

PROJECT CONNECT STATUS REPORT

ATP BOARD BRIEF | OCTOBER 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 work to deliver an updated light rail implementation plan to build an equitable, reliable transit system for Austin and the surrounding region. Interdisciplinary focus groups comprised of ATP, City of Austin, and CapMetro staff meet weekly to evaluate the technical feasibility of light rail optimization and cost-saving ideas that came out of workshops held in late August among all three agencies.

The focus groups center on various aspects of the light rail program, including light rail endpoints, downtown, the combined maintenance facility, stations, systems and vehicles, river crossing options, street cross sections, and construction technology and materials. As part of each focus group meeting, the teams carefully consider each cost-saving and program optimization idea, evaluating it based on technical criteria and relevant data gathered to date. The focus groups will continue developing viable alternatives using technical data, financial analysis, evaluation criteria, and community feedback. Equity and sustainability remain central values of the program and will continue to be prioritized as the program moves forward. ATP will use data collected during the technical and viability analysis to develop recommended operating segments for light rail implementation.

Coordination with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) is also ongoing to ensure the project's compliance with federal program requirements, including several in-person meetings with FTA at this year's American Public Transportation Association (APTA) annual TRANSform Conference in early October (discussed further below).

CITY OF AUSTIN – FOUNDATIONAL ORDINANCE

The City of Austin is bringing a foundational ordinance to enable Project Connect to City Council on Nov. 15. The ordinance is in response to a Council resolution that directed staff to review City Code, criteria manuals, and permitting procedures to look for impediments to the design, permitting, construction and implementation of the Project Connect Program.

This foundational ordinance is not predicated on a specific design or scope, but rather creates a place for transit-specific regulations, expands permitting options, clarifies uses, and details a programmatic approach to construction noise mitigation. As the City and ATP know more about design and construction in the coming months and years, additional amendments may be proposed.

ATP and City representatives briefed several Austin boards and commissions, including the Urban Transportation Commission, Environmental Commission, Planning Commission, Zoning and Platting

Commission, Downtown Commission, and Design Commission. These same representatives will brief the Technical Advisory Committees and Community Advisory Committee in early November.

CAPMETRO: METRORAPID BUS PROJECTS

CapMetro continues to progress design and construction work on the Expo Center and Pleasant Valley bus rapid transit projects. Small Starts grant agreements for federal funding are expected to be executed in November. Both lines are expected to be operating in 2023. Four more stations on the Expo Line have been released for construction. Shelter design is at 100% and a first article inspection is scheduled for November 15th.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

On October 22, ATP held an advisory committee workshop that served to gather feedback around community values that embed both equity and sustainability into the criteria and the priority destinations and goals for transit and access through downtown Austin.



Attendance for the meeting included representation from the Engineering, Architecture & Construction (EAC) and Planning, Sustainability, Equity & DBE (PSEC) Technical Advisory Committees, the CAC Design Working Group, as well as staff representatives from Austin Transit Partnership, CapMetro, and City of Austin.

Moving forward, ATP will evaluate the feedback received during the half-day workshop to support extended outreach to communities around Austin, with a primary focus on increasing representation from

priority populations. ATP will continue to gather feedback on community value metrics from internal and external stakeholders to lead to scenario planning in the spring.

ATP STAFF ATTEND 2022 APTA CONFERENCE



ATP sent a team to an annual conference of the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) to share program updates and learn from the public transportation industry. While at the conference, ATP met with the FTA and conducted a series of market listening sessions with contractors and consultants with industry experience delivering large-scale transit projects.



While at the conference, ATP staff and members of the Commercial, Risk, and Project Delivery Advisory consultant team (EY) were invited to meet with Sound Transit leadership—the public transit agency delivering light rail to the Seattle metropolitan area—and discuss topics ranging from project delivery and agency growth and development to stakeholder engagement strategies and governance lessons learned.

NOVEMBER 16TH ATP BOARD MEETING

ATP's Board of Directors will convene at 10:30am at the Austin Transit Partnership headquarters. The additional time will allow staff to present a more detailed status of work of the updated light rail implementation plan and allow time for dialogue with ATP Board Members about progress to date.

NOVEMBER 30TH JOINT PARTNERSHIP MEETING

In addition, 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 3:30pm November 30th 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.