

# PROJECT CONNECT STATUS REPORT

## ATP BOARD BRIEF | NOVEMBER 2024



In November 2020, 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 UPDATES

### » LIGHT RAIL IMPLEMENTATION

ATP is working with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to complete the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for public review and input. The community will have the opportunity to review updated information for Austin Light Rail Phase 1 including a set of preliminary engineering plans and associated environmental analysis recommendations on the design options that were presented at public meetings in February 2024, as well as proposed Project commitments and mitigation measures. Comments received within a 60-day public comment period will be reported and responded to in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) in 2025. Feedback received on the DEIS will inform any updates to the analyses and the continued progression of the project engineering.

In parallel with the environmental study, ATP continues to advance the development of Preliminary Engineering for the light rail alignment and maintenance facility, including utility coordination and engineering. Updated Preliminary Engineering plans will support the FEIS, serve as reference designs for final design/ construction procurements, and are required to complete the Capital Investment Grants Project Development phase.

Progressing the Preliminary Engineering also includes defining guidelines, criteria, and manuals to form the basis of design requirements for the project. These project requirements will guide future stages of design under the collaborative final design/construction contracts (i.e., Progressive Design-Build) that will serve as the basis for design compliance and acceptance reviews and are critical to ensuring the light rail system is designed to meet Austin’s needs. Guidelines and criteria address elements such as technical requirements and human-centered design to optimize user experience, sustainability and applicable local, State and federal codes.

The project requirements will continue to be advanced to support the Progressive Design-Build procurements scheduled in 2025 and ultimately serve as contractual requirements for the design-builders to follow once awarded anticipated in 2026.

## » DELIVERY & CONTRACTING



ATP is in the final stages of procuring a Delivery Partner to support project management and other services as an integrated partner with ATP.

ATP staff anticipate bringing a contract recommendation to the ATP Board so services may begin in early 2025. ATP staff also are preparing for the next procurements required to deliver Austin Light Rail Phase 1, including final design and construction contracts as well as light rail vehicles.

As ATP prepares to issue a solicitation for light rail vehicles in 2025, the team has been developing the technical specifications and procurement process considering factors such as customer experience, community input, operational and maintenance needs, the state of the industry, vehicle manufacturing and testing timeline, and many others.

Select members of ATP attended InnoTrans, the leading vehicle and light rail systems industry expo that brings together the full market of possibilities for light rail vehicle options that may be considered for Austin.



ATP attends InnoTrans, the leading trade fair for transit technology.

ATP staff provided an update on the organization's contracting plan at the November 14th Board Meeting, which may be viewed online at [atptx.org](http://atptx.org).

## » COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

ATP team members participated in a panel hosted by the Congress for the New Urbanism & American Institute of Architects (AIA). Panel members discussed ATP's approach to the integration of architecture, urban design, sustainability and engineering in the design process. The panel discussed experiences and lessons learned in breaking down barriers to achieve collaboration and bringing diverse perspectives to the table to improve design.



*Brad Cummings and Lindsay Wood serve as panelists at luncheon for regional contractors.*

ATP also participated in a panel on implementing successful transit projects at an event facilitated by MARTA CEO Collie Greenwood. The panel discussion was one of several featured topics at the 2024 APTA Conference hosted in California last month, and included representatives from ATP, SoundTransit, Caltrain, and Gateway Development Commission. The discussion served as an opportunity for sharing experiences and learning from other large transit capital projects, as well as making connections for future coordination on best practices.

ATP Executive Director Greg Canally and CAC Chair Awais Azhar served as panelists at the MPact Transit + Community national conference that is focused on the interplay of transit, mobility, land use and development in building great places to live. The panel highlighted Austin Light Rail and the interconnections with land use and Austin's goals for affordable housing development.



*ATP shares at CNU/AIA Event: Lindsay Wood, Lisa Storer, Peter Mullan*

ATP team members joined experts from TxDOT, the Austin-Bergstrom International Airport, and CapMetro at a luncheon hosted by SMPS for regional contractors, designers and other professional services firms interested in transportation industry projects. The ATP team provided an update on Austin Light Rail Phase 1 and highlighted upcoming opportunities for industry to partner with ATP in delivering the project.



*Top: Jennifer Pyne shares at APTA Annual Conference  
Bottom: Awais Azhar and Greg Canally share at Mpact*

The ATP Community Engagement team continues to be active in the community, building partnerships and strengthening relationships. ATP congratulates Yannis Banks, ATP Public Involvement Manager, for being selected by the Conference of Minority Transportation Officials as a 2025-2027 Ambassador for the Transit Cooperative Research Program. As part of the program, Yannis will assist in exploring the latest developments in advanced technologies, innovative management techniques, and best operating practices in the industry.

The ATP Community Engagement team supported our community at the Hispanic Advocates Business Leaders of Austin Gala and the Austin Green Awards. The team shared project updates with more than 500 people at community events including the Safe Alliance Touch-a-Truck event, KUT's ATXplained performance, and the Lakeside Resident Council Meeting. Jocelyn Vokes, Director of Community Engagement & Involvement, attended the IAP2 North American Conference and brought back lessons learned for meaningful and inclusive engagement.



*[Left] Tabling at Safe Alliance Touch-a-Truck event at Q2 Stadium, [middle] HABLA Con Orgullo Awards, [right] South Congress walking tour for ATP partners*

## PARTNERSHIP UPDATES

*Partnership content is contributed directly from partnering organizations.*

### » PROJECT CONNECT SITE SIMPLIFIED

The [projectconnect.com](https://projectconnect.com) site now features a simplified layout where the public can find direct links to three partner web sites (Austin Transit Partnership, CapMetro and City of Austin) and up-to-date information about each partner's respective projects. The online resource also includes prominent access to information about the Community Advisory Committee and links to previous Project Connect public engagement activities.

### » CAPMETRO PROJECT CONNECT UPDATE

#### Spring 2025 Service Change

The Spring 2025 Service Change, featuring two new CapMetro Rapid lines and a new Pickup zone in the Decker and Colony Park area, is on track to serve customers in Spring 2025. These service changes are some of the most significant service changes CapMetro has completed in several years, all of which are Project Connect investments. In addition, some bus and rail schedules may have minor changes to improve reliability.

Small schedule adjustments are a common part of every service change. This allows the CapMetro to adjust and make minor improvements for service reliability. The CapMetro Board of Directors unanimously approved the proposed service change at their regularly scheduled meeting on September 23rd. The schedule adjustments will start on Sunday, January 12, and the Pickup Decker—the 12th pickup zone—will begin on Monday, January 13. The two Rapid lines will launch later in Spring 2025 after essential infrastructure and testing are completed.

#### CapMetro Rapid

The highly anticipated CapMetro Rapid Lines—Pleasant Valley (800) and Expo Center (837)—continue to progress toward their 2025 launch. These new lines will provide important transit connections to areas east of I-35, with buses initially arriving every 20 to 30 minutes. Staff have constructed a total of 50 Rapid Stations along the new routes and installed 16 shelters, and seven more are planned to be installed by the end of November. In addition, staff are working towards getting more Rapid Stations constructed and shelters installed. The new Rapid Station amenities include cameras for enhanced security, shelters equipped with wood benches, improved lighting, and real-time arrival and departure technology.

Service for customers would begin after the essential infrastructure and testing are complete (estimated in Spring 2025). and preliminary construction on the Expo Center Park & Ride is underway. While some infrastructure, including stops and Park & Rides, are still under construction, temporary stops may be used once the service launches. Customers can expect further enhancements to continue beyond the initial launch.

Additionally, the Expo Center and Goodnight Ranch Park & Rides will support the upcoming Rapid lines. These new locations will offer ample parking for commuters with connections to local routes and feature end-of-line charging for CapMetro's electric bus fleet. CapMetro is on track to begin operating and serving the community with both the Pleasant Valley and Expo Center Rapid Lines in 2025.