail**– Right-of-way (ROW) is being cleared of existing concrete drives in ROW on the south side of the roadway and west of the railroad tracks. Contractor is working on water, wastewater and stormwater lines—yippee. Chisholm Trail is planned to be opened again, if all goes well, first week of August. This is CORR, Wilco & TxDOT project. Estimated completion date is Summer 2022.

**Great Oaks Bridge at Brushy Creek Rd.**– AT&T's design is done and they are scheduled to finish their construction in September 2020, Charter and Grande in September 2020, and Oncor in November 2020. Hopefully, they can stay on target. Atmos Gas is installing a new gas line near the BCMUD maintenance yard on the north and along the right-of-way on the east. Material has been placed under the bridge over Brushy Creek to keep the bats from roosting there. Roadway designs are being finalized. All permits have been approved. The old bridge will remain in use during construction. The construction is anticipated to begin Fall 2020 (if utility moves happen) and take 18-24 months to complete and set to finish in Spring 2022. Learn more [HERE](#).

**Great Oaks Water Line Relocations**– **Fern Bluff water line:** Connection date for the new 12" line is still a mystery. **Brushy Creek water line:** Just a tiny setback: leak has occurred—fix may have occurred by the time of this writing. Cleanup nearly done.

**Hairy Man Rd./Brushy Creek Rd. Safety Improvements**– Everything you want to know about this project is at this [website](#). Design work to modify road alignment, to maintain as much of the canopy over the road as possible, is nearly complete & is out for comments to engineers, then project will be ready for bids. Nearly all utility work is completed. Construction start is not slated to begin until fall 2020. This is 100% county job.

**N. Mays St. Extension from Paloma Dr. to Oakmont Dr.**– Bridge work nearly completed. Final utility moves by Spectrum actually happened 7/16!!! Can't believe it. This project is 1-year behind schedule because of all the utility work that was delayed and delayed. Road crews will return and start at south end of the bridge. Pond work continues at north end. This is a Round Rock—County project. Substantial completion slated for late summer/early fall 2020.

**University Blvd. widening from IH-35 to Sunrise Rd.**– Design and right of way acquisition are complete, and utility relocation efforts are still ongoing and taking longer than anticipated. Road construction has been delayed by the City of Round Rock (there's a story here), and no anticipated construction start date has been given. This is their project for which the county has contributed \$5M. Project was slated to finish in early 2022.

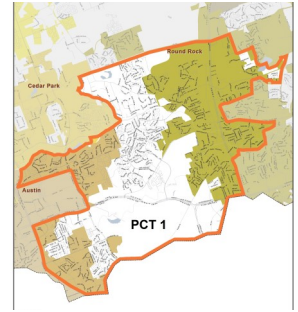
**Pond Springs Road Area Drainage Improvements**– GOOD NEWS! TxDOT will allow use of the area's drainage pond pending approval of an agreement between TxDOT, the County, and the City of Austin. Draft drainage design on the preferred option is under review with final design in August. Utility relocations are unknown at this time. Construction start is anticipated Spring 2021.

**Forest North Drainage Improvements Phase III**– All easement agreements are done. Erosion control measures have been installed. City of Austin completed waterline designs, and DeNucci, the contractor, has started to install one of those replacement lines for the old, brittle pipes—(ok one old line break so far, damage minimal) in the Braes Valley Zone on Braes Valley and Perthshire Streets.

**O'Connor Drive Traffic Signals**– All right-of-way has been acquired. Work is underway. Signal poles and mast arms are nearly ready for delivery and installation. Walls at Pocono have been moved. Finding each corner loaded in utilities—could be tricky for signal light posts. Sorry for the blockage on some corners—not much room to work AND walk safely. They're hustling. Substantial completion is anticipated by end of August 2020.

**1431 and Sam Bass Rd.**– We are working with TxDOT to make the intersection more driver friendly. For all those traveling north on Sam Bass and wanting to turn west onto 1431—there's blessed relief coming. The change has the approval of TxDOT and it will be re-stripped to have 2 left turning lanes and an additional left turn signal will be added! This is temporary as the new road design will not be implemented as construction on Sam Bass Road itself is not anticipated to begin before 2022 because of utilities. (The thorn in our side). PS Sam Bass Road became designated officially as a corridor road on the 2016 Corridor Map of the county's Long-range Transportation Plan.

# The Mission, Vision, and Value Statements of the Williamson County Commissioner Precinct 1 Office



## **MISSION**

To lead pro-actively on the Williamson County Commissioners Court while advocating for the constituents of Precinct 1 and the county at-large from a foundation of collaboration and respect.

## **VISION**

To transform Williamson County government into a more accessible, responsive, transparent, and well-managed organization for our residents, so that we become the community recognized as the best in Central Texas to live and enjoy.

## **VALUES**

Accountability, commitment, integrity, and respect form the values that guide the Williamson County Commissioner Precinct 1 office.

### **CONTACT US!**

**LOCATION:** Williamson County Jester Annex  
1801 E. Old Settlers Blvd., Suite 110

**MAIN PHONE:** 512-244-8610

**EMAIL COMMISSIONER COOK:**  
commissioner1@wilco.org

**COMMUNICATIONS/SCHEDULING:** Doris Sanchez  
512-244-8610, doris.sanchez@wilco.org

**EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT:** Garry Brown  
512-244-8615, garry.brown@wilco.org

### **SEE US ONLINE!!!**

Williamson County's Website! - [www.wilco.org](http://www.wilco.org)

Our office's web site– [Terry Cook, Commissioner Pct 1](http://TerryCook.CommissionerPct1.org)

### **Non-Emergency Phone Numbers**

Austin Fire Department  
512-974-0130

County Judge Bill Gravell  
512-943-1550

Jollyville Fire Department (ESD 1)  
512-258-1038

Round Rock Fire Department (ESD 9)  
512-218-5590

Sam Bass Fire Department (ESD 2)  
512-255-0100

Williamson Central Appraisal District  
512-930-3787

Williamson County Landfill  
512-759-8881

Williamson County Regional Animal Shelter  
512-943-3322

Williamson County Sheriff's Office  
512-864-8282

Want to know even more  
about what's happening in  
Williamson County?

Sign up for the WILCOunty  
Line E-newsletter! Click  
[here](#) to sign up!

Commissioner Cook  
keeps meeting with many  
MUD Boards and HOAs.  
To invite her to your  
meeting, contact Doris at  
doris.sanchez@wilco.org

**In case of  
Emergency  
DIAL 911**