

Austin Light Rail Phase 1 Coordination Plan

Version 3

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1 Introduction

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and Austin Transit Partnership (ATP) has completed the environmental review of the Austin Light Rail Phase 1 Project (the Project) in Austin, Texas under the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

FTA, as lead federal agency and ATP, as local lead agency and Project sponsor, prepared this Coordination Plan (Plan) in accordance with *Efficient Environmental Reviews for Project Decision-Making and One Federal Decision*, 23 U.S.C. 139. This document is an update to the January 2025 Project Coordination Plan (Version 2) and supports the combined Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS)/Record of Decision (ROD) that was published in the Federal Register on January 16, 2026. The Plan describes how the FTA and ATP had divided environmental review responsibilities and provided an opportunity for agency and public participation in and comment on the environmental review process for the Project.

1.1 Roles and Responsibilities

ATP is seeking federal funding through FTA's Capital Investment Grants program. FTA is responsible for managing the NEPA process and will ensure all environmental investigations, reviews, and consultation are coordinated as a single process in compliance with all applicable environmental requirements.

ATP is the independent local government corporation responsible for the implementation, planning, design, financing, execution, and oversight of the Project. FTA and ATP prepared the EIS and supporting documentation consistent with FTA's NEPA procedures. In addition, ATP ensured Project stakeholders had an opportunity to participate in and comment on the EIS. FTA and ATP were responsible for considering and responding to all public and agency comments received.

1.2 Coordination Plan Goals

This Plan describes activities that have taken place throughout the development of the EIS. The goals of this plan include:

- Goal 1: Provide early coordination with agencies and the public.
- Goal 2: Enable a more efficient environmental review.
- Goal 3: Facilitate Project decision-making.
- Goal 4: Ensure Project decision-making transparently.

2 Project Description

The Project is a 9.8-mile light rail transit (LRT) branched line extending north, south, and east of downtown Austin. **Figure 1** depicts the Selected Alternative included in the FEIS/ROD and subsequently published in the Federal Register on January 16, 2026.

Beginning at the intersection of Guadalupe Street and 38th Street, the in-street, LRT-dedicated, double-tracked, 15-station alignment will extend south past the University of Texas and the Texas State Capitol building. At the intersection of Guadalupe Street and 3rd Street, the alignment will turn east on 3rd Street, cross Congress Avenue, and connect to Trinity Street. The alignment will continue south on Trinity Street and cross Lady Bird Lake on a new LRT-dedicated bridge. On the south shore of Lady Bird Lake, the alignment will connect to East Riverside Drive, where it will split into two branches. The western branch will cross East Bouldin Creek, extend south on Congress Avenue, and terminate at the intersection of Congress Avenue and Oltorf Street. From East Riverside Drive, the eastern branch of the alignment will continue southeast along East Riverside Drive and terminate just west of State Highway 71 at the proposed Yellow Jacket station.

The Project includes an Operations and Maintenance Facility (OMF) near the U.S. Highway 183 / State Highway 71 interchange with Airport Commerce Drive in a light-industrial/commercial use area. The OMF will include space for administration, operations and maintenance staff, a light rail control center, and light rail vehicle maintenance. The OMF will also serve as a light rail vehicle storage yard with the capacity to support both light rail vehicle operations and fleet storage. The OMF will include adjacent Maintenance of Way shop locations and associated light rail equipment storage functions.

The Project will include three park-and-rides located near the system termini at 38th Street, Oltorf Street, and Yellow Jacket Lane. The Project will include traction power substations spaced approximately one mile apart. Train control and communication cabinets, similar in size to traffic signal intersection cabinets, will be located approximately 0.5 mile apart along the alignment.

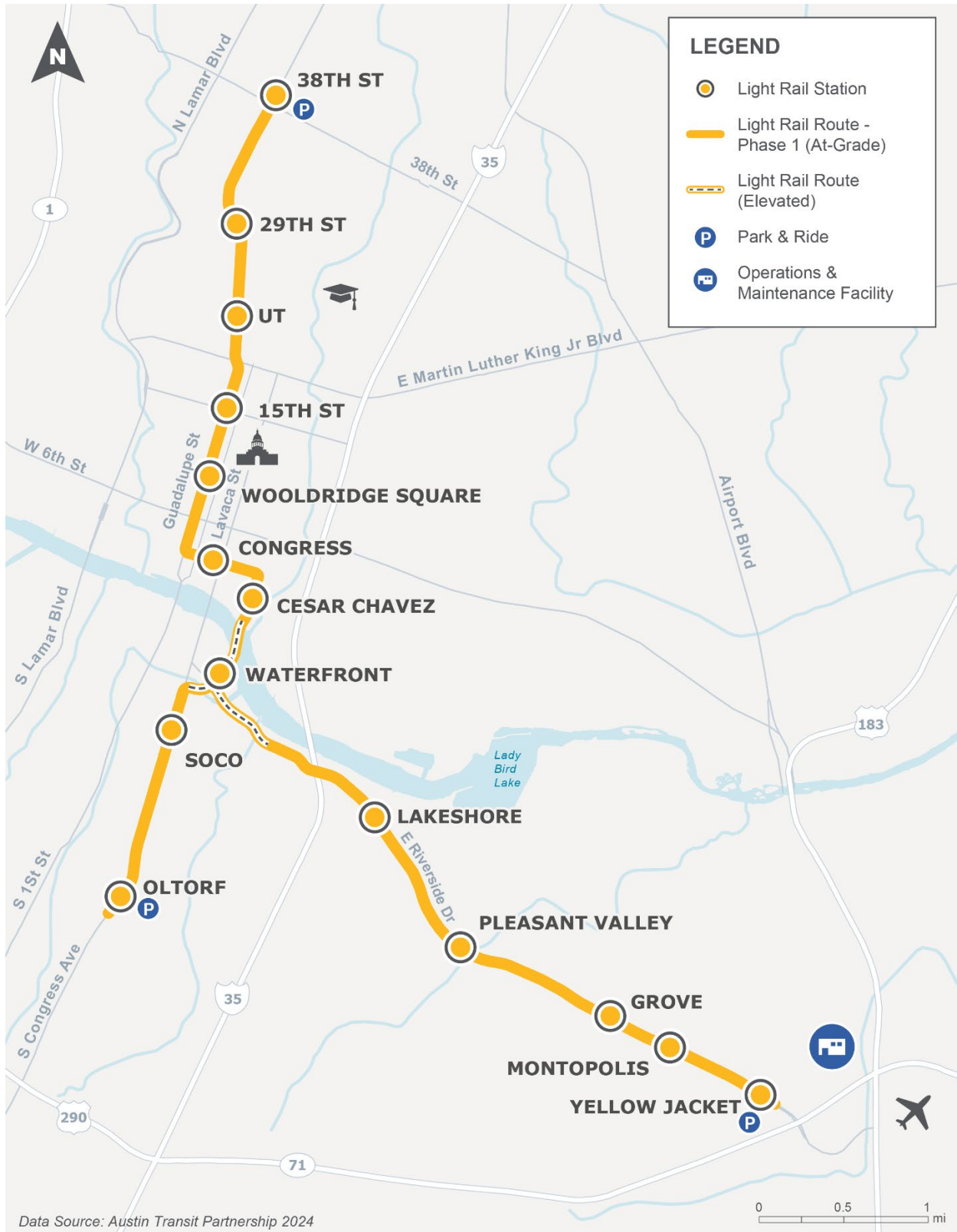
2.1 Purpose and Need Statement

The purpose of the Project is to meet growing corridor travel demand with a reliable, safe, cost-effective, time-competitive, sustainable, and equitable light rail system. The lack of transportation options and limited roadway capacity to accommodate growth in central Texas may hinder the continued vitality and economic health of Austin and surrounding areas in the future. Inadequate transit access and rising travel demand have resulted in longer travel times, decreased mobility, and additional travel costs for residents and businesses.

The Project is needed to:

- increase the transportation network capacity in response to existing travel demand;
- increase transportation choices and capacity to support Austin’s population and employment growth;
- improve transit access between housing and jobs; and
- support growth of, and connectivity to, the regional activity centers.

Figure 1: Alternative included in the FEIS/ROD (January 2026)



2.2 Planning History

Planning for high-capacity transit in the Austin metropolitan area began over two decades ago to address congestion on the capacity-constrained roadway network and accommodate the significant population and employment growth projected for the area. This planning led to the *Project Connect Long-Term Vision Plan*, which included high-capacity transit corridors (CapMetro 2018). The vision plan was included as an integral part of the *Austin Strategic Mobility Plan*, approved by the Austin City Council in 2019 (City of Austin 2019). In 2020, the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization adopted its *2045 Regional Transportation Plan*, which included the high-capacity transit corridors as priority transit capital investments. In November 2020, voters approved Proposition A, an increase in the City's property tax rate, to provide local funding for the Project Connect program, a program of transit improvements that included light rail in Austin.

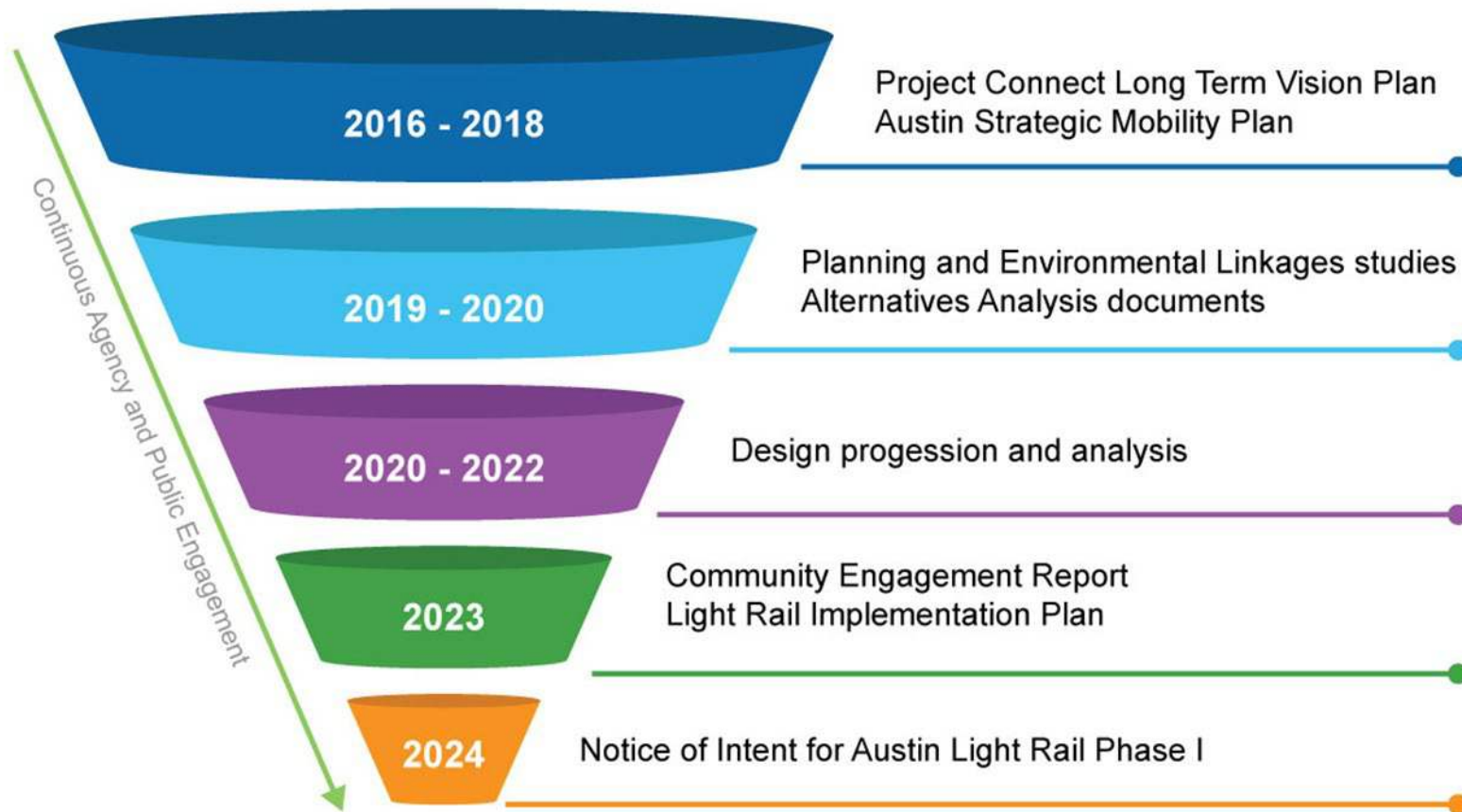
Under Project Connect, transit planners originally planned for two LRT lines in Austin, one line running north and south of downtown (Orange Line) and another running downtown east to the airport (Blue Line) (CapMetro 2020a, 2020b). As planners advanced the design work on these two lines, the estimated construction, operation, and maintenance costs increased. The primary cost drivers were increasing real estate costs, inflation, supply chain cost escalations, and scope refinements. It soon became clear that the original LRT lines warranted a re-evaluation to ensure ATP could deliver high-capacity transit that was fiscally feasible, aligned with the 2020 tax referendum passed by the voters, and remained responsive to the needs of the public.

Throughout 2022 and 2023, ATP developed a new light rail implementation plan that it viewed as more viable considering the constraints. This new plan was for a single LRT line that ran largely along the same corridors as the Orange and Blue Lines and would similarly meet the area's transportation needs.

On June 6, 2023, ATP, the City, and CapMetro unanimously approved the Austin Light Rail Phase 1 Project (as defined in Section 1) to advance into the next phase of implementation. **Figure 2** shows the progression of planning done for light rail in Austin. This includes continuous agency and public coordination throughout this time.



Figure 2: Progression of Austin Light Rail Phase 1 Project



3 Environmental Review Process

FTA's transportation planning regulations (23 Code of Federal Regulations 450.212 and 450.318) encourage a concept known as Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL). PEL embraces the idea that transportation planning and the environmental review process are integrated. Information, analysis, and products developed during transportation planning can be incorporated into and relied upon during subsequent environmental review. As long as transportation planning products are readily available for agency and public review, they may be incorporated by reference in the environmental review process. The PEL shortened environmental review and led to better project decisions for both transportation and the environment.

FTA and ATP applied PEL principles when developing alternatives for the Project and selecting one preferred alternative to analyze in the EIS. They relied on decisions made during the transportation planning process, and those decisions were documented and analyzed through applicable public involvement. Those decisions included determining the transportation needs of the area, defining the Project's purpose, selecting its general travel corridor, screening alternatives, and choosing the preferred transit mode. A Notice of Early Scoping, published in the Federal Register in the Fall of 2021, informed the public of FTA and ATP's intent to include PEL planning activities and decisions in the NEPA process.

Relying on the prior PEL planning, the EIS evaluated two alternatives: a No Build Alternative and a Build Alternative. The No Build Alternative was included in the EIS for comparison purposes. The Build Alternative included the Project, as described in Section 2, and six Design Options, mostly affecting station locations. Each Design Option was evaluated to identify a Preferred Alternative.

3.1 Scoping Process

FTA and ATP formally initiated the Project's environmental review process on January 19, 2024, when they published a notice of intent to prepare an EIS in the *Federal Register*. A 45-day scoping period followed where ATP briefed agencies and the public about the Project and solicited comment on significant issues the EIS should address. During this time, ATP hosted six public scoping meetings (five in-person meetings and one virtual, online meeting), attended by nearly 500 individuals with nearly 4,000 comments received from the community on the Project. The Project's *Phase 1 Project Scoping Summary Report* (May 2024) is available at [Austin Transit Partnership Engagement Library - PublicInput](#) and included in Appendix B of the FEIS/ROD.

3.2 Draft Environmental Impact Statement

After considering scoping comments, FTA and ATP prepared a Draft EIS that evaluated the preferred alternative, including preferred Design Options, and described why they eliminated other alternatives from detailed study. The Draft EIS summarized the studies, reviews, consultations, and coordination required by environmental law or executive order. FTA and ATP completed the Draft EIS in January 2025 and circulated it for comment for 60 days. The Notice of Availability to review the DEIS was published in the Federal Register on January 10, 2025. FTA and ATP conducted four public hearings during the public comment period. See Attachment A of Appendix B of the FEIS/ROD.

After circulation of the Draft EIS and consideration of comments received, FTA published the combined Final EIS and Record of Decision (ROD) in the Federal Register January 16, 2026. FTA and ATP coordinated with partner agencies, as needed, and provided an overview of the changes in the Final EIS from the Draft EIS and reviewed mitigation commitments for the preferred alternative. The Final EIS and ROD did not include a comment period because the Preferred Alternative was provided during the DEIS public commenting period. The issuance of the FEIS/ROD was FTA's final agency action under NEPA and concludes the EIS process.

3.3 Other Environmental Requirements

The environmental review process included other environmental requirements. Typically, FTA meets these requirements through the EIS process. Other requirements included, but were not limited to, Section 4(f) of the U.S. Department of Transportation Act, Section 6(f) of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act, and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. Each of these requirements has its own coordination process. Environmental requirements for these adjacent regulatory requirements were coordinated through the EIS process and prior to FTA issuing the FEIS/ROD.

3.3.1 Section 4(f) Coordination

Section 4(f) protects significant publicly owned parks, recreation areas, and wildlife and waterfowl refuges, as well as significant historic sites, whether they are publicly or privately owned. FTA and ATP provided opportunities for coordination and comment to the official(s) with jurisdiction over any Section 4(f) resource that may be affected by the Project, as well as applicable federal agencies. FTA and ATP provided the public an opportunity to review and comment on the Project's potential Section 4(f) effects in coordination during the EIS comment period.

3.3.2 Section 6(f) Coordination

Section 6(f) prohibits property acquired and improved with Land and Water Conservation Fund assistance from being converted to uses other than public outdoor recreation without the approval of the National Park Service (NPS) or its delegate (i.e.,

the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department [TPWD]). The NPS has delegated authority as a Cooperating Agency to TPWD.

The Project will require the conversion of properties that have Section 6(f) protections. FTA and ATP provided the public an opportunity to review and comment on the Project's potential Section 6(f) effects in coordination with the EIS comment period. ATP is currently coordinating with the TPWD related to conversion and subsequent replacement properties.

3.3.3 Section 106 Consultation Process

Section 106 consultation is required for all federal undertakings with the potential to affect historic properties regardless of the NEPA class of action. FTA coordinated Section 106 review with its environmental review under NEPA, identifying historic properties, and assessing effects from the Project.

Section 106 Consulting Parties were provided an opportunity to review the cultural resource archeology and historic properties survey reports that included ATP's initial eligibility recommendations for the Texas Historical Commission's (THC) and the Consulting Parties to review and comment. FTA and ATP held a Consulting Party meeting on September 9, 2024. Following review on the cultural resource reports and the Consulting Party meeting, the consulting parties provided comments related to properties they felt should be considered historic, potential visual considerations to existing historic properties, potential changes to property access, considerations related to neighborhoods, and utility/construction easements. ATP responded to consulting party comments and coordinated with the consulting parties during the Draft EIS public comment period. An additional Consulting Party Meeting was held in the summer of 2025 to review ATP's response to Consulting Party comments on the DEIS. A Programmatic Agreement between FTA, ATP, and THC, executed on January 2026 and appended to the FEIS/ROD details cultural resource avoidance measures and monitoring activities during final design and construction of the Project.

4 Agency Coordination

FTA and ATP view agency coordination as essential to the Project’s development and have already done a great deal of coordination with partner agencies prior to entry into the environmental review process. The EIS continued to build on this coordination and provided more formal opportunities for input. In addition, since the entire review process included actions sometimes taken after the EIS is complete, such as required permits and authorizations, those agencies that have a permitting role will have an additional opportunity to provide input. Consistent with 23 U.S.C. 139(d)(8)(A), all federal reviews and authorizations for the Project will rely on the EIS. An overview of the environmental review process is shown in **Figure 3**.

Figure 3: Progression of Austin Light Rail Phase 1 Project

Key Steps in the Environmental Review Process



4.1 Cooperating Agencies

Cooperating agencies have a high degree of authority, responsibility, and involvement in the environmental review process. Cooperating agencies are agencies with jurisdiction by law or with special expertise regarding the Project. They may develop information and prepare environmental analyses, including portions of the EIS, where they have special expertise. They may adopt the EIS for their own purposes without recirculating it. Cooperating agencies should use the environmental review process to address any issue that could substantially delay or prevent it from granting a permit or other approval needed for the Project. FTA and ATP invited and accepted the agencies listed in **Table 1** to be Cooperating agencies to the environmental review process for the Project.

Table 1: Cooperating Agencies

| Agency | Involvement |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| U.S. Army Corps of Engineers | Permits under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act; 33 U.S.C. 408 (Section 408); and Section 10 of the Rivers & Harbors Act of 1899 |
| U.S. Environmental Protection Agency | Consultation on the Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, and Environmental Justice |
| Texas Department of Transportation | Consultation on the transportation right-of-way |
| Texas Parks and Wildlife Department | Consultation and approvals under Section 4(f) and 6(f). |

4.2 Participating Agencies

Compared to cooperating agencies, participating agencies have a lower degree of responsibility and involvement in the environmental review process. Participating agencies are agencies that may have an interest in the Project. Participating agencies should identify, as early as practicable, any issues of concern regarding the Project's potential environmental or socioeconomic effects, and they should provide meaningful and timely input on unresolved issues. Like cooperating agencies, participating agencies should use the environmental review process to address any issue that could substantially delay the Project. FTA and ATP invited and accepted the agencies listed in **Table 2** to be participating agencies to the environmental review process for the Project.

Table 2: Participating Agencies

| Agency |
|--|
| Federal Aviation Administration |
| Federal Emergency Management Agency, Region 6 |
| Federal Highway Administration, Texas Division |
| U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service |
| Austin Community College |
| Austin Independent School District |
| Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization |
| Capital Area Rural Transportation System |
| CapMetro |
| Central Health, the Travis County Healthcare District |
| Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority |
| City of Austin |
| Downtown Austin Alliance |
| Huston-Tillotson University |
| Lower Colorado River Authority |
| Travis County |
| Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, Region 11 |
| Texas Historical Commission |
| The University of Texas at Austin |

4.3 Agency Coordination Opportunities

The environmental review process includes opportunities for Cooperating and Participating agencies to comment on the Project. The schedule in **Table 3** identifies these key opportunities.

Table 3: Proposed EIS Schedule

| Coordination Point | Task | Date |
|---|---|--|
| Cooperating agency briefing | Briefing to cooperating agencies on the Project, Purpose & Need, range of alternatives, and environmental methodologies. | Meeting held May 22, 2024 |
| Administrative Draft EIS review | Cooperating agencies review and comment (3-week review) on affected environment, anticipated effects, and proposed mitigation measures. | September 2024 |
| Second cooperating agency briefing | Optional meeting to resolve issues of concern. | September 18, 2024 Meeting held with TxDOT as requested |
| Draft EIS circulation and Public Comment Period | Release of Draft EIS and beginning of 60-day public comment period. Participating agencies and the public review the Draft EIS and provide comment. | January 2025 |
| Public Hearings on Draft EIS | Public hearings to receive comments on Draft EIS during public commenting period. | January 2025 |
| Third cooperating agency briefing | Briefing on summary of public comments received and identification of selected design options. | Fall 2025 |
| Administrative Draft Final EIS and ROD | Coordinate with Cooperating agencies on response to comments and changes to Draft EIS. | Fall 2025 |
| Combined Final EIS and ROD available | FTA publishes Notice of Availability in <i>Federal Register</i> . No agency or public comment period is included. | January 2026 |

FTA and ATP provided the proposed Project schedule shown in Table 3 to both Cooperating and Participating agencies.

5 Public Involvement

This section outlines the public involvement goals, types of outreach activities, and tools that FTA and ATP used to engage the public.

5.1 Public Involvement Approach

The key objectives in ATP's public involvement approach included the following:

- Informed the public of the Project's purpose and need and identify and communicated the process and schedule for public participation.
- Requested public input throughout all stages of planning and Project development.
- Researched and responded to public inquiries, suggestions, and ideas in the decision-making process.
- Provided opportunities for the public to affect major decisions before they were finalized.
- Publicized meetings and activities through a variety of diverse communication vehicles and made the records available for public review.
- Provided the public with different, innovative opportunities and methods for accessing Project information throughout each Project phase.
- Ensured that all populations were engaged in the Project development process by making materials available in multiple formats, holding meetings in accessible facilities, and providing meeting and Project information to underserved populations.
- Communicated key Project milestones and accomplishments to show progress toward Project completion. Ensured transparency of the process by communicating the Project's needs, potential solutions, schedules, and budget information.
- Used information obtained through past and ongoing stakeholder interviews and public outreach efforts to enhance the Project team's knowledge of the area, key stakeholders, and community leaders.
- Created a Project record of public input, responses, and outreach activities.
- Continuously monitored and adapted outreach activities and tools to help reach affected and interested populations and interests.

5.2 Outreach Activities and Tools

FTA and ATP used multiple outreach activities and tools to engage the public and solicit their input on the Project. Outreach activities and tools included the following:

- Public meetings / open houses and comment periods
- Printed and electronic materials (e.g., fact sheets, maps)
- Online/virtual public meetings (e.g., webinars)
- Notifications (e.g., postcards, emails, flyers, online/print display advertisements)
- Community events and tabling
- Door-to-door and grassroots outreach
- Public input collection mechanisms (e.g., surveys, comment forms, interactive exercises)
- Social media
- Briefings and working group meetings (e.g., elected officials and community leader briefings, stakeholder and facilitated working group meetings, cross-coordination with other agencies)
- Legal notices
- Web-based outreach (e.g., ATP website, eblasts, media kits, interactive maps on website)

5.3 Outreach to Communities

ATP committed to engaging with the community throughout planning and Project development. Opportunities for two-way dialogue ensured accountability and offered insight on ways that public feedback and participation could help move the Project forward.

Austin is a diverse community composed of people from different economic, educational, and cultural backgrounds. ATP employed the following strategies to guarantee that all members of the community had an opportunity to participate:

- Strategically planned to engage in specific venues, events, or organizations within communities.
- Attended existing community events and incorporated a “go-where-they-gather” strategy for pop-up outreach events.

- Distributed event and Project information through groups and existing networks, such as chambers of commerce, schools, neighborhood and community groups, faith-based and community service organizations, and low-income assistance programs.
- Coordinated with essential services for information sharing and distribution through existing networks.
- Coordinated with apartment complexes for information sharing and distribution.
- Distributed information via print and broadcast channels, including local community papers, social media, and neighborhood magazines/publications. These publications also included Spanish, Korean, and Vietnamese translations.
- Provided translation of meeting documents and web content on key initiatives into languages other than English upon request.

In addition, ATP made the following available as part of all public outreach:

- ATP made Spanish translated versions of the following available:
 - Fact sheets
 - Scoping and EIS booklets
 - Draft and Final EIS Executive Summary and ROD
 - All materials produced for a virtual open house (e.g., surveys, and presentation materials)
 - Websites and web copy, including directions and content
 - Surveys/Comment forms
 - Sign-in sheets
 - NEPA-required notices (i.e., notices in the legal notices section published in a newspaper of record)
 - Event registration pages
 - Frequently Asked Questions
 - Ads for newspapers and social media
- ATP offered a live translator / 1:1 meeting with a Spanish-speaking subject matter expert for any materials or reports during in-person public outreach.

- ATP offered additional translation services available for all materials upon request.
- Spanish-language translators were made available at all in-person-person and virtual public meetings (including open houses, workshops, and public hearings).
- American Sign Language interpreters were made available upon request for virtual and in- person meetings.
- A translator who speaks a language other than Spanish or English, such as Arabic or Vietnamese, was made available at any public meeting upon request. To ensure accessibility:
 - translators/interpreters were familiar with the Project and community;
 - requests for those needing special accommodations were honored for all events, both in-person and virtual;
 - all photos and supporting materials were added to the website and virtual open houses and tagged for Americans with Disabilities Act compliance;
 - Spanish-translated materials and supporting materials were provided with Spanish tags for Americans with Disabilities Act compliance.

5.4 Public Coordination Opportunities

ATP continuously met with community organizations and other stakeholders upon request, providing updates on the Project elements and process. Please see Appendix B and Attachment A of Appendix B of the FEIS/ROD for a summary of public outreach activities conducted during Project Scoping and public review of the DEIS. ATP is currently developing a plan for 2026 to continue engagement with the public.

5.5 References

Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization. 2020. 2045 Regional Transportation Plan. Adopted May 4, 2020. Accessed October 18, 2023. [2045 Plan - CAMPO](#)

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