

# PROJECT CONNECT STATUS REPORT

## ATP BOARD BRIEF | JULY 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 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 reached a critical project milestone for Austin Light Rail Phase 1 in May by officially entering the Project Development phase under the Federal Transit Administration’s Capital Investment Grants New Starts program—a competitive grant program that funds transit capital investments. As planned, local funding will leverage federal dollars to fund the project. ATP is now eligible for future reimbursement of allowable costs incurred for the planning and design work to develop the project. This Project Development phase is an initial step towards the execution of a final grant agreement with the FTA. This milestone signals federal support for this voter-approved project and brings Austin Light Rail Phase 1 a step closer to delivering billions in infrastructure investments and jobs to Texas.

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Over the next two years, ATP will complete the Project Development phase, to include completing National Environmental Policy Act requirements and advancing architectural and engineering design of the system. The ATP team is in the process of completing these requirements, conducting studies that support the preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Statement that will be published later this year. The team is also advancing the preliminary design that serves as the foundation for the environmental analysis and will be published as part of the DEIS. ATP will engage the community to gather feedback on the DEIS when it is published this fall.

### » Advancing Design

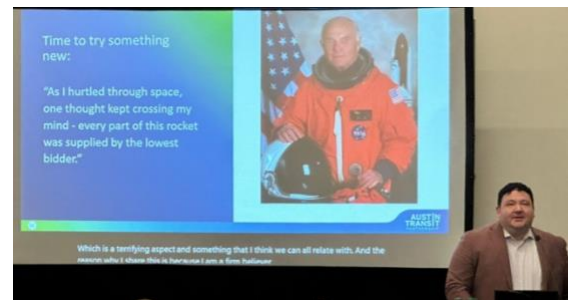
ATP awarded on-call preliminary engineering contracts in May to provide support services needed to progress the initial base design to complete preliminary engineering as required for Project Development. Staff has developed initial task orders focused on advancing design for utility relocations, LRT civil/stations/system, operations and maintenance facility and the bridge over Lady Bird Lake and expect to have all tasks executed to begin work by August. The team has also been developing the guidelines and criteria which will be used by the designers to implement project requirements for engineering, architecture, urban design and sustainability.

## » Advancing Organizational Readiness

ATP issued the formal solicitation to procure a Delivery Partner (owner’s representative) to provide services such as project management, project controls, advisory services, and design and construction management to support delivering Austin Light Rail Phase 1 through all project phases. ATP thoughtfully designed the procurement process, including early and on-going collaborative industry engagement, to attract the expertise and services of a Delivery Partner that is outcome driven and accountable, as well as trusted and able to effectively and efficiently address the evolving needs of the project over time. ATP expects to receive Delivery Partner proposals in August for evaluation with the goal of awarding a contract by the end of this year.

## » Leading and Learning

Jen Pyne (EVP of Planning, Community & Federal Programs) and Brad Cummings (SVP of Procurement & Contract) presented at conference sessions on innovative procurement practices ATP has cultivated. Jen spoke to the APTA Rail Committee about what agencies should be looking for and preparing for during early stages of major capital projects. Brad conveyed the need to evolve agency procurement practices to a model that seeks early industry collaboration and involvement and how ATP is achieving collaborative procurement.



*A slide from Brad's presentation at APTA Rail*

Staff also learned from other industry leaders by attending professional development sessions on critical topics including alternative delivery methods, with a deep dive on progressive design build, innovative technologies for light rail vehicles, safety and security, federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act requirements, and next generational train control technologies.

Lisa Storer also participated in a panel at the Conference of Minority Transportation Officials National Conference on Centering Equity in Technology-Driven Transit Projects, with representatives from Bay Area Rapid Transit and Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority, moderated by AtkinsRealis. She discussed ATP’s innovative research methodologies, including cognitive behavioral assessments, and highlighted ATP’s people-centered design for Austin Light Rail Phase 1.



*Lisa poses with fellow COMTO panelists*



*Lisa presents on people-centered design*

## ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATES

### » ATP Presents Fiscal Year 2024-25 Budget

The ATP Board of Directors will hear a presentation related to the Fiscal Year 2024-2025 Proposed Budget. Executive Director, Greg Canally, presents the proposed budget with an opportunity following for the board to learn more from ATP staff at a budget work session currently scheduled at 1pm August 7th. The Budget Report may be viewed at [www.atptx.org](http://www.atptx.org).

The budget advances all aspects of the implementation of Austin Light Rail Phase I, continuing to advance the design engineering and overall business services for ATP as the organization continues to lead the project.

Following the budget work session in early August, the ATP Board will consider approval of the FY25 Budget at its regularly scheduled meeting in September. These meetings will be live streamed and recorded for viewing during discussion or following. The public may view Board Meetings on the ATP Board Meeting webpage [www.atptx.org/atp-board-meetings/](http://www.atptx.org/atp-board-meetings/).

### » Contract Framework updates

Following the ATP Board approval of the On-Call contracts in May, task orders under the preliminary engineering contracts are currently being competed amongst the previously qualified firms. Additionally, the Delivery Partner solicitation was published on June 17, 2024. Responses are due on August 20, 2024 and staff anticipates bringing a recommendation for award at the December ATP Board Meeting.

## CAPMETRO PROJECT CONNECT UPDATE

### » CapMetro Pickup

CapMetro’s Pickup service continues growing its ridership with a proposed new zone servicing the Decker neighborhood in January 2025 as part of the agency’s triannual service adjustment. Currently, CapMetro staff are conducting surveys and community listening sessions with area residents to inform a plan that meets the community’s needs. The proposed Pickup Decker service zone may include the Travis County Expo Center, Community First! Village, several schools, the Delco Activity Center, the East Communities YMCA, the University Hills Public Library, with the Springdale Shopping Center—which includes an HEB—as its anchor. Key roads within the proposed zone may include Springdale Road between Loyola and US Highway 290, Loyola Lane between Springdale Road and Decker Lake, Hog Eye Road, Daffan Lane, and Decker Lane between East MLK, JR Boulevard and Daffan Lane.

At a June public hearing, Leander community members overwhelmingly supported a 0.64 square mile service expansion in the southwest corner of the Leander Pickup zone. The expansion was approved by the CapMetro Board of Directors in June 2024 and goes into effect in August 2024. The expanded zone will now provide access to popular destinations including schools, housing, groceries and emergency healthcare—a first for the area.

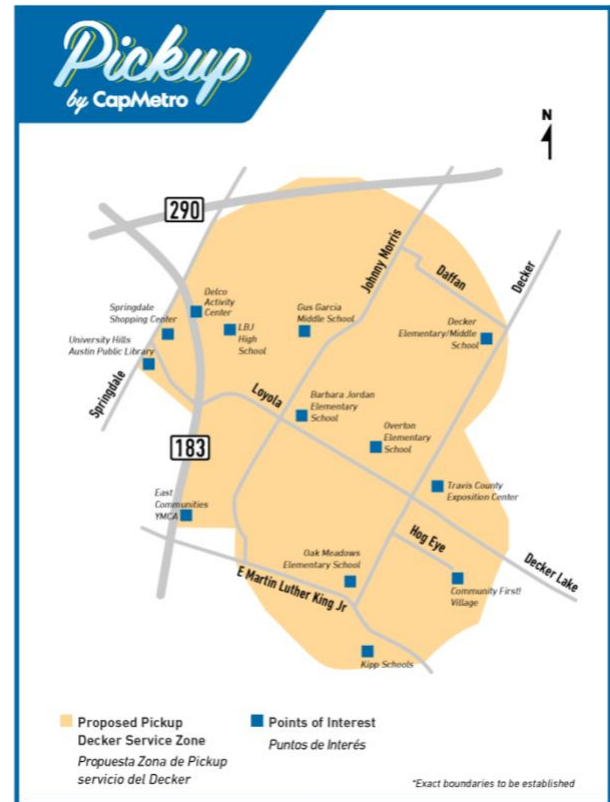
Customers interested in providing their feedback may attend a virtual open house and leave comments at [www.publicinput.com/decker](http://www.publicinput.com/decker).

### » CapMetro Rapid

CapMetro continues to make progress for the highly anticipated CapMetro Expo Center and Pleasant Valley Rapid lines. Installation of amenities (i.e., bus stops and shelters) continues for both routes. At a June 2024 Board of Directors meeting, members approved a construction contract to begin work on the Goodnight Ranch Park & Ride.

The Park & Rides at Goodnight Ranch and Expo Center will support the upcoming CapMetro 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 zero-emission 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.



Proposed Pickup zone in Decker

## » Other Key Organizational Updates

### Ridership

CapMetro's ridership across the entire system continues to increase to its highest levels of the last three years. For the fifth consecutive month, ridership across CapMetro's system has exceeded two million riders per month. The current ridership is projected to grow steadily for the remainder of the year.



### Childcare

CapMetro remains committed to investing in workforce development through continued high-quality childcare for team members. Over the last several weeks, staff have made great progress in determining a path forward in support of employees' childcare needs. A major step was completing a childcare survey distributed to staff in English and Spanish. The survey, which received 446 responses, will help to inform future childcare and dependent care options.

The childcare steering committee has also conducted a series of community meetings each month to keep both staff and community members informed. A summary of the survey results and a comprehensive update on childcare benefit solutions will be shared with the CapMetro Board of Directors in July.

### Transit Police TCOLE Certification

The future CapMetro Transit Police Department received a key authorization from the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement (TCOLE) to continue the process of creating a new Transit Police Department. The state commission has certified that the CapMetro Transit Police Department has clearly demonstrated a dedication to upholding law enforcement standards within its transit system. CapMetro will continue to submit additional materials as required by TCOLE to receive full authorization which is expected in the coming weeks. Once fully authorized, CapMetro will have the authority to respond to emergencies as police and begin personnel recruitment and hiring.

The Transit Police Department is part of our three-pronged public safety approach and will work alongside Community Intervention Specialists and Public Safety Ambassadors. CapMetro anticipates the state to fully certify the Transit Police Department in the coming weeks and the first officers to be hired in early 2025.



# CITY OF AUSTIN PROJECT CONNECT UPDATE

## » City Work Aids Project Connect Effort Across Full Program

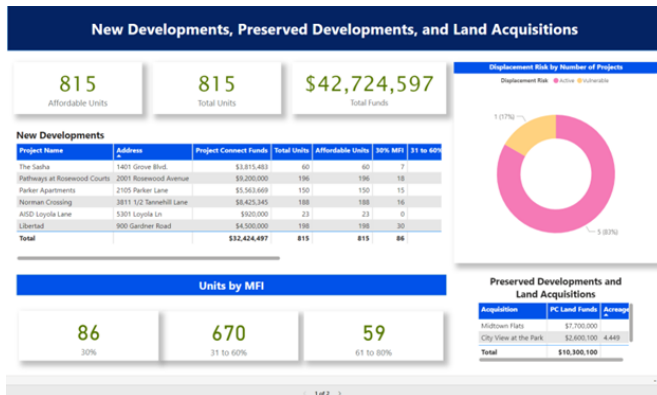
Following City Council’s May 16<sup>th</sup> [adoption of the transit-supportive Land Development Code amendments](#), staff has begun the work of implementing the new policies. There were three related amendments passed:

- ETOD Overlay — limits non-transit-supportive uses within ½ mile of the Austin Light Rail Phase 1 alignment and establishes a density bonus program in the same area in exchange for community benefits,
- HOME 2 — lowers the lot size needed for a single home,
- Compatibility — allows more buildable height along corridors and closer to single-family homes, to be more in line with policies in peer cities like San Antonio and Kansas City.

Each of these will increase the options for individual Austinites and developers to add more housing throughout the city, but especially along Project Connect transit corridors.

The adoption of the amendments allows ATP to include these transformative land-use policy changes when filing materials to support its Capital Investment Grant New Starts application in August 2024. Project Connect Office staff are providing feedback on behalf of the City during the review process and helping describe these policy changes as the ATP team finalizes the Capital Investment Grant New Starts application.

## » Displacement Risk Dashboards Updated



Last month, the City’s Housing Department released an [updated map and dashboard depicting areas in Austin at risk of displacement](#). The map identifies areas located within 1 mile of Project Connect transit lines. The dashboards categorize areas by the intensity of their risk for displacement:

- Vulnerable — vulnerable populations are present, but no significant demographic change demonstrated;
- Active — vulnerable populations are present, and active demographic change is occurring;
- Chronic — vulnerable populations have been displaced, and significant demographic change has occurred.

The data collected in the dashboards informs investments of [the \\$300 million Project Connect Anti-Displacement Fund](#). The Displacement Prevention team also updated its citywide data at the same time, and that information has helped identify parts of Austin that will see delayed implementation of the HOME 2 regulations, to allow City staff more time to properly address the concerns of residents in those vulnerable areas.