PROJECT CONNECT

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

2019 PLAN

STAFF

Randy Clarke

President and Chief Executive Officer

Dave Couch

Project Connect Program Officer

Joe Clemens

Project Connect Strategic Transportation Planner

Jacob Calhoun

Project Connect Transportation Planner

Brian Carter

Vice President, Marketing and Communications

Cynthia Lucas

Marketing Director, Marketing and Communications

Jackie Nirenberg

 Community Engagement Manager

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

01

ABOUT PROJECT CONNECT

Central Texas is rapidly changing. The population is over 2 million, and it's projected to double by 2040. In that same time, road capacity is expected to increase by only 15 percent. Project Connect is a regional, multi-generational transit plan developed to change the way transportation is evaluated in Central Texas. Its purpose is to improve existing high-capacity transit services and develop new, high-capacity transit projects that provide efficient travel options into, out of, and around Central Texas.

Instead of wondering how more cars can fit on roads, Project Connect is leading the way on developing innovative solutions that move more people. These solutions are affordable and connect communities to jobs, schools, health care and more. These solutions can also adapt to technology advances that could make the system fully electric, always connected and, eventually, autonomous.

Project Connect is about innovative solutions that **move more people.**

The plan reflects what is important to the Central Texas community — a complete system of reliable and frequent transit with congestion-proof services that operate free from other traffic.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Project Connect envisions a connected system of reliable and frequent transit. This vision will be the community's plan and will need support from the public and other agencies to help shape the future of transportation in Central Texas.

OUR GOAL

Create a more connected, affordable and equitable community through five essential strategies.

Customer Experience
Increase the efficiency, attractiveness and use of high-capacity transit into, out of, and around Central Texas.

Reliability
Provide frequent, reliable high-capacity transit service along dedicated right-of-way into, out of, and around Central Texas.

Sustainability
Contribute to a socially, economically and environmentally sustainable transit network that travels into, out of, and around Central Texas.

Land Use and Policy
Support "compact and connected" land use and development patterns.

Implementation and Operations
Develop and select community-supported transit projects.

OBJECTIVES

- Provide reliable, frequent service.

- Provide safe and comfortable transit services, amenities and facilities.

- Make the best use of our current transit system and improve that experience by allowing travel in dedicated pathways, separate from the rest of traffic.

- Coordinate with existing and planned transit services.

- Establish a more balanced transportation system that encourages walking, bicycling and transit use.

- Combat the rising cost of living by providing safe, affordable alternatives to car ownership.

- Reduce energy use and minimize impacts to the natural environment.

- Make using transit easier, both for people who rely on transit and for people who simply prefer transit.

- Encourage compact and connected development by increasing service to and from activity and employment centers.

- Support compact and mixed-use development.

- Incorporate high-capacity transit within regional transportation plans.

- Choose transit projects that have support from the public and government agencies.

- Define and select transit projects that are cost-effective.

- Ensure the selected projects include funding plans, so they can be built and are affordable to operate.

PROJECT CONNECT

ENGAGEMENT BACKGROUND

Between 2016 and 2018, the Project Connect team shared information, received feedback and collaborated with more than 1,200 Central Texans on Project Connect, including the process and previously identified and future corridors. This effort included public events and engaging people where they were by hosting tables at other events, giving presentations to neighborhood and civic organizations, and conducting pop-up engagement. Feedback received refined the Project Connect Vision and prioritized development corridors.

In fall 2018, a Capital Metro Board/Austin City Council Engagement Work Session was held to provide feedback to the Project Connect team regarding ongoing Project Connect community engagement.

Major requests included:

- Clearly communicate the process and the community's role, including what feedback is needed and how that feedback will be used.

- Provide multiple and meaningful feedback opportunities with ample notice at locations where stakeholders are already frequenting.

- Share information in traditional and non-traditional ways.

- Engage stakeholders not traditionally reached by using a variety of tools.

PROJECT CONNECT ADVISORY NETWORK

The Project Connect Advisory Network (PCAN) was developed to provide input and feedback on program milestones and community engagement processes to establish an effective process. Previously part of the Austin Strategic Mobility Plan Multimodal Community Advisory Committee (MCAC), group members met in October 2018 to discuss the future of the committee.

To reflect the aspiration to continuously grow the network of organizations, interest groups and individuals participating in the committee, the group recommended Project Connect Advisory Network (PCAN) as the new name for the committee.

PCAN members represent various interest areas and backgrounds across Central Texas, encourage and facilitate the engagement and input of other community members, and consider input in program discussions. They serve two-year terms and meet quarterly.

ENGAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

02

DESIRED OUTCOMES

The community engagement plan will include coordination with public engagement processes currently underway for other programs and initiatives, such as the Corridor Mobility Program and the Austin Strategic Mobility Plan, among others.

This coordination will be essential to maximize outreach and engagement, align messaging around the concurrent processes, and strive to prevent information overload and confusion for the community.

☑ **Engage and inform the community.**
Use tools and techniques that create a widespread, common understanding of Project Connect and how it benefits all of us, not just those who choose to use transit.

☑ **Connect with individuals from all communities.**
This assures those with the greatest need are fully engaged and have easy access to information and convenient ways to be heard.

☑ **Track and report regularly on community engagement activities.**
Continue throughout the program to allow for adjustments to better reach and accommodate stakeholders.

☑ **Receive clearance on environmental studies.**
Successfully complete preliminary engineering.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

03

WHAT WE WILL COMMUNICATE

Key takeaways are statements that engage an audience by encouraging follow-up questions and interest in Project Connect.

Key takeaways will be incorporated into communication materials to assist the project team in maintaining consistent communications throughout the planning process.

As engagement continues, key takeaways will be refined to reflect community feedback and supported with fact statements.

Key takeaways create meaning and headline issues that need to be discussed.
They help to guide communication and enhance relationships with the target audience.

KEY AUDIENCES

04

COMMUNITY VALUES

Project Connect will need to consider a wide array of stakeholders within the community. Understanding stakeholders' unique values, priorities, concerns and communication preferences will help the Project Connect community engagement team effectively engage with them.

While not exhaustive, this plan identifies areas of interest that may be applicable to each stakeholder group identified in this plan.

An online stakeholder database will be set up and used throughout the program to track communication with individuals and organizations identified in the key audiences above.

The database will be updated throughout the multi-year program, including after significant public involvement activities (such as public meetings), as well as following government elections, and board and commission member turnovers.

Project Connect is the community's plan. The project team **will seek input from a wide array of stakeholders.**

KEY AUDIENCES

Agency Partners Areas of Interest

Opportunities
(perceived and real)

Transit stops and connections

Separated bike lanes

Right-of-way (ROW)

Complete sidewalks

Crosswalks at intersections

Crossing time

ADA compliant sidewalks

Trees/shading

Placemaking

Design and public art

Sidewalk Master Plan priorities

Bicycle Master Plan priorities

Safe Routes to School Infrastructure Plan
development

Increased corridor density resulting in more
student demand on schools

Coordination with parallel programs

Impacts to schools and school districts

Impacts to emergency services

Observance of regulations and jurisdictions

Business Community Areas of Interest

Impacts to business operations

Increased travel times for the delivery and
shipping of goods

Ease of access to businesses for patrons and
employees

Driveway consolidations/access

Impacts to future development potential

Density

Development potential

Affordable and mixed-use housing
developments

Placemaking

Elected Officials Areas of Interest

Geographic dispersion of improvements
throughout corridors

Expectation that work will be completed on
time and on budget

Impacts on constituents

Coordination with parallel programs and
planning efforts

Opportunities to leverage funding

Transparency and public involvement
opportunities

Neighborhood Groups Areas of Interest

Cut-through traffic

Permanent impacts to access, ROW, or easements

Changes to their neighborhoods

Safety of families and children

Access

Non-Profit Organizations Areas of Interest

Impacts to /opportunities for their particular constituencies

Threatened and endangered species

Water quality

Air emissions

Improving active transportation

Sidewalk improvements

Bicycle improvements

Transit stops and connections

Current Customers Areas of Interest

Impacts to travel time and routes during and after construction

Alternate route information

Transit stops and connections

Future Customers Areas of Interest

Expectations for traffic reductions

Impacts to travel lane widths

Being informed of previous corridor studies and planning efforts

Health Care Areas of Interest

Impacts to routes during and after construction

Alternate route information

Transit stops and connections

Accessibility for mobility impaired

Visual and hearing-impaired

ADA compliant

Greatest Need Areas of Interest

Hesitancy to ask questions or engage

Language barriers

Availability to attend/ participate

Application to their lives

Bike/pedestrian access

Accessibility for mobility impaired

Visual and hearing-impaired

ADA compliant

Youth Areas of Interest

Access to and from schools

Impacts to bus routes

Transit stops and connections

COMMUNITY OFFICE

05

FOSTERING COMMUNICATION

Members of the project team will office part time at the Project Connect Community Office, an organizational unit responsible for the centralized and coordinated management of the Project Connect program. This coordination will improve communication across the program, allowing for the effective transfer of ideas, information and knowledge in an effort to minimize errors.

It will also allow for easy coordination between environmental and outreach team members, improving time utilization and benefiting the fast-paced nature of outreach.

The Community Office will also serve as a central location for two-way communication with stakeholders and provide meeting/event space for engagement opportunities.

A centralized Community Office at **607 Congress Avenue fosters effective two-way communication** across the program.

ENGAGEMENT TOOLS

06

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT TOOLBOX

The team will create and use a variety of informational tools and materials to assist with communications and public engagement efforts related to Project Connect. Tools will be developed for in-person use and online. Tools will be chosen that best align with communication goals.

Recognizing that this is a dynamic plan, other tools and materials not described below may be developed if circumstances suggest they would enhance outreach effectiveness.

To establish visual recognition, templates for handouts, displays, signage, presentations and other Project Connect-related communications will be developed based on brand guidelines. The engagement tools developed for Project Connect consist of printed and electronic materials, web-based outreach, and traditional media.

The screen displays:

05/15/14   05:08pm

SCAN
PHONE
BELOW

A METRO

init

PRINTED AND ELECTRONIC MATERIALS

The team will utilize a variety of informational printed and electronic materials. Where appropriate, they will be displayed and distributed at public meetings and events, posted on the Project Connect website and social media platforms, and distributed to community members, elected officials and the media.

In recognition of diverse populations in Austin, some of the tools and materials noted may be provided in multiple languages. Once finalized, recommendations will be made regarding which materials need translation.

Maps, 3D Renderings and Graphics

Graphics and illustrations can significantly enhance information-sharing efforts, especially when communicating complex concepts. A variety of maps, 3D renderings and graphics will be developed. These tools could be used to illustrate the overall Project Connect vision and specific corridors, corridor constraints, proposed improvements, modeling, progress, and other data as deemed necessary. In some cases, existing maps, renderings and exhibits will be modified or updated.
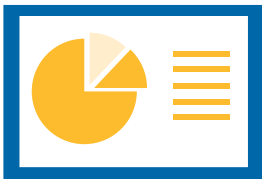
Handouts

A variety of handouts will be created to provide information about Project Connect. Handouts will be updated as needed to reflect the most current information.

Informational Boards and Presentations

Informational boards and presentations will be developed to share information with the community and key stakeholders, including the Capital Metro Board, Austin City Council members, PCAN, Boards and Commissions, affected local agencies and others. Boards and presentations will use maps, graphics, and other information to help clarify concepts to key audiences.

Questions and Answers (Q&A)

Q&A related to both Project Connect and corridor-specific topics will be developed. Team members from each discipline will contribute to the development of responses to provide factual, accurate answers. The Q&A will be utilized to help prepare team members for interactions with members of the public and can be used in communication materials and tools, including the website, eBlasts and handouts. The Q&A will be reviewed and updated periodically as new information becomes available and/ or when additional issues or topics of interest arise.

Videos

Team members will conceptualize, storyboard and produce short animated videos. Videos will be used in multiple settings and on various tools, with a focus on social media.

Public Input Collection Mechanisms
(Surveys, comment forms and interactive exercises)

Public feedback will be collected using a variety of mechanisms, including input surveys, comment forms and interactive exercises. The public will have an opportunity to provide feedback in-person during public meetings and events, utilizing both written and electronic formats.

- Surveys will be conducted to obtain feedback on specific topics. Participants will have the ability to complete surveys in writing at meetings and events, or online via the website. Demographic questions may be included to help track outreach and verify we are hearing from a representative sample of the Central Texas community.

- Comments may be submitted on any topic via the website, social media, visiting the Project Connect Community Office, or at public meetings and events (in writing or verbally).

- Interactive exercises may be used at public meetings and events, as well as online to engage with the community and obtain their feedback and preferences on specific topics.

Notification Postcards/Flyers

Postcards or flyers may be distributed via direct mail or by walking door-to-door to inform neighbors and businesses about Project Connect, as well as upcoming meetings and public feedback opportunities. These pieces may also be useful in driving traffic to social media platforms and the website.

Paid Advertisements

As budget and approval allows, paid advertisements may be used to draw attention to Project Connect and corridor-specific updates, public meetings and feedback opportunities. Options include targeted social media advertising (e.g. Twitter); transit/station advertisements; newspaper, television or radio advertisements; gas pump toppers; billboards (stationary or mobile); and bike-share or pedicab advertisements.

Public Service Announcements

Public Service Announcements (PSAs) may be used to promote public meetings and public feedback opportunities, as well as provide updates. PSAs could run on media including ATXN (Austin's government access channel), Univision (Spanish language television), KUT (Austin's local NPR station) or KAZI (Austin Community Information).

On-Transit/Station Signage

On-transit signage placed on Capital Metro vehicles and at stations may be used to drive people to different sources to obtain more information, including the Project Connect website, social media platforms, or the Project Connect Community Office.
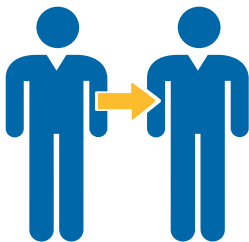
Information Distribution via Third Party Groups and Organizations

The team may utilize third party groups and organizations to help distribute information through their websites, email networks, newsletters, and/or events to audiences that may not be established in the stakeholder database. These could include electronic communications distributed by the city of Austin, other local agencies, parallel planning and transportation initiatives, elected officials, Chambers of Commerce, neighborhood groups, special interest groups, faith groups and religious institutions.

Stuff We All Get (SWAG)

SWAG, or free promotional items given to attendees, can be distributed at public and stakeholder meetings, during pop-up outreach events and community fairs to encourage engagement with the team, create brand recognition, and promote Project Connect. This could include items such as pens, re-usable bags, and t-shirts.

WEB-BASED OUTREACH

Web-based tools allow for communication that is up-to-date, concise and accessible by a wide and diverse audience.

Project Connect Website

Capital Metro has established a website for Project Connect that will serve as an online information center, providing a Project Connect overview, upcoming events, news, and contact form to reach the project team.

The team will provide content updates during major milestones. Capital Metro will review and approve any changes to the website before they are made live. All printed and electronic materials will encourage the community to visit the website for more information.

Capital Metro Website Promotional Banners

Promotional banners can be placed on Capital Metro's main website (capmetro.org) to help create awareness about public meetings and public feedback opportunities, as well as highlight Project Connect milestones. Visitors can click banner links to be directed to the Project Connect website or social media platforms for more information. Links may also request that visitors complete online surveys.

eNewsletters and eBlasts

The use of eNewsletters and eBlasts will provide overall Project Connect updates, as well as promote public meetings, other public engagement efforts and feedback opportunities. A subscriber list will be developed through an online sign-up form on the Project Connect website by collecting email addresses at public events. Project Connect eNewsletters and eBlasts will be archived on the website.

Email Inquiries

Project Connect staff will directly handle email inquiries that are received from the general public. The public will have the ability to email the team via a form on the website. This tool will serve as a direct line for questions from the public. As needed, Project Connect technical staff will assist with drafting responses to inquiries on topics for which answers are not already available. Upon submitting a question or comment, an automated message will appear on the sender's computer screen acknowledging receipt and thanking them for their interest in Project Connect. Customized responses will be provided to the sender in a prompt manner. Comments and responses will be documented.

Social Media

The team will utilize new and existing social media accounts to engage and inform the community and seek their feedback. The team will monitor the accounts in order to make these social media platforms interactive and useful. See Chapter 13 for more information about Social Media procedures.

TRADITIONAL MEDIA

Capital Metro will promote the widespread dissemination of Project Connect information, including key milestones and upcoming public meetings and feedback opportunities, by engaging reporters and soliciting media coverage. Capital Metro will be responsible for day-to-day media management including press releases and media alerts. As needed, the team will provide support in developing media materials and responding to media inquiries. Capital Metro will determine spokespersons by topic area expertise.

The team may develop a media schedule for Project Connect using specific milestones and public participation opportunities. As media outreach opportunities arise, publication deadlines will be added to the media schedule and the overall media plan.

Approach

The team will prepare for positive long-term coverage by establishing and maintaining constructive relationships with the media. These relationships will require adhering to a stringent response time to media inquiries, mindful of meeting their tight deadlines, and consistently distributing timely, accurate information encouraging awareness throughout the duration of Project Connect. Engaging with the media can help us publicize public feedback opportunities and disseminate information and key messaging.

MEDIA STRATEGIES

Consistent Key Messaging
Guide communication and enhance relationships with strong main points.

Quick Response
Timely response to media inquiries and requests.

Relationship Building
Active media relationship building with existing and new media contacts.

Regular Briefings
A regular media briefing schedule to build long-term, lasting relationships with the local media.

Thoughtful Engagement
Responsible and effective social media engagement with news outlets and reporters.

MEDIA TOOLS

A variety of tools will be used for positive, long-term media coverage.

Print and Online Media Kits
Media kits, comprised of key information materials, news releases, graphics, maps, or videos will be developed and made available to media contacts as needed.

Press Releases/Media Alerts
Press releases/media alerts will be sent to media prior to events with an explanation of the purpose, time, date and location.

Analytics and Reporting
Media coverage of Project Connect captured by Capital Metro and the team may be incorporated into outreach metrics and reporting. Ongoing evaluation will occur to review the accuracy of information, tone and reach of media coverage, and to determine if follow-up with reporters is needed.

Pitching Interviews
Proactive outreach and communication with established media contacts can increase reporter awareness of Project Connect. This could include pitching news stories to the media, arranging meetings with reporters and editorial boards to provide more in-depth information about Project Connect history and goals, and addressing specific issues.

Special Events
Special events may be held to celebrate milestones. The events would incorporate elected officials, community members and other key stakeholders. Media opportunities, such as interviews with spokespeople and experts, engaging graphics, would be provided to encourage media attendance and participation. B-roll footage could also be captured and provided to media who are not able to attend, but may have an interest in covering the event.

OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT TECHNIQUES

07

HOW WE ENGAGE

The project team aims to inform the community about Project Connect using many community outreach and engagement techniques throughout all Austin City Council Districts and Central Texas. These methods discussed are a starting point, and other methods may be employed as new opportunities are identified.

Furthermore, it may be determined that certain techniques are more appropriate than others for reaching stakeholders based on their communication needs and preferences.

This plan will remain fluid and adaptable so the most appropriate tools can be utilized for reaching specific audiences. This plan will be modified and supplemented if circumstances suggest other techniques and methods would be more effective.

Project Connect will utilize the most appropriate tools for outreach. **Our plan will remain fluid and adaptable to best facilitate communications.**

Public Meetings

Public meetings will be held to share information and obtain public feedback. The team will prepare public meeting plans outlining logistics, informational materials (exhibits, maps, handouts), meeting management tools (e.g., sign-in sheets, directional signs), feedback opportunities, and outreach/notification methods will be developed. The team will prepare summaries to document each meeting. Public meeting materials will be made available on the website.

Meetings will be held in accessible community spaces, and invitation methods could include newspaper display advertisements, postcards, flyers, changeable message signs, social media and social media advertising, electronic methods (emails, website postings, third party email networks), targeted media relations, and outreach to community leaders and organizations.

An engaging open house format will be utilized to create an informal, informative event. Information, exhibits and materials developed for meetings will be highly visual, using language and concepts that are clear, concise, and resonate with the public. Technical concepts will be communicated in a visually engaging format for public consumption, allowing technical talk to be reserved for those who are interested in "deep-dive" conversations.

Staff would be available to talk one-on-one with attendees. Public input tools could include surveys, comment forms and interactive exercises. Formal presentations are not envisioned, and attendees would be able to come-and-go at their convenience.

Online (Virtual) Public Meetings

Virtual public meetings will allow visitors to review project information, watch brief videos, provide comments, and view and download handouts and other materials. Virtual meetings will be designed in a user-friendly manner that makes it simple for participants to obtain information and provide feedback.

Stakeholder Meetings

Face-to-face meetings offer a unique opportunity to build trust by exchanging information in an open dialogue. Meetings will be offered to key stakeholder groups in order to gather feedback and deliver Project Connect information directly to them. Opportunities will be sought to take advantage of existing neighborhood and community group meetings.

Pop-Up Outreach

Pop-up outreach can be used at existing community events and in high-traffic public spaces to have conversations with community members about Project Connect, gather feedback, and answer questions. A strategy for pop-up outreach will be provided to Capital Metro, along with research to identify potential events and high-traffic locations.

The team can also collaborate with cultural centers, especially in communities that are traditionally harder to reach. At these events, the team may also consider providing food items (e.g., snow cones or popcorn) and giveaway items to draw people to the information booths.

Facilitated Workshops

Facilitated workshops can be a productive forum for providing more detailed information on specific issues or topics (e.g., aesthetics, funding). Workshops also provide a forum where different opinions and priorities can be expressed, and stakeholders can gain an appreciation for the need to balance priorities.

Community Fairs

Stakeholders have limited time and ability to participate in multiple informational events in the Central Texas community. In coordination with sister and local agencies, the team can organize community fairs where information on many local initiatives, including Project Connect, can be shared with the community (e.g. health, education, and planning).

Door-to-Door Outreach

Door-to-door outreach may be conducted with businesses and neighbors to provide information, collect contact information and solicit feedback.

Field Trips/Tours

Conducting field trips with key stakeholder groups (including elected officials and special interest groups) can be an effective way to obtain in-depth feedback regarding desired mobility and safety improvements, and to provide perspective on available right-of-way or other constraints. Tours can be conducted on foot or in vehicles.

Elected Official and Community Leader Briefings

The team will assist Capital Metro staff to prepare for meetings and briefings of elected officials to provide Project Connect information and answer questions.

Presentations and Updates to Capital Metro Board and PCAN

The team will assist with presentations and/or targeted emails to update the Capital Metro Board and PCAN. Updating these groups will promote information sharing through existing networks to reach key stakeholder groups.

Engage Trusted Community Leaders

Trusted community leaders can be engaged to help the team stay informed about concerns or issues of importance to their communities, and to help disseminate information about Project Connect, including public meetings and public feedback opportunities.

Ongoing Communication with Local Agencies

Regular updates will be provided to local agencies in the region including: city of Austin, Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority (CTRMA), Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO), Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Region 6 Office, Williamson County, Travis County, Austin Independent School District (AISD) and local municipalities.

Informational Brown Bag Lunch Sessions for Major Employers (Public and Private)

Informational brown bag lunch sessions for major employers (public and private) will be offered to share information and gather feedback. These meetings may be particularly effective for providing the latest updates to Capital Metro employees and labor unions, so they can share accurate information with their friends and neighbors.

Special Events

Project milestones will be promoted using special events that incorporate elected officials, news media, community members, and other key stakeholders.

Project Connect Community Office

A team member should be available to interact with members of the public who stop in to ask questions, and informational materials will be provided to individuals.

Promotions and Incentives

Promotions and incentives can be used to encourage participation in the feedback gathering process, including completing surveys and participating in interactive exercises. By completing a survey or recruiting a set number of people to complete a survey, participants could be entered into raffles to win prizes from local businesses, or gift cards to popular retailers (such as HEB or Amazon). The team could also explore partnerships with nonprofit organizations or schools, whereby the entity that gets the most people to participate in a survey would be entered into a contest.

Independent School District and other Education Partnerships

Engaging local residents through educational entities such as the University of Texas, Austin Community College, independent school districts (ISD), and others can be used to engage stakeholders who typically do not participate in the process. The team will work with the educational agencies to provide flyers for meetings and also present at meetings and special community events.

Youth Organizations

Engaging our local youth organizations, such as American YouthWorks and Communities in Schools, will both inform and involve the younger generation in the project and the future of transit in our city. The team will work with these youth organizations to present at meetings, attend community events, and engage in small group dialogue to engage and inform about the project.

Leadership Austin Conversation Corps

The Leadership Austin Conversation Corps, initially established by the Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce (GACC), encourages thoughtful leadership within the community. Engaging this group will empower young leaders to learn more about the project, share their feedback and build relationships that will help inform others about the project.

GUERRILLA/ EXPERIMENTAL MARKETING

Guerrilla and experimental marketing can be used to raise awareness and interaction among large audiences without interrupting them. The element of surprise is used to create unconventional campaigns that catch people unexpectedly in the course of their day-to-day routines and offers an opportunity for interaction.

Environmental Design
Adding to preexisting urban environments, both indoor and outdoor, e.g. transit stations, sidewalks and streets and buildings. Graffiti marketing is an example that uses city streets and alleyways as a giant canvas.

In-Progress Event Engagement
Engaging an audience at an in-progress event, such as a concert or sporting event.

Flash Mobs
Flash mobs involve organizing a group of individuals to perform a specific action or task at a pre-determined location and time. In some cases, participants are hired actors, other times they are simply members of the community.

Publicity Stunts
Publicity stunts involve specific feats of awe and amazement, usually sponsored or in partner with a brand.

Treasure Hunts
Creating custom, high-quality treasure hunts can energize audiences. These treasure hunts often involve posting online clues to hidden items scattered across a single or several cities. Winners are rewarded with digital codes, prizes, or a hint for the next level of the treasure hunt.

Non-Conventional Outreach
Interaction through non-conventional outreach channels including social media, virtual reality, and visioning vehicles, e.g. "Join the Movement" bus. Other examples include viral videos, user-generated content competitions and creative landing pages.

INCLUSIVE OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT

08

A DIVERSE COMMUNITY

The Central Texas community is a diverse, multi-layered group that is composed of people from different economic, educational, and cultural backgrounds. Community members are comprised of a diverse blend of individuals from various countries and varied ideological perspectives; therefore, our outreach and engagement techniques need to match this diversity.

The project team will employ strategies to enhance the community engagement program, so that all members of the community have an opportunity to participate as Project Connect progresses.

INCLUSIVE OUTREACH METHODS

The project team will attempt to engage and involve these populations by identifying neighborhoods and communities, determining the most effective means for reaching them to provide information, and encouraging their involvement.

Possible outreach methods could include, but are not limited to:

Paid Advertisements

Place paid advertisements in minority and/or non-English language publications and media (e.g. KAZI).

Targeted Outreach

Outreach to community organizations, faith groups and places of worship; collaboration with community leaders to share information through existing communication channels.

Outreach to various Chambers of Commerce; hosting a table at special events and high-traffic locations.

Community Online Forums and Meetings

Post information to community calendars.

Attend neighborhood and local association meetings where project information can be shared. Where possible, translation services will be procured through local community members.

INCLUSIVE OUTREACH QUALITIES

In order to engage historically underserved and/or underrepresented communities, engagement must have the following characteristics:

Space

Meetings or informational sessions must take place at locations near, familial, and accessible by transit to community members.

Time

Events should be held at times that are convenient for families to attend, typically on weekends or after work.

Outreach

Residents have busy lives; therefore, collaborating with various organizations that already hold events or meetings for families is key.

Feedback

Providing a transparent process for residents to engage with the project is important, whether it be via the web, social media, print media, online or in-person.

Logistics

Ensure materials and meetings are presented in a variety of languages and in a medium that is accessible to diverse groups.

Accessibility

Capital Metro's ridership includes individuals with various physical disabilities and/or impairments; therefore, we will make sure information is accessible for these populations.

OUTREACH FOR NON-ENGLISH SPEAKERS

Interpretation Services

Foreign language interpreters can be provided at public meetings upon request, provided the request is received 5 working days prior to the meeting in order to secure the services.

- Tools used to promote public meetings will include a note that foreign language interpreters can be made available upon request.

- Spanish-speaking interpreters should be considered for meetings held in areas with a heavy concentration of Spanish-speaking households, regardless of whether specific requests are received.

- Interpreters can be provided using resources including Capital Metro staff and/or by contracting those services through the consultant team.

Translation Services

- Key informational tools and materials, including the website, handouts, public input surveys, comment forms, and public meeting announcements can be translated into Spanish.

- These tools and materials may also be provided in other languages, upon request.

DEMOGRAPHICS ASSESSMENT

Ongoing Assessments

An ongoing assessment of Central Texas demographics should be conducted to maintain an accurate understanding of the language needs to determine if additional interpretation or translation services should be employed.

Demographic sources cited below should be reviewed annually for the latest information. The American Community Survey provides estimate updates every year.

- City of Austin demographic reports that include local trends and analyses: www.austintexas.gov/page/demographic-data

- The most recent US Census Bureau's American Fact Finder and the American Community Survey (ACS), which includes languages spoken at home: www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/ http://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml

- StatisticalAtlas.com, which includes census data about local neighborhoods and individual city blocks: statisticalatlas.com/place/Texas/Austin/Overview

Following each public meeting (in-person and online), the team will review information provided by those who attended/participated.

NEPA ENGAGEMENT

(NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT)

09

NEPA PROCESS

The primary law governing the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) environmental protection process is the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.), as amended.

Many different federal laws, rules and regulations govern environmental review of federally-assisted mass transportation projects. NEPA establishes an umbrella process for coordinating compliance with each law through the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for all major federal actions significantly affecting the environment.

50 ACCR

356

MEETING NEPA REQUIREMENTS

It is policy that public involvement and a systematic interdisciplinary approach be essential parts of the development process for proposed actions and that no person, because of handicap, age, race, color, sex, or national origin, be excluded from participating in, or denied benefits of, or be subject to discrimination under any program or procedural activity required by or developed pursuant to this regulation.

NEPA COMPLIANCE PLAN

In addition to the engagement tools and tactics outlined in this plan, the team will comply with NEPA policy. The engagement tools and tactics outlined in this plan support involvement processes and standards.

☑ **Engagement with participating agencies.**
This includes historic preservation and parks.

☑ **Provide early and continuing opportunities during project development for public involvement.**
The public can help identify social, economic, and environmental impacts, as well as impacts associated with relocation of individuals, groups, or institutions. This includes an opportunity to assist in defining the purpose and need and the range of alternatives for any action subject to the project development procedures in 23 U.S.C. 139.k.

☑ **Plan one or more public hearings at a convenient time and place.**
Any federal-aid project that requires significant amounts of right-of-way, substantial changes to the layout or functions of connecting roadways or of the facility being improved, has a substantial adverse impact on abutting property, or has a significant social, economic, environmental or other effect, or for which the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) determines that a public hearing is in the public interest.

Provide reasonable notice of public hearings.
Inform the community of a public hearing well ahead of time to indicate the availability of explanatory information. The notice shall also provide information required to comply with public involvement requirements of other laws, executive orders, and regulations.

Include the following information, as appropriate at the public hearing.
The project's purpose, need, and consistency with the goals and objectives of any local urban planning.

The project's alternatives and major design features.

The social, economic, environmental, and other impacts of the project.

The relocation assistance program and the right-of-way acquisition process.

Procedures for receiving both oral and written comments from the public.

Provide transcripts and certification.
A transcript of each public hearing and a certification that a required hearing or hearing opportunity was offered will be provided to FHWA. The transcript will be accompanied by copies of all written statements from the public, both submitted at the public hearing or during an announced period after the public hearing.

OUTREACH METRICS AND REPORTING

10

TRACKING STATISTICS

It is important to track the progress, traction and outcomes of community engagement activities throughout the program to allow for adjustments or adaptations to messaging. Indicators will include metrics to track qualitative and quantitative changes in the audience's level of interaction, overall tone of communications, and behavioral change/activity.

The effectiveness of the Project Connect community engagement plan will be measured and reported quarterly to the Capital Metro Board, PCAN and other interested stakeholders.

The team will develop a quarterly infographic-based report in online and print formats. The online version will be posted on the website and promoted through social media channels.

TRACKING OUTCOMES

Community Engagement Activities
- Events/attendance
- Comment/feedback trends
- Survey results

Website Analytics
- Daily page views and visitors
- Average visit duration
- Average pages per visit

Web traffic sources, including social, direct, referral, and organic search

- New or returning visitors
- Visits by sources, including desktop, mobile and tablet
- Top pages visited along with corresponding page views and average time on page

Social Media Analytics
- Total organic impressions, engagements, and link clicks
- Audience growth data, including total followers/fans and followers/fans growth
- Engagement count, including replies, retweets and likes
- Engagement and impressions per tweet/post and follower
- Reactions, comments and shares

eNewsletter/eBlast Analytics
- Opens
- Clicks
- Forwards
- Hard and soft bounces
- Opt outs
- Click through performance

Note: Demographic data will be collected from community members who voluntarily provide it. The communications team envisions including demographic questions in surveys (in-person and online). This tool will help the communications team gauge whether we are hearing from a representative sample of the Central Texas community.

COMMENT AND OUTREACH TRACKING

11

COMMENT CODING

It is anticipated most comments will address multiple issues and concerns. Comment coding and response will be logged in the comment database.

This protocol would apply to comments received during an official comment period in addition to required reporting in accordance with NEPA.

Contact Database/ Listening Log

The team will establish a contact database to streamline the tracking of agency and stakeholder coordination.

This database will be used for the following:

- Tracking and documenting public and agency comments

- Tracking and documenting public participation, outreach, media, contact lists and mailing lists

- Managing administrative records

- Providing participation data for tracking metrics and reporting

Comment Submittal

Comments may be submitted by any of the following avenues:

- In writing by mail or submitted at a public meeting

- Email a Project Connect team member or Capital Metro employee

- Telephone calls with Project Connect team member or Capital Metro employee

- Fax

- Website

- Capital Metro general inquiry email via Capital Metro website

- Social media

Comment Management

All comments will be entered into the database, including the date received and contact information provided, such as:

- Name of commenter

- Agency/organization

- Address

- Comment method (letter, email, etc.)

- Contact type

- Information requested

- Preferred contact method

- Other, as appropriate

SCHEDULE

2016-2018

Community engagement
and corridor selection

✔ **Complete**

2019-2020

Community
engagement, engineering
and environmental review,
vehicle review, vehicle
selection

2020

Possible referendum

SOCIAL MEDIA PROCEDURES

13

PROTOCOL FOR ONLINE ENGAGEMENT

Social media messaging will focus on the value of Project Connect, ongoing projects and initiatives, and promoting special programs and events. Content will be posted on Capital Metro's existing social media accounts: Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram. By posting on these accounts, Project Connect can build on Capital Metro's successful accounts and reach large groups immediately.

Using existing accounts also streamlines information-gathering channels for the community. Project Connect posts will utilize #ProjectConnect. All content will follow guidelines established in Capital Metro's Social Media Guidelines.

Posting and Frequency

Social media posting will occur on a weekly basis, or more frequently as needed, to support Project Connect communication and outreach efforts. When appropriate, live posting will be allowed, such as during public meetings or other community outreach events. Social media content will consist of both text and visuals.

The team will be responsible for:

- Generating and distributing monthly content.
- Managing comment responses.
- Identifying potential communication issues or crises.
- Analyzing engagement data and creating quarterly reports.
- Acting as a liaison between the city of Austin and the consultant team.

Response Guidelines

The team will monitor, update and engage interested parties on program channels during normal business hours, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Outside of normal business hours, the team will provide emergency or urgent updates, as needed. In the event of an issue, the team will respond within 24 hours of notification. Abusive or urgent posts will be addressed immediately. General questions or comments submitted via social media will be addressed within one business day.

Social Media Content

Social media posts should be current, fresh, innovative and consistent. The suggested framework has been developed with these goals in mind, as we aim to inform the public about current Project Connect activities and plans.

The framework is divided into three different areas: Project Connect Information, News and Updates, and Creative Engagement. Throughout these areas, we will reinforce our key messaging and key terminology. We will also coordinate our postings with other Capital Metro employees who will be using the same social media accounts in an effort to avoid content overlap.

Project Connect Information

These posts will provide background information and facts about Project Connect.

Key topic areas include:

- Project Connect history
- Overall Project Connect information/vision
- Project Connect benefits
- Process metrics
- Types of enhancements

Program News, Events and Updates

These posts will provide current updates about Project Connect news, events and progress, including community outreach efforts. We may explore opportunities to post in real-time/live feeds during outreach activities as they are occurring in the community.

- Pop-up outreach opportunities
- Outreach to diverse/underrepresented groups
- Presentations
- Information tools and materials

Entity Engagement through Social Media

Use of hashtags, polls, tweeting at local celebrities, businesses, and organizations and could include the use of sports, pop culture and Austin-themed posts. Retweets and reposts of key social media influencers when appropriate and on-message.

Creative Engagement

Photo contests and scavenger hunts to engage the public by asking them to take photos in their corridors with a chance to win prizes.

DEFINITIONS

Autonomous Vehicle

A vehicle that uses a combination of sensors, cameras, radar and artificial intelligence (AI) and has the ability to travel between destinations without a human operator.

Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)

A high-quality bus-based transit system that delivers fast and efficient service that may include traffic signal priority, off-board fare collection, elevated platforms and enhanced stations.

Bus Rapid Transit Light (BRT Light)

A high-quality bus-based transit system that delivers fast and efficient service that may include bus priority lanes, traffic signal priority, off-board fare collection, elevated platforms and enhanced stations.

Capital Metro

A public transportation provider that operates bus, paratransit, commuter rail, and express service in Austin and several suburbs in Travis and Williamson counties. Voters approved the creation of Capital Metro in January 1985, agreeing to fund the organization with a one percent sales tax.

Commuter Rail

A form of rail public transportation that operates at a high capacity and in exclusive right-of-way. This track can carry heavy rail vehicles, including freight. An example is Capital Metro's MetroRail.

Dedicated Pathway

Fully dedicated lanes set aside for public transportation vehicles that allow for traffic-free travel.

Express Bus

A bus service that runs faster than local or regular bus services between the same commuter or destination points. Express buses operate on a faster schedule by not making as many stops as local bus services, often taking faster routes, such as along freeways, or by using dedicated pathways or roadways.

High-Capacity Rapid Transit

Public transportation option that carries a large volume of passengers using larger vehicles and/or more frequent service than local or regular bus services. High-capacity transit can operate on exclusive rights-of-way, such as a rail track, dedicated pathway or on existing streets with mixed traffic.

Light Rail (LRT)

Rail service that operates at a high capacity on a track designed for lighter weight trains. This track cannot carry freight trains.

Local Route

Bus service with regular operation along a route stopping at established bus stops according to a published schedule.

MetroRail

Capital Metro's commuter rail system that connects downtown Austin with Austin's northern suburbs. The line operates on 32 miles of existing freight tracks, and serves nine stations.

MetroRapid

Capital Metro's bus rapid transit service. MetroRapid offers more frequent service with a limited number of stops and faster travel times. This type of service is known as Bus Rapid Transit Light or BRT Light.

Neighborhood Circulator

A vehicle serving an area confined to a specific locale, such as a downtown area or suburban neighborhood, with connections to other transportation services and popular destinations.


Park & Ride

Parking lots with public transportation connections that allow commuters and other people to leave their vehicles and transfer to a bus, rail system, or carpool for the remainder of the journey. The vehicle is left in the parking lot during the day and retrieved when the owner returns. Park & Rides are generally located in the suburbs of metropolitan areas or on the outer edges of large cities.

Priority Treatment

Allows public transportation vehicles to bypass traffic at signalized intersections. These treatments reduce travel time delay caused by traffic congestion and improve the reliability of schedules.
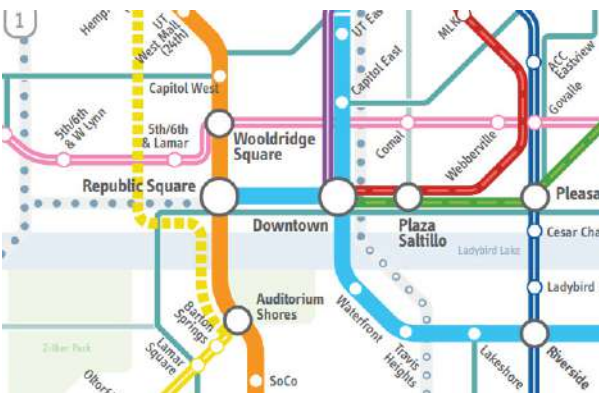
Project Connect

A regional, multi-generational public transportation plan developed to improve existing high-capacity transit services and develop new high-capacity transit projects that provide efficient travel options into, out of, and around Central Texas.

PROJECT CONNECT

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

2019 PLAN