



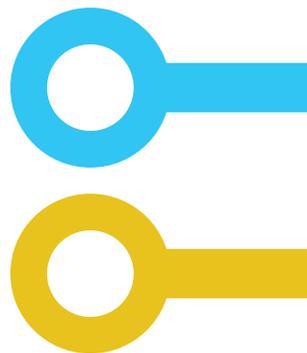
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Your Plan, Your
Blue Line &
Gold Line



Summary Report April 2020

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WHY PLAN THE BLUE LINE & GOLD LINE

»» THE NEED AND THE VISION

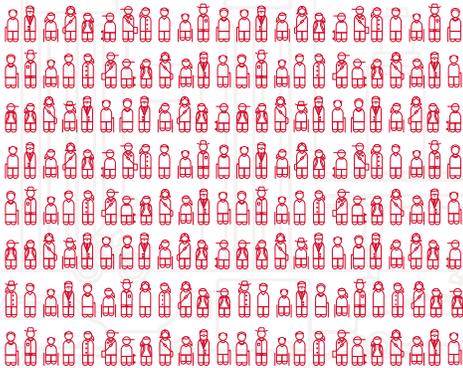
Capital Metro began developing the Project Connect Vision Plan in 2016. The need for the Project Connect vision is the result of Central Texas' booming population which is projected to double by 2040. This growth will cause additional strain on the roadway network, result in increased travel times and travel costs, decrease our mobility, hinder our region's economic health, and threaten our air quality.

In December 2018, the Capital Metro Board of Directors approved the **Project Connect Vision Plan**, which identified corridors for potential investment in High Capacity Transit (HCT), in addition to other improvements like new MetroRapid routes, Red Line improvements, development of the Green Line, additional MetroExpress routes with park-and-rides, and Neighborhood Circulators.

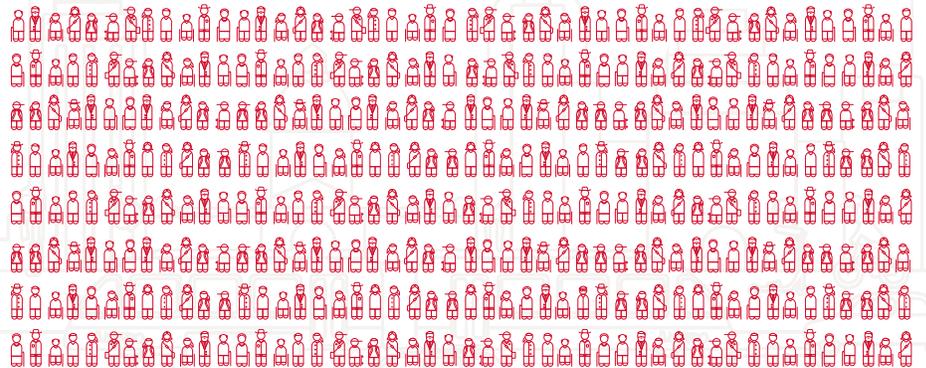
In 2019, the Austin City Council approved the **Austin Strategic Mobility Plan**, which establishes a policy goal to quadruple the share of commuters who use transit by 2039. The Project Connect Vision Plan is included as an integral part of the ASMP, and both initiatives provide a way forward for solving future mobility challenges the region faces.

Constructing and operating HCT is an effective tool to address the region's growth pressures, improve mobility, and connect Central Texans to their travel destinations. HCT will make peak transit travel times faster than peak automobile travel times and create transit service that is reliable. Project Connect is a multi-generational investment and will be planned to accommodate the latest vehicle technology when it comes to market.

2019
Population: **2M+**



2040
Population: **4M+**



»» HOW THE BLUE LINE & GOLD LINE FIT INTO THE SYSTEM

The Project Connect Vision Plan identified two HCT corridors - the Blue Line Corridor and the Orange Line Corridor - as the backbone of the future system. Capital Metro initiated the Blue Line Corridor Study in 2019 to better define Blue Line & Gold Line HCT, and to explore how they could advance as individual investments (to attract federal funds) and as a part of the Capital Metro system (as part of the local and regional planning process). The **Project Connect System Plan** will be significantly advanced following the adoption of the Blue Line & Gold Line Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA).

This document provides an overview of the process used to evaluate HCT in Austin and the path to develop a proposed LPA, including how public and agency input was used to craft the proposed LPA. Key features and benefits of the LPA are illustrated, and future actions on the path toward implementation are outlined.

FUTURE-PROOFING THE SYSTEM

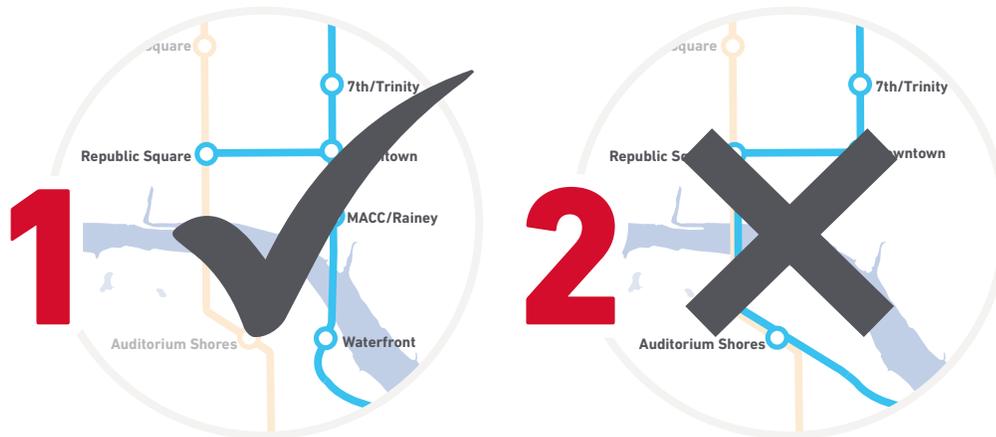
- »» Identifying how the Orange, Blue, and Gold Lines will intersect (serve the same station) or interline (operate on the same portion of tracks)
- »» Considering the costs and benefits associated with building a transit tunnel for the Orange, Blue, and Gold Line
- »» Coordinating with MetroRapid, Red and Green Lines, MetroExpress, and Neighborhood Circulator planning to facilitate connections across the system

CORRIDOR PLANNING & ROUTE EVOLUTION

BLUE LINE CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT

In April 2019, Capital Metro initiated a formal study to investigate the viability of high-capacity transit (HCT) from the Austin Airport (AUS), through downtown with a connection to another Project Connect corridor (the Orange Line) at Republic Square, and north to ACC Highland. This corridor was then-titled the “Blue Line” to distinguish it from other routes also under analysis as part of the Project Connect system.

ALIGNMENT SCENARIOS PRESENTED TO THE PUBLIC



ALTERNATIVE 1 ADVANTAGES

- » Provides service to the fast-growing Rainey neighborhood
- » Adds resilience to the system by providing an additional LRT lake crossing
- » Allows maximum flexibility for infrastructure maintenance

As Alternative 1 (Trinity Street Lady Bird Lake Crossing) emerged as the local preference (see survey results, page 9), the Project Connect team also considered the appropriate mode and transitway profile (discussed on page 8) for the Blue Line as an independent project, but also, as part of a larger, multi-generational system.

Ridership demand on the Blue Line corridor yielded a technical recommendation that light rail transit (LRT) was the mode best-suited to serve the long-term goals of Project Connect and Central Texas' anticipated population growth. LRT was also the strong local preference, as shown in the survey results.

Thus, the Project Connect team considered different scenarios for how the Blue Line would operate as a route to meet this demand and optimize system-wide operations. In a January 2020 joint City Council/ Capital Metro board meeting, Capital Metro introduced a potential alternative operating scenario where this Blue Line route would originate at the Austin Airport (AUS), travel through downtown via 4th Street, then interline with the Orange Line.

This route option creates a more resilient transit system that is interconnected with efficient transfers between the corridors.



» THE GOLD LINE CORRIDOR EMERGES

The Project Connect team continued to analyze the ridership demand and the potential cost of a route from Republic Square to ACC Highland to fully understand the viability of high-capacity transit on this segment. In January 2020, Capital Metro presented another route option for this segment - the Gold Line. Originally introduced in the 2018 vision map as a route option connecting ACC Highland to Crestview via 4th Street downtown, this configuration became redundant given the proposed interlining of the Blue Line with the Orange Line north of Republic Square. The redefined Gold Line route (right) offers an additional layer of system flexibility that can serve the corridor from ACC Highland to Downtown Station, cross east-west through downtown on the Blue Line Corridor, and travel south on the Orange Line. This configuration offers optimal flexibility and connection to a greater number of destinations and Capital Metro transit centers and provides significantly more LRT service.



2018 GOLD ROUTE CONCEPT
Crestview to ACC Highland



2020 GOLD ROUTE
South Congress Transit Center to ACC Highland

The Project Connect team analyzed options that included how each segment would perform independently as well as together as a system. The Project Connect corridors have assigned color names, whereas route names can evolve based on origin and destination. In this document, corridors and routes are defined as:

Corridors:
the alignment name

Routes:
origin and destination lines

HOW THE LRT SYSTEM COMES TOGETHER

PROJECT CONNECT ROUTES

This configuration of the LRT system allows for multiple routes to operate in the same corridor – creating many route combinations. The overlap of routes can provide riders more frequent service, or shorter times waiting for a bus or train. The segments that would have overlapping service include:

- » Gold Line/Blue Line overlap on 4th Street between the Downtown MetroRail Station and Republic Square
- » Orange Line/Blue Line overlap between Republic Square and North Lamar Transit Center
- » Orange Line/Gold Line overlap between Republic Square and South Congress Transit Center

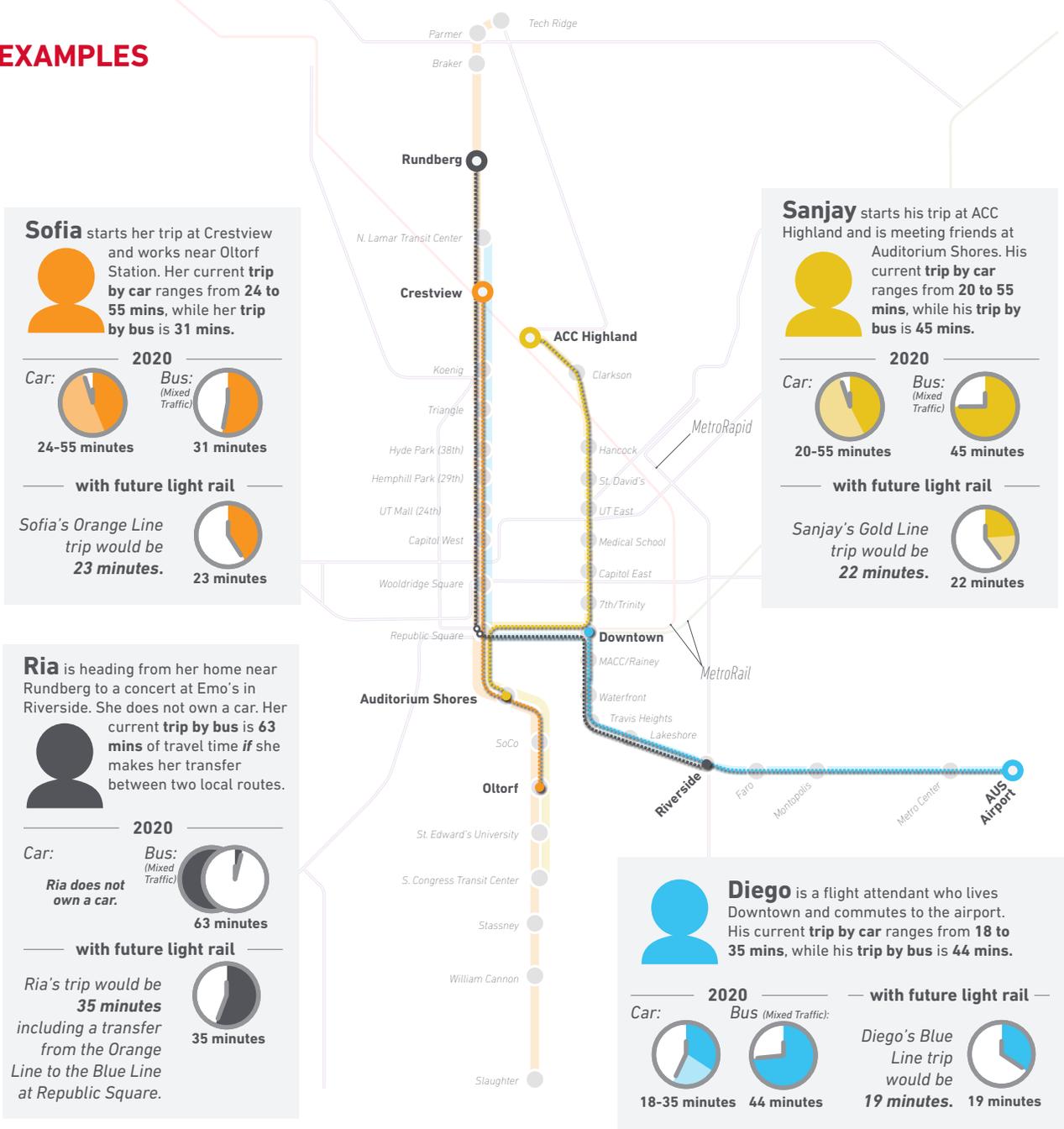


» BETTER TRANSFERS AT KEY POINTS

The Project Connect program includes a plan to enhance some of Capital Metro's existing transit centers to become inviting places that function as multimodal mobility hubs. Mobility hubs are more than just typical transit stations or park & rides. They are programmed, well-designed places with ample amenities and opportunities to access transportation needs. Successful mobility hubs can help make transit service more welcoming to both daily and occasional riders. Both the Blue Line and the Gold Line are planned to stop at existing transit centers that can evolve to mobility hubs to facilitate ease of system use and route transfers.



» TRIP EXAMPLES



Note: Car travel time does not include time spent finding a parking space.

EXPLORING OUR OPTIONS FOR A TUNNEL

Depending on the frequency of service and how the LRT system interlines, a downtown tunnel could provide operational benefits. When operating at the street level, the number of trains per hour through a specific intersection (e.g., 4th Street and Guadalupe or Cesar Chavez and Trinity), could adversely affect the transportation network, as other modes wait for the train to pass. Frequency of the trains could be adjusted with longer time between trains to mitigate these effects, but this would limit the capacity of

the system. A tunnel not only avoids street-level conflicts, it also eliminates capacity constraints.

The Project Connect team will continue to study the viability of a transit tunnel during the environmental phase. The estimated cost of the tunnel is \$2-\$2.5 billion dollars. This cost would be shared along with other system-wide costs of the Orange, Blue, and Gold corridors.

» SAFER OPERATION WITH COMPLETE SEPARATION:



A downtown tunnel will provide a safer environment for all mobility modes.

» PLACEMAKING OPPORTUNITIES:



These types of transit spaces could include:

- retail/food
- restrooms
- public art
- AC-controlled environments

» FUTURE-PROOFING:



Allows the system to increase capacity for future service demand.

» IMPROVEMENT IN TRANSIT OPERATIONAL RELIABILITY:



The benefits of grade separation and the elimination of surface conflicts improves travel time reliability and ultimately the quality of the customer's trip for everyone citywide.

» FASTER SERVICE UNDERGROUND:



The downtown tunnel would bypass approximately 20% of surface level traffic signals, which improves speed and reliability of the whole network.

There are

14 TOWERS BUILT BETWEEN 2010 AND 2018

37 TOWERS being planned for DOWNTOWN AUSTIN

including an additional **3.7 MILLION FT²** of office space to the area

Source: Austin Business Journal, March 2020

WHICH WILL BRING **TENS OF THOUSANDS OF WORKERS** TO DOWNTOWN

» REDUCTION IN SURFACE CONFLICTS:



With the construction of a downtown tunnel, approximately twenty percent of the intersections could be made conflict free resulting in improved safety, reliability and travel time for all mobility modes, including emergency vehicles.

» EXPANDING TRANSIT FOOTPRINT:



By placing a light rail transit system in a tunnel and expanding the service options of the corridor, one can help maintain the mobility capacity of the corridor and react to the growth and the congestion that comes with it.

»» WHAT IS A LOCALLY PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE?

LPA is the technical term that the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) uses to describe a community-selected transit investment that is seeking federal capital funds. Project Connect will seek Federal funding in line with recent trends in Capital Investment Grant authorizations under the New Starts Program. The program will consider awarding up to 50 percent. An LPA, or project, is made up of an alignment, transitway, vehicle, service

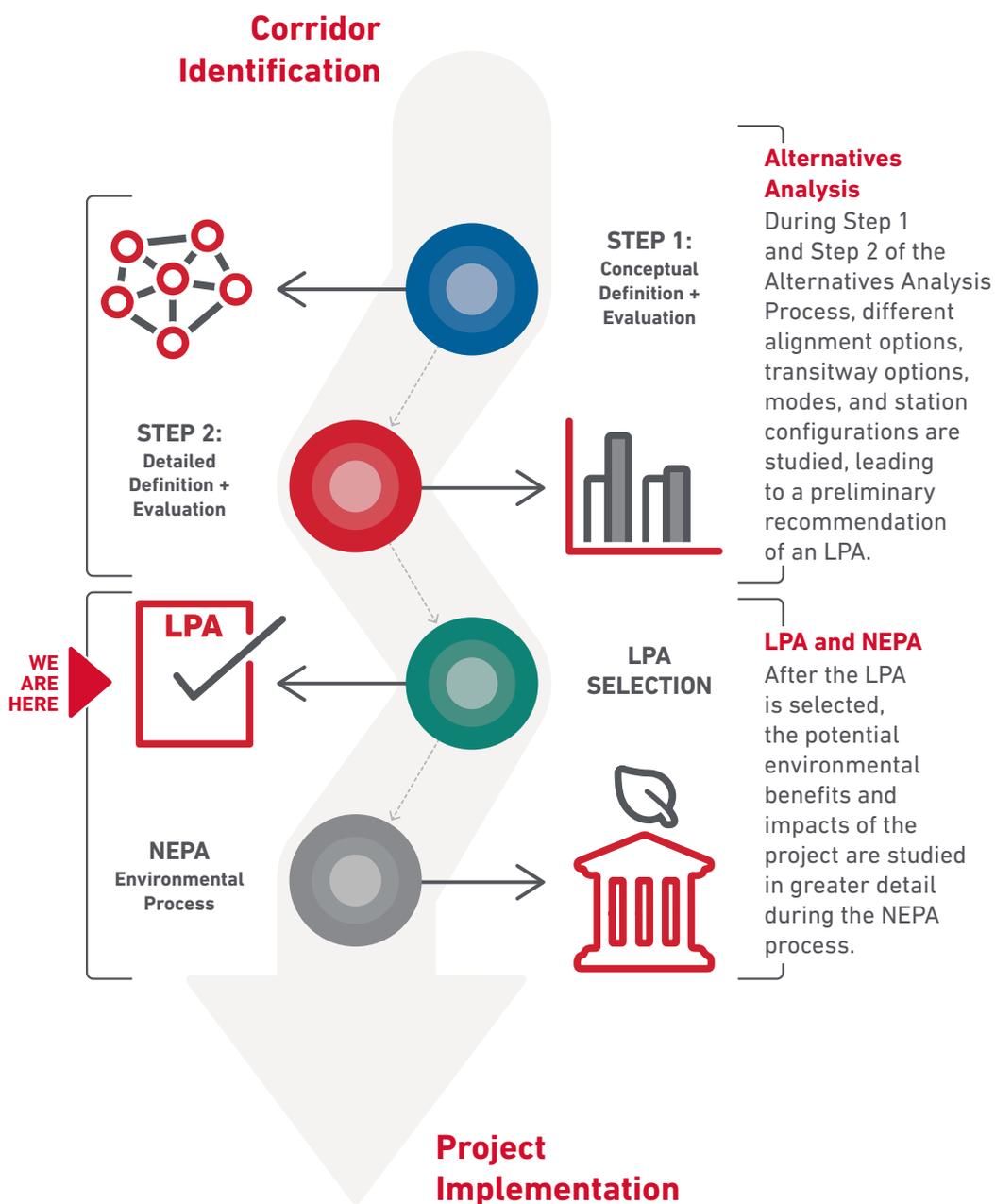
plan, and any required support infrastructure (tracks, stations, and maintenance facilities). The LPA may be broken into phases for implementation.

Capital Metro is working with stakeholders across the region to identify individual LPAs for each of the Project Connect transit investments that are seeking capital funding from the FTA.

HOW WE GOT HERE

»» THE PROCESS

The Blue Line and Gold Line Corridor Study has used a phased approach, in conjunction with guidelines set by the FTA. The process is structured as a tiered screening, where alternatives are defined, evaluated, and refined or eliminated in each step of the process. The result is a proposed LPA that will be further refined in the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process and future project phases.



WHO IS INVOLVED



COMMUNITY LEADERS

Public input has been essential to the development of the LPA. Capital Metro has worked with the Project Connect Ambassador Network (PCAN), made up of more than 150 community organizations and stakeholders to provide input through a community lens.



PARTNER AGENCIES

Throughout the process, Capital Metro regularly convened a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) of public agency staff members from local cities, counties, transportation agencies and other entities to provide technical feedback related to the project. TAC members included:

- The City of Austin and the Austin Transportation Department
- Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT)
- Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO)
- Travis County
- ...and many others



YOU, THE PUBLIC

To date, Capital Metro has conducted three rounds of formal public engagement to gather input at key points in the process. Capital Metro made a special effort to meet people in their communities: the Project Connect team tabled at community events, conducted outreach at transit stops, and implemented innovative strategies including online open houses and virtual outreach when community members were unable to attend in person public meetings.



STAKEHOLDERS

Capital Metro conducted extensive outreach to stakeholders, including neighborhood meetings, corridor working groups, and small-group presentations. Stakeholder working groups helped provide focused feedback on critical pinch points within the corridor.





» WHAT ALTERNATIVES WERE CONSIDERED?

Alignment

The Project Connect Team studied two alignment alternatives for how the corridor could cross Lady Bird Lake: a new crossing connecting to Trinity Street; or a shared crossing with the Orange Line Corridor near the S. 1st Street Bridge.



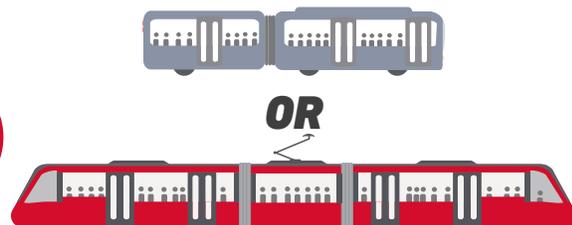
Transitway

The Project Connect Team studied whether the corridor would operate in a street level, elevated, or underground dedicated transitway depending on corridor constraints.



Mode

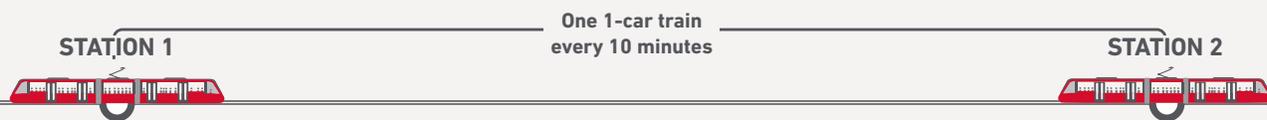
Two options were considered for the vehicle type that would operate on the transitway: **Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)** or **Light Rail Transit (LRT)**.



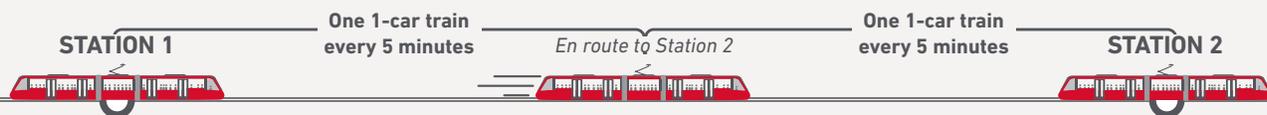
» HOW TO ENSURE THE MOST FLEXIBILITY

The technical recommendation for the Blue Line & Gold Line is Light Rail Transit (LRT). LRT allows for the most capacity and operational flexibility to handle the needs of existing and future estimated ridership.

To Carry 1,032 People Per Hour:



To Carry 2,064 People Per Hour:



To Carry 4,128 People Per Hour:



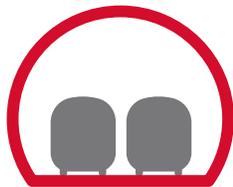
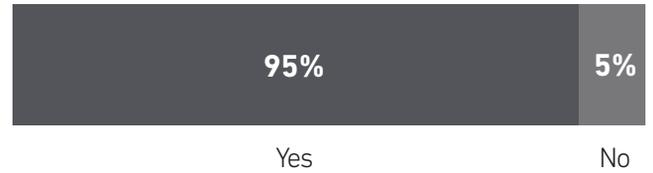
Note: Capacity illustrations are single-direction only. Downtown block lengths (272 feet) can accommodate up to three-car consists.

WHAT WE HEARD



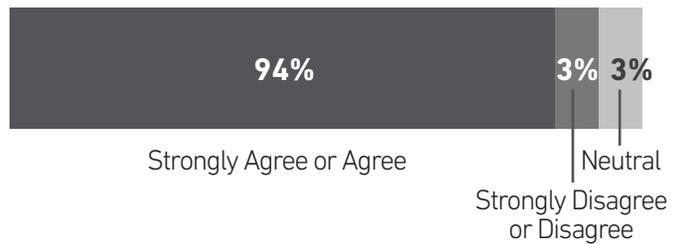
There is broad support for building dedicated transitways as part of the corridor.

» BUILD ALTERNATIVE BETTER MEETS THE PROJECT PURPOSE AND NEED

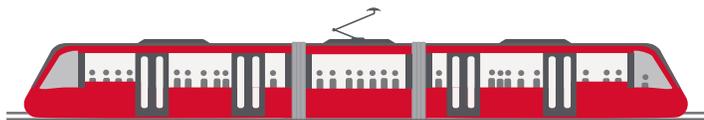
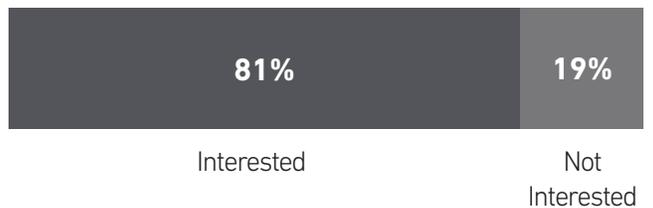


There is interest in further studying a Downtown tunnel.

» DEDICATED TRANSITWAY IS IMPORTANT



» PUBLIC INTEREST IN TUNNEL



Light Rail is the mode preferred by most respondents.

» MODE CHOICE



Most respondents prefer crossing Lady Bird Lake on a new bridge using the Trinity Street alignment.

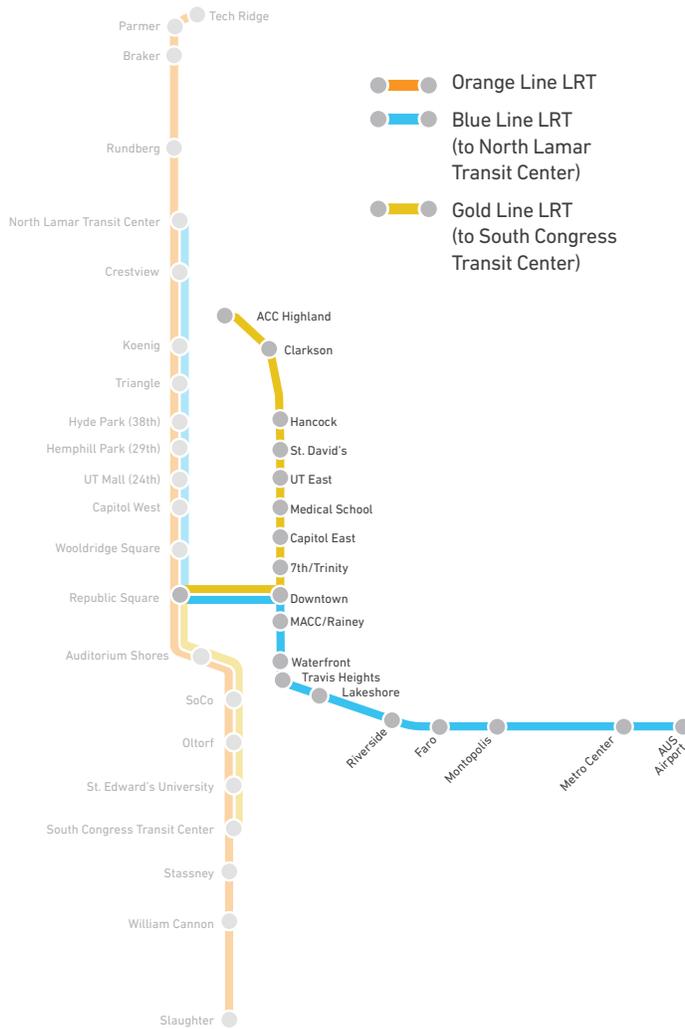
» LADY BIRD LAKE CROSSING



Note: Based on survey responses during July and November 2019 Engagement Survey responses based on initial definition of the entire Blue Line Corridor (ACC Highland to AUS Airport via Republic Square).

HOW IT COULD BE IMPLEMENTED

»» BLUE & GOLD CORRIDOR LONG TERM VISION



The Blue Line, Gold Line, and Orange Line work together as a system of interconnected services. A funding and construction sequencing plan will outline how and when each part of the system is paid for, built, and operated.

»» PROJECT CONNECT CORRIDORS

As the Project Connect corridors proceed through the federal process, the following definitions will be used to categorize projects separately for engineering purposes. These definitions are most useful to the technical team but may be helpful in understanding how the Project Connect team will delineate projects within formal applications for federal funding. These corridor definitions are also used in this report to ensure that key performance metrics – such as capital cost and ridership – best reflect the projects that will be carried into the federal environmental process.

ORANGE CORRIDOR

Tech Ridge to Slaughter Lane



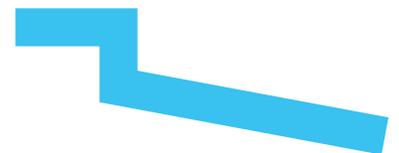
GOLD CORRIDOR

Republic Square to ACC Highland



BLUE CORRIDOR

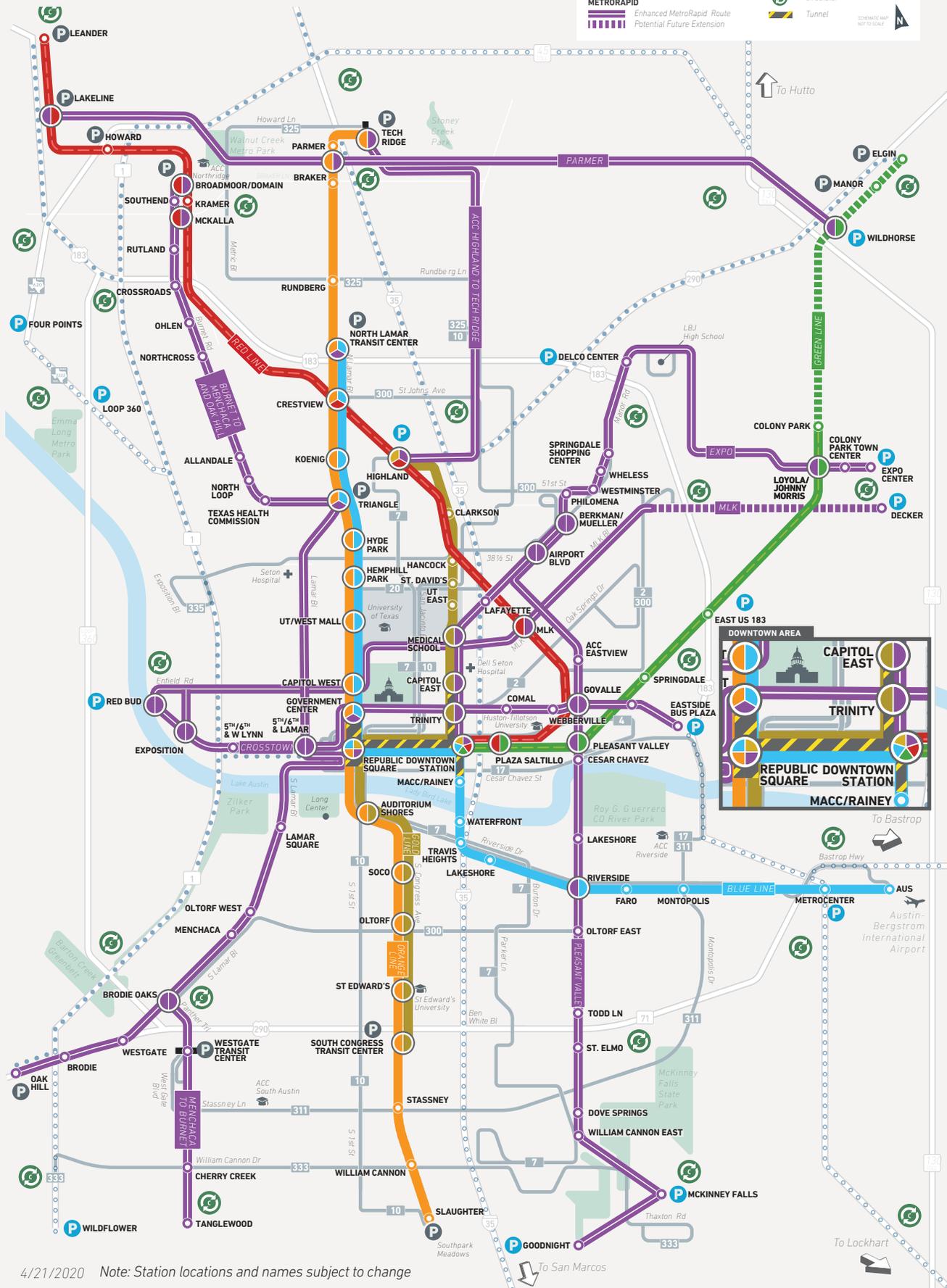
Austin Airport (AUS) to Republic Square



HOW IT ALL COMES TOGETHER

LEGEND

- LIGHT RAIL**
 - Orange Line
 - Blue Line
 - Gold Line
- METRO RAIL**
 - Red Line
 - Green Line
 - Potential Future Extension
- METRO RAPID**
 - Enhanced MetroRapid Route
 - Potential Future Extension
- METROBUS**
 - Current Frequent Local Routes
- METRO EXPRESS**
 - Current MetroExpress
 - Future MetroExpress
- METRO ACCESS**
 - Available within CapMetro service area
 - Current Park & Ride
 - Proposed Park & Ride
 - Circulator
 - Tunnel



4/21/2020 Note: Station locations and names subject to change

BLUE LINE *at a glance*

Mode *Light Rail*

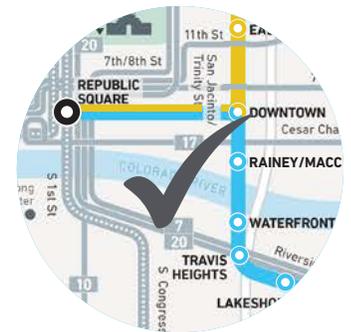
Alignment *Trinity St*



42 connections to MetroBus routes

8.2 miles & 11 stations

3 connections to LRT routes
2 connections to MetroRail routes
3 connections to MetroRapid routes



Travel Time

AUS Airport	→	Republic Square	Blue Line	21 Minutes	
			<i>Car in Rush Hour</i>		45 Minutes
Riverside	→	Downtown	Blue Line	8 Minutes	
			<i>Car in Rush Hour</i>		24 Minutes
MACC/Rainey	→	Metro Center	Blue Line	12 Minutes	
			<i>Car in Rush Hour</i>		26 Minutes



Cost

Capital Cost
\$1.5 - \$1.8 billion

Operations & Maintenance
\$14.2 - \$17.5 million annually



Ridership

Weekday Ridership (2040)
16,000 - 19,000



Environmental

Vehicle Miles Traveled Reduction
16.7 million fewer miles annually

Greenhouse Gas Reduction
6,600 tons fewer annually



Demographics

Zero Car Households in Station Areas
3,000 | 10%

Individuals in Poverty in Station Areas
17,900 | 26%

Minorities in Station Areas
41,100 | 59%

»» WHAT IS THE PROPOSED BLUE LINE?

The proposed Blue Line is Light Rail operating in a 8.2-mile dedicated transitway from Republic Square on the northern end of the corridor to Austin Bergstrom International Airport (AUS) on the southern end of the corridor using Trinity Street to cross Lady Bird Lake on a new bridge.

The transitway is proposed to operate at street level (center running) throughout most of the corridor, except elevated at the southern end of the corridor from Metro Center to AUS, over US 183. Through Downtown, there are two potential transitway options: street level and tunnel. Selection of the preferred transitway option (or combination of transitway options) between Republic Square and MACC/Rainey Stations will be made during the next project phase (Preliminary Engineering).

Eleven stations are planned along the route. The placement of these facilities will be coordinated with the local community during the design phase. Service has been modeled to operate every 10 to 15 minutes, seven days a week, from 5:00 a.m. to 3:50 a.m. (12:50 a.m. on Sundays). The Blue Line will feature off-board fare collection, larger stations with level boarding, ADA accessibility, and intersection signal prioritization.

The Blue Line will connect with the Orange Line & Gold Line in downtown Austin; the location of those connections (including potential joint use of a tunnel) will be determined in Preliminary Engineering.

Note: the data presented in the "at a glance" section reflects only the Blue Line as an independent project.

GOLD LINE *at a glance*

Mode *Light Rail*



6.4 Miles & 10 Stations

- 3 connections to LRT routes
- 3 connections to MetroRail routes
- 6 connections to MetroRapid routes



Travel Time

ACC Highland	→	Republic Square	Gold Line	20 Minutes	45 Minutes
			<i>Car in Rush Hour</i>		
St. David's	→	Downtown	Gold Line	9 Minutes	35 Minutes
			<i>Car in Rush Hour</i>		
UT East	→	ACC Highland	Gold Line	10 Minutes	40 Minutes
			<i>Car in Rush Hour</i>		



Cost

Capital Cost
\$1.0 - \$1.2 billion

Operations & Maintenance
\$12.3 - \$15.5 million annually



Environmental

Vehicle Miles Traveled Reduction
17.4 million fewer miles annually

Greenhouse Gas Reduction
7,000 tons fewer annually



Ridership

Weekday Ridership (2040)
18,000 - 20,000



Demographics

Zero Car Households in Station Areas
3,000 | 11%

Individuals in Poverty in Station Areas
11,400 | 20%

Minorities in Station Areas
25,200 | 37%

»» WHAT IS THE PROPOSED GOLD LINE?

The proposed Gold Line is Light Rail operating in a 6.4-mile dedicated transitway from ACC Highland on the northern end of the corridor to Republic Square on the southern end of the corridor.

The transitway is proposed to operate at street level (center running) throughout most of the corridor and elevated in two sections: where the Gold Line will cross over the Red Line north of Hancock Station; and through the University of Texas from Dean Keeton Street south to Martin Luther King Boulevard. Through Downtown, there are two potential transitway options: street level and tunnel. Selection of the preferred transitway option (or combination of transitway options) between Republic Square and Capitol East Stations will be made during the next project phase (Preliminary Engineering).

Ten stations are planned along the route. The placement of these facilities will be coordinated with the local community during the design phase. Service has been modeled to operate every 10 to 15 minutes, seven days a week, from 5:00 a.m. to 3:50 a.m. (12:50 a.m. on Sundays). The Gold Line will feature off-board fare collection, larger stations with level boarding, ADA accessibility, and intersection signal prioritization.

The Gold Line will connect with the Blue Line & Orange Line in downtown Austin; the location of those connections (including potential joint use of a tunnel) will be determined in Preliminary Engineering.

Note: the data presented in the "at a glance" section reflects only the Gold Line as an independent project.

WHAT'S IN IT FOR YOU

IMPROVED RELIABILITY

- The Blue Line & Gold Line will operate in dedicated transitways (separated from general traffic).
- This means fewer service interruptions and freedom from congestion.
- Dedicated transitways take the guesswork out of estimating transit travel times.

A STRONGER NETWORK

- Investing in congestion-proof transit is a necessary complement to other regional transportation investments, like improving I-35 and 183, and expanding Austin-Bergstrom International Airport.
- Each of these investments is needed to keep Austin moving.

EXPANDED ACCESS TO JOBS

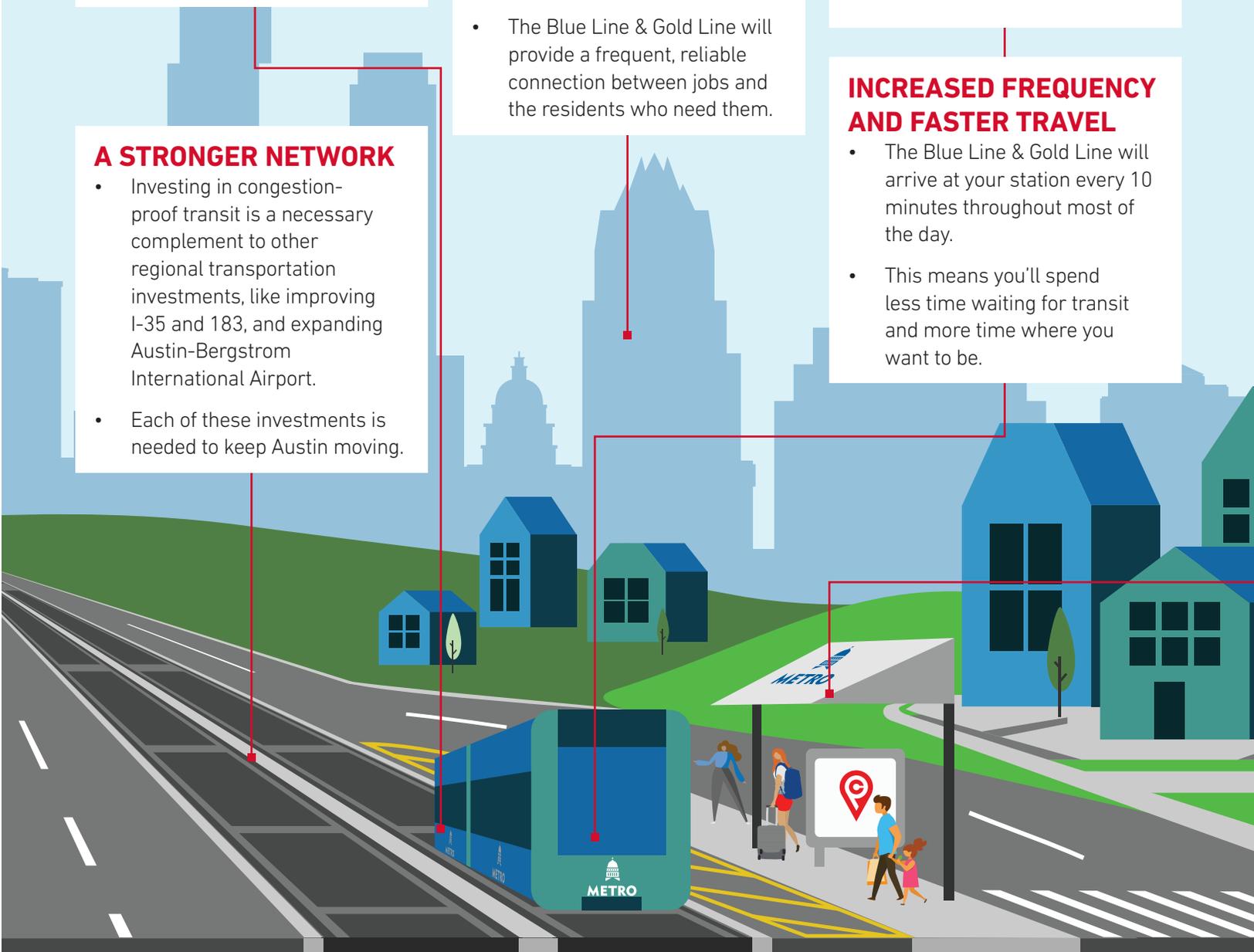
- 10% of Blue Line corridor and 11% of Gold Line corridor households do not have access to a car.
- 26% of Blue Line corridor and 20% of Gold Line corridor individuals live below the poverty line.
- 118,000+ jobs will be accessible from the Blue Line & Gold Line.
- The Blue Line & Gold Line will provide a frequent, reliable connection between jobs and the residents who need them.

EXPANDED SPAN OF SERVICE

- The service planning models assume LRT service starts at 5:00 a.m. and ends at 3:50 a.m. the following day (except 12:50 a.m. on Sunday).
- This nearly 24-hour, 7-days-a-week modeled service means that the Blue Line & Gold Line will be ready when you are.

INCREASED FREQUENCY AND FASTER TRAVEL

- The Blue Line & Gold Line will arrive at your station every 10 minutes throughout most of the day.
- This means you'll spend less time waiting for transit and more time where you want to be.



SUPPORT FOR REGIONAL PLANS

- The Austin Strategic Mobility Plan envisions that 16% of Austinites will use transit to get to work by 2039.
- Fast, reliable, frequent transit service (like the Blue Line & Gold Line) is necessary to make this happen.

MORE OPTIONS

- The Blue Line & Gold Line corridors are being designed to maximize connections to where you want to go.
- Congestion-proof transit will get you there without the headache of traffic and parking.
- If you're a driver, there will be fewer cars in front of you.

THRIVING COMMUNITIES

- Central Texas' population is expected to nearly double over the next 20 years.
- Housing construction is not meeting this demand, which means housing costs will continue to increase.
- The Blue Line & Gold Line can be a tool to help preserve affordable housing and produce housing for Austinites of all income levels.

SUSTAINABILITY AND IMPROVED AIR QUALITY

- Transportation plays an important role in confronting environmental challenges.
- Investing in the Blue Line & Gold Line will help Austin meet national air quality standards by reducing overall vehicle emissions and pollutants.
- The Blue Line & Gold Line support the greenhouse gas reduction goals of the City of Austin's Community Climate Plan.

INVESTMENT IN THE FUTURE

- The Blue Line corridor is the key to growth of the Airport and Central Texas.
- Rethinking how we use this space to move people is key to a healthy Austin.
- The Blue Line & Gold Line are major steps toward a more sustainable future and has been future-proofed to evolve with technology.



WHAT'S NEXT

Once the Capital Metro Board of Directors adopts the Blue Line & Gold Line LPA and the Austin City Council endorses it, both projects will be ready to advance through next steps in the implementation process. These next steps include: identifying an implementation plan including funding, completing the federal environmental review process, completing final design, and starting construction. Capital Metro will continue to engage with the community as the Blue Line and Gold Line projects advance.

Blue Line & Gold Line

It's time for regional public transit we can rally behind.

It's Go Time!

» HOW WILL IT BE FUNDED?

Once an LPA is adopted, the Blue Line & Gold Line would be eligible for Federal funding in line with recent trends in Capital Investment Grant (CIG) authorizations. The CIG program may award up to 50% of the capital cost. Other funding will primarily

come from local sources, and authorization of new local funding to be directed towards some or all of the Blue Line & Gold Line could be on the November 2020 ballot.



Capital Metro Board Action on LPA

- Capital Metro Board adopts independent corridor LPA
 - Necessary step for federal funding
- Capital Metro Board adopts System Plan



Local Partner Action on LPA

- Austin City Council endorses LPA
- CAMPO adopts LPA into Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) in June 2020



Implementation

- Develop implementation plan
- Define projects for construction/funding
- Finalize funding package



Investments Advanced

Environmental Work (NEPA)

Potential impacts to natural, social, and built environments

Engagement

Preliminary Engineering

Design advanced to support environmental work

Final Design

- Design is finalized for construction
- Costs are finalized
- Funding is finalized

FTA Approval & Construction

- FTA funds
- Construction begins

Blue & Gold Line Implementation

2020



2025



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QUESTIONS?



**Visit the Project Connect Community Office
located at 607 Congress Ave.**

Talk with project staff, ask questions and provide feedback between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m.



Visit ProjectConnect.com

We value your input! Sign up to receive updates or learn about upcoming meetings.



Follow us on Twitter @CapMetroATX!



Join us on [Facebook.com/CapitalMetro!](https://www.facebook.com/CapitalMetro/)

Led by Capital Metro with support from the City of Austin

AECOM **HR**

HNTB **N NELSON**
NYGAARD