



Race Weekend Spectator Guide

Sunday, February 19, 2012

On February 19, the table will be set for the 2012 LIVESTRONG Austin Marathon and Half Marathon: 20,000 runners, a beautiful and challenging course, 26 benefiting charities, and thousands of committed and excited volunteers.

One of the most important pieces, though, are the thousands of spectators that will be out in force all through the race routes, helping to once again give friends, families, neighbors, and guests of the city the great crowd support Austin is increasingly known for.

While we want spectators throughout the course, we've located some of the best "cheer points" for you. With planning, you can easily hit multiple points in the course of the race. If you want to catch a runner at different points on the course, find out their projected pace, consult the maps and street closure information at youraustinmarathon.com, and make a plan. Some locations may be in the loop of the course, or require you to cross the course when you're able.

If you're a runner, you'd rather have crowd support than headphones. Get your friends and family to come out to support you and the other runners who are in this with you.

If you're an Austinite, we want you to own this event and be proud of it. Austin's only marathon, it's one of the largest combined marathons and half marathons in the country, one of the greenest races in North America, and every year, people from every state, and dozens of countries, go back home talking about Austin and its people, and how they came out on a chilly February morning to cheer them on.

And, if you're a visitor, come out, get to know our city and our people, and make yourself at home!

Austin City Hall, Cesar Chavez and South First (Mile 2/8.4)

This year's course creates two viewing opportunities at Austin City Hall – runners will come down Lavaca, on the east side of the building, before turning east on Cesar Chavez for their long climb up South Congress, and they'll run towards the south side of the building as they come off the long downhill on South First, before turning west on Cesar Chavez.

Fuel/Tunes: Jo's Coffee (242 W. 2nd), Austin Java (NE corner of City Hall), St. James Baptist Church Men's Chorus.

South 1st, (Miles 5.6-8)

Runners have just finished the three-mile climb up South Congress. At the access road to Ben White Blvd., they brave another short, sharp hill to get to the almost three-mile downhill on S. 1st. S. 1st is a great place to help them maintain momentum after their first major accomplishment of the day. Ben White has quick access to I35, Lamar, and Mopac, so it's easy to get to. Do keep in mind that the access road itself will be closed between South Congress and South First, so your best bet might be to park south of Ben White and walk across the bridge.

Fuel/Tunes: Fair Bean Coffee (2210 S. 1st), Torchy's Tacos (2809 S. 1st), Once Over Coffee (2009 S. 1st), Bouldin Creek Cafe (1900 S. 1st), music by Ortega Elementary School Choir (Ben White and S. 1st), and Catch a Dream (Oltorf & S. 1st)

Pfluger Pedestrian Bridge, over Cesar Chavez, just east of Lamar (Mile 9)

On the north side of the river the beautiful new Pfluger Pedestrian Bridge Extension passes over the course, offering an overhead view of the runners as they move west on Cesar Chavez. Lamar runs unobstructed all the way up to North Loop, allowing you good access to later points in the course, as well as Mopac and I35.

Fuel/Tunes: Starbucks (up the hill, 907 W. 5th), music by San Saba County

The (Really) Big One (Half Marathon Course Only) – 15th and West Ave. (Mile 11.8)

This spot sits atop the toughest hill on either course. Tell runners to keep their heads up, keep their hips under them, and to move those arms. DON'T tell them it's the last hill – there's a couple more to go. DO remind them that they've come too far to let up. The lululemon athletica family will be there, throwing down an energy zone at the top of the hill.

Fuel/Tunes: Starbucks (510 W. 15th – 15th and San Antonio), music by Jonathon Garcia

Note: The remainder of the cheer points are for the marathon course only...

The (Other) Big One, Exposition & Westover (Mile 12.7)

At Westover, the marathoners have crested a fairly massive hill, and have nearly closed out what is, in terms of hills, the toughest portion of the course. But they now have what most consider the more difficult mental task of simply grinding out the “middle miles” of the race. This spot is easy to access from Mopac via Westover.

Refuel: Starbucks (2727 Exposition)

Great Northern Blvd. (miles 16.7-18.2)

With no turns, and no visible terrain change, set in the mentally difficult “middle-miles” of the marathon, Great Northern can be the “long, dark, tea-time of the soul”. The road looks flat, but their legs tell them otherwise. And, crowd support is thinner here. Access is either through the neighborhoods, from inside the course's loop, or via the pedestrian bridge that spans Mopac from Far West. If you make the effort, runners can really use the help here.

Fuel/Tunes: Better bring the coffee and doughnuts with you..., music by Jay Clement at the baseball fields

The Turn, Foster and Northcross Blvd. (Mile 18.6)

This right turn, at the northernmost tip of the marathon course, has been one of the loudest and most talked-about locations for great crowd support on the course. After about five miles running through neighborhoods, runners hit this corner, typically lined with throngs of cheering crowds that snap runners out of the doldrums and give them a boost for the miles ahead. The crowds stretch down the street, sending them off into the neighborhoods of Brentwood, where the course shifts to mostly-downhill. This point is easy to get to via Anderson Lane, from either Mopac or I35.

Fuel/Tunes: Starbucks (2900 W. Anderson Lane), Elsi's Restaurant (6601 Burnet Rd.), music by Bryan McLeod

University of Texas Intramural Fields, 51st and Guadalupe (Mile 22)

Mathematically, the marathon is “almost over”, but DO NOT shout that at the runners, because physically and mentally, it's just not. The average marathoner will still have 40 to 45 minutes of running left. Most are now going further than they have ever run in their training. Bodies are low on fuel, and most runners have found the infamous “wall”, right as they head into the long hill up 51st. There's a large water stop that will join you to up the noise and positive energy levels. The best access is from inside the course's loop, from Lamar, or from outside the loop via Airport Blvd, down 53rd.

Fuel/Tunes: Epoch Coffee House (221 W. North Loop Blvd.), music TBD, but it always rocks

The Home Stretch, 38th and Duval (Mile 24.3)

At mile 24, the marathoners are in the middle of two miles of fast downhill into the University of Texas campus, and they're just two miles from the finish. It's easy to think that the last two miles would be easy to get through, having done 24, but they're not. It's easy for runners to get lost in their own heads, so having some support here is as important as it is anywhere else. Access is easy from Lamar to the west, inside the loop, or from I35, to the east.

Fuel/Tunes: Flightpath Coffee (5011 Duval), Hyde Park Grill/Dolce Vita/Quackenbush's (42 & Duval), music TBD

The Finish, 10th and Congress

Finally, of course, once you've shared the love out on the race route, it's worth coming down to the finish area on Congress, south of the Capitol. There's live music and a food court, and, of course, the finish itself, where you can see the different lives of 20,000 runners and their commitment to training and causes, converge at the finish line. They will love to see you there.