

# PROJECT CONNECT STATUS REPORT

## ATP BOARD BRIEF | NOVEMBER 2022

In November 2020, the Austin voters approved Proposition A to dedicate new revenue to the implementation of Project Connect—a program of transit projects designed to provide transportation alternatives for our community. Voters simultaneously created the Austin Transit Partnership (ATP) and tasked its Board of Directors with overseeing the program. This Project Connect ATP Board Brief serves as an update to the ATP Board about the progress of the projects that make up the Project Connect Program.

### » PROGRAM UPDATE

#### LIGHT RAIL

ATP continues its work on an updated light rail implementation work plan in coordination with CapMetro and the City, as well as with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to ensure project compliance.

Interdisciplinary, technical focus teams continue to meet weekly to evaluate the technical feasibility of light rail optimization and cost-saving options. These focus groups, created earlier this year, center on various aspects of the light rail program, including light rail endpoints, downtown and underground, the combined maintenance facility, stations, systems and vehicles, river crossing options, street cross sections, and construction technology and materials.

The focus groups will continue to meet this fall to develop viable alternatives informed by technical data, FTA grant competitiveness, and community values criteria.

ATP will use data collected and validated through the technical and viability process to develop and recommend optimized operating segments for light rail implementation. In the coming months, such operating segments will be further developed and shared with the community, with a focus on equity and sustainability, solicited feedback from priority communities. Using this community feedback and the evaluation criteria co-created with the community, the technical team will

advance the design of the financially-viable, community-supported options.

ATP continues to coordinate with the FTA to ensure the project's compliance with NEPA policies and grant eligibility, as well as with the City of Austin to facilitate any needed revisions to city code, criteria and permitting procedures. These coordination efforts will continue with the evaluation of the financially-viable and community-supported light rail operating segments in 2023.

#### RED LINE METRORAIL PROJECTS

Construction of the McKalla Station and Lakeline-Leander Double Tracking continues as planned. At McKalla Station, the design packages for the station area are near 100% and utility relocation is ongoing. For Lakeline-Leander, construction is substantially complete and final testing is planned.



To support the ongoing construction at McKalla Station and the Lakeline-Leander Double Tracking Project, CapMetro has scheduled a rail service suspension between November 19 and 27, 2022. The closure is necessary for both construction projects and will impact both freight and commuter rail service. These investments will ultimately improve rail service for transit customers and freight partners, as was committed to as part of the Project Connect program. The closure was timed during a holiday week to be minimally disruptive, as rail service was already suspended Thursday (Thanksgiving Day) and Friday.

During upcoming meetings, the ATP and CapMetro Boards of Directors will both consider approval of an interlocal agreement related to \$25 million in capital funding to support the MetroRail improvements.

### METRORAPID

Construction progress and schedule coordination for the Expo Center and Pleasant Valley MetroRapid projects are ongoing. CapMetro has reached 100% design on shelters and will be inspecting a prototype in early December. Construction is complete at nine stations, with seven more in the immediate pipeline.

During the CapMetro Board Meeting in November, the Board will consider a design-build contract for construction of bus electrification infrastructure at CapMetro's South Operations bus yard (2910 E. 5th Street). CapMetro's Sustainability Action Plan includes a pledge to transition the bus fleet to zero emissions by 2035. This project also supports Project Connect program commitments for a zero-emissions fleet by providing the charging infrastructure to enable battery electric buses to be deployed on the MetroRapid lines, which will primarily use end-of-line charging at Park & Ride facilities.

### METRORAPID PARK & RIDES

Property acquisition and land-use regulatory processes to support the MetroRapid Park & Rides continue. The Expo traffic signal necessary to support safe bus movements in and out of the Park & Ride at Expo Center has reached 100% design.

### CAPMETRO SMALL MEMBER CITIES

During the November 8 election, the residents of CapMetro small member cities Manor and Lago Vista voted to remain committed to CapMetro. These votes retain the service in Lago Vista which connects that community to the Red Line as well as the commuter bus service in Manor which will serve the commuter needs of the community until the Green Line is completed. ATP and CapMetro will continue working with the City of Manor in partnership on the future Green Line MetroRail project and commuter service to that community.



### PROCUREMENT/SOLICITATIONS UPDATE

ATP continues to move Project Connect forward to build the foundation for future solicitations and build out the future transit network of the Austin region. Specifically, at the November 2022 meeting, the ATP Board will consider approval of a Systemwide Architecture, Urban Design, and Engineering Services contract for an amount not to exceed \$16.7 million.

The selected Systemwide Architecture, Urban Design, and Engineering Team will be responsible for developing prototypical station design, systemwide guidelines, and prototypical design elements, as well as, site-specific designs for individual stations and facilities in alignment with ATP's system goals and aspirations.

These systemwide guidelines are aimed at the implementation of the light rail stations and adjacent areas through research, benchmarking studies, and community engagement activities (coordinated with other, ongoing community outreach efforts). These

guidelines and designs must be able to provide a consistent design language and system identity for all design elements that are visible and part of the user experience, while providing required, functional back-of-house solutions that incorporate all necessary rail and building systems.

The expected duration of services is three years for Phase 1 with possible one-year extensions.

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

The October 2022 technical and community advisory committee workshop, which served to gather feedback around community values for the light rail system, also helped inform the development of future community-facing focus groups, currently to be scheduled for late 2022 – early 2023. These focus groups will help the ATP Community Engagement team connect with priority populations and continue to build trust and meaningful input around the process of updating the light rail implementation plan.



The Community Engagement team has also been participating in this ongoing phase of Project Development to ensure equity, sustainability and community values are embedded in the engineering and planning conversations. The team continues to conduct one-on-one conversations with non-profit organizations that can help us reach priority communities. Examples include the Diversity & Equity Chambers, Foundation Communities, People United for Mobility Action (PUMA), the Housing Authority, the NAACP, Austin Justice Coalition, the Urban League and many more.

Additional work completed by the Community Engagement team this month has included hosting the Community Advisory Committee (CAC), supporting the roll-out of the Project Connect Ordinance with City of Austin Commissions, participation in the development of the Equitable Transit-Oriented Development Study, a Project Connect Alignment Tour, tabling activities at local community events, and Project Connect presentations by request that target priority communities – including, most recently, college student and low-income communities.



**NOVEMBER 30TH JOINT PARTNERSHIP MEETING**

The ATP Board of Directors, Austin City Council Members and CapMetro Board of Directors will convene for the Annual Joint Partnership Meeting from 1 to 3 p.m. on November 30 to engage with Project Connect partners and present progress on the work across the multiple facets of the program. The meeting will be conducted at the City of Austin Planning & Development Center, 6310 Wilhelmina Delco Dr., Austin, TX 78752.