

PROJECT CONNECT STATUS REPORT

ATP BOARD BRIEF | DECEMBER 2023



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 continues to advance the Austin Light Rail base design in collaboration with the City of Austin and CapMetro, refining plans for National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process analysis starting early 2024.

In November, several members of the ATP team spoke to a well-attended Mpack Mobility Conference panel about the experience to date in developing Austin Light Rail. Staff also visited light rail construction projects underway in Phoenix, explored the light rail Operations and Maintenance facility, and toured the car-free, transit oriented Culdesac development project. The delegation was jointly attended by policy leadership of ATP, City of Austin, and CapMetro.

Mayor Watson and ATP staff representatives visited U.S. Department of Transportation and Federal Transit Administration leadership, including Mitch Landrieu, Senior Advisor responsible for implementation of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, and representatives from the Texas congressional delegation and staff, to share information on Austin Light Rail and explore funding opportunities for intermodal projects.

ATP will host a series of community engagement events in early 2024 to coincide with the NEPA scoping process. The publication of a Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement in the *Federal Register* will initiate this phase of Austin Light Rail through the federal environmental review process. ATP will share updates on conceptual engineering and seek community feedback on the issues to be analyzed through the NEPA process starting in late January.



ATP EVP Jennifer Pyne and City Council member/CapMetro Board member Jose “Chito” Vela present at Mpack Mobility Conference

› USER EXPERIENCE OPEN HOUSES

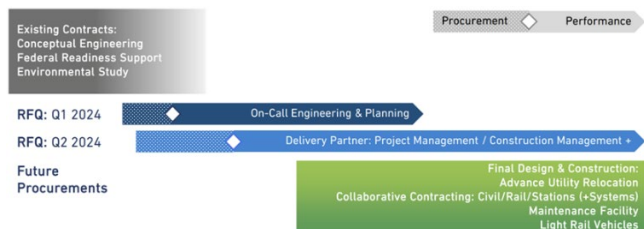
From November through December, ATP hosted five open houses with more than 300 attendees to learn how people use transit in Austin and explore design challenges related to safety, predictability, and comfort of light rail and the larger public transit system. This information will also be presented in a virtual meeting on December 13, and through an online survey until January 2. Data will inform the design process to help build a transit system that prioritizes people and their experiences and ultimately encourages more people to ride.



University of Texas User Experience Open | November 16, 2023

› ADVANCING PROJECT DELIVERY AND CONTRACTING

As presented to the Board in October, ATP staff have updated the project delivery and contracting framework and shared an overview of upcoming partnership opportunities with industry stakeholders, including focused outreach to local, small, and DBE firms. ATP hosted a Meet the Primes event on December 12 to create connections with small business vendors and discuss teaming opportunities for upcoming Austin Light Rail contracts. In November, ATP released pre-solicitation drafts for industry feedback on two planned Requests for Qualifications for on-call preliminary engineering, planning, and environmental support. These procurements will be formally released in the new year. Also in 2024, ATP anticipates procuring a Delivery Partner team to support implementation of light rail project delivery.



Preview of upcoming Austin Light Rail solicitations

› ADVANCING THE CONSTRUCTION PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

ATP joined City of Austin, TxDOT, CapMetro, and CTRMA regional partners at the Women's Transportation Seminar (WTS) November monthly luncheon to provide an update about the Construction Partnership Program (CPP) and participate in a panel session. The CPP is a multi-agency partnership preparing for more than \$20 billion of transportation and public infrastructure construction projected over the next 10 years. The program will streamline communications and drive improved project coordination while efficiently informing the public and keeping Central Texans moving through the peak construction period.



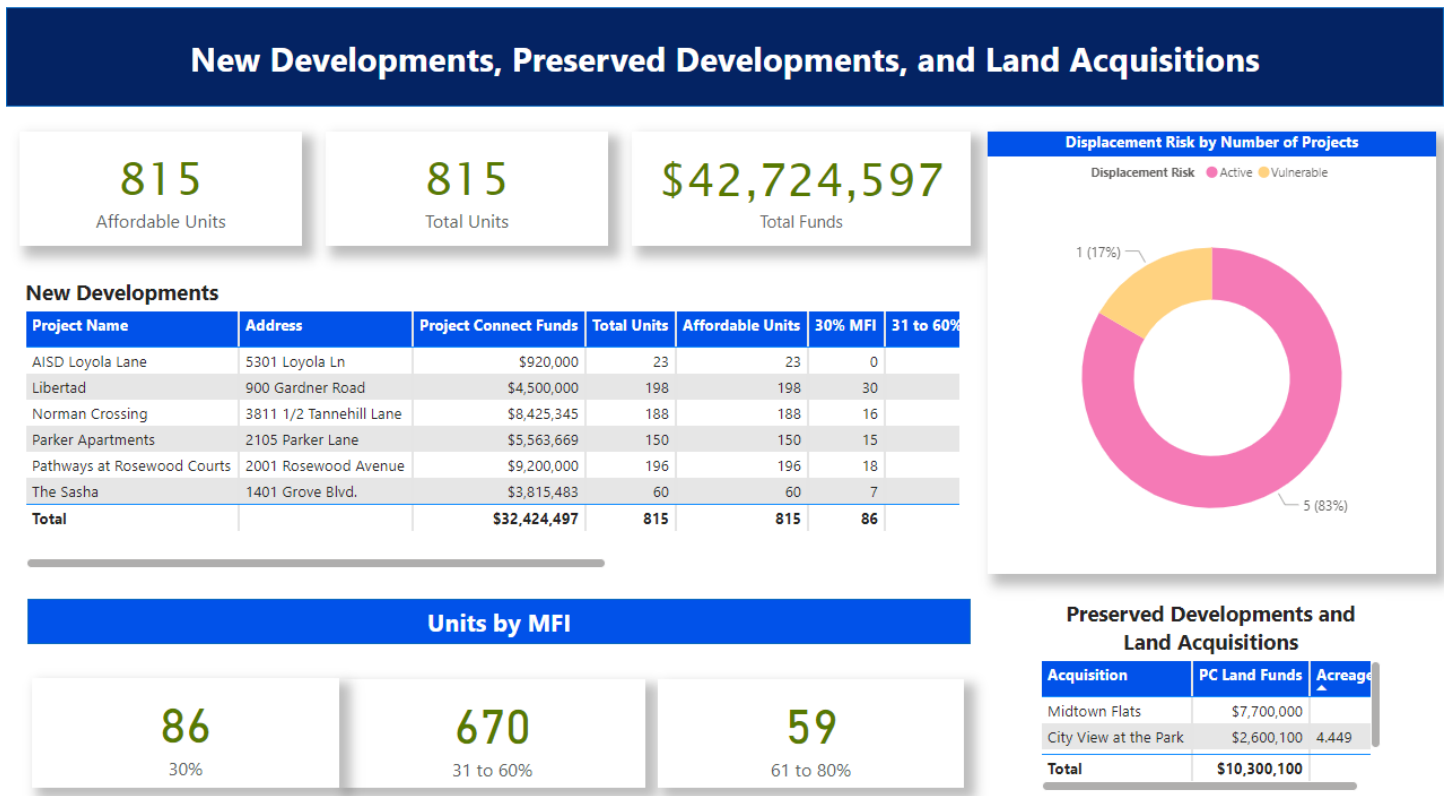
ATP EVP Lindsay Wood joins other regional mobility leadership at the November CPP Luncheon

PARTNERSHIP UPDATES

Partnership content is contributed directly from partnering organizations.

› CITY OF AUSTIN STAFF END YEAR SUCCESSFULLY, READY FOR 2024

After months of preparation, contract negotiations, and October's Community Initiated Solutions launch event, the City of Austin Anti-Displacement Program is continuing to serve the people of Austin by contributing financing to affordable housing developers, identifying opportunities to preserve existing affordable units, and supporting local organizations in implementing community efforts. See the newly launched [Anti-Displacement Funding Dashboard](#) to follow along with the program.



Snapshot of City of Austin Anti-Displacement Funding Dashboard

The combined City and CapMetro Equitable Transit-Oriented Development (ETOD) teams have introduced station-area vision plans for the CapMetro-owned North Lamar and South Congress Transit Centers, as well as the surrounding area. The vision plans reflect staff's substantial community engagement, research, and best practice reviews over more than a year. Staff will present the work to the Community Advisory Committee at its December 14 meeting.

ATP ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATES

› PARTNERING WITH THE NEXT GENERATION OF ARCHITECTS AND ENGINEERS

Collaboration with Austin’s educational institutions is one of many partnerships that helps inform how Austin Light Rail will serve the community. This fall, ATP partnered with the University of Austin at Texas to mentor College of Engineering and the School of Design and Creative Technologies students. Students analyzed aspects of the project, and ATP staff gained diverse perspectives into their Austin Light Rail work. ATP staff served as the “client” for students tasked with developing creative solutions to design, such as connecting the proposed light rail bridge to the trail system at the north shore of Lady Bird Lake as well as optimizing wayfinding and access for campus transit users.



ATP leadership meets with University of Texas at Austin students

› ATP COMMUNITY SERVICE

Alvin Livingstone, ATP SVP Engineering, and Yannis Banks, ATP Community Engagement, planned and hosted a golf tournament for the Austin chapter of the Conference of Minority Transportation Officials (COMTO) that raised roughly \$17,000 to support minority students pursuing transportation industry degrees. More than 100 golfers and numerous volunteers attended this scholarship fundraiser to support this important cause. COMTO Austin is a non-profit organization committed to facilitating opportunities for minorities in transportation in Central Texas.

› COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE: DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD

Members of the Austin City Council, ATP, and CapMetro recognized the Community Advisory Committee (CAC) with a Distinguished Service Award at a ceremony on December 1. Austin Mayor Kirk Watson, ATP Chair Veronica Castro de Barrera, and CapMetro Chair and Travis County Commissioner Jeffrey Travillion offered remarks and formal recognitions on behalf of the three organizations. To view a video of the event, visit <https://austintx.new.swagit.com/videos/283303>.



CAC Distinguished Service Award recipients present on December 1

The ceremony, held at the Austin Transit Partnership office and attended by policy leaders of the three entities, underscored the CAC’s important role in advising policy leaders and working with staff to inform Project Connect outcomes. It also celebrated CAC members’ contributions and dedication to representing Austin’s diverse community as they advise on Project Connect-related anti-displacement and equity matters. Committee Chair Awais Azhar spoke of the CAC’s dedication and his advocacy for transit. “Transit is freedom,” said Azhar, who solely relies on transit for his professional, social and basic needs.