

PROJECT CONNECT STATUS REPORT

ATP BOARD BRIEF | SEPTEMBER 2023

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.

› LIGHT RAIL IMPLEMENTATION UPDATES

ATP continues to advance engineering and design, and initiate environmental analyses that are required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Staff is coordinating with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to publish an updated Notice of Intent (NOI) in early 2024, a key milestone in the NEPA process. This notice will officially clarify and define the project under federal environmental review and reflect the Austin Light Rail Implementation Plan adopted in June 2023.

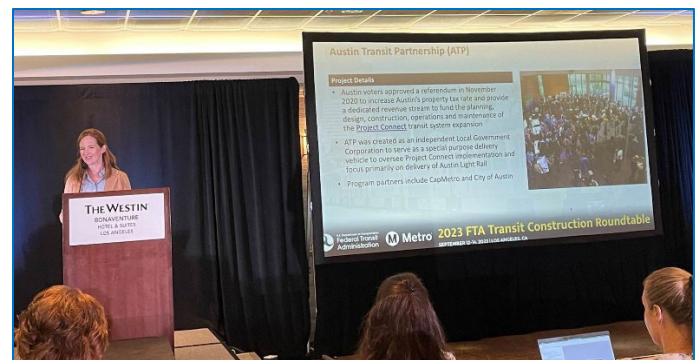
Project delivery planning is ongoing and has been informed by extensive engagement with peer agencies and industry on delivery models, risk management strategies, and contracting needs. Staff is also considering ATP's organizational capacity and developing a risk management approach. ATP will present updates on the delivery strategy this fall, including near-term contracting needs and anticipated solicitations.

On August 31, ATP hosted FTA Region 6 representatives to provide an update on the progress of the Light Rail Implementation Plan. ATP looks forward to continued collaboration and partnership with FTA as the project advances through NEPA and the Capital Investment Grants (CIG) Program.

This fall, ATP will be initiating a broad discussion to assess the community's preferred light rail user experience, which will inform future design principles and requirements. The team will be sharing research on Austin's transit user needs and experiences as a starting point to guide the design of a human-centered light rail system.

› ATP PARTICIPATES IN FTA CONSTRUCTION ROUNDTABLE

In September, ATP staff attended an FTA Construction Roundtable with FTA representatives and peer agencies from across the country. The Roundtable provided a forum to learn from other transit agencies that are implementing similar light rail projects. ATP shared updates and discussed the project's advancement of NEPA, engineering, and other necessary steps for FTA's CIG timeline.



Lindsay Wood, Executive Vice President, Engineering & Construction, presenting to the FTA Construction Roundtable | September 2023

› COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CAC) BYLAW UPDATES



Following the June 6 action, staff from ATP, the City of Austin, and CapMetro have been working alongside the Community Advisory Committee (CAC) to

refine the Committee’s governance structure and to reflect the implementation of its goals.

This effort aims to:

1. Provide continuity in CAC membership.
2. Reduce barriers to membership.
3. Clarify appointment and reappointment processes.
4. Increase accountability and transparency in the appointment process.
5. Clarify the roles of the staff liaison.
6. Evolve bylaws and structure to reflect today’s joint partnership approach to Project Connect.

After presenting final recommendations at the September 2023 CAC meeting, members unanimously approved the recommended changes to the bylaws.

› BOARD ACTION: AN IMPORTANT STEP TO FTA GRANT RECIPIENT STATUS

FTA requires new recipients of federal funds to demonstrate the legal authority to request, receive, and spend FTA funds. This is a necessary step before pursuing specific grant opportunities under CIG or other programs. One of the required documents to demonstrate legal capacity is a resolution from the Board authorizing the Executive Director (or their designee) to file applications with the FTA and other USDOT agencies for federal assistance under 49 USC Chapter 53, Title 23 of the United States Code and other federal statutes administered by the FTA. Following ATP Board approval of [Item No. 4](#) on the September 20 Agenda, ATP staff will submit information to FTA to support its review of ATP in accordance with federal grant eligibility criteria. Future applications will be for specific grants for the implementation of Austin Light Rail. ATP will continue to work with FTA to fulfill the requirements for federal funding.

› ETOD TEAM PREPARES IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

This month, City of Austin Planning Department staff presented Equitable Transit-Oriented Development (ETOD) implementation plan progress to the Community Advisory Committee (CAC).

The presentation focused on population targets around stations along the new light rail alignment. These figures will inform a process to plan development that serves current neighborhood residents, supports transit, and increases housing options at all income levels.

City and CapMetro ETOD teams will present their policy plan to City Council and boards this fall.



› ANTI-DISPLACEMENT PROGRAM ANNOUNCES PARTNERSHIPS

Later this month, the City of Austin Housing Department will formally announce awards of \$16.5 million in “Community-Initiated Solutions” funding to a dozen organizations that work to prevent displacement of renters and homeowners in Austin. These services will help strengthen households by focusing on people at risk of displacement due to their proximity to potential development along Project Connect corridors.

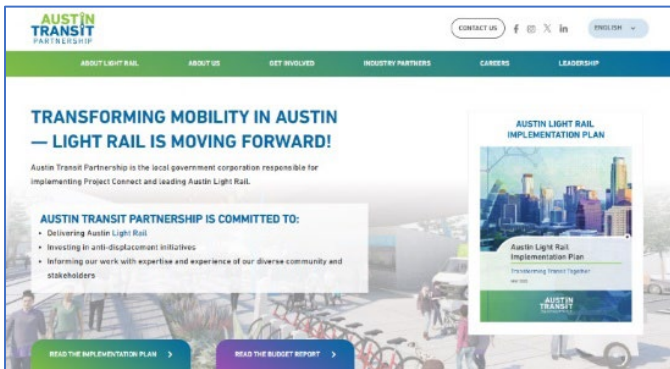
The organizations broadly work in three categories:

- Economic Mobility
- Home Ownership Expansion
- Tenant Stabilization

The groups will participate in a community event at Conley-Guerrero Senior Activity Center on October 14.

› ATP ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATE: ATPTX.ORG WEBSITE ENHANCEMENTS

ATP’s website, www.atptx.org, now features new functionality enhancements and accessibility tools to provide information about ATP and Austin Light Rail to the public. This new website includes improved navigation, searchable resources, and the ability for visitors to view information in multiple languages. These updates lay the groundwork for future enhancements to ATP’s public website.



› ATP ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATE: NEW HIRES BRING NATIONAL EXPERTISE IN LIGHT RAIL IMPLEMENTATION

Brad Cummings joined the ATP team in September as ATP’s Senior Vice President in Procurement and Contract Management. He has significant experience leading contract and procurement functions at transit and other agencies nationwide. Brad’s management experience extends beyond procurement and contract management to include innovation and social responsibility initiatives, materials management, and diversity, equity, and inclusion functions at three distinct transit agencies—Dallas Area Rapid Transit, Jacksonville Transportation Authority, and Valley Metro—in addition to the Utah State Board of Education.



Brad has a law degree and experience working as an attorney on contractual disputes and litigation.



Aaron C. Franklin also joins ATP this month as the organization’s Director of Quality Management and Assurance playing a critical role in ensuring the quality and safety of all project activities and deliverables. Aaron brings

more than 20 years of experience in quality control inspection, materials testing, and quality management for heavy civil construction projects, with extensive knowledge in transportation, and rail construction sectors. Aaron comes to ATP from Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (LA Metro). Aaron will join the Engineering & Construction team and will develop quality assurance plans and collaborate with project stakeholders to ensure compliance with industry standards and best practices.

Joining ATP in October, **Haley Garcia** will serve as the Senior Vice President of Program Controls in the Planning, Community and Federal Program Department. Haley has



almost 20 years expertise working as a program and project controls professional establishing, managing and mentoring project controls teams on projects involving multiple funding partners, agencies, divisions, owners and contractors. She brings more than 10 years of experience on projects that have received FTA Capital Improvement Grants (CIG). Haley will join the Austin team from Valley Metro where her last position was as Project Controls Manager.