

# PROJECT CONNECT STATUS REPORT

ATP BOARD BRIEF | JANUARY 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

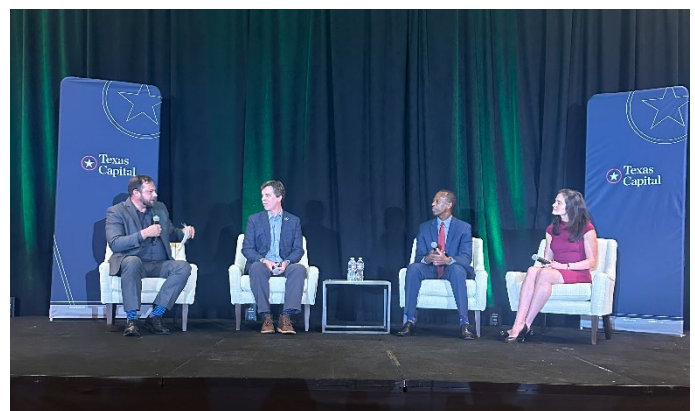
### › LIGHT RAIL IMPLEMENTATION

On January 19, 2024, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) published a [Notice of Intent](#) (NOI) in the *Federal Register*. This notice signifies FTA and ATP’s intention to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for Phase 1 of the Austin Light Rail Project and initiates the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Scoping process, during which comments related to the NEPA review of the proposed project are solicited.

Throughout February, ATP will share project updates, base design information, along with the design options under consideration, at five in-person, and one virtual, community engagement events. The meetings offer the public an opportunity to provide feedback on issues to be analyzed through the NEPA process. ATP requested additional time above the requisite 30 days to enable broader participation. Following March 4—the end of the Scoping phase—ATP will prepare a Scoping Report to summarize the input received during this period. ATP will continue to encourage, receive, and consider public input after that time. For more information regarding the FTA Notice of Intent, visit the [ATP website](#).

### › ATP SHARES INSIGHTS WITH BUSINESS COMMUNITY

ATP’s Executive Director, Greg Canally, served as a panelist at ATX Ahead: 2024 Economic Outlook on Jan. 18. The event featured an economic analysis of the region; and panelists discussed affordability, transit, and quality of life. Greg provided Austin Light Rail updates to the audience of Austin-area business leaders and shared insight into what comes next for the community-informed project.



*Austin Business Journal* Editor, Colin Pope, served as moderator. The panel also included Aaron Demerson, President & CEO of the Texas Economic Development Corporation, and Clare Losey, PhD, Housing Economist with Austin Board of REALTORS®.

## › APTA STEERING COMMITTEE FORUM

ATP’s SVP Environmental & Project Development, Deron Lozano, serves as Co-Chair of the American Public Transportation Association’s (APTA) Major Capital Investment Sub-Committee. Deron, along with CapMetro’s Sharmila Mukherjee, EVP, Strategic Planning & Development, other Planning and Policy Development sub-committee representatives, and FTA participants, met in Washington D.C. to strategize 2024 activities to continue the successful advancement of the federal Capital Investment Grant (CIG) program.

While offering input on APTA’s 2024 CIG efforts, the forum provided Deron and Sharmila with the opportunity to update FTA attendees, who guide the CIG program, on the progress of Austin Light Rail along with other transit investments in the Austin community.

## › ADVANCING PROJECT DELIVERY AND CONTRACTING

On January 24, 2024, ATP released two requests for qualification (“RFQ”) solicitations for on-call preliminary engineering and advanced utility services and on-call planning and additional environmental services. For the preliminary engineering and advanced utility RFQ, ATP is seeking respondents to provide (i) light rail, systems, and operations and maintenance facility preliminary engineering; and (ii) preliminary engineering for advanced utility relocation and betterments (with an option for ATP to direct advance utilities through final design).

For the planning and additional environmental services RFQ, ATP is seeking respondents to provide (i) planning services, including transit planning and supporting ATP’s sustainability program; and (ii) additional environmental services, including environmental support, compliance, and resource monitoring.

| <u>On-call Engineering &amp; Planning (Multiple Providers)</u>   |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Preliminary Engineering</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Preliminary engineering (civil, systems, OMF)</li> <li>▪ Geotechnical analysis, field survey</li> <li>▪ Constructability, value engineering &amp; risk support</li> <li>▪ Technical requirements, design criteria</li> </ul> | <b>Advance Utility Engineering</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Advance utility assessments and preliminary engineering</li> <li>▪ Option for final design of advance utilities</li> <li>▪ Subsurface Utility Engineering (SUE)</li> <li>▪ Betterments preliminary engineering</li> <li>▪ Conditions assessment</li> </ul> |
| <b>Planning &amp; Additional Environmental Support</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Transit planning</li> <li>▪ Additional environmental support</li> </ul>  |  |
| <b>RFQ Q1 2024</b>   |  |

# PARTNERSHIP UPDATES

Partnership content is contributed directly from partnering organizations.

## › CAPMETRO PROJECT CONNECT UPDATES

### CapMetro Rapid

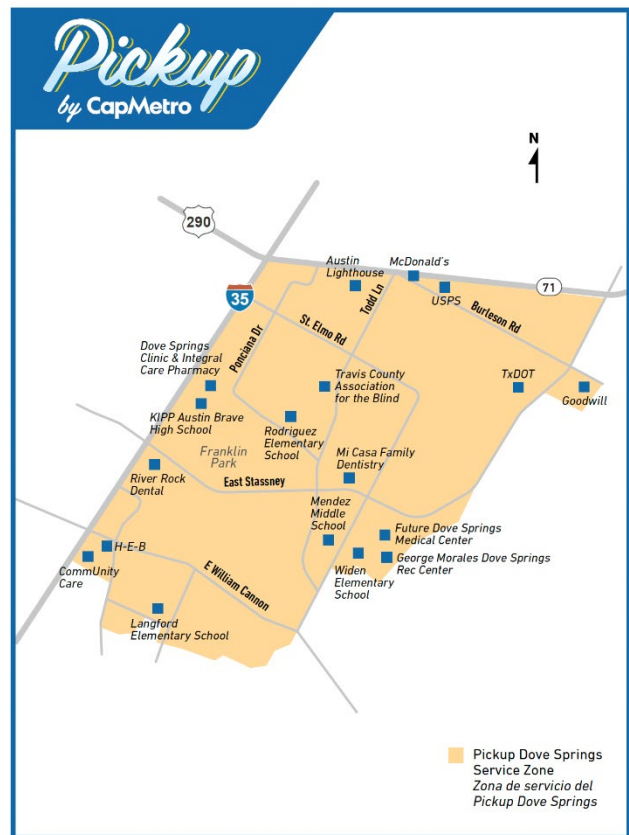
CapMetro continues to make on-time progress for the highly anticipated CapMetro Expo Center and Pleasant Valley Rapid Lines. The first two of 80 new CapMetro Rapid shelters began serving the community in November 2023 and were designed to support the expansion of the region's emerging transit system. Station amenities include cameras for enhanced security, shelter against extreme weather, improved lighting, ticket vending machines, and real-time arrival and departure technology. CapMetro is on track to begin operating and serving the community with both the Pleasant Valley and Expo Center Rapid Lines in early 2025.



CapMetro Rapid Shelter

### January Service Changes / Dove Springs PickUp Zone Launch

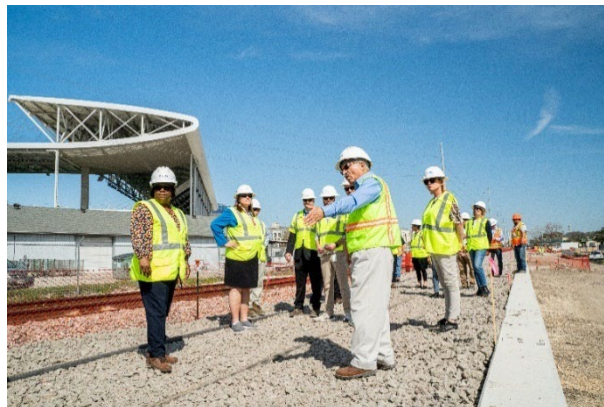
As part of the January 2024 service change, the new Dove Springs PickUp Zone launched on January 14, 2024. This newly launched service is a Project Connect investment and will connect southeast Austin customers to our public transit system, schools, grocery stores, health services, and the upcoming CapMetro Rapid Pleasant Valley Line. A launch event with a tour of key destinations accessible through the service is planned for January 26, 2024.



Dove Springs Pickup

## McKalla Station Grand Opening

CapMetro is in the final stages for the on-time and on-budget opening of Red Line McKalla Station at Q2 Stadium. The new station is located along the east side of Q2 Stadium, near Delta Drive, on the CapMetro Rail Red Line between Braker Lane and Rutland Drive. The stadium station's grand opening on February 24, 2024 coincides with the Austin FC season home opener. For fans of Austin FC (¡Vamos Verde!) McKalla Station means better access to the stadium on game days. New rail platforms to support the high demand and service capacity on game days, double-tracking to improve overall service reliability, along with new quiet zones, drainage improvements, water line relocations, trail connections and utility improvements delivered in partnership with the City of Austin are among the many enhancements provided through this project. CapMetro continues to engage with the community to provide information on construction schedules, traffic rerouting, and help with wayfinding once the station opens.



McKalla Site Tour

## › CITY CODE AMENDMENTS WOULD INCREASE HOUSING OPTIONS AND SUPPORT ETOD ALONG LIGHT RAIL CORRIDORS

The City's Planning Department is focused on the code amendment process at the turn of the new year. Working closely with program staff across the three partner organizations, City staff members are formulating the strongest mix of regulatory changes, both to increase housing options for Austinites along the light rail alignment, and to continue to address housing capacity and affordability citywide.

These efforts will also strengthen the program's ability to obtain a federal funding grant for Austin Light Rail.

The amendments are largely centered around City regulations for residential and commercial development, delivering community benefits, and enabling more housing to be built citywide, but especially along the Phase 1 Light Rail alignment and priority extensions.

The City Council is scheduled to consider initiating the code amendment process at its February 1 meeting. City staff will then continue their work refining the proposed amendments, including a community process in the spring that would include work with the Planning Commission, public notices of the amendments under consideration, community open houses, and further presentations to City Council.

That schedule is still being finalized.

## ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATES

### › ATP NAMES BRYAN RIVERA CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

Effective January 2024, ATP appointed Bryan Rivera to the position of Chief Financial Officer. Bryan joined ATP October 2021 and served as Interim Chief Financial Officer since summer 2023. Bryan previously worked at the City of Austin managing the City's debt portfolio. During his tenure at the City of Austin, he helped finance the first Airport terminal expansion, took part in a number of refunding financings that help saved the City millions on debt service cost, and was a key member in making sure the City maintained compliance with its various covenants made to bondholders over the years.



### › ATP RECEIVES RECOGNITION FOR BUDGET ACHIEVEMENT

The Government Finance Officers Association announced in early January that Austin Transit Partnership received GFOA's Distinguished Budget Presentation Award for its budget.

The award reflects the commitment of the governing body and staff to meeting the highest principles of governmental budgeting. To receive the budget award, ATP had to satisfy nationally recognized guidelines for effective budget presentation. These guidelines are designed to assess how well an entity's budget serves as a:

- policy document
- financial plan
- operations guide
- communications device.

Budget documents must be rated "proficient" in all four categories, and in the fourteen mandatory criteria within those categories, to receive the award.

There are more than 1,700 participants in the Budget Awards Program. The most recent Budget Award recipients, along with their corresponding budget documents, are posted quarterly on GFOA's website. Award recipients have pioneered efforts to improve the quality of budgeting and provide an excellent example for other governments throughout North America.