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Intensive Archeological Survey of Potential Shaft Locations Along the Proposed City of Austin Parmer Lane Wastewater Interceptor, Travis and Williamson Counties, Texas

Chris Dayton

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Intensive Archeological Survey of Potential Shaft Locations Along the Proposed City of Austin Parmer Lane Wastewater Interceptor, Travis and Williamson Counties, Texas

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INTENSIVE ARCHEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF POTENTIAL SHAFT LOCATIONS ALONG THE PROPOSED CITY OF AUSTIN PARMER LANE WASTEWATER INTERCEPTOR, TRAVIS AND WILLIAMSON COUNTIES, TEXAS

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For
The City of Austin
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Austin, TX 78704

Under
Texas Antiquities Permit 6713

Cox | McLain Environmental Consulting, Inc. Archeological Report 067 (CMEC-AR-067)



February 5, 2015

Management Summary

In January and April 2014, an intensive archeological survey was completed in order to inventory and evaluate archeological resources within six proposed work areas, primarily potential shaft locations, along a proposed 3.7-kilometer (km) or 2.8-mile wastewater interceptor pipeline adjacent to Parmer Lane, also known as Farm-to-Market (FM) Road 734 in northwest Austin, Travis and Williamson Counties, Texas. The six areas—two along the southwest side of Parmer Lane and four along the northeast side—cover a total of 9.7 hectares or 24 acres. The work was carried out for the City of Austin under Texas Antiquities Permit 6713 by Cox | McLain Environmental Consulting, Inc. (CMEC), a subcontractor to Kennedy-Jenks Consultants.

Ground visibility was moderate to high within the APE, which was found to be extensively disturbed. Soils were generally thin and clayey, with frequent limestone bedrock exposures. Seventeen shovel tests were excavated where disturbance appeared minimal and ground visibility decreased. None yielded materials of archeological interest. Non-diagnostic lithic flakes and tested cobbles/choppers were observed sparsely scattered on the surface of the APE at an approximate density of one artifact per 100-500 square meters, as is common throughout central Texas. The APE is mapped as overlapping three previously recorded sites, 41TV857, 41WM585, and 41WM971; however, no materials or features were observed that might contribute to National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) or State Antiquities Landmark (SAL) eligibility at any of these sites. Further, no deposits or materials meriting recordation as new sites (e.g., activity areas, dense concentrations of artifacts, etc.) were observed. Half of the project's 17 shovel test units were placed at or near surface finds. The only cultural item recovered from a subsurface context was a modern golf ball.

No further archeological investigation is recommended prior to construction at any of the shaft locations.

No materials were collected; therefore, this project generated no archeological materials to be curated. Notes, forms, and other project data will be made permanently available to future researchers via an appropriate public facility per TAC 26.16 and 26.17.

No artifacts were collected; project records including notes, forms, and photographs will be curated at the Texas Archeological Research Laboratory (TARL), per TAC 26.16 and 26.17. The Texas Historical Commission (THC) concurred with the findings and recommendations of this report on January 5, 2015 (see Appendix A).

INTENSIVE ARCHEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF POTENTIAL SHAFT LOCATIONS ALONG THE PROPOSED CITY OF AUSTIN PARMER LANE WASTEWATER INTERCEPTOR, TRAVIS AND WILLIAMSON COUNTIES, TEXAS

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1.0 Introduction

Overview of the Project

In January and April 2014, an intensive archeological survey was completed in order to inventory and evaluate archeological resources within the footprints of six project work areas associated with a proposed 3.7-kilometer (km) or 2.8-mile wastewater interceptor pipeline along Parmer Lane, also known as Farm-to-Market (FM) Road 734, in northwest Austin, Travis and Williamson Counties, Texas (see **Figure 1**). The overall interceptor project will largely consist of horizontal tunneling carried out at depths far below archeologically relevant deposits (9.1-27.4 meters [m] or 30-90 feet [ft]). Much of the interceptor alignment is located within the existing Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) right-of-way for Parmer Lane, which is heavily disturbed and has been previously surveyed for cultural materials. Per 2009-2010 consultations with the Texas Historical Commission (THC), the archeological area of potential effects (APE) for this investigation is made up of those portions of the interceptor project that extend outside the existing TxDOT right-of-way. The 9.7-hectare (24-acre) APE consists of a total of six areas—two along the southwest side of Parmer Lane and four along the northeast side—under consideration as potential locations for vertical shafts to access the proposed tunnel and/or as construction and equipment staging areas.

The project is owned and funded by the City of Austin, rendering the project subject to the Antiquities Code of Texas (9 TNRC 191). No federal nexus is known.

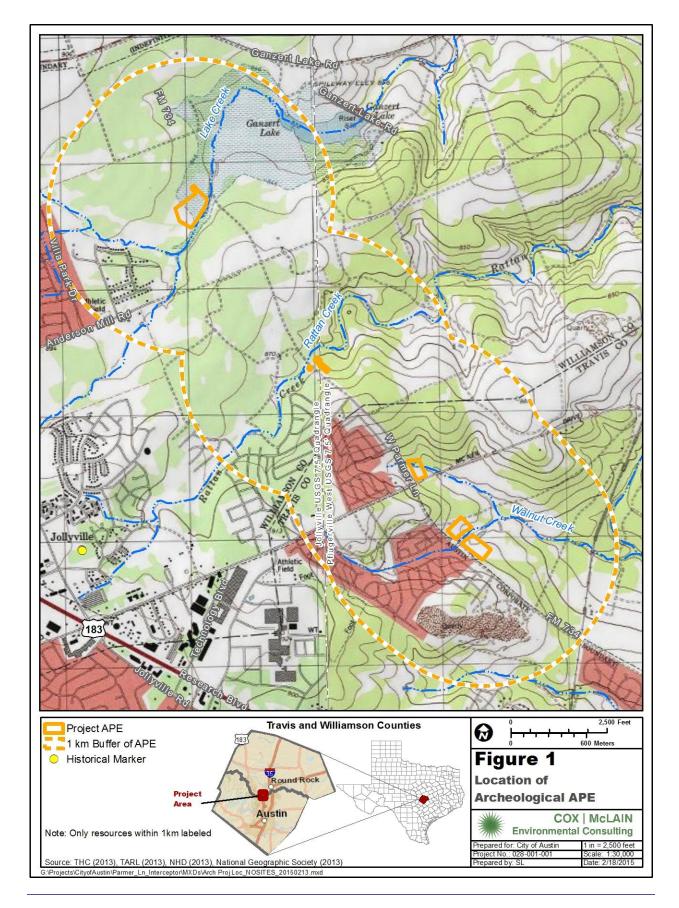
Methodological and Logistical Considerations

Chris Dayton (Principal Investigator) of Cox | McLain Environmental Consulting, Inc. (CMEC) performed the fieldwork for this project in January and April 2014. The weather was cool and overcast and no major logistical difficulties were encountered. Shovel test units were placed judgmentally within the APE based on observed disturbance levels and guidelines established by the Texas Historical Commission (THC) and the Council of Texas Archeologists (CTA). The methods employed during this study and relevant constraints are discussed further in Chapters Three and Four.

Per the approved scope of Texas Antiquities Permit 6713, a no-collection policy was in place within the APE, which lies on private land. Various non-diagnostic lithics were noted and returned to their original contexts. Therefore, this project generated no archeological materials to be curated.

Structure of the Report

Following this introduction, Chapter Two presents environmental parameters, a brief cultural context, and a summary of previous archeological research near the APE; Chapter Three discusses research goals, relevant methods, and the underlying regulatory considerations; Chapter Four presents the results of the survey and summarizes the implications of the investigations, and references are in Chapter Five.



2.0 Environmental and Cultural Context

Topography, Geology, Soils, and Land Use

The APE is located at elevations of 250-270 m (820-886 ft) above mean sea level on the rocky, dissected uplands of northwest Austin, along and near Lake, Rattan, and Walnut Creeks (see **Figure 1**). Geologically, the APE is underlain by limestones and other calcareous rocks of the Cretaceous-age Fredericksburg Group (Stoeser et al. 2007). According to Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) data, soils within the APE include Eckrant stony clay, Georgetown stony clay loam, Fairlie clay, and San Saba clay (NRCS 2013). The northwest-most portion of the APE, which is located along Lake Creek, is currently used for drainage/detention associated with a newly constructed residential subdivision, and also includes an existing lift station. Another small portion of the APE on the southwest side of Parmer lane along Rattan Creek also includes an existing lift station. The remaining four parts of the APE are in active use as cattle pastures.

Archeological Chronology for Central Texas

The APE lies within the Central Texas archeological region, which is based—like most spatial constructs used to classify past cultural groups—on a combination of archeological patterns and geologic, geographic, climatic, pedologic, and other environmental factors (Pertula 2004). The geographic boundaries of the Central Texas region include the eastern half of the Edwards Plateau, the Llano Uplift, and the portion of the Blackland Prairie that borders the Balcones Escarpment (Collins 2004 and Prewitt 1981). Although the Central Texas archeological region is characterized by diverse environments and archeological expressions, the ubiquitous presence of burned rock middens unifies the archeology in the region across both time and space (Collins 2004). The archeological chronology typically used by researchers in Central Texas is broadly similar to that used in the rest of Texas, and indeed throughout North America, with the first well-established human occupations occurring approximately 11,500 radiocarbon years before present (BP), or approximately 13,000 calendar years ago, and the bulk of the prehistoric record contained within a long Archaic period (**Table 1**).

Central Texas is generally considered to have a high probability for prehistoric archeological sites and materials, due in large part to the suitability of native Edwards Plateau chert—typically found as large cobbles within limestone beds—for toolmaking. The region contains thousands of chert quarrying and tool-production sites, some hundreds of hectares/acres in size (THC 2013).

Further discussion of the prehistory and history of the APE's environs and Central Texas is beyond the scope of this document. For such a discussion regarding prehistory—supplemented by critiques of dominant archeological methods and research frameworks and suggestions for alternative strategies—the reader is referred to Michael B. Collins' recent synthesis (Collins 2004).

Table 1: Archeological Chronology for Central Texas*			
Period	Years Before Present (BP)**		
Paleoindian Early Late	11,500 - 8,800 11,500 - 10,000 10,000 - 8,800		
Archaic Early Middle Late	8,800 - 1,200 8,800 - 6,000 6,000 - 4,000 4,000 - 1,200		
Late Prehistoric Early Late	1,200 - 400 1,200 - 800 800 - 400		
Historic	400 – 50		
* After Collins 2004: 113,1 ** Based on uncalibrated ra (see Perttula 2004:14, N	diocarbon dates, which are typical in Texas archeology		

Previous Investigations and Previously Identified Resources

A search of the Texas Archeological Sites Atlas (Atlas) maintained by the THC and the Texas Archeological Research Laboratory (TARL) was conducted in order to identify archeological sites, historical markers (Recorded Texas Historic Landmarks or RTHLs), properties or districts listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), State Antiquities Landmarks (SALs), cemeteries, or other cultural resources that may have been previously recorded in or near the APE, as well as previous surveys undertaken in the area.

Two archeological surveys have been carried out within the project area, both linear in configuration: a 1984 survey by the State Department of Highways and Public Transportation (SDHPT, now TxDOT) along Parmer Lane and a 1996 TxDOT survey intersecting Parmer at Anderson Mill Road. Within one kilometer (0.62 miles) of the project area, previous projects include area surveys carried out by Bill Milburn Co. for residential subdivisions near the northwest and southeast ends of the project area as well as multiple area and linear surveys undertaken by TxDOT, the North Austin Municipal Utility District, and the Veterans Administration, all dating to 1984 (THC 2013).

According to available Atlas data, three known archeological sites are located within the APE (THC 2013). Site 41WM585 overlaps slightly with the northwest-most portion of the APE and consists of a large prehistoric (possibly Early, Middle, or Late Archaic) camp area with diagnostic points. It was not recommended eligible for NRHP/SAL designation and was considered disturbed at the time it was recorded in 1984. Site 41WM971 is a disturbed lithic scatter possibly associated with 41WM494 and/or 41WM585 and was also recommended ineligible. Site 41TV857 overlaps the southeast-most part of the APE and consists of thinly scattered prehistoric lithics, a petroglyph, and historic features and materials associated with limestone quarrying. It was not recommended eligible for NRHP/SAL designation and destruction was considered likely at the time of the site's recording in 1984.

Within one kilometer of the APE, the following sites were found (THC 2013).

- 41TV856: Prehistoric (possibly Middle Archaic) component with burned rock, lithics. Historic component (late 19th century) with remains of barn, well, corral. Not recommended eligible for NRHP/SAL designation. Destruction was considered likely at time of recording (1984).
- 41TV1734: Form not available.
- 41WM494: Prehistoric component (potentially Late Paleoindian through Late Archaic) with diagnostic lithics, multiple burned rock middens. Historic component (1910-1930) – rock quarrying. Initially recommended as potentially eligible for NRHP and SAL designation, later updated with ineligibility recommendation. Disturbances anticipated at time of recording (1982-1984): road construction, drainage modifications, park development.
- 41WM586: Minor prehistoric lithic scatter, historic (late 19th-early 20th century) water control features. Not recommended eligible for NRHP/SAL designation. Disturbance by road construction and drainage modification anticipated (1984).
- 41WM587: Prehistoric diagnostic lithics, multiple burned rock middens, bedrock mortars. Evidence of historic-period rock quarrying. Initially recommended as NRHP/SAL-eligible, later updated to be ineligible. Construction of roads, subdivisions, utilities, public facilities anticipated to impact site at time of recording (1984).
- 41WM588: Minor prehistoric lithic scatter (short-term camp), historic quarry. Noted as "badly disturbed;" not recommended eligible for NRHP/SAL designation.
- 41WM589: Minor prehistoric lithic scatter (short-term camp). Noted as "disturbed;" not recommended eligible for NRHP/SAL designation.
- 41WM590: Historic (late 19th-early 20th century) farmstead with house, outbuildings, old roadbeds, fields. Structures robbed for materials. Not recommended as eligible for NRHP or SAL designation. Destruction by subdivision construction considered likely in 1984.
- 41WM591: Minor prehistoric lithic scatter (short-term camp). Noted as "very thinly scattered" and "disturbed;" not recommended eligible for NRHP/SAL designation.
- 41WM769: Possibly prehistoric lithics, possibly historic-age shack. Not recommended as eligible for NRHP or SAL designation. Likely destroyed by construction immediately after recording (1991).
- 41WM787: Early 20th century trash dump and structures including shed, stable, windmill, tanks. Not recommended as eligible for NRHP or SAL designation.
- 41WM788: Scattered lithic debris of indeterminate age, possibly brought in with road fill. Not recommended as eligible for NRHP or SAL designation.

3.0 Research Goals and Methods

Purpose of the Research

The present study was carried out to accomplish three major goals:

- 1. To identify all historic and prehistoric archeological resources located within the APE defined in Chapter One;
- To perform a preliminary evaluation of the identified resources' potential for inclusion in the NRHP and/or for designation as a SAL (typically performed concurrently); and
- To make recommendations about the need for further research concerning the identified resources based on the preliminary NRHP/SAL evaluation and with guidance on methodology and ethics from the THC and CTA.

The Antiquities Code of Texas

Because the project is currently owned and funded by the City of Austin, a political subdivision of the State of Texas, the project is subject to the Antiquities Code of Texas (9 TNRC 191), which requires consideration of effects on properties designated as—or eligible to be designated as—SALs, which are defined as:

...sites, objects, buildings, structures and historic shipwrecks, and locations of historical, archeological, educational, or scientific interest including, but not limited to, prehistoric American Indian or aboriginal campsites, dwellings, and habitation sites, aboriginal paintings, petroglyphs, and other marks or carvings on rock or elsewhere which pertain to early American Indian or other archeological sites of every character, treasure imbedded in the earth, sunken or abandoned ships and wrecks of the sea or any part of their contents, maps, records, documents, books, artifacts, and implements of culture in any way related to the inhabitants, prehistory, history, government, or culture in, on, or under any of the lands of the State of Texas, including the tidelands, submerged land, and the bed of the sea within the jurisdiction of the State of Texas. (13 TAC 26.2)

Guidelines for the evaluation of cultural resources as SALs and/or for listing on the NRHP, which is also explicitly referenced at the state level, are detailed in 13 TAC 26. An archeological site identified on lands owned or controlled by the State of Texas may be of sufficient significance to allow designation as a SAL if at least one of the following criteria applies:

- 1. the site has the potential to contribute to a better understanding of the prehistory and/or history of Texas by the addition of new and important information;
- 2. the site's archeological deposits and the artifacts within the site are preserved and intact, thereby supporting the research potential or preservation interests of the site;
- 3. the site possesses unique or rare attributes concerning Texas prehistory and/or history;
- 4. the study of the site offers the opportunity to test theories and methods of preservation, thereby contributing to new scientific knowledge;
- 5. the high likelihood that vandalism and relic collecting has occurred or could occur, and official landmark designation is needed to insure [sic] maximum legal protection, or alternatively further investigations are needed to mitigate the effects of vandalism and relic collecting when the site cannot be protected (13 TAC 26.10).

For archeological resources, the state-level process requires securing and maintaining a valid Texas Antiquities Permit from the THC, the lead state agency for Antiquities Code compliance, throughout all stages of investigation, analysis, and reporting.

Survey Methods and Protocols

With the goals and guidelines above in mind, CMEC personnel conducted an intensive survey in January and April 2014, per category 6 under 13 TAC 26.15 and using the definitions in 13 TAC 26.3, searching for previously identified and unidentified archeological sites. Field methods complied with the coverage requirements of 13 TAC 26.15, as elaborated by the THC and CTA.

Shovel tests (see **Figures 2a-c**) were excavated in natural levels to major color/texture changes or restrictive features, as allowed by compaction and hardness of the deposits. Excavated matrix was screened through 0.635-cm (0.25-in) hardware cloth as allowed by moisture and clay content, which often required that the removed sediment be crumbled/sorted by hand, trowel, and/or shovel point. Deposits were described using conventional texture classifications and Munsell color designations, and all observations were recorded on standard CMEC shovel test forms. The testing protocol detailed in the approved scope for Texas Antiquities Permit 6713 called for radial shovel tests to be placed at 5-m (16-ft) intervals around each shovel test positive for cultural material until two negative units were established in each cardinal direction. As detailed in the next chapter, none of the shovel tests were positive for archeological materials, so the testing protocol was moot. The only artifacts observed were in surface contexts and were not diagnostic.

No materials were collected during the investigation; therefore, this project generated no archeological materials to be curated. Project field notes, forms, and other data will be made available to future researchers at an appropriate public facility per 13 TAC 26.16 and 26.17.







4.0 Results and Recommendations

Field Observations

In January and April 2014, CMEC personnel conducted an intensive survey of the 9.7-hectare (24-acre) APF.

The northwest-most portion of the APE, which overlaps slightly with the mapped locations of 41WM585 and 41WM971, was found to be extremely disturbed by the construction of a detention pond for a new residential subdivision (**Figure 3**).



Figure 3. View west along private road embankment to detention pond and new subdivision in northwest-most portion of APE near mapped location of 41WM585. The embankment around the pond is generally 2-3 m in height.

The APE and the area around it, including the Lake Creek channel and floodplain (**Figure 4**), have been heavily modified, with evidence of excavation up to 3 m (10 ft) in depth and filling up to 3 m (10 ft) in height to create the detention pond and surrounding embankments, entirely destroying archeologically relevant soil horizons and any deposits that may once have been part of 41WM585 and 41WM971. The APE also includes an existing wastewater lift station and access road along Parmer Lane (see **Figure 5**). Several non-diagnostic lithics were noted on top of the embankments in association with modern trash and construction debris (**Figure 6**). Because the lithics were at least several meters out of context and were not found on a natural surface, no shovel tests were excavated at artifact findspots. Informal probing of the surface with a shovel point revealed imported gravels and riprap cobbles/boulders and confirmed that recordation of formal shovel test units would not be productive, and that the lithics may have been brought in with construction fill. This part of the project area is therefore not included in **Figures 2a-c**, which show unit locations.



Figure 4. View northeast at Lake Creek floodplain adjacent to APE near mapped location of 41WM971. Taken from on top of 2-m-high artificial embankment. Note drainage structure (outlet from detention pond).



Figure 5. View southeast along Parmer Lane (elevated roadway visible at upper left) to existing lift station in northwest-most portion of APE.



Figure 6. View of typical surface lithic from northwest-most portion of APE, found amidst trash, construction debris, and imported gravels.

Continuing southeast along Parmer Lane, the other portions of the APE were found to be less disturbed, with greater likelihood of natural ground surfaces. Visibility was moderate to high, with frequent outcrops of limestone bedrock and patchy, thin, clayey soils (see **Figures 7-8**). Non-diagnostic lithic flakes and tested cobbles/choppers (see **Figures 9-10**) were found scattered on the surface within the APE at densities ranging from one artifact per 100 square meters to one artifact per 500 square meters, generally in keeping with expected "background noise" levels throughout central Texas, where tool material is nearly ubiquitous. No particular increase in density was noted at the mapped location of 41TV857 (see **Figure 8**).

Seventeen shovel tests were excavated where ground visibility dropped below 30 percent. The units ranged in depth from 5 cm (2 in) to 40 cm (16 in) before encountering limestone bedrock or dense cobble/gravel deposits that likely indicate decomposing bedrock. Soils were generally moist clays and clay loams ranging in color from $7.5 YR \ 4/2$ (brown) to $10 YR \ 3/2$ (very dark grayish brown) in upland settings to $10 YR \ 2/1$ (black) near creeks, where no zones of significant alluvial deposition or terrace formation were observed (see, e.g., **Figure 7**). Half of the units were excavated at or near lithic findspots. However, all excavated units were negative for archeological materials. The only cultural item recovered from a subsurface context was a modern golf ball found at approximately 40 cm (16 in) in depth in ST15, near Walnut Creek (see **Figure 11** and **2b**).



Figure 7. View north in low-lying wooded area near McNeil Drive, along tributary to Walnut Creek (see Figure 2a). Note extensive bedrock exposures.



Figure 8. View east at typical open pasture with moderately visible surface east of Walnut Creek, in mapped location of 41TV857 (see Figure 2c). Note typical bedrock exposures running up the center of the photograph.



Figure 9. View of typical isolated surface lithic flake.



Figure 10. View of typical isolated tested cobble or chopper found on the surface.



Figure 11. View of the only subsurface cultural item found during the survey, a modern golf ball found at approximately 40 cm in depth in ST15. The shovel test was still considered negative for archeological materials.

Recommendations

All 17 shovel tests excavated during the survey were negative, and surface materials were sparsely scattered and non-diagnostic. No materials, features, or deposits were observed that might contribute to NRHP or SAL eligibility at previously recorded sites 41TV857, 41WM585, or 41WM971. No evidence was found of preserved deposits with a high degree of integrity; associations with distinctive architectural and material culture styles; rare materials and assemblages; the potential to yield data important to the study of preservation techniques and the past in general; or potential attractiveness to relic hunters (3 TAC 26.10). No further archeological work within the APE is recommended under the Antiquities Code of Texas (9 TNRC 191).

No materials were collected; therefore, this project generated no archeological materials to be curated. Notes, forms, and other project data will be made permanently available to future researchers via an appropriate public facility per TAC 26.16 and 26.17.

5.0 References

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X TO FUCTO



TRANSMITTAL MEMO

To: Tiffany Osburn – THC Archeology Division

CC: Larry Cox - Cox | McLain; Kathy Fretwell - Kennedy/Jenks

Cox|McLain Environmental Consulting, Inc.

6010 Balcones Drive, Suite 210 Austin, TX 78731 www.coxmclain.com (512) 338-2223 From: Chris Dayton - Cox|McLain

Date: 12/16/14

RE: Draft Report Submittal: Intensive Archeological Survey of Potential Shaft Locations Along the Proposed City of Austin Parmer Lane Wastewater Interceptor, Travis and Williamson Counties,

Texas (Permit 6713)

Dear Ms. Osburn:

Please find enclosed one (1) unbound copy of the draft report Intensive Archeological Survey of Potential Shaft Locations Along the Proposed City of Austin Parmer Lane Wastewater Interceptor, Travis and Williamson Counties, Texas. The archeological APE consists of six proposed work areas along a proposed 3.7-kilometer (km) or 2.8-mile wastewater interceptor pipeline adjacent to Parmer Lane (FM 734) in northwest Austin, covering a total of 9.7 hectares or 24 acres. The work was carried out for the City of Austin under Texas Antiquities Permit 6713. Ground visibility was moderate to high within the APE, which was found to be extensively disturbed. Soils were generally thin and clayey, with frequent limestone bedrock exposures. Seventeen shovel tests were excavated where disturbance appeared minimal and ground visibility decreased. None yielded materials of archeological interest. Non-diagnostic lithic flakes and tested cobbles/choppers were observed sparsely scattered on the surface of the APE at an approximate density of one artifact per 100-500 square meters, as is common throughout central Texas. The APE is mapped as overlapping three previously recorded sites, 41TV857, 41WM585, and 41WM971; however, no materials or features were observed that might contribute to National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) or State Antiquities Landmark (SAL) eligibility at any of these sites. Further, no deposits or materials meriting recordation as new sites were observed.

No further archeological work is recommended within the APE.

Please do not hesitate to call or email if you have any questions or comments.

Sincerely,

Chris Dayton, PhD, RPA chris@coxmclain.com (512) 338-2223

for Mark Wolfe

Track#_ 201503726

ANTIQUITIES CODE OF TEXAS REVIEW