Austin Transit Partnership

To: ATP Board of Directors

From: Jennifer Pyne, EVP, Planning, Community and Federal Programs
Lindsay Wood, EVP, Design and Construction

Date: November 10, 2026

Subject: Advancing Planning for Austin Light Rail Airport Extension and Initiating NEPA

This memorandum serves as an update to the ATP Board on planning activities that ATP will be initiating regarding the Austin Light Rail priority extension to Austin-Bergstrom International Airport (AUS).

Background
The Light Rail Implementation Plan adopted in May 2023 identified the 9.8-mile Austin Light Rail Phase 1 project, as well as a priority extension to AUS.

ATP has continued to successfully advance Austin Light Rail Phase 1 through the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Capital Investment Grant program, including entering the Project Development phase, completing the required National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process in January in less than two years, and receiving a Medium-High rating from FTA. ATP has also successfully approved all major design and construction contracts, and with these partners are advancing pre-construction activities and design, as we work toward beginning early works construction in 2027.

Light Rail Extension to Airport
The priority extension from the Yellow Jacket Station on East Riverside Drive to Austin-Bergstrom International Airport would be an approximately 3-mile, mostly elevated structure, with one station at AUS. During the NEPA process for Austin Light Rail Phase 1, the number one comment we received from Austinites was to extend light rail to the airport – to increase mobility capacity and mobility choices, and to improve reliability in getting to the airport for both passengers and the airport workforce.

ATP staff will begin the work to advance planning for this extension, including these activities:

Design Coordination with Austin-Bergstrom International Airport (ongoing). ATP and AUS engineering and architectural teams will closely coordinate to identify opportunities to align the Austin Light Rail Airport extension with the airport's expansion program that is currently underway. It is critical that as AUS designs the new Arrivals and Departures Hall, that a future Austin Light Rail station is integrated into that design, ensuring a seamless and convenient experience for airline passengers and airport employees.

We will also work with AUS and TxDOT to ensure the planned improvements along SH71 are coordinated and cost-effective. Because the AUS expansion design is on-going, it is necessary to do this planning work now, in order to future-proof this extension and station.

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Initiating NEPA. As we advance this planning work on the extension to the Airport, we will also be initiating the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process with FTA specifically for this extension. FTA has agreed to a streamlined NEPA process, allowing ATP to produce an Environmental Assessment (EA).

Analysis of Costs and Funding Strategies. This planning work will determine a cost estimate for this extension and analyze the timing/schedule of when this extension could be covered by ATP's Proposition A contract revenue budget. ATP will also investigate other opportunities to fund the Austin Light Rail extension to the Airport, including potential federal funding support for this critical intermodal connection. Early engagement with FTA will help ensure that the airport extension design process results in a cost-effective project and aligns with federal requirements.

ATP expects all this planning work to take approximately 9-12 months but will provide updates to the ATP Board along the way.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me.

cc: Greg Canally, Chief Executive Officer
Bryan Rivera, EVP, Financial Services
Casey Burack, EVP, Business and Legal Affairs
Rebecca Giello, EVP, Communications & Board Relations