

# Austin American-Statesman

## Environmental groups threaten lawsuit over MoPac project

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Environmental groups are threatening to sue the Texas Department of Transportation over a MoPac Boulevard improvement project that they say threatens the habit of several endangered species.

Save Our Springs Alliance and the Arizona-based Center for Biological Diversity filed a notice of intent to sue TxDOT and the Federal Highway Administration over the MoPac project, which would add six new lanes over roughly two miles, from north of Slaughter Lane to south of La Crosse Avenue.

Saying the project is likely to harm federally protected Barton Springs salamanders, Austin blind salamanders and golden-cheeked warblers, the environmental groups accused TxDOT of failing to consult adequately with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to make sure the project did not harm the species.

“The failure by Texas officials to consult with federal wildlife experts on this project reflects their pattern of incomplete and woefully deficient evaluations of the environmental effects of highway projects in the Barton Springs Recharge Zone,” said Kelly Davis, an attorney with Save Our Springs Alliance.

TxDOT spokeswoman Veronica Beyer declined to comment.

The project is meant to ease congestion in the traffic-heavy area.