



# AUSTIN TRANSIT PARTNERSHIP

# AUSTIN LIGHT RAIL: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT REPORT

COMMUNITY DIALOGUE  
MARCH 21 – MAY 2, 2023

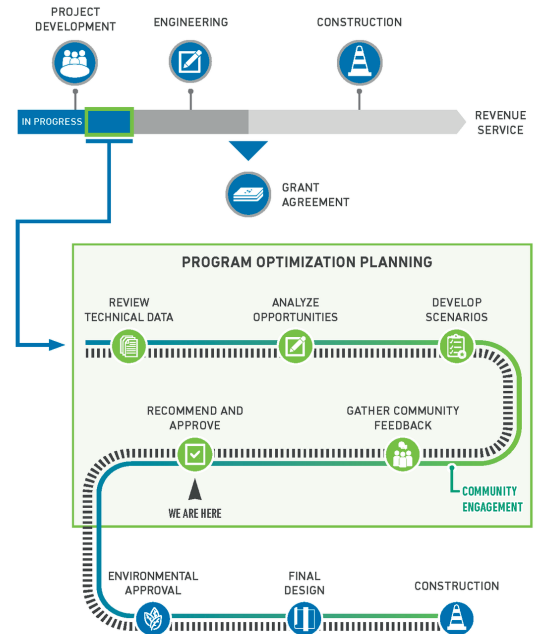




## Key Insights

### Top Community Feedback Themes:

- Supported the advancement of a light rail project that moves Austinites where they need and want to go
- Prioritized Mobility, Customer Service, and Access to Opportunities
- Focused on greater coverage, seamless integration with other transportation options, expandability of the system and affordably reaching key destinations.
- Explored endpoint alternatives, expressed sentiments related to environmental impacts and benefits, and land use and housing.



## Austin Light Rail Background

In November of 2020, Austin’s voters overwhelmingly approved Proposition A that dedicated property tax to support Project Connect, a transit system plan that includes new light rail and more services.

## Light Rail Implementation Plan

The Austin Transit Partnership (ATP) has worked with our community to develop options for a Light Rail Implementation Plan that can be delivered within budget while honoring the goals and values of Austin voters.

## Dialogue Results In Better Light Rail

Community dialogue is central to the success of Austin Light Rail. On March 21, 2023, ATP presented five light rail plan options to our community that aligned with the community’s values and needs. This launched a six-week engagement process that provided our community opportunities to learn about the light rail project and comment on the options. In partnership with the Project Connect team at the City of Austin and CapMetro, ATP staff made strides towards reaching priority populations, increasing outreach and education about the Austin Light Rail Implementation Plan, and receiving valuable feedback on the options presented.

## Prioritizing Community Values & Guiding Principles

Community values criteria coupled with overarching guiding principles were used to categorize community feedback into themes and gather insights to inform the first phase of the light rail project.

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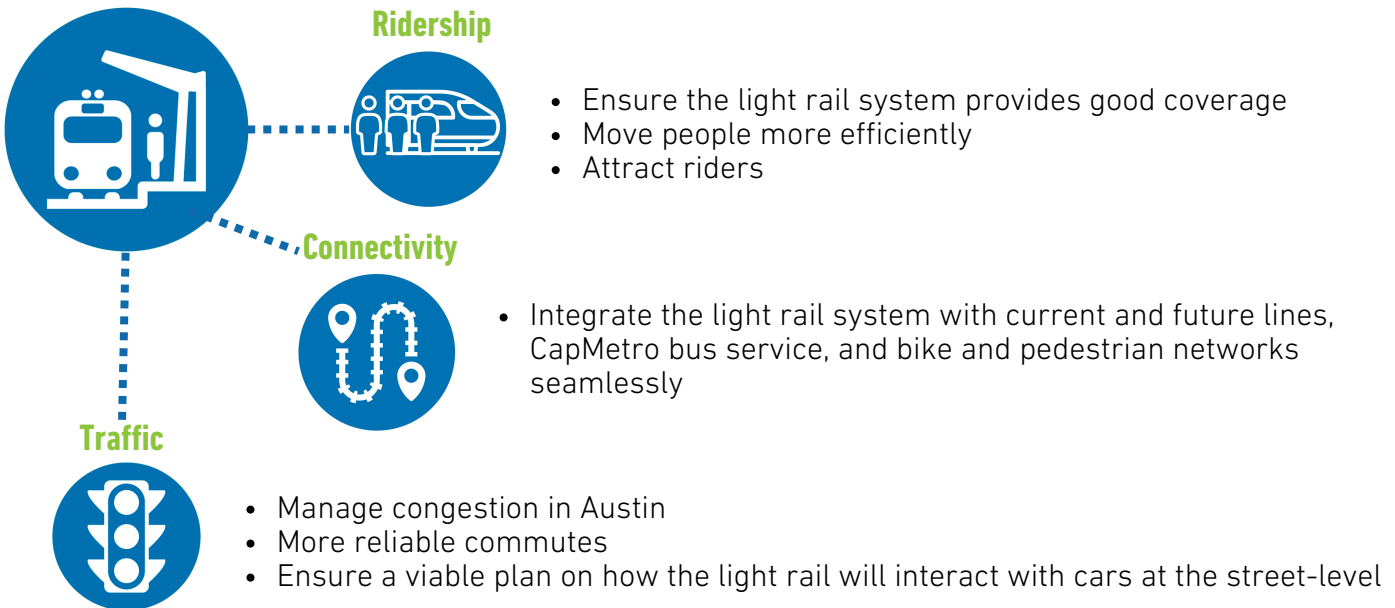
## 1

### SECTION 1: COMMUNITY FEEDBACK THEMES

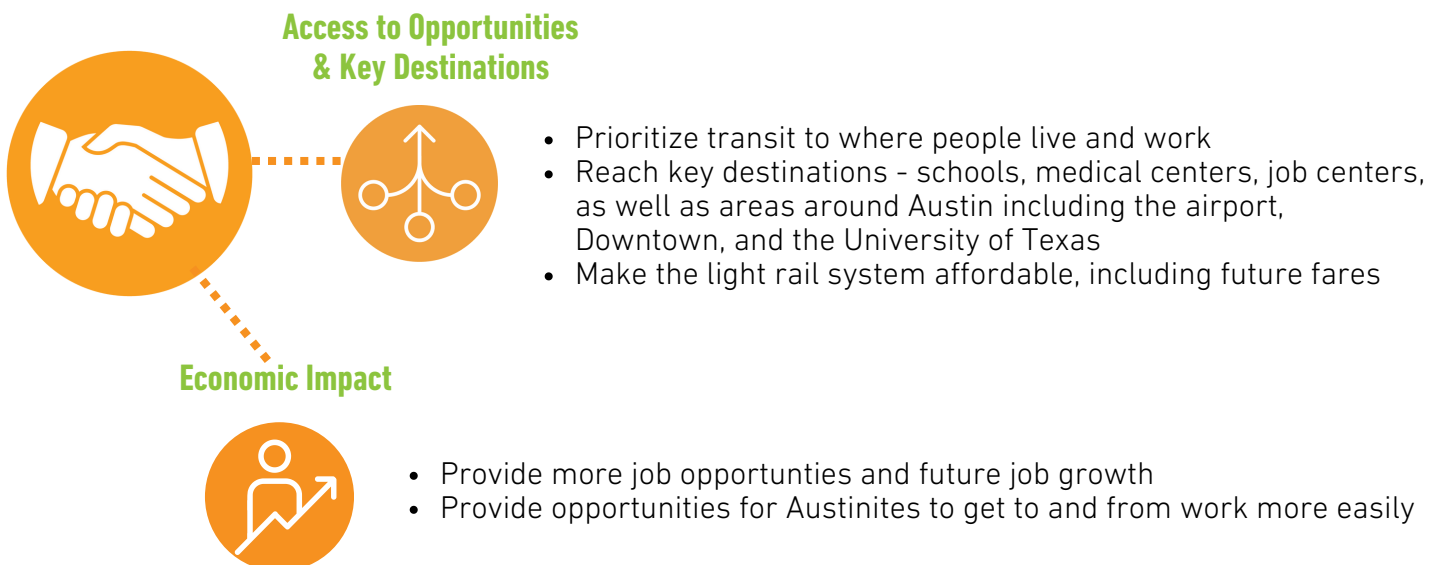
## What We Heard the Most



**Mobility and Customer Experience:** Light Rail should provide convenient and good transit service.



**Access To Opportunities:** Light Rail should make meaningful connections, especially for the people who need them most.





SECTION 1: COMMUNITY FEEDBACK THEMES

Additional Community Feedback



Community comments explored additional endpoint alternatives, expressed sentiments related to environmental impacts and benefits, and land use and housing. Community questions arose on ridership data, costs and financing plan, and expandability of the system. [www.atptx.org/faqs](http://www.atptx.org/faqs)

**Land Use and Housing:** Light Rail should create links between affordable/attainable housing and transit



- Serve existing and planned affordable housing units
- Land use adjacent to light rail should support higher ridership
- Support Equitable Transit-Oriented Development plans

**Environmental Benefits:** Light rail has both potential impacts on sensitive environmental resources and provides benefits for climate change



- Transit presents environmental advantages
- Mode-shift opportunities have a positive impact on climate change



## 2

## SECTION 2: HOW WE LED ENGAGEMENT

### Engagement Strategy

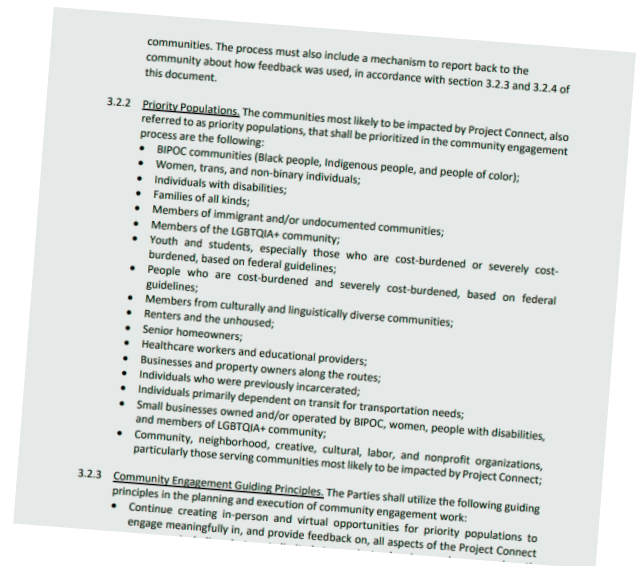


#### Priority Populations Guided Engagement

ATP is committed to engaging directly with "priority populations," or communities most likely to be impacted by Project Connect.

Last May, ATP assessed previous Project Connect engagement efforts and identified outreach gaps in the following priority populations:

- Youth (ages 18-24)
- Spanish-speaking communities
- Black and Latino communities
- People with disabilities
- Low-income communities



#### Focus Groups Prioritized Community Values For Light Rail

The engagement strategy evolved to adjust and increase the quantity and quality of interactions with priority populations to respond to the outreach gaps. Focus group participants self-identified as a member of a priority population group mentioned above.

**ATP conducted 11 Light Rail Focus Groups between December 2022 and January 2023 in advance of the public launch of light rail options.**

##### Focus Group Goals

- Engage with Priority Populations
- Receive Community Values Criteria feedback
- Evaluate perceptions on key destinations that light rail could serve



##### Focus Group Results

Participants indicated the project team should prioritize:

- Access to Opportunities
- Affordability Benefits
- Who we serve
- Connectivity
- Traffic

#### Light Rail Alternative Options Selected Based On Priority Community Values

Following the conclusion of the focus groups, ATP Community Engagement team provided data collected during the community values exercise to the Engineering & Planning teams to incorporate the feedback (along with previous feedback) into the analysis of feasible option alternatives for Austin's first light rail project.

2

SECTION 2: HOW WE LED ENGAGEMENT

Values and Principles Guiding Engagement



When combined, core community values and guiding principles formed the framework for how ATP analyzed feedback to identify community priorities.

Community Values Criteria

Reflect goals rooted in the Austin Strategic Mobility Plan, Climate Equity Plan, and other previous documents in the criteria that will be applied to our work.



Guiding Principles

Build equity, sustainability, and accessibility into community outreach to priority populations and the overall decision-making processes at ATP.



Comment Analysis

Analyze and prioritize the principles and values most important to our community and incorporate feedback into the staff recommendation for the Light Rail Implementation Plan.

Community Values Criteria

<b>MOBILITY AND CUSTOMER SERVICE</b> Are we providing convenient and good transit service?			
<b>RIDERSHIP</b>	<b>BIKE &amp; PEDESTRIAN CONNECTIVITY</b>	<b>TRAFFIC</b>	<b>TRANSFERS TO BUS AND RAIL</b>
<b>ACCESS TO OPPORTUNITIES</b> Are we making meaningful connections, especially for the people who need them most?			
<b>CURRENT &amp; FUTURE POPULATION DENSITIES</b>	<b>DEMOGRAPHIC DATA</b>	<b>ACCESS TO KEY DESTINATION POINTS</b>	
<b>LAND USE AND HOUSING</b> Are we creating links between affordable/attainable housing and transit?			
<b>AFFORDABILITY BENEFITS</b>	<b>CURRENT HOUSING &amp; FUTURE GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES</b>	<b>SUPPORT ANTI-DISPLACEMENT &amp; EQUITABLE TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT (ETOD) INITIATIVES</b>	
<b>ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS</b> How do options compare in terms of potential impacts on sensitive environmental resources and climate change?			
<b>GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS</b>	<b>IMPACTS ON COMMUNITY RESOURCES AND AMENITIES</b>	<b>WATER RESOURCES AND FLOODPLAIN IMPACT</b>	

## 2

### SECTION 2: HOW WE LED ENGAGEMENT

## Engagement Activities & Highlights



On March 21, 2023, ATP unveiled five light rail plan options to the community that aligned with community values and needs. This launched a six-week community dialogue process from March 21 through May 2, allowing the community the opportunity to comment on the options.

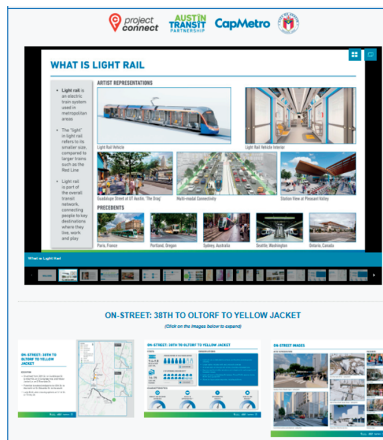
#### In-Person Open House Participation

532 people attended March 21st Austin Light Rail Open House and provided 423 handwritten comments



#### Virtual Open House Participation

Over 19,000 views, ~2,000 participants, and over 5,049 comments received on the site



#### Priority populations and broader engagement tactics included:

- Virtual Open House and virtual meetings in English and Spanish
- Media engagement in English and Spanish-language markets
- Partnered with community groups to support deeper connections with priority populations
- Spoke to core transit riders through outreach at bus stops and train stations
- Attended meetings in community spaces and public events
- Partnered with City Council Members to engage with their constituents
- Presented to City of Austin Boards and Commissions and CapMetro and ATP Committees
- Ensured access to ATP staff for all questions via email, phone, in person, etc.

#### Bus Stop/Train Station Outreach

Outreach occurred at 45 unique locations around Austin connecting with 3,469 people

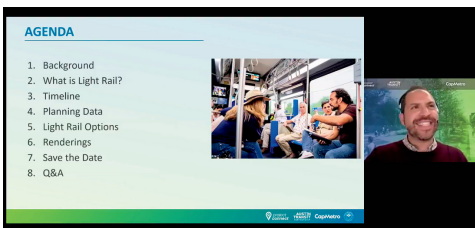


#### Community Conversations, Events, and Boards, Commissions and Committees

Adopting a “say yes” policy to any group or individual who asked for a meeting, ATP participated 90+ events during the six-week dialogue period.

#### Virtual Community Update

On April 6, ATP staff presented to 149 community members and answered more than 90 questions live





## 2

## SECTION 2: HOW WE LED ENGAGEMENT

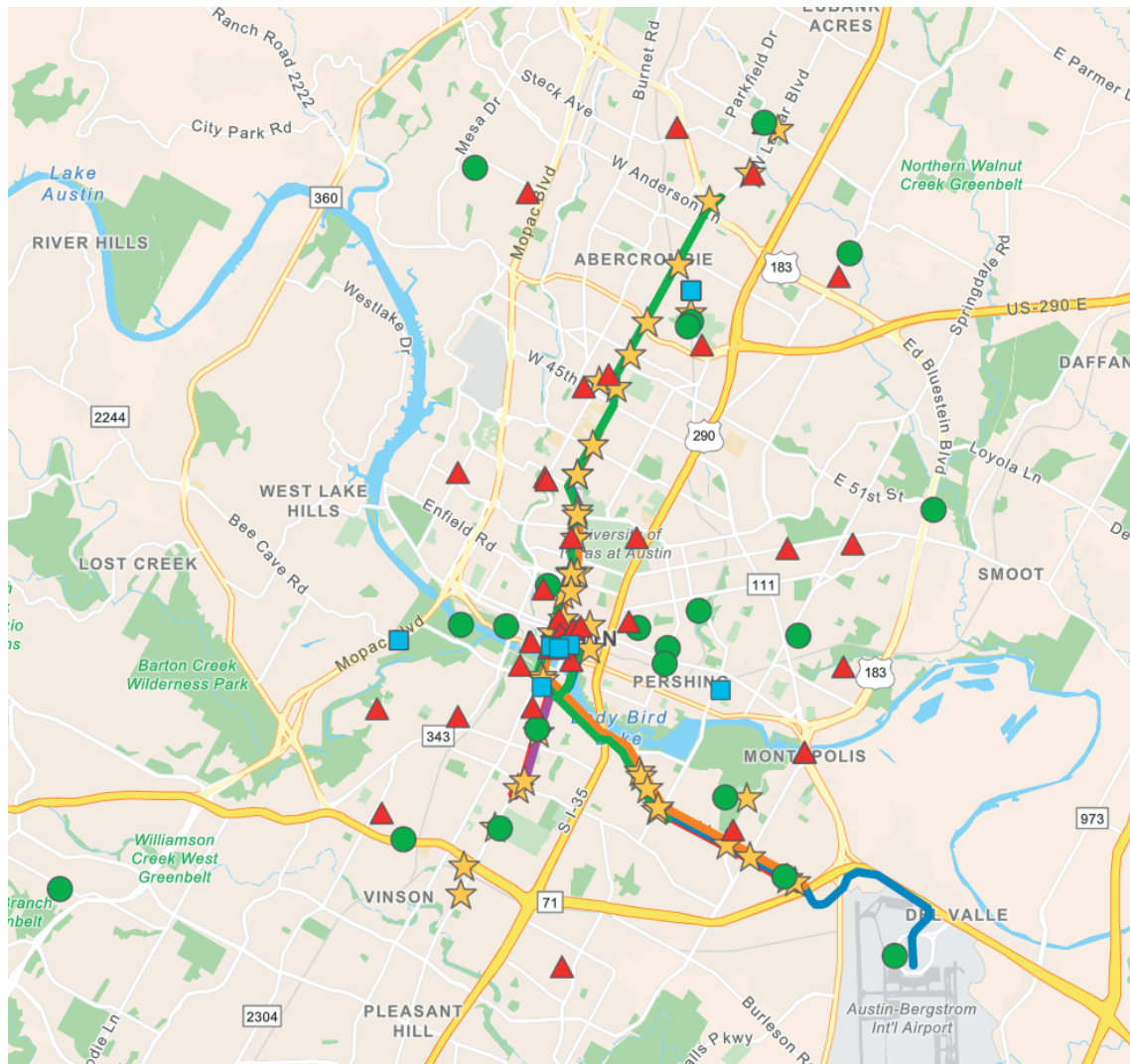
### Engagement Map



- Boards, Commissions, and Committees
- ▲ Community Conversation
- Community Event
- ★ Bus Stop / Train Stop Outreach

**8,000+** Direct Interactions

*Includes interactions with attendees counted at in-person outreach events, bus/train stop outreach, and self-reported virtual open house participants.*



Map shows community interactions conducted between March 21, 2023 and May 2, 2023. See Appendix (A2-A4) for more information on engagement locations and data by zip code.

<https://tinyurl.com/lightrailoutreachmap>

## 2

## SECTION 2: HOW WE LED ENGAGEMENT

# Engagement By The Numbers: Reaching Community



In partnership with the Project Connect team at the City of Austin and CapMetro, ATP staff made strides towards reaching priority populations, increasing outreach and education about the Austin Light Rail Implementation Plan, and receiving valuable feedback on the options.

### IN-PERSON ENGAGEMENT



**8,000+**  
PEOPLE ENGAGED



**5,600+**  
TOTAL COMMENTS

**91** ACTIVE  
ENGAGEMENT  
ACTIVITIES



**45** BUS STATION AND TRAIN  
STATION OUTREACH  
LOCATIONS

### MULTILINGUAL COMMUNICATIONS

**오스틴 경전철의 다음 단계를 알아보면 저희와 함께 하십시오**

4월 6일 목요일 5:00 - 7:00 P.M. ZOOM을 통한 원격 참여 PROJECTCONNECT.COM/GET-INVOLVED

4월 6일 오스틴 경전철을 추진하는 다음 가장 커다란 화두에 함께 하십시오. Austin Transit Partnership(ATP)의 경전철 시스템 업데이트, Project Connect의 다음 단계에 대해 알아보고 피드백을 제출하십시오. 누구나 참석할 수 있습니다. 거기서 밖까지 바랍니다!

참석하지 못하셨습니까? 그레도 우리의 비공개된 설문조사! 3월 21일부터 5월 2일까지 ProjectConnect.com/Get-Involved에서 온라인으로 자료를 보고 피드백을 제공해 주십시오. 언어 번역이나 기타 편의사항에 대해서는 512-904-0180으로 전화해 주십시오.

**TREN LIGERO DE AUSTIN: ¡Hartando la conversación!**

¡Acompáñanos para conocer las novedades del tren ligero de Austin!

JUEVES, 6 DE ABRIL 5:00 A 7:00 P.M. REÚNASE EN VIVO POR ZOOM PROJECTCONNECT.COM/GET-INVOLVED

¡Queremos que pueda participar e reunir a personas como usted para discutir y decidir con nosotros las opciones de implementación de un sistema de tren ligero en Austin! Project Connect(ATP) ha anunciado planes en Project Connect y estamos buscando sus comentarios.

¡No podrá asistir? ¡Queremos que participe! En la plataforma de nuestro sitio web ProjectConnect.com/Get-Involved puede proporcionar información sobre sus comentarios. ¡El 21 de marzo hasta el 2 de mayo!

Para solicitar servicios de interpretación o algún tipo de asistencia, llámenos al 512-904-0180.

**오스틴 경전철: 대화를 지속합시다!**

오스틴 경전철: 대화를 지속합시다!

**AUSTIN LIGHT RAIL: WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!**

Join us to learn what's next for light rail in Austin

TUESDAY, MARCH 21 AUSTIN CENTRAL LIBRARY 5:00 - 7:00 P.M. COME & GO FROM 4-7 P.M.

Please join us for an open house on March 21! Look at the next round of community engagement as we move forward with Austin's light rail. Learn about updates on the light rail system from Austin Transit Partnership(ATP), what is next for Project Connect and share your feedback. Everyone is welcome to attend. We hope to see you there!

Can't make it? Your feedback is still needed! Share the surveys, online and provide feedback of ProjectConnect.com/Get-Involved starting on March 21 through May 2.

For language translations or accommodations, call 512-904-0180. Información de la reunión está disponible en español.

### OVERALL E-NEWSLETTER STATS



**42K+** TOTAL RECIPIENTS REACHED



**806** TEXT MESSAGE RECIPIENTS

**57.2%** AVERAGE UNIQUE OPEN RATE

### OVERALL SOCIAL MEDIA STATS



**19K** PAGE REACH ON ATP SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS



**54K** POST IMPRESSIONS



**15K** USERS REACHED

### WEBSITE



**19,397** VIEWS (ENGLISH+SPANISH)



**2,017** PARTICIPANTS (ENGLISH+SPANISH)



**5,049** COMMENTS (ENGLISH+SPANISH)



**67K+** WEBSITE PAGE VIEWS (COMBINED ACROSS ALL PAGES ON ATPX.ORG)

3

SECTION 3: HOW WE ANALYZED THE FEEDBACK

Comment Analysis Process & Demographic Data Insights

During the six-week community dialogue period, ATP collected and coded all comments. A qualitative analysis of self-identified demographic data identified emerging themes.

1

Comments Coded To Themes

2

Addressed Multiple Themes In Single Comment

3

Determined Patterns Through Qualitative Data Analysis

4

Qualitative Analysis of Self-Identified Demographic Data

5

Examination of Emerging Themes

Demographic information provides a limited snapshot of what different communities are saying about light rail. For example, roughly only half of the Virtual Open House participants provided their race/ethnicity, and about a third provided their income. ATP will continue to actively explore ways of collecting demographic data in future engagement efforts.

Priority Themes from Self-Identified Black, Indigenous, People of Color Participants

744 comments:

- Top themes: Access, Airport, Connectivity, Cost, and Ridership.
- Top community values: Access to Opportunities; Mobility and Customer Service.
- Support for options that served the most locations and carried the most riders.
- Feedback was split about reaching the airport during the first phase of the light rail.

Priority Themes from Self-Identified Low-Income\* Participants

547 comments:

- Top themes: Airport, Access, Connectivity, Cost, and Ridership.
- Top community values: Access to Opportunities; Mobility and Customer Service
- Support for options that served the most people and focused on connections for bicyclists, pedestrians, bus transit, and overall system connections.
- Extending light rail to the airport to increase access to East Austin was a common theme.

(\*household incomes below \$73,000 or individual incomes below \$43,000)

Priority Themes from Current Transit Rider Participants

3,355 comments:

- Top themes: Airport, Access, Connectivity, Ridership, and Downtown.
- Top community values: Access to Opportunities; Mobility and Customer Service.
- Identified the airport and downtown as key destinations.
- Support for options that had larger coverage, served the most people, provided frequent service, and the need for multimodal connections and bus connectivity.

## 4

### SECTION 4: WHAT WE HEARD

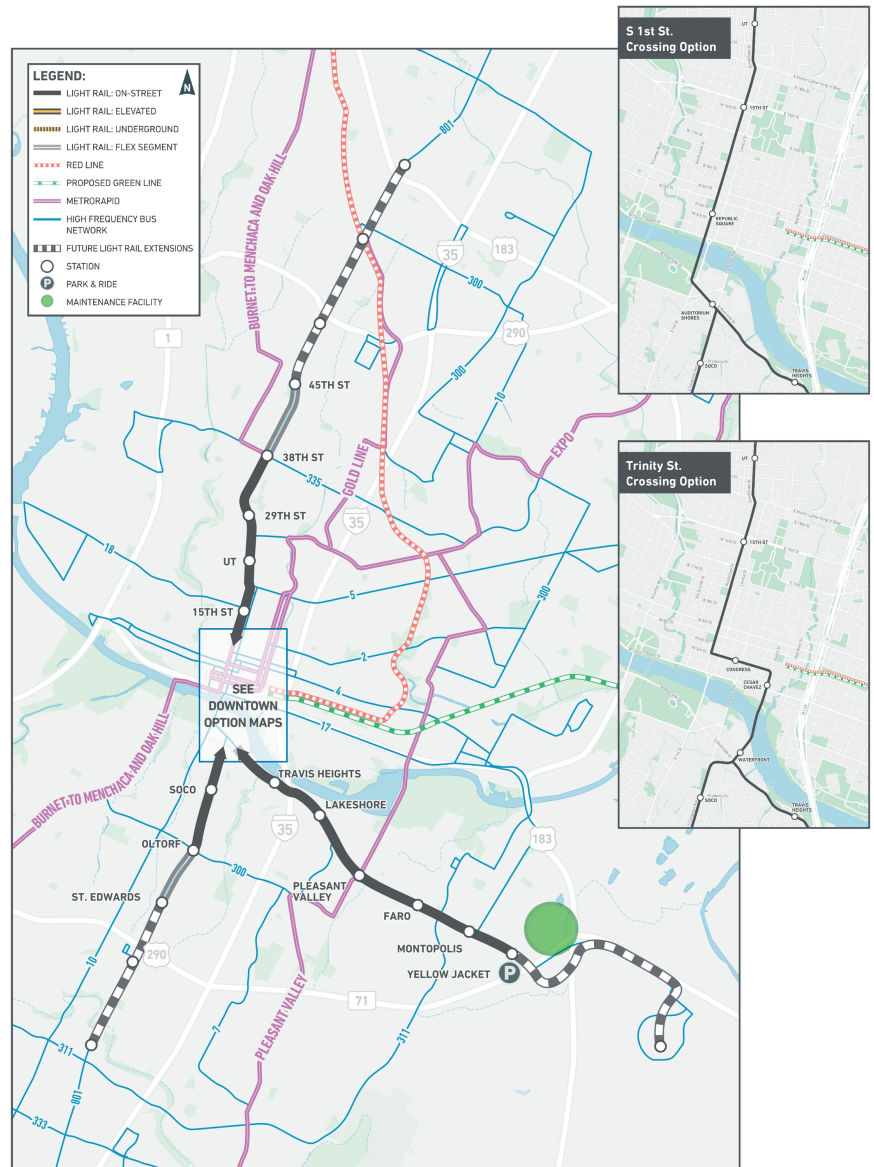
## Community Feedback On Light Rail Options



### On-Street: 38th To Oltorf To Yellow Jacket

#### Community feedback on this option included:

- Support for connecting to existing rail and bus service.
- Need for access to key destinations and areas of town, including South Austin, Downtown and the University of Texas.
- Concerns about how the on-street option could impact and delay vehicle traffic.
- Feedback also included expanding the line past Yellow Jacket Lane to the Airport and expanding the line further north and south.
- On-street light rail was seen as more affordable and providing more connectivity to the community.
- Trinity Street river crossing allows for connection to the east side of Downtown, the Convention Center, Rainey District, current and future jobs centers and housing, transit connections, and opportunities for future expansion; concerns around traffic and construction impacts.
- 1st Street river crossing allows for connections to Auditorium Shores, Long Center, Republic Square, and Zilker Park; concerns around traffic impacts and visual impacts over Lady Bird Lake.
- BIPOC/Low-Income/Transit Riders supported this option because of ridership, access, and connectivity.



## 4

### SECTION 4: WHAT WE HEARD

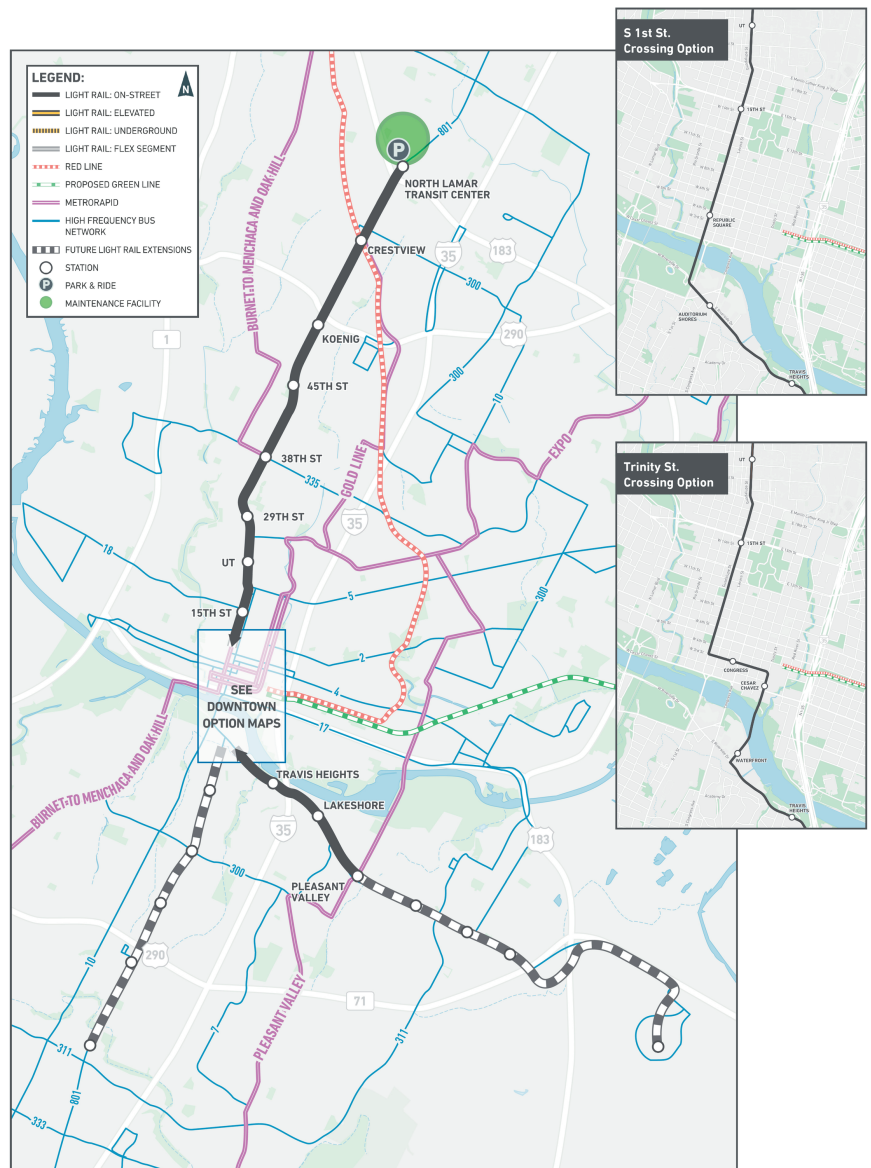
## Community Feedback On Light Rail Options



### On-Street: North Lamar Transit Center To Pleasant Valley

#### Community feedback on this option included:

- Consistent comments highlighting high ridership numbers and the ability to connect North Austin with Downtown and East Austin.
- Concerns around lack of access for South Austin.
- Feedback also included expanding the line past Yellow Jacket Lane to the Airport and expanding the line south.
- On-street light rail was seen as more affordable and providing more connectivity to the community.
- Trinity Street river crossing allows for connection to the east side of Downtown, the Convention Center, Rainey District, current and future jobs centers and housing, transit connections, and opportunities for future expansion; concerns around traffic and construction impacts.
- 1st Street river crossing allows for connections to Auditorium Shores, Long Center, Republic Square, and Zilker Park; concerns around traffic impacts and visual impacts over Lady Bird Lake.
- BIPOC/Low-Income/Transit Riders supported this option for connectivity, access, and ridership.



**4**

## SECTION 4: WHAT WE HEARD

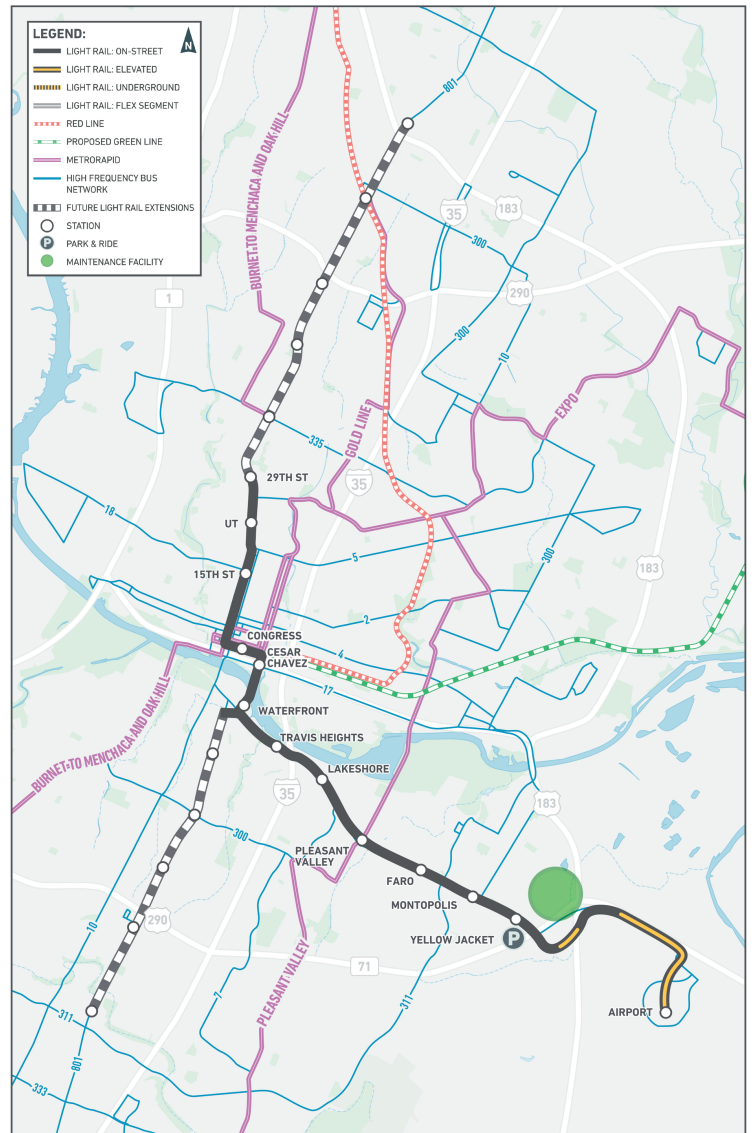
### Community Feedback On Light Rail Options



#### On-Street: 29th To Airport

**Community feedback on this option included:**

- Comments around the importance of getting to the Airport, and connecting the Airport with Downtown and other transit connections such as the Red Line.
- On-street rail feedback was seen as more affordable and providing more connectivity to the community.
- This option was the most frequently discussed, and further analysis of all option comments showed a strong preference for reaching the Airport as a key destination.
- BIPOC/Low-Income/Transit Riders shared concerns over costs, ability to phase, and lack of access to other destinations; however, there was also support for reaching the airport.



**4**

## SECTION 4: WHAT WE HEARD

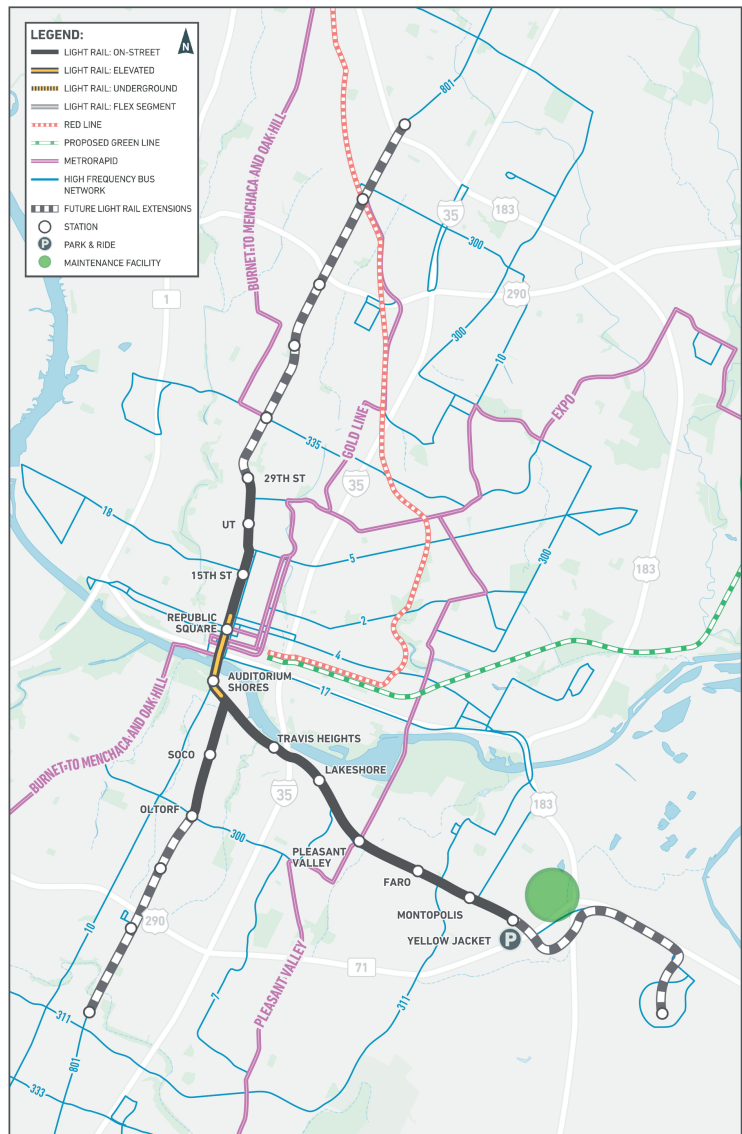
# Community Feedback On Light Rail Options



### Partial Elevated: 29th To Oltorf To Yellow Jacket

**Community feedback on this option included:**

- Access to key destinations, connectivity, and ridership as important.
- Additional concerns about cost and phasing were raised.
- Feedback also included expanding the line past Yellow Jacket Lane to the Airport and expanding the line further north and south.
- Elevated light rail was seen as more affordable than underground and faster than on-street.
- BIPOC/Low-Income/Transit Riders had concerns with connectivity, access, and ridership, as well as support related to operations and safety.



**4**

## SECTION 4: WHAT WE HEARD

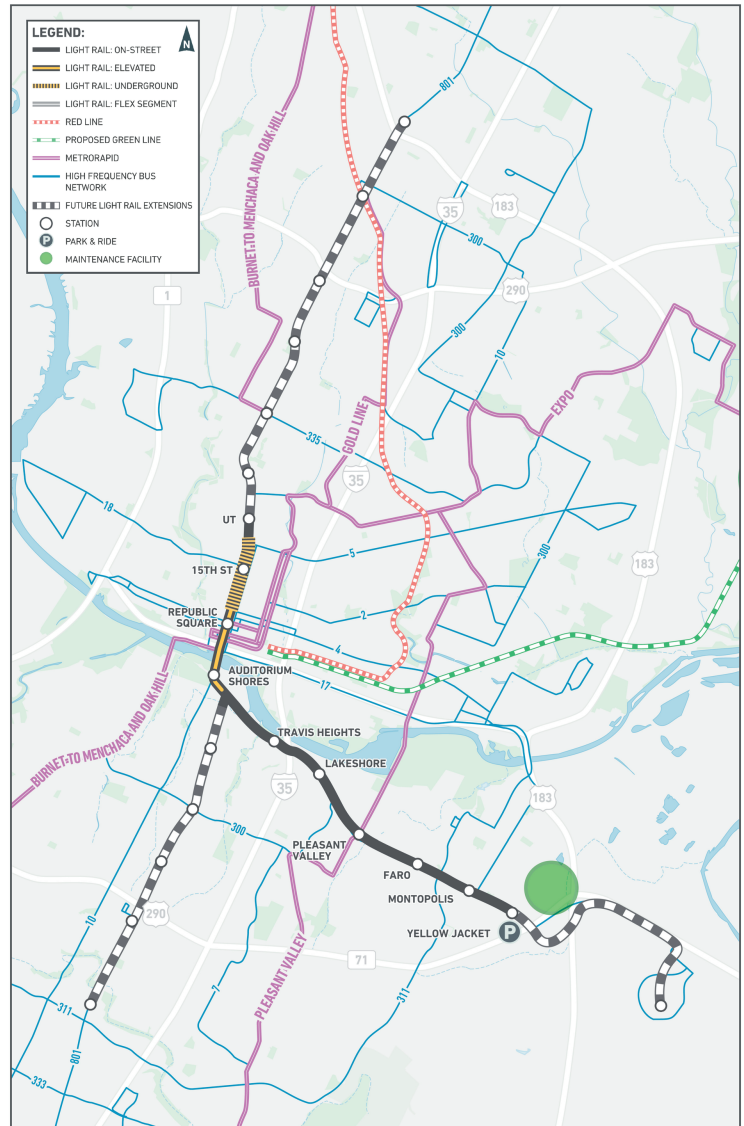
### Community Feedback On Light Rail Options



#### Partial Underground: UT To Yellow Jacket

**Community feedback on this option included:**

- Concerns about cost, phasing, and ridership impacts.
- Lack of access to key destinations in South Austin was mentioned frequently.
- Feedback also included expanding the line past Yellow Jacket Lane to the Airport and expanding the line further North.
- Consideration that this would increase safety, reduce noise, and improve the aesthetics of the city.
- BIPOC/Low-Income/ Transit Riders supported this option for better operations and expressed concerns over not reaching the airport and low ridership.







## Appendix

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**A1**

**DEMOGRAPHIC DATA ANALYSIS**

**A2**

**CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

**A3**

**BUS AND TRAIN STATION ENGAGEMENT LOCATIONS**

**A4**

**VIRTUAL OPEN HOUSE COMMENTS BY ZIP CODE**

**A5**

**LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION FROM COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS**

**A6**

**TO VIEW ALL COMMENTS, PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT EVENTS AND ZIP CODE  
BREAKDOWN:**

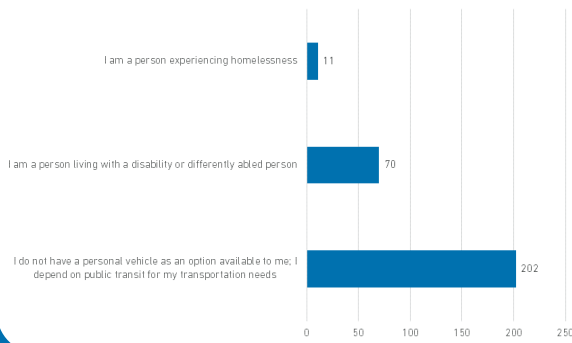
**<https://tinyurl.com/spring2023CEappendix>**



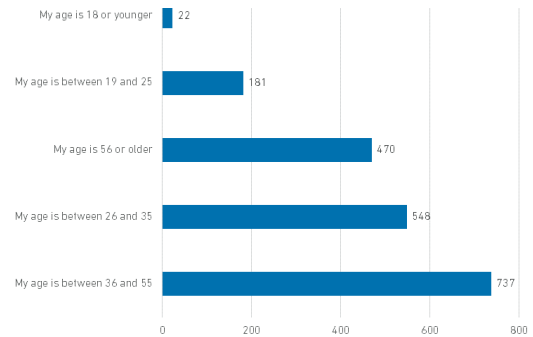
## Demographic Data Analysis

Demographic information was requested, but not required, throughout the community dialogue period to inform ATP about who we were hearing from. The following charts shows the demographic information, household income, and transit behaviors of individuals who participated in the Virtual Open House and chose to answer at least one demographic question.

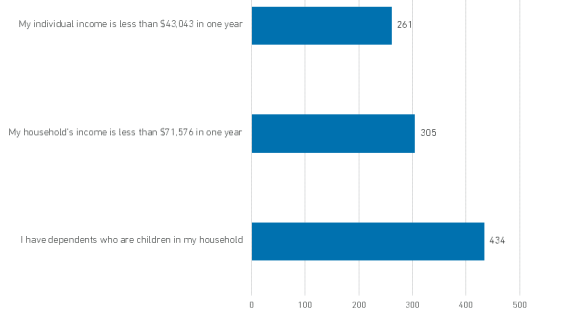
**DEMOGRAPHICS: MOBILITY / HOUSING**



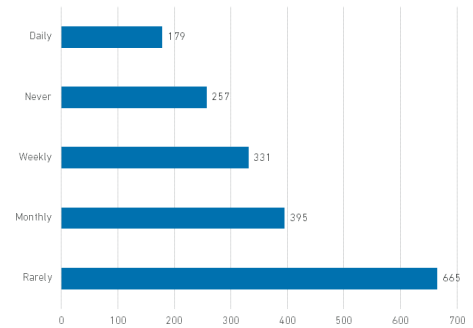
**DEMOGRAPHICS: AGE**



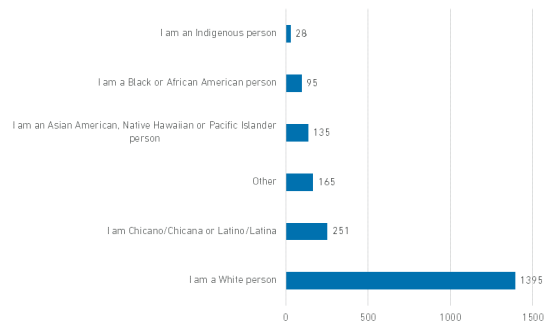
**DEMOGRAPHICS: INCOME**



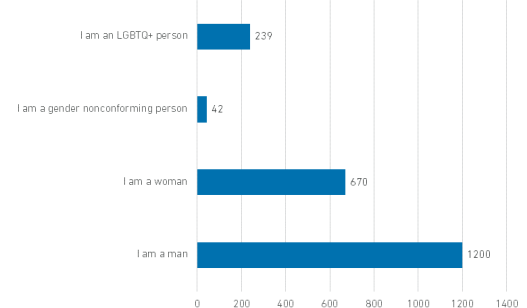
**DEMOGRAPHICS: TRANSIT FREQUENCY**



**DEMOGRAPHICS: RACE/ETHNICITY**



**DEMOGRAPHICS: GENDER & SEXUALITY**



## AUSTIN LIGHT RAIL COMMUNITY DIALOGUE EVENTS March 21 – May 2

DATE	EVENT	EVENT TYPE	LOCATION
3/21	In-Person Open House	Community Event	Austin Central Library, 710 W Cesar Chavez, 78701
3/23	CapMetro Staff	Community Conversation	CapMetro Offices, 700 Lavaca, 78701
3/24	Movability	Community Conversation	Virtual
3/24	Trail Conservancy	Community Conversation	ATP Offices - 203 Colorado St., 78701
3/27	Design Commission	Board, Commission, Committee	Permitting and Development Center, 6310 Wilhelmina Delco, 78752
3/27	Montopolis Neighborhood Association	Community Conversation	Montopolis Recreation & Community Center, 1200 Montopolis, 78741
3/27	East Austin YMCA	Community Event	5315 Ed Bluestein Blvd
3/28	Town Lake YMCA	Community Event	1100 W Cesar Chavez St, 78703
3/28	LBJ Urban Economic Development Class	Community Conversations	LBJ School of Public Affairs, 2315 Red River St., 78712
3/29	ATX Mobility Coalition	Community Conversation	Austin Area Urban League, 8011A Cameron Rd., 78754
3/31	Meeting with Ann Teich	Community Conversation	8716 Research Blvd, 78758
4/1	North Austin YMCA	Community Event	1000 W Rundberg Ln, 78758
4/1	Zilker Park Kite Festival	Community Event	Zilker Park, 78746
4/3	Pedestrian Advisory Council	Board, Commission, Committee	901 South Mopac EXY, 78746

DATE	EVENT	EVENT TYPE	LOCATION
4/3	MLK Neighborhood Association	Community Conversation	3701 E Martin Luther King Jr Blvd., 78721
4/3	Central Austin Neighborhood Planning Advisory Committee	Community Conversation	Lamar Senior Activity Center, 2874 Shoal Crest Ave, 78705
4/4	Austin Lighthouse - Travis Association for the Blind	Community Conversation	4512 S Pleasant Valley Rd., 78744
4/4	Baptist Ministers Union/ Austin Area Urban League	Community Conversation	Mount Zion Fellowship Hall, 2938 E 13th St., 78702
4/4	Urban Transportation Committee	Board, Commission, Committee	Austin City Hall, Boards and Commission, 301 W 2 <sup>nd</sup> St., 78701
4/5	CapMetro ACCESS	Committee	Virtual
4/5	East Riverside/Oltorf Combined Contact Team	Community Conversation	Virtual
4/5	Environmental Commission	Board, Commission, Committee	Permitting and Development Center, 6310 Wilhelmina Delco, 78752
4/6	Mobility Committee	Board, Commission, Committee	Austin City Hall, Boards and Commission, 301 W 2 <sup>nd</sup> St., 78701
4/6	CapMetro Town Hall	Community Conversation	Virtual
4/6	ATP Community Update	Community Conversation	Virtual
4/7	Urbanist Happy Hour	Community Event	1902 E 6 <sup>th</sup> Street, 78702
4/10	Central TX Labor	Community Conversation	Virtual
4/10	LGBTQ Quality of Life Commission	Community Conversation	Permitting and Development Center, 6310 Wilhelmina Delco, 78752

DATE	EVENT	EVENT TYPE	LOCATION
4/11	Construction Advisory Committee	Board, Commission, Committee	One Texas Center, 505 Barton Springs Rd., 78704
4/11	Texas School for the Deaf	Open House	1102 S Congress Ave, 78704
4/11	ATP Finance and Risk Committee	Board, Commission, Committee	Virtual
4/11	ATP Joint Planning, Sustainability, Equity & DBE/Engineering & Architecture Committee	Board, Commission, Committee	ATP Offices - 203 Colorado St., 78701
4/11	Real Estate Council of Austin - Transportation Committee	Community Conversation	98 San Jacinto, 78701
4/12	Regional Mobility Summit	Community Conversation	Parmer Events Center, 900 Barton Springs Rd., 78704
4/12	Todos Juntos Health Fair	Community Event	409 W Ben White, 78704
4/12	CapMetro Customer Service Advisory Committee	Board, Commission, Committee	Virtual
4/13	Community Advisory Committee	Board, Commission, Committee	ATP Offices - 203 Colorado St., 78701
4/14	Downtown Austin Alliance	Community Conversation	515 Congress Ave., 78701
4/14	CapMetro Operations Committee	Board, Commission, Committee	2910 East 5th Street, 78702
4/15	Blacker the Block, Sweeter the Juice Block Party	Community Event	1104 E 11th St, 78702
4/15	League of United Latin American Citizens	Community Conversation	6002 Jain Lane, Austin, TX 78721

DATE	EVENT	EVENT TYPE	LOCATION
4/15	National Federation of the Blind	Community Conversation	Virtual
4/15	CAC Hosted Montopolis Neighborhood Meeting	Community Conversation	Ruiz Branch, Austin Public Library, 1600 Grove Blvd., 78741
4/17	Heritage Neighborhood of Austin	Community Conversation	Lamar Senior Activity Center, 2874 Shoal Crest Ave, 78705
4/18	St. Edwards Open House	Community Event	3001 S Congress Ave
4/18	Building and Strengthening Tenant Action	Community Conversation	8071 N Lamar Blvd
4/18	Asian American Quality of Life Commission	Community Conversation	Austin City Hall, Boards and Commission, 301 W 2 <sup>nd</sup> St., 78701
4/18	Bicycle Advisory Committee	Board, Commission, Committee	901 South Mopac EXY (Building 5, Suite 300)
4/19	Austin Outside	Community Conversation	ATP Offices – 301 Congress, 78704
4/19	Austin Community College – Highland Campus	Community Event	6101 Highland Campus, 78752
4/19	South Austin AARP	Community Conversation	South Austin Senior Activity Center, 3911 Menchaca Rd., 78704
4/19	Young Professionals in Transportation – Redline Trail Roundtable	Community Event	6015 Dillard Cir., 78752
4/20	Austin Community College – Riverside Campus	Community Event	1020 Grove Blvd., 78741
4/20	North Austin Civic Association	Community Conversation	1000 W Rundberg Ln., 78758
4/20	Farm & City	Community Conversation	Capital Factory, 701 Brazos St, 78701
4/21	Austin Airport Earth Day	Community Event	Austin-Bergstrom International Airport, 78719
4/22	Earth Day at HT	Community Event	Huston-Tillotson, 900 Chicon St., 78702

DATE	EVENT	EVENT TYPE	LOCATION
4/22	Earth Day Festival (NWACA Event)	Community Event	Doss Elementary, 7005 Northledge Dr., 78731
4/22	Blockwalking Uphill and Yellow Jacket Lane	Community Event	Uphill and Yellow Jacket Ln, 78741
4/22	District 2 Townhall Event	Community Event	The Union at Easton Park, 7604 Solari Dr., 78744
4/23	Creative Action	Community Event	1023 Springdale Rd., 78721
4/24	American Institute of Architects Roundtable	Community Conversation	801 W 12 <sup>th</sup> Street, 78701
4/24	Parks and Recreation Board	Board, Commission, Committee	Austin City Hall, Boards and Commission, 301 W 2 <sup>nd</sup> St., 78701
4/24	Zilker Neighborhood Association	Community Conversation	1801 Kinney Ave, 78704
4/24	Human Rights Commission	Board, Commission, Committee	Austin City Hall, Boards and Commission, 301 W 2 <sup>nd</sup> St., 78701
4/25	University Area Partners	Community Conversation	University Presbyterian Church, 2203 San Antonio St., 78705
4/25	Housing & Planning Committee	Board, Commission, Committee	Austin City Hall, Boards and Commission, 301 W 2 <sup>nd</sup> St., 78701
4/25	Texas School for the Blind Mobility Team	Community Conversation	1100 W 45th St, 78756
4/25	Austin Young Chamber	Community Conversation	6836 Austin Center Blvd., 78731
4/25	Hispanic/Latino Quality of Life Resource Advisory Committee	Board, Commission, Committee	Austin City Hall, Boards and Commission, 301 W 2 <sup>nd</sup> St., 78701
4/25	Barton Hills Neighborhood Association	Community Conversation	St. Mark's Episcopal Church, 2128 Barton Hills Dr., 78704
4/25	Planning Commission	Board, Commission, Committee	Austin City Hall, Boards and Commission, 301 W 2 <sup>nd</sup> St., 78701

DATE	EVENT	EVENT TYPE	LOCATION
4/25	Yellow Jacket/ Uphill Lane Community Meeting	Community Conversation	Montopolis Recreation & Community Center, 1200 Montopolis, 78741
4/26	South Congress Merchants	Community Event	Güero's Taco Bar, 1412 S Congress Ave., 78704
4/26	Greater Austin Asian Chamber of Commerce	Community Event	8001 Centre Park Dr., 78754
4/26	Joint Inclusion Committee	Board, Commission, Committee	Austin City Hall, Boards and Commission, 301 W 2 <sup>nd</sup> St., 78701
4/26	Council Memeber Ellis Community Fair	Community Event	Hampton Branch Library, 5125 Convict Hill Rd, 78749
4/26	North Austin Community Event hosted by CAC and Council Member Vela	Community Conversation	Kick Butt Coffee, 5775 Airport Blvd., 78752
4/26	Equity Action Team	Community Conversation	1000 E 11th St., 78702
4/26	Joint Sustainability Committee	Community Conversation	Permitting and Development Center, 6310 Wilhelmina Delco, 78752
4/26	Austin Neighborhood Council	Community Conversation	Virtual
4/27	Four Seasons Residences + Four Seasons Hotel	Community Conversation	98 San Jacinto, 78701
4/27	Waterloo Greenway Conservancy Board	Community Conversation	1111 Red River St., 78701
4/27	Austin Community College - Rio Grande	Community Event	1212 Rio Grande St., 78701
4/27	Urban Land Institute Young Leaders	Community Conversation	Virtual
4/28	Housing Authority City of Austin - Women's Conference	Community Event	2300 Rosewood Ave., 78702
4/28	Criss Cole Rehabilitation Center	Community Conversation	4800 N Lamar Blvd., 78756



DATE	EVENT	EVENT TYPE	LOCATION
4/29	Council Member Kelly Open House	Community Event	10401 Anderson Mill Rd., 78750
5/1	C9 Committee Meeting (UT Austin)	Community Conversation	Virtual
5/1	District 3 Light Rail Meeting hosted by Council Member Velásquez	Community Conversation	Virtual
5/2	African American Resource Advisory Commission	Board, Commission, Committee	Permitting and Development Center, 6310 Wilhelmina Delco, 78752

## BUS STOP AND TRAIN STATION OUTREACH LOCATIONS March 21 – May 2

STOP ID	STOP NAME	ROUTE ID NAME DIRECTION	ZIP
2643	Lavaca/4 <sup>th</sup>	10-South 1st/Red River-Northbound, 483-Night Owl Riverside-Northbound, 7-Duval / Dove Springs-Northbound, 20-Manor Rd/Riverside-Northbound, 486-Night Owl South Congress-Northbound, 30-Barton Creek/Bull Creek-Northbound	78701
2738	Capitol Station (SB)	1-North Lamar/South Congress-Southbound, 982-Pavilion Express-Southbound, 20-Manor Rd/Riverside-Southbound, 30-Barton Creek/Bull Creek-Southbound, 3-Burnet/Manchaca-Southbound, 803-Burnet/S Lamar-Southbound, 985-Leander/Lakeline Direct-Northbound, 990-Manor/Elgin Express-Westbound, 481-Night Owl North Lamar-Southbound, 801-N Lamar S Congress-Southbound, 980-North Mopac Express-Northbound, 105-South 5th Flyer-Southbound	78701
5534	Downtown Station	550-Metro Rail Red Line-Northbound, 550-Metro Rail Red Line-Southbound	78701
2613	Guadalupe/4 <sup>th</sup>	20-Manor Rd/Riverside-Southbound, 5-Woodrow/East 12th-Westbound, 30-Barton Creek/Bull Creek-Southbound, 483-Night Owl Riverside-Southbound, 7-Duval / Dove Springs-Southbound, 2-Rosewood/Cesar Chavez-Southbound, 10-South 1st/Red River-Southbound, 486-Night Owl South Congress-Southbound	78701
5866	Museum Station (SB)	803-Burnet/S Lamar-Southbound, 801-N Lamar S Congress-Southbound	78701

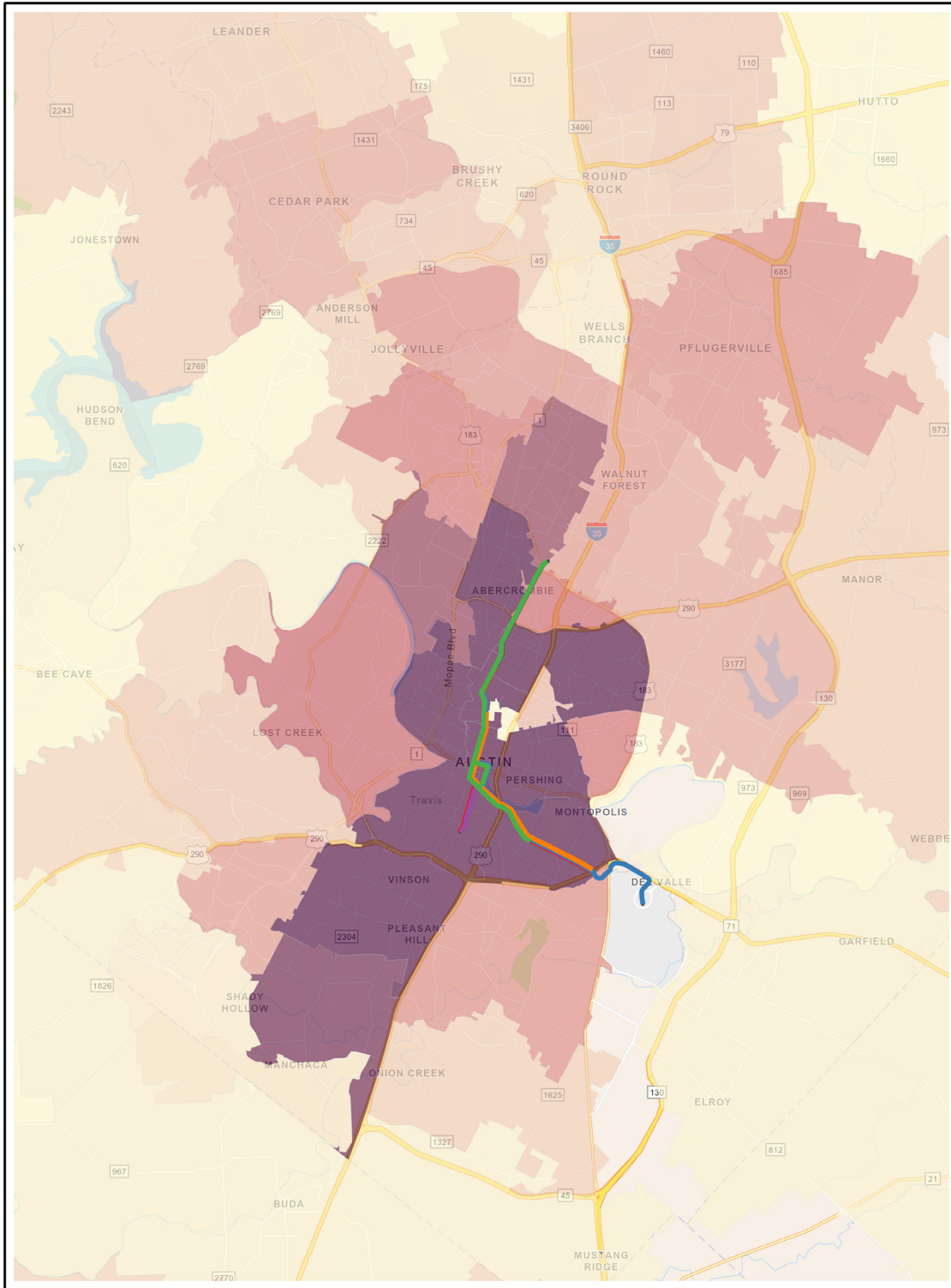
STOP ID	STOP NAME	ROUTE ID NAME DIRECTION	ZIP
2606	Austin History Center Station (NB)	1-North Lamar/South Congress-Northbound, 3-Burnet/Manchaca-Northbound, 803-Burnet/S Lamar-Northbound, 801-N Lamar S Congress-Northbound	78701
4657	Museum Station (NB)	803-Burnet/S Lamar-Northbound, 801-N Lamar S Congress-Northbound	78701
501	Guadalupe/16th Street	1-North Lamar/South Congress-Southbound, 982-Pavilion Express-Southbound, 20-Manor Rd/Riverside-Southbound, 30-Barton Creek/Bull Creek-Southbound, 3-Burnet/Manchaca-Southbound, 990-Manor/Elgin Express-Westbound, 481-Night Owl North Lamar-Southbound, 18-Martin Luther King-Westbound, 980-North Mopac Express-Northbound, 105-South 5th Flyer-Southbound	78701
591	Capitol Station (Nb)	481-Night Owl North Lamar-Northbound, 1-North Lamar/South Congress-Northbound, 3-Burnet/Manchaca-Northbound, 803-Burnet/S Lamar-Northbound, 20-Manor Rd/Riverside-Northbound, 801-N Lamar S Congress-Northbound, 30-Barton Creek/Bull Creek-Northbound	78701
6315	805 Trinity/8Th	10-South 1st/Red River-Northbound, 5-Woodrow/East 12th-Eastbound, 7-Duval/Dove Springs-Northbound, 2-Rosewood/Cesar Chavez-Northbound, 111-South Mopac Flyer-Northbound, 935-Tech Ridge Express-Northbound, 103-Manchaca Flyer-Northbound, 142-Metric Flyer-Northbound, 171-Oak Hill Flyer-Northbound	78701
4046	Oltorf Station (SB)	1-North Lamar/South Congress-Southbound, 801-N Lamar S Congress-Southbound, 486-Night Owl South Congress-Southbound	78704
4026	Soco Station (NB)	1-North Lamar/South Congress-Northbound, 801-N Lamar S Congress-Northbound, 486-Night Owl South Congress-Northbound	78704

STOP ID	STOP NAME	ROUTE ID NAME DIRECTION	ZIP
2767	Vic Mathias/Auditorium Shores (NB)	483-Night Owl Riverside-Northbound, 1-North Lamar/South Congress-Northbound, 7-Duval / Dove Springs-Northbound, 20-Manor Rd/Riverside-Northbound, 935-Tech Ridge Express-Northbound, 142-Metric Flyer-Northbound, 801-N Lamar S Congress-Northbound, 486-Night Owl South Congress-Northbound	78704
4039	Oltorf Station (NB)	1-North Lamar/South Congress-Northbound, 801-N Lamar S Congress-Northbound, 486-Night Owl South Congress-Northbound	78704
2763	Vic Mathias/Auditorium Shores (SB)	1-North Lamar/South Congress-Southbound, 20-Manor Rd/Riverside-Southbound, 483-Night Owl Riverside-Southbound, 7-Duval / Dove Springs-Southbound, 801-N Lamar S Congress-Southbound, 142-Metric Flyer-Southbound, 935-Tech Ridge Express-Southbound, 486-Night Owl South Congress-Southbound	78704
5869	St. Edwards Station (NB)	1-North Lamar/South Congress-Northbound, 801-N Lamar S Congress-Northbound, 486-Night Owl South Congress-Northbound	78704
5357	31St Street Station (SB)	1-North Lamar/South Congress-Southbound, 30-Barton Creek/Bull Creek-Southbound, 3-Burnet/Manchaca-Southbound, 803-Burnet/S Lamar-Southbound, 481-Night Owl North Lamar-Southbound, 801-N Lamar S Congress-Southbound	78705
5863	UT Dean Keeton Station (SB)	1-North Lamar/South Congress-Southbound, 30-Barton Creek/Bull Creek-Southbound, 3-Burnet/Manchaca-Southbound, 803-Burnet/S Lamar-Southbound, 481-Night Owl North Lamar-Southbound, 801-N Lamar S Congress-Southbound	78705
5864	UT Dean Keeton Station (NB)	803-Burnet/S Lamar-Northbound, 801-N Lamar S Congress-Northbound	78705

STOP ID	STOP NAME	ROUTE ID NAME DIRECTION	ZIP
603	31St Street Station (NB)	481-Night Owl North Lamar-Northbound, 1-North Lamar/South Congress-Northbound, 3-Burnet/Manchaca-Northbound, 803-Burnet/S Lamar-Northbound, 801-N Lamar S Congress-Northbound, 30-Barton Creek/Bull Creek-Northbound	78705
5865	UT West Mall Station (NB)	803-Burnet/S Lamar-Northbound, 801-N Lamar S Congress-Northbound	78712
1005	Riverside/Pleasant Valley	20-Manor Rd/Riverside-Southbound, 483-Night Owl Riverside-Southbound	78741
3317	Riverside/Yellow Jacket	271-Del Valle-Eastbound, 20-Manor Rd/Riverside-Southbound	78741
1032	Riverside/Town Creek	483-Night Owl Riverside-Northbound, 7-Duval / Dove Springs-Northbound, 20-Manor Rd/Riverside-Northbound	78741
950	Riverside/Montopolis	20-Manor Rd/Riverside-Northbound, 217-Montopolis Feeder-Southbound, 271-Del Valle-Westbound	78741
1002	Riverside/Burton	20-Manor Rd/Riverside-Southbound, 483-Night Owl Riverside-Southbound, 7-Duval / Dove Springs-Southbound	78741
5728	Riverside/Grove	310-Parker/Wickersham-Westbound, 20-Manor Rd/Riverside-Northbound	78741
1030	Riverside/Willow Creek	20-Manor Rd/Riverside-Northbound, 228-VA Clinic-Westbound	78741
4692	Riverside/Airport Commerce	20-Manor Rd/Riverside-Northbound, 271-Del Valle-Westbound	78741
6439	ACC Riverside @ Grove	310-Parker/Wickersham-Westbound, 350-Airport Blvd-Southbound, 310-Parker/Wickersham-Eastbound, 311-Stassney-Westbound, 311-Stassney-Eastbound, 350-Airport Blvd-Northbound	78741
6442	Pleasant Valley/Riverside WB	20-Manor Rd/Riverside-Northbound	78741
6355	St. Elmo Station (NB)	1-North Lamar/South Congress-Northbound, 801-N Lamar S Congress-Northbound, 486-Night Owl South Congress-Northbound	78745
5551	South Congress Bay I	315-Ben White-Westbound, 315-Ben White-Eastbound	78745

STOP ID	STOP NAME	ROUTE ID NAME DIRECTION	ZIP
5873	Southpark Meadows Station	801-N Lamar S Congress-Southbound, 801-N Lamar S Congress-Northbound	78748
484	Triangle Station (SB)	1-North Lamar/South Congress-Southbound, 990-Manor/Elgin Express-Westbound, 481-Night Owl North Lamar-Southbound, 801-N Lamar S Congress-Southbound	78751
5405	Hyde Park Station (SB)	1-North Lamar/South Congress-Southbound, 990-Manor/Elgin Express-Westbound, 481-Night Owl North Lamar-Southbound, 801-N Lamar S Congress-Southbound	78751
5537	Highland Station	550-Metro Rail Red Line-Northbound, 550-Metro Rail Red Line-Southbound	78752
5304	Tech Ridge Bay I	801-N Lamar S Congress-Southbound, 801-N Lamar S Congress-Northbound	78753
6360	North Loop East Station (SB)	1-North Lamar/South Congress-Southbound, 481-Night Owl North Lamar-Southbound, 801-N Lamar S Congress-Southbound	78756
5861	Brentwood Station (SB)	1-North Lamar/South Congress-Southbound, 481-Night Owl North Lamar-Southbound, 801-N Lamar S Congress-Southbound	78756
5877	Sunshine Station (SB)	5-Woodrow/EAST 12TH-Eastbound, 803-Burnet/S Lamar-Southbound, 345-45th-Eastbound	78756
5606	Crestview Station (SB)	1-North Lamar/South Congress-Southbound, 481-Night Owl North Lamar-Southbound, 801-N Lamar S Congress-Southbound	78757
467	Fairfield Station (SB)	1-North Lamar/South Congress-Southbound, 481-Night Owl North Lamar-Southbound, 801-N Lamar S Congress-Southbound	78758
5859	North Lamar Station	481-Night Owl North Lamar-Southbound, 801-N Lamar S Congress-Southbound, 801-N Lamar S Congress-Northbound	78758
4540	Rundberg Station (SB)	1-North Lamar/South Congress-Southbound, 801-N Lamar S Congress-Southbound	78758

## Virtual Open House Comments by Zip Code



### LEGEND

Simplified LRT Options

- 38th | Oltorf | Yellow Jacket
- Airport

— NLTC | Pleasant Valley

— Partial Elevated

— Partial Underground

Collected Zip Codes from VOH

Count





## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** City of Austin Mayor and Council Members, Austin Transit Partnership Board Chair and Board Members, Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority Board Chair and Board Members

**FROM:** Awais Azhar, Chair, Project Connect Community Advisory Committee

**CC:** Greg Canally, Executive Director, Austin Transit Partnership  
Dottie Watkins, President and CEO, Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority  
Jesús Garza, Interim City Manager, City of Austin  
Robert Goode, Interim Assistant City Manager, City of Austin

**DATE:** May 11, 2023

**SUBJECT:** Project Connect Community Advisory Committee Austin Light Rail Implementation Recommendations

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As the City of Austin, Austin Transit Partnership, and Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority move towards implementation of the first phase of the Austin Light Rail component of Project Connect, **the Community Advisory Committee (CAC) recommends one of two light rail implementation options presented to the community and decision makers: On-Street: 38th to Oltorf to Yellow Jacket and On-Street: North Lamar to Pleasant Valley.** The CAC makes this recommendation based on community feedback, conversations with stakeholders and staff, data analysis, and alignment with System-Wide Design Principles that the CAC created in advance of the options being released. Either one of these options would expand transit services for our community and provide certain opportunities, while faced by some challenges, as described below.

### Commitment to Overall Austin Light Rail Vision and On-Street Service

The Project Connect program advances transit connectivity throughout our entire community by expanding MetroRail and MetroRapid Services, creating Austin's first Light Rail system, and improving other transit service and infrastructure. The CAC fully supports the overall Austin Light Rail vision and asks that the leadership of all three parties explore innovative solutions to achieve full implementation of subsequent phases of the vision. The first phase of Austin Light Rail will play a critical role in expanding transit service in Austin. It is also important to plan for future expansions of the system, while



continuing the ongoing work to expand MetroRapid services in our community. It is necessary to ensure the Project Connect program proceeds with a focus on equitably expanding our transit system in a manner that supports the needs of existing riders and provides opportunities to expand ridership.

The CAC recommends the two on-street options for Austin Light Rail because of the greater number of riders served by these options and we believe on-street transit infrastructure will better serve our community at this time by providing seamless connections with other transit modes and active transportation elements, enhancing accessibility to minimize impacts for people with disabilities while also benefiting other users such as those with strollers, and activating the street-level through a better interface between the transit system and the urban sphere.

### Opportunities and Challenges of Recommended Options

Both options recommended by the CAC provide certain opportunities, while facing specific challenges. The two recommended options provide the greatest coverage in terms of number of stations and overall system length out of the five options, have higher ridership figures, and provide greater interaction with other mobility modes. The recommended options overall serve a similar number of people and people living in poverty and provide access to a similar number of affordable housing units and low-wage jobs<sup>1</sup>. Furthermore, both of these options provide greater accessibility for people with disabilities and other users such as those utilizing a stroller. However, these options also require significant utility relocations and mitigation of other factors.

From the perspective of equitably expanding transit services, the 38th to Oltorf to Yellow Jacket option serves more Black, Indigenous, and people of color. This option also provides a starter segment on all three legs of the full Austin Light Rail vision plan, allowing for rapid expansion in the future. Furthermore, this option provides better transit services to South Congress (SoCo), giving Austinites alternatives to congested roads and associated parking issues in the SoCo commercial area. At the same time, out of the two recommended options, this option does not serve the most riders or provide access to the most jobs. In addition, while this option allows rail service to be extended to the communities east of Pleasant Valley, locating the maintenance facility in East Austin will necessitate mitigation of any potential impacts and engaging with the neighboring community throughout the design process to address the concerns they have voiced. If, during further planning for this option, the opportunity should arise to build only one of the two proposed flex segments in the first phase of the light rail implementation, the CAC recommends that priority is given to segments that serve the most riders.

The North Lamar to Pleasant Valley option serves the most riders and connects the service to the greatest number of jobs. It provides a critical connection to the North Lamar Transit Center, enhancing connectivity with North Austin and offering opportunities for creating Equitable Transit Oriented Development (ETOD) at that publicly owned site. It also provides a connection with the Red Line MetroRail at the Crestview station. Furthermore, with enhanced design elements, similar to what is recommended below, this option could provide opportunities for seamless future expansion of the light rail system. However, this option includes elements such as construction in the public right-of-way and

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<sup>1</sup> The data analysis for this section is supported by work completed by Austin Transit Partnership Staff and Dr. Alex Karner, Ex-Officio member of the CAC.

conflicts between the Red Line and light rail that need to be resolved and addressed in the future. In addition, while this option allows rail service to be extended to the communities North of US Highway 183, locating the maintenance facility at the proposed location necessitates further engagement with the neighboring community in the future. Should the North Lamar to Pleasant Valley option be selected, the CAC recommends that tie-in infrastructure, including track switch, be included in the initial phase of development to allow for expandability of the light rail system with minimal disruption to future light rail operations.

Regardless of the option selected for light rail in Austin, it is necessary to address any potential impacts of the maintenance facility on the surrounding communities and to engage with stakeholders in those communities during the design process. Furthermore, the selected light rail option must be aligned with the existing bus and active transportation networks to provide seamless connections for riders. It is also important to ensure that land-use policies, affordable housing opportunities, and anti-displacement efforts support the initial light rail infrastructure to ensure that the greatest number of Austinites can access and benefit from the system equitably.

### Maintenance Facility Recommendations

To ensure that any future maintenance facility created as a part of Austin Light Rail does not have a potential disparate impact on the surrounding community, we ask that the following be considered.

- As design advances, including during parts of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review process, ensure that there is continued engagement with the community through transparent processes that embody the following principles:
  - Ensure that environmental review documentation is shared with the public in a transparent and timely fashion.
  - Ensure that public engagement efforts are aligned with the Community Engagement and Inclusion Commitments included in the Joint Powers Agreement.
  - Ensure that the environmental review considers impacts from an environmental justice perspective.
  - As appropriate, include the CAC in future design discussions, including the NEPA review process.
- Depending on findings from the NEPA review process, ensure that there is ongoing environmental evaluation and transparency by undertaking the following:
  - If warranted by the Environmental Impact Statement, commit to periodically monitor any potential air quality and noise impacts throughout the lifetime of the project.
  - If monitoring is necessary, ensure data is shared periodically with the Community Advisory Committee in a meeting open to the public.
  - If monitoring is necessary, share data on an easily accessible webpage for the public to review.
- Ensure that the design of the facility supports community needs and is environmentally sustainable using the following approaches:

- Engage with the surrounding community and the Community Advisory Committee in the design of the facility.
  - Minimize impacts on any adjacent residential uses, including any site utilized for providing shelter to unhoused neighbors.
  - If there is to be any fuel storage, ensure that there is no underground fuel storage.
  - Ensure that there is proper on-site stormwater mitigation.
  - If possible, allow direct pedestrian access to the facility from the surrounding neighborhood, to allow workers and community members to access the site easily.
  - If a sound wall or other solid barrier is built, consider working with the community on a public arts project similar to that for the former Holly Power Plant.
  - Utilize green building techniques and advanced environmental standards.
  - Preserve or relocate as many heritage trees on the site as possible.
- Ensure that there is proper noise and light mitigation, where necessary, using the following approaches:
    - Utilize a landscape buffer and setbacks from residential uses.
    - Where necessary, create a sound wall or other solid barrier.
    - Utilize shielded and directional light fixtures.
    - If necessary, provide adjoining residential property owners the opportunity to soundproof openings in the direction of the facility, this includes both owner and renter-occupied properties.
    - Ensure that there is minimized idling of non-light rail vehicles on the site.
- Provide the surrounding community with benefits that serve their needs, including, but not limited to, the following:
    - Explore the potential for education and workforce partnerships with local school districts and community college to create work opportunities for local residents during the construction and operation phases.
    - Within the constraints of federal guidelines, create internal and external spaces that are accessible to the community for hosting meetings, holding community gatherings, and other activities.
    - Explore the ability to provide walking paths on the periphery of the facility.
    - Proactively work to ensure the participation of Disadvantaged Business Enterprises in the project, with an aim to support business of all types.
    - Explore opportunities to incorporate public art programs, such as those at the former Holly Power Plant site.
    - Ensure that all community spaces provided on the site, or surrounding it, are accessible for people with disabilities and other users.

Austin Light Rail will increase connectivity and accessibility in our community by providing an enhanced transit experience. The CAC sees great opportunities for the Austin community with both the 38th to Oltorf to Yellow Jacket and North Lamar to Pleasant Valley options. The CAC wishes to thank the Austin Transit Partnership for their commendable community engagement efforts, supporting the CAC through

this decision-making process, and providing us with all necessary information to make these recommendations.

If you should have any questions, I can be reached at [bc-awais.azhar@austintexas.gov](mailto:bc-awais.azhar@austintexas.gov).

Date of Approval: May 11, 2023

Record of the vote: Approved on a 11-0-0 vote (Committee Member Elias absent; one vacancy)

Attest:  , Project Connect Community Advisory Committee Chair

# waterloo greenway

2023 Board of Directors

Jesús Aguirre  
Hayden Brooks  
Jamie Chandlee  
Michelle Cline  
Virginia Cumberbatch  
Cotter Cunningham  
Kira Dell  
Bianca Garcia  
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Mary Hager  
Caroline Haley  
Alyssa James  
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Katie Naranjo  
Xavier Peña  
Elizabeth Rogers  
Anne Smalling  
Martha Smiley  
Jim Susman  
Marissa Tarleton  
John Teinert  
Roosevelt Weeks

May 2, 2023

Austin Transit Partnership

Re: Project Connect — Waterloo Greenway Conservancy Public Comment

Dear Austin Transit Partnership,

Since 2019, Waterloo Greenway Conservancy has supported Project Connect's vision for a more connected Austin community and participated in the Transit Forward coalition. Waterloo Greenway Conservancy believes it is important to improve transit access to downtown Austin for both quality of life benefits and supporting equitable development. Providing the community with safe, reliable, and affordable transit options will also connect hundreds of thousands of Austinites with the community-centered programs and amenities at Waterloo Greenway. The second phase of Waterloo Greenway will break ground this May, creating new bike and pedestrian trails, with parkland amenities and a restored landscape that would enhance access to Project Connect's lake crossing.

After reviewing the recent update to the Project Connect Phase 1 plan, we would like to share the following feedback and recommendations based on the information we have available today:

1. **Prioritize access to the Eastern Side of Downtown:** The Trinity St. crossing is critical to providing more direct, accessible transit to the eastern side of downtown and Waterloo Greenway. This option brings a station within close walking distance of the Greenway, the ESB-MACC, Palm School, and the Rainey Street Historic District, connecting more of our community with the public amenities in and around Waterloo Greenway. Enhanced access to eastern downtown would also support the vision for a well-connected and accessible Palm District that seeks to encourage walking, biking, public transit use, and leverage the significant investments around Project Connect transit lines to foster pedestrian friendly places. We encourage planning additional transit segments to enhance access from the Convention Center, continuing northward to better connect to the Palm and Innovation Districts.

# waterloo greenway

2. **Prioritize construction of a new bridge at Trinity St.:** A bridge at Trinity St. provides a pedestrian and bicycle connection across Lady Bird Lake at the southern terminus of the Waterloo Greenway. This will open up access to South Austin and the development of the South-Central Waterfront. It will also provide a safe pedestrian and bicycle connection on the eastern side of the lake, aligning with one of the important goals in the Waterloo Greenway Design Plan.
3. **Support a transit-oriented vision for the growth of the eastern side of downtown:** The area around Waterloo Greenway represents the largest remaining opportunity for growth in downtown Austin. With approximately ten private development projects either planned or under construction in the Rainey Street Historic District, Project Connect has an opportunity to shape more transit-oriented development patterns and reduce reliance on single-occupancy vehicles, as this area continues to grow and develop.
4. **Connect as many community members as possible to Waterloo Greenway:** Project Connect provides an opportunity to connect our community to Waterloo Greenway like never before, leveraging the significant public and community investment in our 35-acre park system. Light rail access on the eastern side of downtown will allow more people to visit downtown safely and affordably, augmented by potential caps extending connectivity to East Austin across IH-35. We believe it is important that Phase 1 serves as many potential riders as possible.
5. **Prioritize pedestrian-oriented design:** Prioritize the experience of pedestrians over vehicles when redesigning the streets to accommodate light rail. Waterloo Greenway is part of reshaping our downtown as a pedestrian and bike friendly place for all ages and abilities. The design of the downtown rail system should support and enhance these goals, as articulated in the Waller Creek District Design Guidelines and reinforced by the Waterloo Greenway Design Plan.
6. **Minimize impacts to parks and open space:** While envisioning the future of Austin transit's system, existing parks and open spaces should be protected to the fullest extent possible, including native habitats and our beloved tree canopy.

We encourage Austin Transit Partnership to consider the significant opportunity to better serve eastern downtown through a Trinity alignment crossing and opportunity to build upon Waterloo Greenway's investment towards a 1.5-mile connected park system.

Sincerely,



Jesús Aguirre

Waterloo Greenway Conservancy, CEO



May 1, 2023

Members of the Austin Transit Partnership:

On behalf of the members of AIA Austin, thank you for your tireless efforts in promoting and expanding transit options across our community. As architects, we understand that a robust and efficient transit system provides a more equitable and sustainable urban fabric. And as you proceed through your public engagement period, we hope this letter can provide a brief outline of this organization's priorities, for your consideration at every crucial decision point along the way.

- **Encourage Affordability:** We understand that the current options for light rail are somewhat scaled back from the original blue/orange lines, mainly due to price escalation and the demands of initial investment in maintenance facilities, etc. As Project Connect hears public opinion on the five options and their sub-options, we encourage you to keep equity and inclusivity as a core value. The establishment of a light rail system is inherently inclusive. Beyond that, we ask that you give overwhelming preference to Austin's communities that are historically disenfranchised, to ensure that these families can retain their crucial places within our growing city.
- **Data-Driven Decisions:** The five light rail options each present a different set of priorities. When considering the best path forward, we encourage you to give considerable weight to the data points that indicate the most effective route. These points include maximizing ridership, distance, and transfer opportunities, while also considering the delicate balance between speed and access/reach of stops.
- **Quality of the Street Experience:** The benefits of promoting a positive street life are very well known. Improved transit can be a tool to deemphasize our reliance on automobiles, and reestablish priority to people, businesses, places, and parks. AIA Austin encourages Project Connect to consider some of the challenges that elevated lines might create within a thriving urban fabric that puts people at its center.
- **Alignment with Precedents:** Austin has several previously established urban studies that could prove beneficial to Project Connect's efforts. These include: Design Commission's 2009 *Urban Design Guidelines for Austin*, which focuses on creating quality public space downtown; *The Great Streets Plan*, established in 2001 to provide equitable roadway/sidewalk zones and enhanced streetscapes; the *Austin Strategic Mobility Plan (ASMP)* that prioritizes equity, accessibility, and affordability; the *Downtown Austin Plan*, which establishes Downtown Austin as a destination, meant to be experienced and not passed through; and the *Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan*, adopted in 2012 as a designed embodiment of the city's high standards of maintaining sustainable, diverse, and equitable opportunities. We hope that you continue to refer to these guidelines at crucial decision-making points along the way.

Like you, the members of AIA Austin are committed to helping the city make sound, safe, and informed decisions for the betterment of the people of our city. We look forward to being a resource to you as you move this transit plan forward.



Christy Taylor, AIA  
AIA Austin President, 2023

Greg Canally  
Executive Director  
Austin Transit Partnership

May 2, 2023

Mr. Canally,

On behalf of the membership of AURA, Austin's largest grassroots, pro-transit organization, we wanted to share our feedback regarding the current ATP Project Connect options.

First, we want to express our appreciation for ATP staff and engineers for their availability and helpfulness during the public input process. Throughout our discussion process, ATP provided detailed information and answered numerous questions. This was crucial for the success of the AURA Project Connect Working Group and allowed us to conduct a comprehensive and holistic evaluation of each Project Connect option. We appreciate their support and engagement.

To analyze all light rail options and the future of transit in Austin, the all-volunteer AURA Project Connect Working Group built a robust evaluation framework. Our goal was to equip Austinites with the necessary information to understand and contextualize each option's impact on the city. Additionally, we aimed to provide a formal recommendation to inform an official endorsement vote of the AURA membership. After extensive research and investigation, the AURA Project Connect Working Group confidently settled on a specific recommendation: On-Street 38th to Oltorf to Yellow Jacket with the South 1st river crossing.

While all options are undoubtedly better than the current lack of any light rail, the working group has recommended the 38th to Oltorf to Yellow Jacket option because it lays the best foundation for the city overall. It balances every key criterion while providing a foundation that enables us to quickly and iteratively expand the system, achieve our mode shift goals, and connect every part of Austin. Although the lack of grade separation and connections to valuable destinations such as the airport are valid concerns, the working group believes that these issues can be mitigated or resolved while retaining the strengths of this initial build option. You can see the full output of the working group (recommendation, evaluation matrix, and reports) at

<https://aura-atx.org/project-connect-working-group-recommends-on-street-38th-to-oltorf-to-yellow-jacket-light-rail-option/>

The AURA membership also chose to endorse the On-Street 38th to Oltorf to Yellow Jacket rail option, but to also support all of the rail options. This choice shows continued, strong support for Project Connect, and that any of the light rail plans would be vastly preferred to Austin's current lack of light rail. It's worth noting that the vote was narrowly won, the On-Street North Lamar to Pleasant Valley option was a very close runner-up. We believe this shows the membership greatly values high ridership and believes that the significant compromises necessary for full grade separation through downtown are not worth it. In making this decision, we recognize that without grade separation our shared responsibility as transit planners and advocates will be



even greater to ensure that private vehicles are given as few opportunities as possible to interfere with our more efficient and higher capacity transit options. AURA members also voted with a strong preference for the South 1st crossing and that the Austin Airport connections should not be a high priority for Project Connect's initial phase.

Thank you for carefully considering our input and we are excited to collaborate with Austin Transit Partnership, Austin City Council, and CapMetro to make Project Connect an historic success.

Sincerely,  
AURA Board, on behalf of the AURA members

Cc: Members of the Austin Transit Partnership Board



CTX

CONGRESS  
FOR THE NEW  
URBANISM  
CENTRAL TEXAS  
CHAPTER

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May 2, 2023

Greg Canally  
Executive Director  
Austin Transit Partnership  
203 Colorado Street  
Austin, Texas 78701

Re: Austin Transit Partnership Light Rail Open House

Dear Mr. Canally,

On behalf of the Board of Directors of CNU-CTX, I wish to thank the staff at Austin Transit Partnership for presenting the revised plans for the initial phase of Austin's Light Rail investment. We understand that all plans have to be equally grounded in fiscal reality and aspirational ambition to actually transform our city and we appreciate the straightforward way in which the options have been presented to the community. Please note that CNU-CTX Board Member Veronica Castro de Barrera who serves on the ATP Board as Chair has recused herself from the discussion and vote on this topic.

There are two large impending infrastructure projects that will largely determine the shape Austin takes for many decades: Project Connect and I-35. Project Connect, if done well, will be a massive step forward towards realizing the promise of our City's Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan to grow as a compact and connected city, whereas the I-35 expansion will be a massive step backwards. If ATP makes the right decisions over the coming decades, we'll come to understand the wisdom of this generation of Austinites' choice to build a robust transit backbone and the folly of TxDOT's pursuit of illusory "congestion relief" will be laid bare.

We think the following principles will give the initial phase of Project Connect the best chance of success:

**Route:** The initial route should maximize ridership potential connecting the major employment centers and destinations to the greatest number of potential riders. This primary need for ridership should also be balanced against certain equitable considerations in creating a system that reaches a broad sector of the community and that builds confidence in the voting populace that this investment is for all of Austin and all of Austinites. The data indicate that the North Lamar to Pleasant Valley route will maximize the potential for ridership on this initial phase and provide a strong backbone upon which we can build out a full-fledged transit system. We also think there are many attractive qualities about the 38th to Oltorf to Yellow Jacket route (in which case we think an extension to 45th is the preferable option). We think starting with a solid first phase with one of these two options will provide the community with the best chance at seeing the fulfillment of the ultimate complete vision of Project Connect. We hope that subsequent phases to expand the system and serve more parts of the city will be rapidly planned and built so that there is minimal delay in achieving a complete system.

**Grade Separation:** While there might be certain tradeoffs between operational efficiencies and convenience, we believe that surface running light rail has the potential to offer the best user experience if designed appropriately. We feel that the options that have the transit that runs in dedicated transit pathways on the surface to be the preferred option and that while grade separation avoids for conflicts with automobiles and existing infrastructure, it makes sense to run the system primarily at street level (in dedicated ROW) where it can be accessed comfortably and conveniently by pedestrians. However, for surface running transit to be truly successful the design of the public realm and the streets surrounding stations must prioritize pedestrians and micro mobility and deprioritize private automobiles.

**The Public Realm and Street Design:** We feel that running transit on the streets is only a benefit if we also take the opportunity to truly remake those streets to be safe, comfortable, pleasant, and interesting for pedestrians. Streets comprise the largest fraction of Austin’s public realm and we should do a better job of making them places for people. Every transit trip begins and ends with someone using an active transportation option (walk, bike, scooter, etc.). We must design the streets and places that we run transit to prioritize their needs. From the renderings presented, there is work to be done here and we encourage Capital Metro, ATP, and the City of Austin to work together to shift the allocation of space and design of these roadway away from prioritizing automobiles and towards the people who will ultimately be using the transit system.

To that end, we continue to support a car-free Drag and we also support looking at additional route segments for car-free streets. While there won’t be one right design for all places, generally the following should be observed throughout the routes:

- Sidewalks along the route and on cross streets leading to stations should be wide and generous to accommodate increased pedestrian traffic.
- Street trees (located between the sidewalk and the roadbed) should be considered an essential element of street design on the routes and cross streets to the stations. There are many benefits to street trees including providing shade, evaporative cooling, improved street safety for all modes and softening the noise and hard edges of a busy city. Street trees can greatly enhance the safety, comfort, and utility of transit options.
- Slip lanes should be eliminated surrounding transit stations and on other intersections along likely pedestrian and micro mobility routes to the station.
- Where feasible we should have dedicated lanes for active micro-mobility transportation users.
- Streets should prioritize moving pedestrians first, micro mobility second, transit third, and cars last. Transit streets, especially downtown, should be designed to discourage through traffic for automobiles while providing necessary access for deliveries to businesses and to existing driveways and emergency access along the route.
- Just as our transit system operates as a network, our active transportation system should operate as a complete and connected network, with safe crossings, continuous sidewalks, and continuous micro mobility lanes. Our transit and active transportation networks should always work together to provide comfortable, connected, safe, and seamless trips.
- We should remake streets as complex places and consider the multiple user types and ways in which people use the public realm - introduce elements that make the street an enjoyable destination itself, a place to linger, and not just travel through. Elements might include sidewalk cafes, public art, street furniture, water fountains, places for buskers, kiosks or other places for vendors or food carts.

**Land Use:** While this is not something that ATP can do on its own, we want to stress that transportation and land use are not separate issues. We build transportation to serve land use and the land use we choose to build will determine the success of that transportation. We are making a multi-billion-dollar investment of taxpayer money in transit, and we owe it to the taxpayers to

give that investment every chance of success. To that end, we should look at all land in close proximity to stations as an opportunity to increase the intensity and bring as wide as possible diversity of housing options so that as wide as possible diversity of people can be best served with this investment into our transit network. Moreover, in the immediate station areas, we should encourage land uses that provide conveniences and serve the daily needs of transit riders. Creating station area plans along the entire network of high frequency transit options will put us in the best position to de-emphasize travel by automobile and reduce VMT over the course of the next century. Finally, if we are going to prioritize housing in and near our transit corridors (as we should), then it is also an imperative upon the city to make these corridors quality places for people to live their lives.

If we do this correctly, we'll lay down the foundation for being the kind of city that matches our aspirations. We appreciate your consideration of these important items.

Very respectfully yours,



Mateo Barnstone, Director  
CNU-CTX

CC:

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BOARD/COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION: 20230502-005

Urban Transportation Commission

Recommendation Number 20230502-005: Project Connect Light Rail Implementation

WHEREAS that the UTC affirms that surface-running light rail is a good option to address the cost estimates for the Project Connect light rail plan, that can be built in a manner that ensures reliability, and that surface-running light rail has many advantages including access for users of all abilities; and

WHEREAS in every city in the United States with light rail has more bus boardings than rail boardings; and

WHEREAS even after the completion of the light rail lines bus ridership in Austin is likely to exceed rail ridership; and

WHEREAS rapid transfers between bus and light rail will be needed to maximize light rail ridership; and

WHEREAS the UTC believes that high ridership on the first segment to be completed will have a significant impact on public support for further system expansion; and

WHEREAS, most residents of Austin fly infrequently, extending the route to the airport limits the first phase's reach into high ridership communities, and the airport is already served by the high-frequency bus route 20; and

WHEREAS Project Connect planning processes in 2019 identified the area around Rutland and Lamar as having high ridership potential for the Orange Line; and

WHEREAS that area has a high proportion of people of color; and

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the UTC recommends the North Lamar Transit Center to Pleasant Valley option because is it has significantly higher forecast ridership than the other options, connects well with existing bus routes and the Red Line, has the lowest cost per forecast rider, and because following phases could easily extend service from North Lamar Transit Center to higher-ridership areas with great equity impact; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the UTC also recommends the 38th to Oltorf to Yellow Jacket option, as it is the second highest forecasted ridership option, has high frequency on the main

spine, builds a desired leg to South Congress, and to a greater extent, avoids right-of-way not controlled by the City of Austin; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the UTC also recommends that Austin Transit Partnership (ATP) seek any cost-saving or external funding measures that might enable the best parts of the two recommended plans to influence one another, for example, if the North Lamar to Pleasant Valley option is chosen building the “Y” segment for a leg to South Congress, or for the 38th to to Oltorf to Yellow Jacket option is chosen, extending the line on North Lamar, as far past 38th Street as possible, ideally to Crestview Station; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the UTC requests that ATP releases the forecast number of bus transfers at each proposed light rail station and that as the design for the stations evolves, ATP provide information about how fast bus/train transfers are forecast to be; and

BE IT RESOLVED that the UTC requests Austin City Council direct Austin Transportation and Public Works Department to create a Project Connect Ordinance 2.0 that will crystallize the street-level changes needed to support a surface running rail system in downtown Austin, and bring this ordinance to City Council within 6 months of the selection of the preferred light rail implementation option. Items to be covered in this ordinance could include, but are not limited to: parking garage entries and exits and curb cuts, street and intersection closures, street space reallocation on both Guadalupe and Lavaca, street directionality changes, signal timing, and pedestrianization of streets.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the UTC requests ATP and CapMetro evaluate options to enhance MetroRapid service on corridors that are potential future light rail expansion routes. These evaluations should include whether "rail ready" Bus Rapid Transit with Dedicated Median Bus Lanes and light rail style platforms can be developed along these corridors to provide a high level of service and quickly transition these areas to light rail when funding is available; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the UTC also recommends that ATP engage the City of Austin, relevant stakeholders, and the public following the selection of a preferred light rail implementation option, in a scoping project for multimodal investments to ensure light rail integrates with and expands Austin's existing and future pedestrian, bicycle, and transit connections. In keeping with the Contract with the Voters, ATP should prioritize ROW for pedestrians, cyclists, micro-mobility users, and other transit options over preserving access for private auto traffic; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the UTC also recommends that if any part of the preferred light rail implementation option will require ROW acquisition from TxDOT, ATP should designate and publish an alternative plan in the event that ROW is not granted by TxDOT; and

Date of Approval: May 2, 2023

Record of the vote: 7-0 vote with Commissioner Wayne absent

Attest: Christopher Parks, Staff Liaison



# League of United Latin American Citizens

## District VII

### Austin, Texas

May 2, 2023

Mr. Greg Canally  
Executive Director  
Project Connect  
Austin, Texas

Dear Mr. Canally,

LULAC District VII is providing you and the Board of Directors with our feedback to your recent scenarios for the startup of LRT.

- 1. Light Rail Scenarios.** LULAC understands the trade-offs of the various scenario trade-offs with the goal of staying within a system that is now significantly over budget. Part of LULAC's support for the November 2020 Proposition A election was that equity would be a large part of the plan elements. In particular LULAC's interest was that the Green Line could be implemented in a timely fashion along with key expansions of Metrorapid and Metroexpress including neighborhood circulators. The other aspect our support was that \$300 million was programmed for anti-displacement.

The five plans presented for the Project Connect's first phase does not include the Green Line. The Green Line operating on a freight line extending east would provide critical connectivity to other corridors with options to travel to jobs, education, and social, housing, health, and other services within Austin and the surrounding areas. LULAC recently completed a demographic study, and the findings show that most of the working and poverty populations are located northeast and east outside of central Austin.

LULAC aligns with several of the recent comments made at the City Council Housing and Planning Committee discussing the light rail designs. Natasha Harper-Madison raised the issue of lack of northeast and east rail lines, *"We have 365,000 workers in our hospitality industry in this city. Where do the people working at the Hilton, and at the W, where do they live? You don't wanna know. They out here riding with no inspection because they have to...they just spent their whole income tax return on a car because they had to. All of these things have a direct impact on people's lives."*

**Given that the Green Line will be substantially delayed LULAC recommends that Project Connect take a hard look at fast-tracking and implementing the Green Line as soon as possible.**

- 2. Workforce Development.** LULAC appreciates that Project Connect has contributed \$300,000 in planning funds to the development and implementation of a workforce plan. LULAC is calling on Project Connect to allocate substantial funds to ensure that the workplan is implemented. Project Connect should provide resources and support to recruit, retain, and train transit works to ensure that the Austin transit industry has the workforce needed for today and the future. Elements of the support should include:





# League of United Latin American Citizens

## District VII

### Austin, Texas

- Cooperative agreements with various agencies to develop innovative workforce projects
- Reports and information on the results of those projects
- A new transit workforce technical assistance program

The partnership with the Workforce Solutions Capital Area (WFS) is a good start. LULAC has had concerns about WFS's impact. Reviewing their impact reports, WFS has significantly lagged behind in meeting goals in helping residents secure middle-skill jobs and move out of poverty. It is obvious that Project Connect go beyond just a partnership with WFS and consider other innovative approaches including:

- Developing apprenticeships, on the job training, and instructional training for public transportation maintenance and operations occupations
- Building local, regional, and statewide public transportation training partnerships with local operators, labor union organizations, workforce development boards, and other agencies to identify and address workforce skill gaps
- Improving safety, security, and emergency preparedness in local public transportation systems through improved safety culture and workforce communication with first responders and the riding public
- Addressing current or projected workforce shortages by developing partnerships with high schools, community college, and other community organizations

**LULAC recommends that Project Connect allocated a sufficient and significant budget (millions) for workforce development.**

- 3. Project Connect's \$300 million for anti-displacement.** LULAC is still evaluating the amounts allocated for anti-displacement including the \$20 million going to nonprofits including the anti-displacement strategies especially in the context of the Federal Transit Administration's Title VI Disparate Impact and Disproportionate Burden Policy.

The published anti-displacement investment timeline shows \$100 million for years 1-3; \$100 million for years 4-8; and \$100 million for years 9-13. The funding is being allocated for land acquisition, preservation and rehabilitation; affordable housing development; programs; and other strategies addressing immediate needs; and staffing, community engagement and marketing.

Since Project Connect's budget has grown from \$7.1 billion to over \$11.6 billion. A portion of the anti-displacement budget is for land acquisition and affordable housing which is also subject to the same inflationary influence that has affected the Project Connect budget. A \$300 million will not suffice with the increases in costs that the Project Connect has experienced.

**LULAC strongly recommend that the Project Connect budget for anti-displacement double it to an investment to at least \$600 million.**

- 4. Project Connect financing.** LULAC supports Mayor Watson's strategy to work with the Texas House and Senate to obtain voter approval for any debt issuances that incorporate considerations that align



# League of United Latin American Citizens

## District VII

### Austin, Texas

with the City of Austin debt issuance features. The voters will appreciate the transparency and accountability to approve any debt issuances. LULAC has always had a concern that allowed Project Connect to issue unauthorized debt through certificates of obligation.

An election should be held as soon as possible to allow the Federal Transit Administration and secure federal funding as soon as possible. LULAC will be looking for an increased budget for anti-displacement and fast-track of the Green Line.

Project Connect should take notice that the City of Austin has “an enormous amount of unissued debt - \$1.8 billion,” in the words of Interim City Manager Jesus Garza. Recently the City has advised that it is not advisable to have another bond election until 2026.

**LULAC recommends that Project Connect take the opportunity to include additional funding for affordable housing, workforce development, and fast-tracking the Green Line in a November election.**

LULAC also has comments on Project Equitable Transit Orientation that it will present in a detailed report at a later date.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide our comments.

Sincerely,

*Cynthia Valadez*

Cynthia Valadez  
LULAC District VII Director



# The Trail Conservancy

April 21, 2023

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Austin Transit Partnership

Re: Project Connect and The Ann and Roy Butler Hike and Bike Trail at Lady Bird Lake

Dear Austin Transit Partnership:

On behalf of The Trail Conservancy, we are writing to provide our feedback on the five options presented during the recent public engagement process for Project Connect.

The Trail Conservancy (TTC) serves as the formal partner to the City of Austin for all of Town Lake Metropolitan Park and the Ann and Roy Butler Hike and Bike Trail (collectively “The Trail”). We manage day-to-day operations on the almost 300 acres of space that make up the Trail, as well as oversee capital improvements and programming on the Trail. Because the Trail receives over 5 million visits annually it is vital that ATP take into account impacts to the Trail when it decides among the options it is currently considering.

A few preliminary remarks:

- TTC has limited its feedback solely to impacts on the Trail. It does not take any position on the many other issues presented by the five options (where the routes should be, whether rail should be underground, whether it serves the airport, etc.).
- Collectively, the five options present only two locations at which the rail line will cross Lady Bird Lake, and thus the Trail. Given this, our focus here is on the lake crossing options, and primarily upon their location.
- There was not a lot of detail provided about the options to cross Lady Bird Lake. In our meeting we were shown some slides that addressed the crossings. We asked for copies of those slides so we could study them in more detail, but to date we have not received them. Thus, our comments are based on the limited information we have, and our feedback could change if we knew more.
- In forming our feedback we’ve obtained the input of our staff, as well as the full board of TTC. We also called upon all that we’ve learned in our 20 years of engaging the community to find out what it does, and does not, want to see on the Trail. Finally, we’ve looked at the options through the lens of our mission: “to protect, enhance, and connect the Ann and Roy Butler Hike-and-Bike Trail for the benefit of all.” In our analysis, we landed on three primary criteria to evaluate the options:
  - Which crossing provides the greatest access to the Trail;
  - What impact will the crossings have on the Trail environment; and
  - What impact will the crossings have on Trail users.



# The Trail Conservancy

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**Chris Whitaker**  
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Having said all of this, and applying these criteria, we believe that the Trinity Street crossing is preferable. This is how we got there.

**Access to the Trail:** One of our primary missions is to make the Trail accessible to all of Austin. As Austin has grown, it has gotten more and more difficult for those who do not live adjacent to the Trail to get there. A light rail system has the potential to remedy that.

We believe that the Trinity crossing will offer the most access to the Trail for several reasons. First, it includes stations close to the Trail on both sides of Lady Bird Lake. Moreover, a pedestrian bridge at the Trinity location provides a new, additional lake crossing, opening up the north and south sides of the Trail to areas not currently served by a bridge. On the other hand, there are already several options for pedestrians to cross the lake in the immediate vicinity of a South 1st crossing.

Further, our mission also includes connecting the Trail with other parts of Austin. Waterloo Greenway is about to break ground on its Phase II project from the confluence of Waller Creek and Lady Bird Lake to Fourth Street, connecting the Waller Creek Trail with the Butler Trail. The Trinity crossing provides a rail station adjacent to this junction, providing many more people access to these soon-to-be connected trails.

**The Environment:** We also believe that the Trinity crossing minimizes the environmental consequences that could flow from a rail line crossing the Trail. For instance, the stations and rail lines associated with the Trinity crossing appear to have a smaller Park footprint than the South 1st stations and lines do, particularly in the Auditorium Shores area. In addition, there is already a dark “dead zone” under the Drake (South 1st) Bridge on the north side of the lake. Adding yet another bridge immediately next to the Drake Bridge will only enlarge this “dead zone.” Finally, the preservation of heritage trees is also of great importance, and it appears that the Trinity crossing would have the least impact on heritage trees of the two options.

**User Experience:** TTC urges ATP to carefully consider the impact on Trail users that the different crossings will have. When we engage the community and Trail users—which we do regularly—we always hear how much they value the peaceful, nature-focused experience they have on the Trail. Preserving this environment is very important to TTC.

With the caveat that we do not have very detailed information, it appears to TTC that the Trinity crossing would have less impact on the daily experience of a Trail user than the South 1st crossing would. Regardless of whether the line is at grade or elevated, it is hard to imagine how a train running over or through the open spaces of Auditorium Shores would not diminish one’s experience there. On the other hand, a crossing at Trinity would involve crossing the Trail on the south side of the Lake somewhere in the former Austin



# The Trail Conservancy

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American-Statesman site. Because that site is not yet constructed, it will be much easier to consider and accommodate the Trail environment in that crossing. On the north side, given the grade differential from the street to the Lake at this point, the rail line will have to be elevated significantly above the Trail here, mitigating negative impacts.

In summary, for all of the reasons set out above, TTC encourages ATP to have the light rail line cross Lady Bird Lake at the Trinity Street location. We appreciate ATP taking the time to present the options to TTC, and taking into account TTC's views. We remain ready to provide any additional input ATP would like to receive, and look forward to working with ATP as the Project Connect plan gets built out.

Heidi Anderson, CEO  
The Trail Conservancy

May 10, 2023

To:  
Greg Canally  
Austin Transit Partnership  
Executive Director

Dear Mr. Canally:

On behalf of the Downtown Austin Alliance, we are submitting our comments on the updated light rail implementation plan options. Project Connect is a transformational project for downtown—one that will not only enhance mobility, but also make downtown more vibrant and accessible for years to come. After the release of the updated light rail options on March 21, the Downtown Austin Alliance assembled an ad-hoc committee consisting of board members, stakeholders, and property owners adjacent to proposed alignment options. After five meetings that focused on traffic impacts, garage access, street vibrancy, safety, and connections to downtown amenities, our ad-hoc committee recommended the following comments that were approved by our Board of Directors on May 10<sup>th</sup>.

Our guiding principles were centered on creating a safe, welcoming and vibrant downtown experience. One that minimizes traffic impacts, expands connections to downtown's many destinations and offerings, maintains local access for existing and planned properties, and ensures that the transit system supports the large volumes of existing and future development in downtown.

**With those principles in mind, we recommend the 38<sup>th</sup> Street to Yellow Jacket alignment ideally with an extension to 45<sup>th</sup> Street while continuing to identify creative sources of funding for extensions including the airport. Inclusion of adequate park and ride facilities at the terminus of each of the lines is essential. We also strongly recommend the light rail to cross Lady Bird Lake at Trinity Street and include one additional station in the vicinity of Wooldridge Square and the Sweatt Travis County Courthouse.**

Additionally, we ask for a feasibility study of constructing underpasses at Cesar Chavez/Trinity and/or Guadalupe/15<sup>th</sup> Street to mitigate future traffic impacts. We strongly urge Austin Transit Partnership, City of Austin and Capital Metro to explore

The Downtown Austin Alliance mission:  
To create, preserve and enhance the value and vitality of downtown Austin.

creative financing options for an airport station, or at a minimum to acquire the right of way in the first phase.

Below we have outlined each element with more detailed analysis and comment. Also, we included detailed maps showing current and future development patterns for your review.

**On-Street Light Rail with a Trinity Crossing (see appendix A):**

A dedicated on-street light rail alignment provides users with direct access to what makes downtown Austin a premier destination for residents and visitors. We believe that a partial underground or elevated alignment moves people either through downtown or away from street amenities such as restaurants, hotels, and music venues. As currently proposed, the elevated and partially tunneled options have no benefits and many impacts to downtown properties, parks and retail districts. Additionally, our analysis of current and planned development (office, retail, residential, and hotel units) estimates more than 10 million square feet of office and retail and over 10,000 hotel and residential units. Connecting our transit system to this emerging center of downtown, and to the existing Downtown Station, Convention Center, Waterloo Greenway, the Rainey District, future IH-35 Caps and the South-Central Waterfront is critical.

**Station near Wooldridge Square (see Appendix B):**

As currently proposed, the distance between the Congress and 15<sup>th</sup> Street stations is approximately one mile. We recommend adding an additional station in the vicinity of Wooldridge Square and Sweatt Travis County Courthouse. This would lessen the distance between the Congress and 15<sup>th</sup> Street stations to less than half a mile and would provide much needed access to courthouses (federal and state), Austin Community College, Pease School redevelopment, Austin History Center, the Paramount and the Old Bakery. It would also facilitate east-west transfers to frequent bus routes at 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> Streets, providing potential congestion relief at Republic Square.

**Traffic Impacts:**

We strongly urge you to continue to fully evaluate the traffic impacts associated with the preferred option and offer solutions that can mitigate the impacts. One solution we urge you to study is the feasibility of an underpass at Cesar Chavez/ Trinity and/or at 15<sup>th</sup> Street/Guadalupe. Per City of Austin staff traffic estimates, these two intersections would see much longer traffic delays (greater than 45 seconds).

**Airport Station:**

We understand and share the viewpoint that ridership in Phase I is the highest priority for long-term success, yet we believe that there may be creative financing opportunities to build the Airport connection. We encourage you to explore creative funding mechanisms to complete an airport station, working with the Federal Aviation Administration, Austin-Bergstrom International Airport and others. At a minimum,

acquisition of the right of way to the airport should be obtained to ensure the connection in future phases.

With the advancement of the on-street option, the design of the street, stations and public spaces is critical. We want to ensure that opportunities are leveraged to their fullest potential, including the creation of public-private partnerships and design with people and programming in mind to create iconic transit streets and stations. Amenities necessary to operate safe, convenient and welcoming transit stations (including but not limited to security, public restrooms, wayfinding and drinking fountains) should be integrated. The design should enhance and bolster downtown's existing buildings, creative culture, parks and public spaces, local businesses and street vitality. We ask that you involve us early and continuously through a partnership to develop the design for downtown streets and stations as well as to plan for long-term programming and activation strategies.

We appreciate the process and effort undertaken by the staff from Austin Transit Partnership and the City of Austin in advancing us to this critical decision point. The team was responsive, active and engaged with our organization and members of the downtown community. All considered; however, we have had limited time to thoroughly review all information and data requested especially traffic analysis and impacts, thus our feedback and recommendations may alter as more information becomes available during future studies and design. Most importantly, we want to remain fully involved in assisting as a partner as Project Connect proceeds.

Sincerely,



Jeff Howard, Chair  
Downtown Austin Alliance



Dewitt Peart, President & CEO  
Downtown Austin Alliance

CC:

Austin City Council

Capital Metro Board of Directors

Austin Transit Partnership Board of Directors








Lindsay Wood, EVP of Engineering & Construction, Austin Transit Partnership

Peter Mullan, EVP of Architecture & Urban Design, Austin Transit Partnership



# APPENDIX A DEVELOPMENT ALONG TRINITY ALIGNMENT

## MAP LEGEND

-  Grade Rail
-  Potential Light Rail Segment
-  Existing MetroRail
-  Existing Buildings
-  Recently Completed Development
-  Under Construction Development
-  Proposed Development



### RESIDENTIAL

3,000 units Existing  
2,244 units Under Construction  
4,579 units Planned



### HOTEL

4,350 units Existing  
240 units Under Construction  
1,531 units Planned



### RETAIL

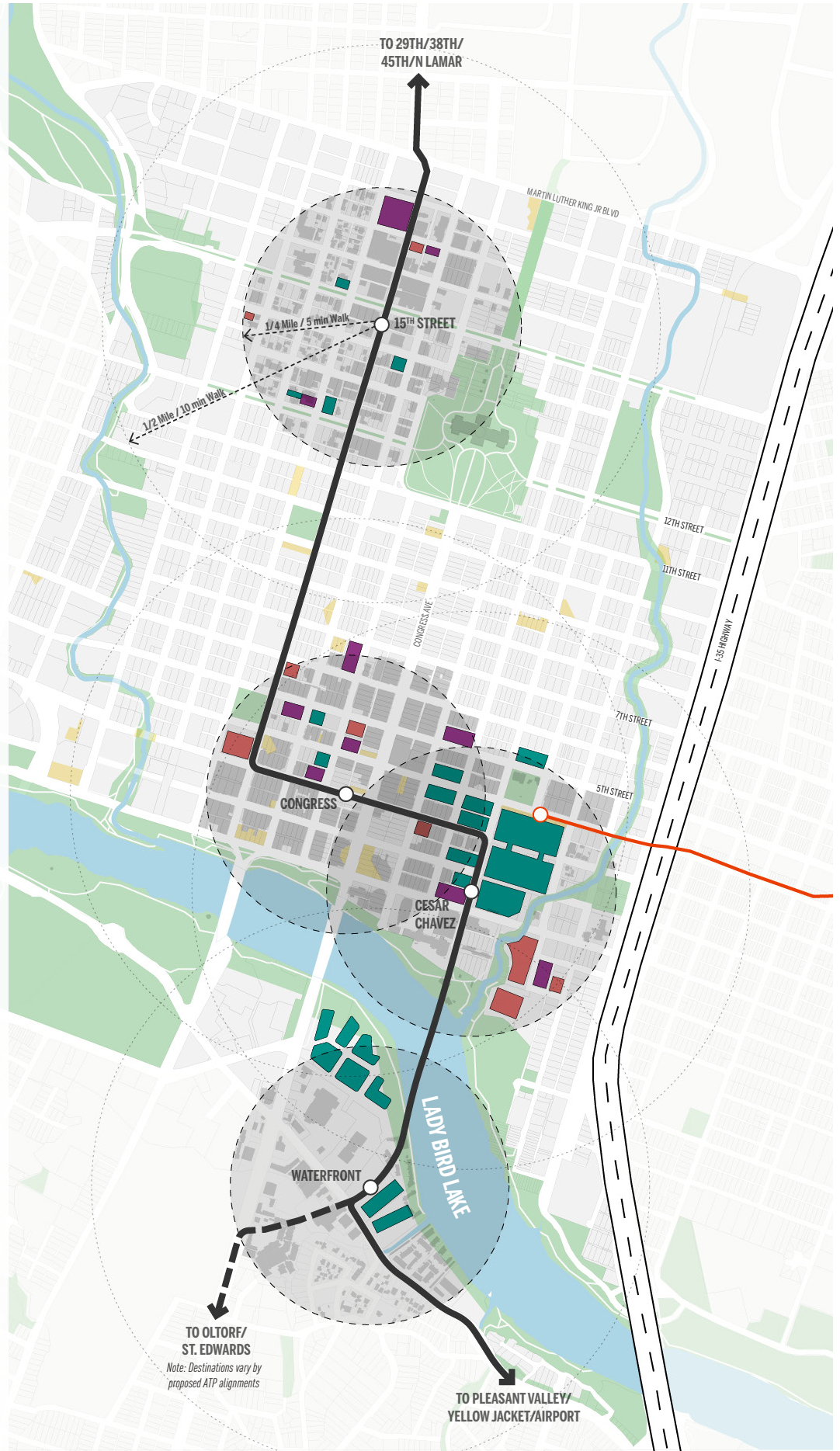
630,000 sq. ft Existing  
54,000 sq. ft Under Construction  
345,000 sq. ft Planned



### OFFICE







1.7 million sq. ft. units Existing  
2.3 million sq. ft Under Construction  
6.9 million sq. ft Planned

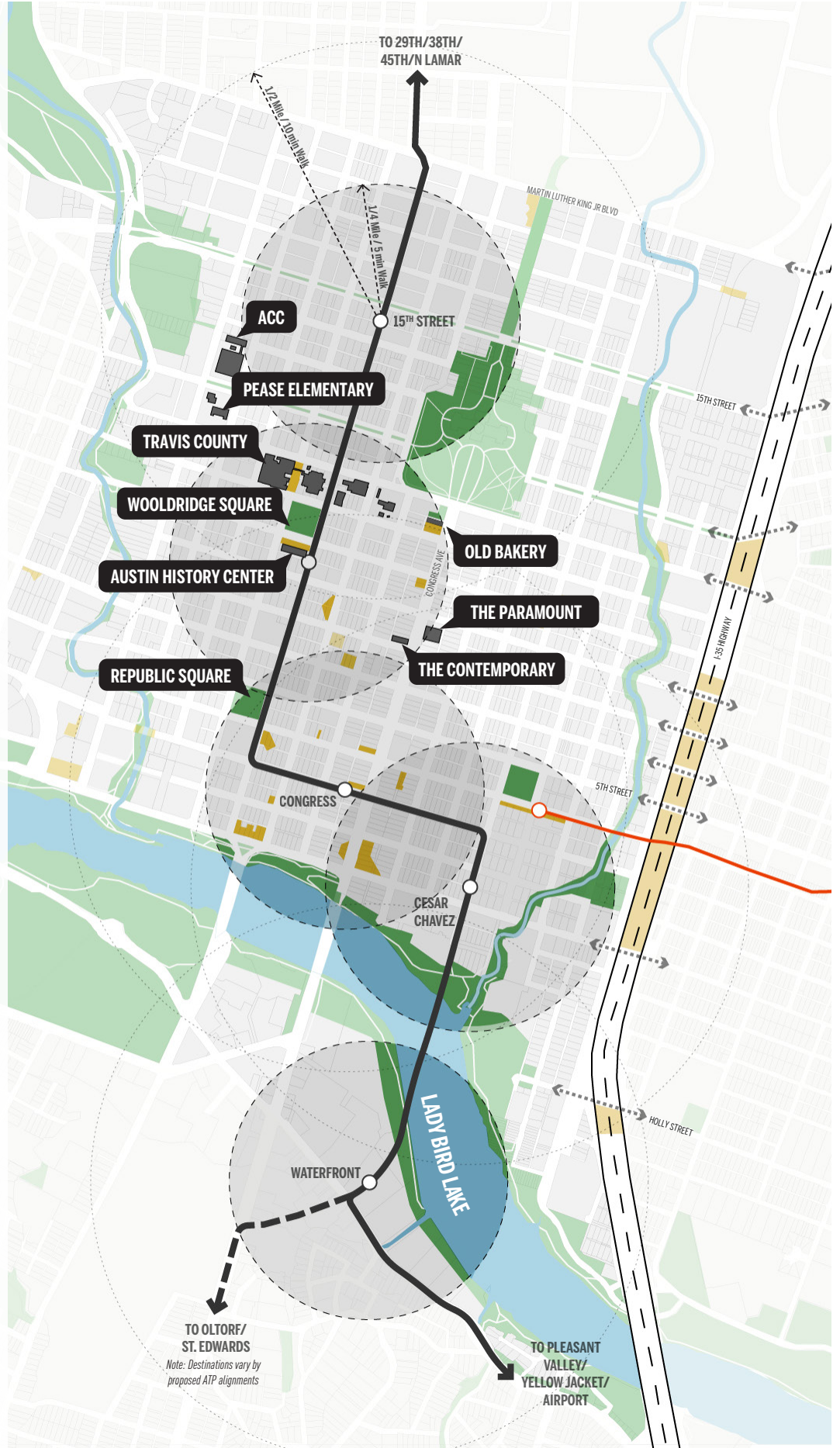
**DOWN  
AUSTIN TOWN  
ALLIANCE**



## APPENDIX B WOOLDRIDGE STATION CONNECTIVITY

### MAP LEGEND

-  Grade Rail
-  Potential Light Rail Segment
-  Existing MetroRail
-  Notable Connections
-  Public Green Space
-  Potential I-35 Caps





## **AIRPORT ADVISORY COMMISSION**

### **ITEM 14 – DISCUSSION AND ACTION ITEMS**

Discussion and possible action on a recommendation by the Airport Advisory Commission to Project Connect, Austin Transit Partnership, and CapMetro about the updated light rail options for public consideration and feedback – Requested and presented by Airport Advisory Commission member Bakari Brock.



## AIRPORT ADVISORY COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION 2023

Date: May 10, 2023

Subject: Airport Transit Service Enhancements

Motioned By: Bakari Brock

Seconded By:

**WHEREAS**, the City of Austin Department of Aviation is responsible oversight of Austin-Bergstrom International Airport; its operation, projects, capital improvement programs, aviation contracts, annual operating budget, long term planning, and quality of service to for the customers of ABIA and the residents of Austin and surrounding metropolitan area;

**WHEREAS**, the Airport Advisory Commission is responsible for making recommendations to the City Council on aviation projects that the Department of Aviation proposes for the capital improvements program; and review and make recommendations to the council on aviation contracts that are presented by the Department of Aviation for council for action; and review and make policy recommendations to the council on quality of services at Austin-Bergstrom International Airport to residents of Austin and customers of the airport and long term planning of Austin-Bergstrom International Airport; in addition to other responsibilities.

**WHEREAS**, Austin-Bergstrom International Airport is a regional transportation hub with over 6,000 employees, 260 daily flights (not including cargo and private aircraft flights), and over 20,000 daily commercial airline passengers and projected to increase;

**WHEREAS**, the Austin-Bergstrom International Airport 2040 Master Plan calls for the promotion of public transportation, partnership with CapMetro, maintenance of air quality standards, reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, and reduction of single occupancy vehicle use;

**WHEREAS**, the Airport Advisory Commission received a courtesy briefing after the deadline for comments and one of the five light rail options for public consideration includes an airport station,

**BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Airport Advisory Commission recommend that Project Connect, the Austin Transit Partnership, and CapMetro propose transportation alternatives that extend the hours of the High-Frequency Route 20 Manor Road/Riverside Drive bus, and to provide additional service to the address the goals stated above and to meet the needs of employees and travelers, whether with light rail or another option.

For:

Against:

Abstain:

Absent:

Attest:

---

Wendy Price Todd, Airport Advisory Commission Chair

DRAFT



**CEO**

Dianne Bangle

May 2023

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Austin Transit Partnership leadership,

The Real Estate Council of Austin (RECA) and its members appreciate the opportunity to weigh in on the important decision of selecting the first phase of Project Connect light rail. We thank you for the time you have spent meeting with our leadership and addressing our concerns.

Transit projects have an important relationship with the built environment, and RECA members are well-acquainted with how transportation projects can improve or detract from development in Austin.

Our comments below are from our lens as real estate professionals, leaning on our professional expertise and our desire to see a thriving city with a well-functioning public transit system.

As has been the case since RECA supported Project Connect in 2020, RECA’s top priorities are an on-time and on-budget delivery of this project, and those continue to be guiding principles. With that in mind, we recommend the following:

**Recommendation #1: Focus on ridership and future land use**

The route you choose should maximize ridership and account for the future development of the areas around the stations. Land use and route selection to attract as much FTA funding as possible should be your priority. RECA recommends consideration of the following:

- Choose a route that maximizes ridership in the first phase
- Consider not just current ridership, but also potential future ridership
- While ATP does not manage zoning or land use, you must advocate to the City to allow for ETODs that maximize FTA funding and ridership
- Based on current zoning, existing development, and potential for change, the Guadalupe/North Lamar and Riverside corridors are likely to generate the most future ridership

**Recommendation #2: Communicate pain points to the public**

RECA appreciates the meetings you have held with stakeholders, but there are still quite a few facets of the project that the public does not understand. To help build trust with the public and ensure they feel included and considered, RECA recommends being transparent with the public on the following important items and all of the project steps along the way. While the team has answered many of these questions, they have not made their way into the general understanding of the Austin public.

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- The 40% contingency: what is this? Why is it so high? What does it mean for the project? Is further expansion possible if you don't spend the contingency? What if the project goes over the budget, will you have to come back and ask the public for more?
- At-grade options and the impact on downtown transportation: did ATP do a transportation impact analysis? What did it show? How are you planning to minimize disruptions?
- Ridership estimates: Why were they based on current ridership? Are you planning to increase density along the lines?
- Phase 1: Is this all that is being built? Will there eventually be a full network? Will you eventually build everything that was shown in 2020?
- Project timing: What's next? How long will this phase take to build? What year will different milestones occur?

### **Recommendation #3: Focus on a plan that allows for the best initial investment and connections**

Planning for a rail line that allows for the best initial investment and allows for the best possible ultimate rail system within Austin is important. With that in mind, RECA recommends considering the following:

- Prioritize a plan that can attract ridership on its own
- Choose an option that gets all the way to the airport, rather than one that only gets close
- If getting to the airport cannot be included in Phase 1, prioritize its funding for the next phase, focus on alternative funding mechanisms (including potential FAA partnerships or public/private partnerships), and ensure that airport stop is "shovel ready" with the rest of the initial route
- Focus on the routes that connect to the Red Line—either the route that includes Crestview or the Trinity downtown option

### **Recommendation #4: Minimize disruption to the city street grids and other methods of transportation**

Project Connect is set to be an important element of how Austinites get around the city in the future. However, there will always be people who drive, walk, bike, and use other methods of transportation. With that in mind, the rail lines should minimize disrupting the existing street grid or transportation capacity of our important corridors. Some of the ways to consider minimizing the disruption to the transportation network include:

- Further analysis of the disruption caused by the Trinity crossing option compared to the South 1<sup>st</sup> crossing option
- Both the construction disruption and the long-term disruption of the on-street vs. elevated vs. partial below-grade options through downtown
- Further study and partnership with the City related to the lines at the 15<sup>th</sup> Street and Martin Luther King, Jr. Street crossings, as those appear to be the most likely to cause significant traffic delays

**Final recommendation:**

ATP staff is encouraged to follow each of the recommendations provided above. The combination of factors in those recommendations leads RECA to one option:

**RECA recommends ATP staff to choose the 38<sup>th</sup> to Oltorf to Yellow Jacket option.**

This recommendation comes with some additional requests:

- RECA prefers the Trinity option downtown, presuming further traffic studies continue to show it has less impact to traffic than the South 1<sup>st</sup> option
- The extension of Yellow Jacket to the airport is hugely important, and ATP should expend all resources possible to allow for that extension in Phase 1
- In tandem with planning for the Phase 1 route, ATP staff should be planning for the next extensions as well to ensure that the projects are “shovel-ready” at the same time, or very soon after, Phase 1

Thank you for considering our recommendations and for your continued efforts to develop a successful public transit system in Austin.

Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dianne Bangle". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being more prominent than the last.

Dianne Bangle  
CEO, Real Estate Council of Austin