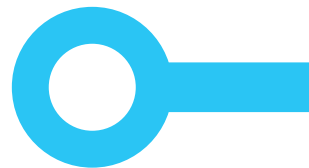




*Get Involved,
Stay Involved*
**Blue Line
Project**



National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)
Public Environmental Scoping Process

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AA	Alternatives Analysis	HCT	High-Capacity Transit
ACC	Austin Community College	HPD	City of Austin Housing and Planning Department
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act	HUD	U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
AISD	Austin Independent School District	LCRA	Lower Colorado River Authority
ATD	Austin Transportation Department	LPA	Locally Preferred Alternative
AUS	Austin-Bergstrom International Airport	LRT	Light Rail Transit
BRT	Bus Rapid Transit	MACC	Mexican American Cultural Center
CAMPO	Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization	NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
CAPCOG	Capital Area Council of Governments	NOES	Notice of Early Scoping
CARTS	Capital Area Rural Transportation System	NPS	National Parks Service
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations	NRCS	Natural Resources Conservation Service
CIG	Capital Investment Grant	PARD	City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department
COA	City of Austin	PCAN	Project Connect Ambassador Network
CTRMA	Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority	PEL	Planning and Environmental Linkages
DAA	Downtown Austin Alliance	ROD	Record of Decision
DEIS	Draft Environmental Impact Statement	RTP	Regional Transportation Plan
EDD	City of Austin Economic Development Department	TAC	Technical Advisory Committee
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement	TCEQ	Texas Commission on Environmental Quality
EJ	Environmental Justice	THC	Texas Historical Commission
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency	TPWD	Texas Parks and Wildlife Department
FAA	Federal Aviation Administration	TxDOT	Texas Department of Transportation
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency	USACE	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration	USDA	U.S. Department of Agriculture
FTA	Federal Transit Administration	USDI	U.S. Department of Interior
HACA	Housing Authority of the City of Austin	USFWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
		UT	University of Texas

PURPOSE OF THIS SCOPING BOOKLET

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Capital Metro) have initiated the environmental review process for the Blue Line Project (the Project) in Austin, Texas in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other regulatory requirements. An Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is being prepared as part of this process, with the FTA as the Federal Lead Agency and Capital Metro as the Local Sponsor Agency responsible for implementing the Blue Line Project under NEPA.

To determine the scope, content and significant issues to be addressed in the EIS, FTA and Capital Metro are conducting agency and public "scoping." Scoping is "an early and open process for determining the scope of issues to be addressed and for identifying the significant issues related to a proposed action" (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] 1501.7). This scoping booklet is intended to help interested parties understand the scoping process, provide pertinent information about the Project and establish an early and open process for obtaining public and agency input.

HISTORY OF PROJECT CONNECT AND THE BLUE LINE PROJECT

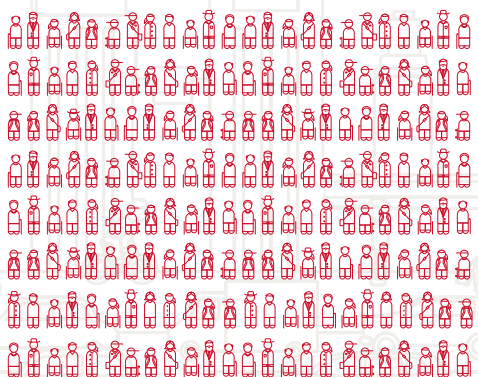
In 2016, Capital Metro initiated work to develop the Project Connect Vision Plan, which evaluated transit alternatives to address Central Texas' growing population and associated traffic congestion. Capital Metro prepared the Project Connect Vision Plan per general guidelines of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)/Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) process. Project Connect Vision Plan that envisions a system of high-capacity transit (HCT) options to connect people, places and opportunities around Central Texas affordably, efficiently and sustainably. Through Project Connect, Capital Metro worked closely with residents, employees and community groups to develop a plan that addresses the region's short- and long-term needs.

In December 2018, the Capital Metro Board of Directors approved the Project Connect Vision Plan, which identified

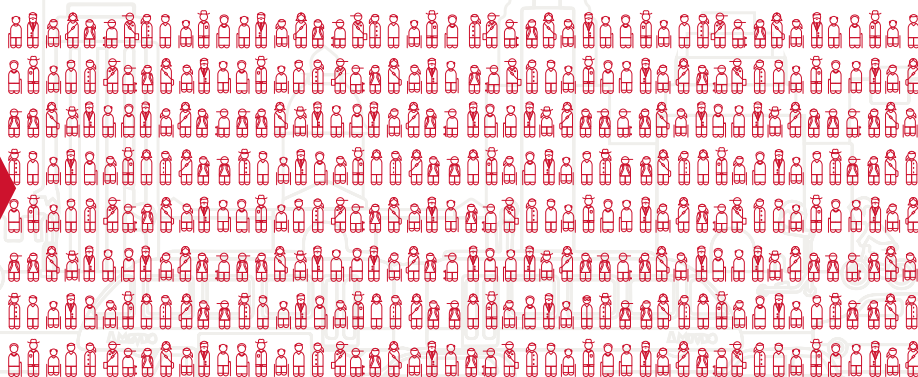
corridors for potential investment in HCT, in addition to other improvements like new MetroRapid bus routes, Red Line improvements, development of the Green Line Commuter Rail, additional MetroExpress routes with Park & Rides and Neighborhood Circulators.

The Project Connect Vision Plan originally identified two HCT corridors - the Blue Line Corridor and the Orange Line Corridor - as the backbone of the future system. Capital Metro conducted an Alternatives Analysis (AA) study as part of the PEL process to investigate the viability of HCT from the Austin-Bergstrom International Airport (AUS), through downtown with a connection to another Project Connect corridor (the Orange Line) at Republic Square and north to Austin Community College (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.

2019
Population: **2M+**



2040
Population: **4M+**





METRO

projectconnect

SYSTEM PLAN

Adopted June 10, 2020

LEGEND

LIGHT RAIL
Orange Line
Blue Line
Gold Line

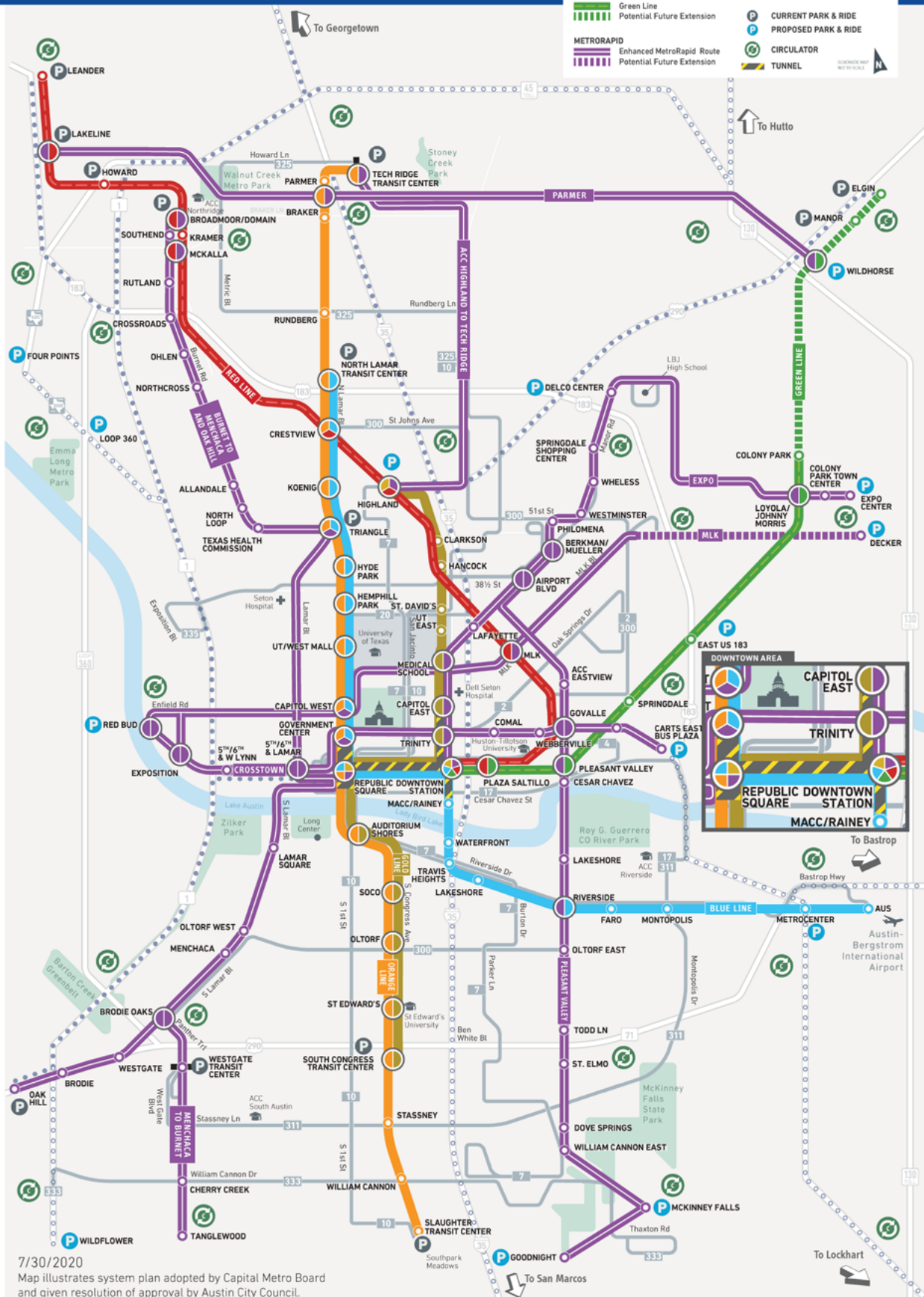
METRO RAIL
Red Line
Green Line
Potential Future Extension
METRO RAPID
Enhanced MetroRapid Route
Potential Future Extension

METROBUS
Current Frequent Local Routes

METROEXPRESS
Current MetroExpress
Future MetroExpress

ADDITIONAL AVAILABLE SERVICES

MetroAccess
MetroBike
CURRENT PARK & RIDE
PROPOSED PARK & RIDE
CIRCULATOR
TUNNEL

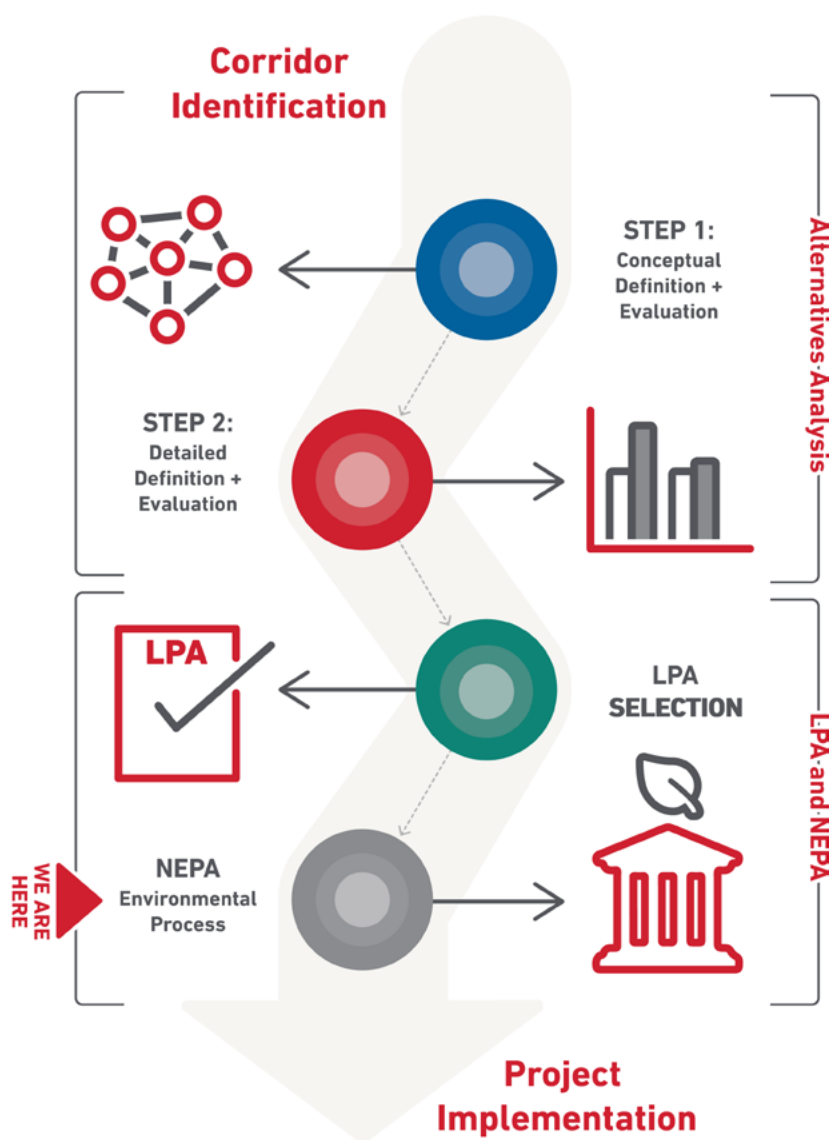


7/30/2020

Map illustrates system plan adopted by Capital Metro Board and given resolution of approval by Austin City Council.

As part of the PEL/AA process, Capital Metro and the FTA published a Notice of Early Scoping (NOES) in the Federal Register on April 19, 2019. Through the NOES, Capital Metro invited public and agency input on the Blue Line Corridor Purpose and Need, proposed alternatives and potential environmental, transportation and community impacts and benefits. Engagement included public open houses and other organized events, both in-person and online, as well as meetings with community stakeholders, such as the Project Connect Ambassador Network (PCAN), and the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) comprised of local and regional agency representatives.

Capital Metro conducted the Alternatives Analysis using a phased approach that was structured as a tiered screening, where alternatives were defined, evaluated and refined or eliminated in each step of the process. Capital Metro evaluated an alignment (i.e. where the HCT would operate), transitway type (e.g. in street in mixed traffic, on aerial structure, or tunnel) and mode (bus rapid transit [BRT] or light rail transit [LRT]). Capital Metro analyzed a combination of mode, transitway and alignment alternatives that meets the Purpose and Need for the Blue Line Corridor, is financially feasible and has strong local support. The result was a proposed Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) whose environmental benefits and impacts will be further evaluated under the formal NEPA process and future project phases. The results of the analysis provided information to decisionmakers and the public on the costs, potential impacts and benefits of the alternatives under consideration.



Through the PEL/AA process, Capital Metro identified light rail transit (LRT) as the preferred mode for the Blue Line Corridor. With the proposed mode preference for light rail confirmed, Capital Metro considered the Blue Line alongside the evolving Orange Line and broader Project Connect system. In January 2020, the joint Austin City Council/Capital Metro Board of Directors meeting yielded a potential alternative operating scenario with the Blue Line originating at AUS, traveling through downtown via 4th Street to Republic Square, where it could then interline with the Orange Line north. Understanding the benefits of interlining the Blue Line with the Orange Line north, Capital Metro divided the Blue Line Corridor at Republic Square to create two routes – the Blue Line and the Gold Line.

Each distinct project can be considered as part of a sequence of investments in implementing the long-term vision. At the June 2020 joint meeting of the Austin City Council and Capital Metro Board of Directors, the Blue Line Project, Gold Line Project, Orange Line Project, and MetroRapid routes were selected as distinct and separate projects with their own LPAs to advance to the environmental review process, as well as the FTA's Capital Investment Grant (CIG) funding program. The graphic on the following page shows the Blue Line LPA.

In November 2020, Austin voters approved Proposition A, a transit funding measure enabling Capital Metro to advance Project Connect and the Blue Line Project.

Proposed Blue Line Project

- 1/2 Mile Study Area
- Blue Line Stations
- Blue Line Alignment
- Proposed Gold Line
- Proposed Orange Line
- Existing Red Line
- Texas State Capitol
- Water
- Park and Open Spaces



0 1 2 Miles

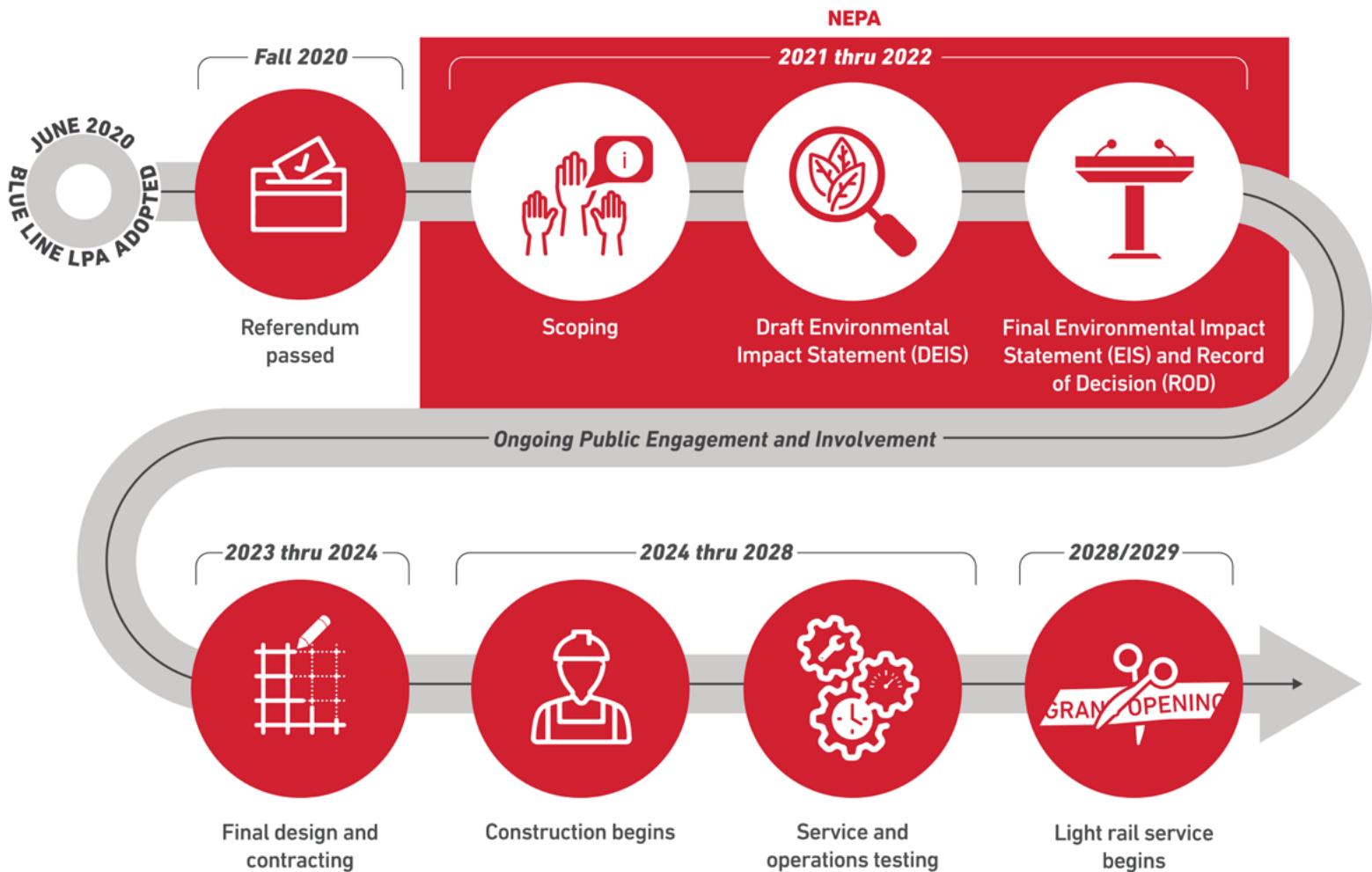
Station location and names subject to change.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS

NEPA requires federal agencies to assess the potential impacts of their actions on the human and natural environment and to avoid, minimize or mitigate adverse effects where reasonably feasible. Since Capital Metro intends to seek federal funding for the Project, the FTA and Capital Metro must comply with NEPA. The purpose of the environmental review process under NEPA is to promote informed decision-making by considering the potential

environmental and social impacts of the Blue Line Project. The FTA and Capital Metro will engage regulatory agencies with a defined interest in the Blue Line Project and the public that could potentially be affected by the project. The environmental review process is structured to encourage participation between government officials, agencies, private businesses, and citizens.

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE



*Schedule subject to change.



THE ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS INVOLVES THE FOLLOWING STEPS:

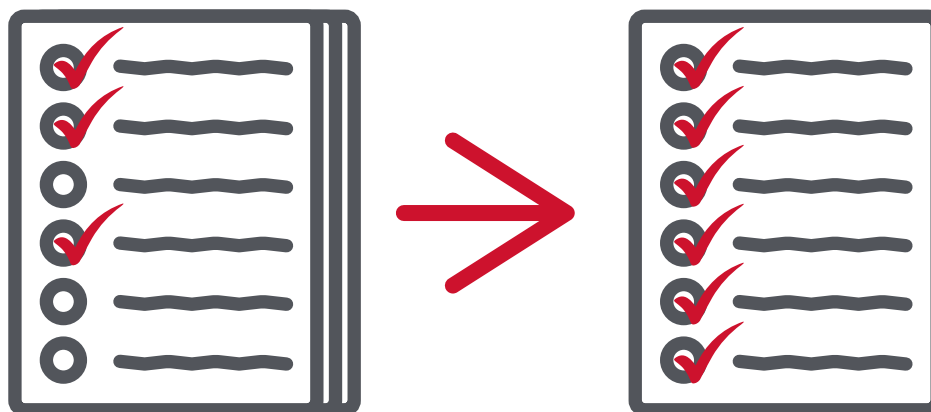
- Scoping
- Draft Environmental Impact Statement
- Final Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision

SCOPING

Scoping is the first step in the environmental review process under NEPA. It is an early and open process for the public and agencies to provide input on the scope, or range, of issues to be addressed and identify the issues related to the Blue Line Project. The input received during scoping will help to identify the appropriate alternatives and the depth and breadth of environmental analysis to be completed. It will also serve to identify and eliminate from detailed study the issues that are not significant or have been covered by prior studies.

The following key steps will be conducted during the environmental scoping process:

1. Invite local, regional, state and federal agencies, tribal governments and other interested parties to comment on the scope of the project, including the purpose and need, alternatives considered, key issues evaluated and evaluation methods;
2. Connect previous planning decisions with current project development;
3. Establish a decision-making framework; and
4. Determine the scope and significant issues to be analyzed in depth in the EIS.



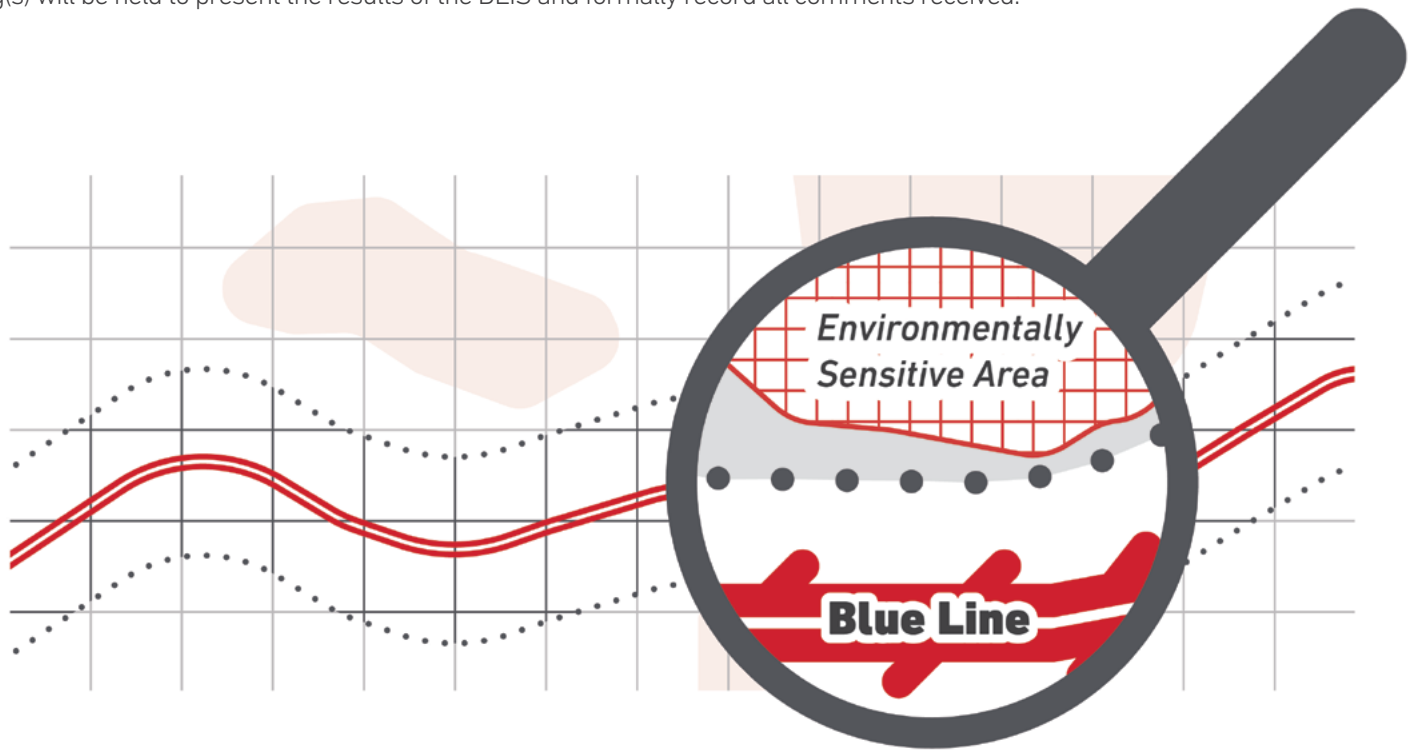
DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT (DEIS)

A Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) document will be prepared following scoping to more fully assess the potential benefits and impacts of the Project.

The DEIS includes:

- The purpose of and need for action;
- Description of alternatives, including the proposed action;
- Discussion of the affected environment; and
- Environmental consequences.

The DEIS document will be circulated for public and agency comment over a 30-day review period. During this time, public hearing(s) will be held to present the results of the DEIS and formally record all comments received.



FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT (EIS) AND RECORD OF DECISION (ROD)

Unless new information is brought forward through the 30-day public and agency comment period of the DEIS, FTA intends to issue a combined final EIS and ROD. The combined final EIS/ROD will respond to comments received on the DEIS, and state the proposed action, environmental findings and mitigation requirements. If FTA and Capital Metro make substantial changes to the proposed action that are relevant to environmental or safety concerns, or there is a significant new circumstance or information relevant to environmental concerns that bears on the proposed action or the impacts of the proposed action, FTA will issue a separate EIS and ROD in accordance with 23 CFR 771.



PURPOSE AND NEED OF THE BLUE LINE PROJECT

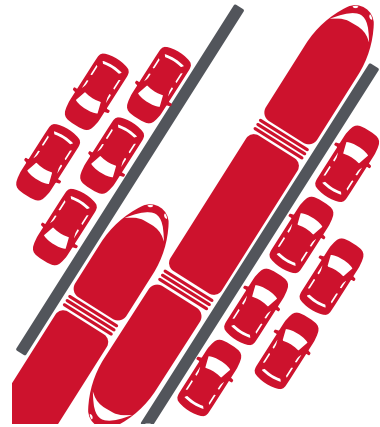
The Blue Line Project is central to Capital Metro's Project Connect Vision Plan. The purpose of the Blue Line Project is to:

1. Provide improved high-capacity transit that operates faster and has better reliability;
2. Provide improved connectivity to affordable housing, employment, activity centers and the airport; and
3. Provide links to other future transit corridors.

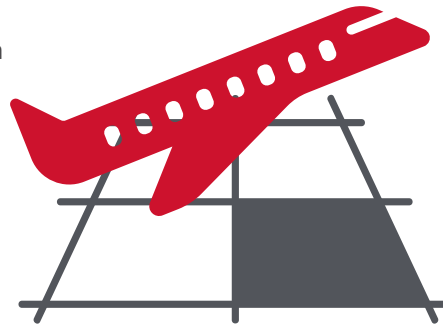
The five needs the Blue Line Project would address are:



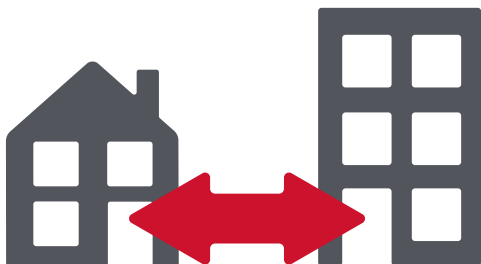
Sustainably Support Austin's
Population and Economic Growth



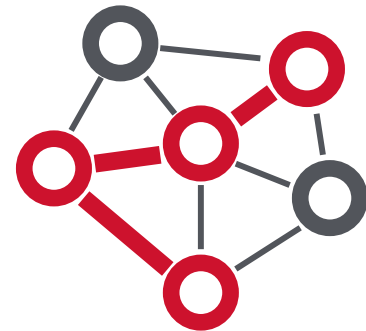
Increase Transportation Network
Capacity to Meet Increasing Travel
Demand



Support Austin-Bergstrom
International Airport (AUS)
Growth in Air Travel



Provide Better Transit Options Linking
Affordable Housing and Jobs



Support Growth of and Connectivity
to Activity Centers

CONSIDERATIONS SUPPORTING THE NEEDS FOR THE BLUE LINE PROJECT

1. Worsening highway congestion due to population growth.
2. The lack of mobility options and limited roadway capacity to accommodate this growth.
3. Inadequate transit access for many city residents.
4. Rising travel demand.
5. Increasing travel times.
6. Decreasing mobility.
7. Additional travel costs for residents and businesses.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The goals and objectives for the Blue Line Project are based on the goals established for Project Connect and the project's purpose and need. The extensive planning and public outreach efforts that culminated into the Blue Line Project served to establish project-related goals and objectives. The goals are more general, whereas the objectives are more specific measures in support of the broader goals for the project. They will form the basis for evaluating transit investment alternatives for the Blue Line Project.



EQUITY

Provide better transit options linking affordable housing and jobs

OBJECTIVES

- Improve mobility options for zero-car households
- Improve intermodal connections
- Enhance connectivity within communities in the corridor and the entire region
- Enhance connectivity to affordable housing
- Support the well-being of people and communities by providing equitable levels of transportation services for low-income, minority, elderly and individuals of all abilities



RELIABILITY

Connect employers and employees along the corridor with fast and reliable transit

OBJECTIVES

- Improve access to jobs in the corridor
- Increase employers' access to labor market
- Reduce travel time
- Increase frequency of service
- Improve schedule reliability
- Increase transit mode share



SUPPORT AIRPORT GROWTH

Provide transit options for access to/from AUS as demand grows over time to serve the needs of air travelers, employees and all others needing access

OBJECTIVES

- Competitive travel time and cost
- Consistency with AUS near-term, midterm and long-term infrastructure and operations

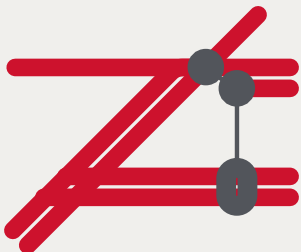


LAND USE AND POLICY

Connect activity centers and manage future growth with better transit service

OBJECTIVES

- Serve high population growth areas currently underserved by transit
- Support adopted local and regional land use and economic development plans and policies
- Coordinate with existing mobility choices across modes
- Improve transit linkages to existing and planned economic development areas in the corridor
- Reduce transit travel times between major activity centers
- Minimize environmental and community impacts



INTEROPERABILITY AND OPERATIONS

Ensure interoperability between the Blue Line Project and planned and future transportation corridors

OBJECTIVES

- Coordinate with interfacing projects and initiatives at the local, regional, and state level

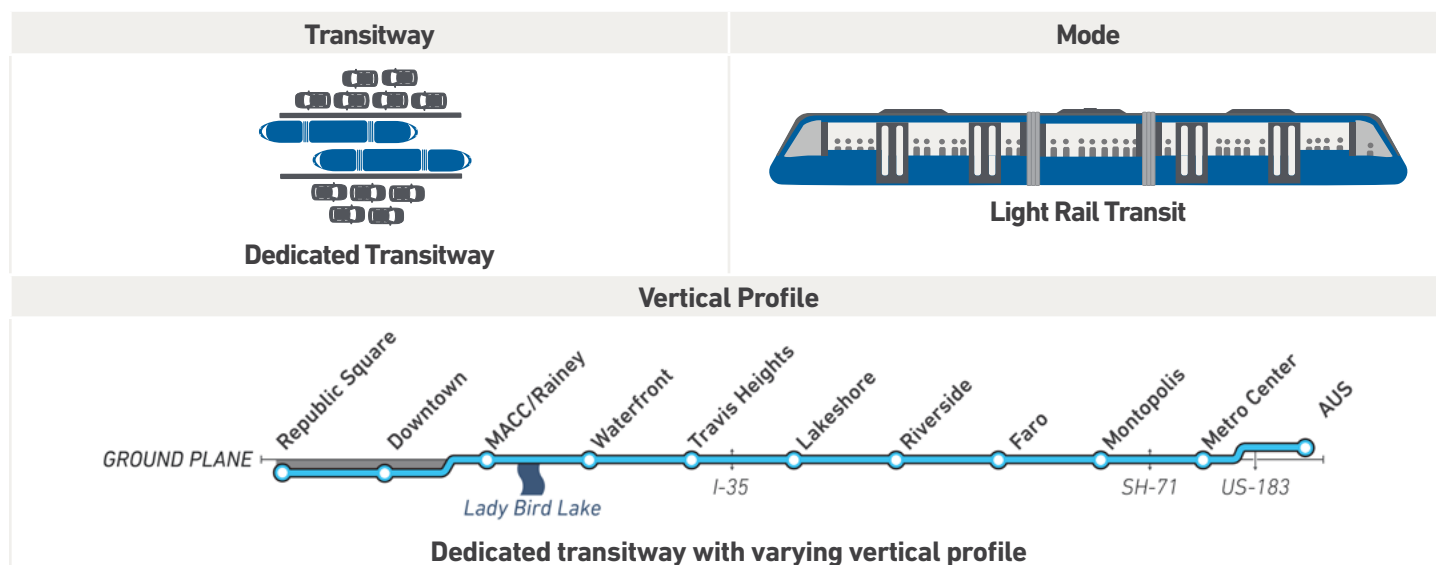
ALTERNATIVES TO BE CONSIDERED

The EIS will evaluate a Light Rail Transit (Build) Alternative and a No Action Alternative. A description of each alternative is provided below:

LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT (BUILD) ALTERNATIVE

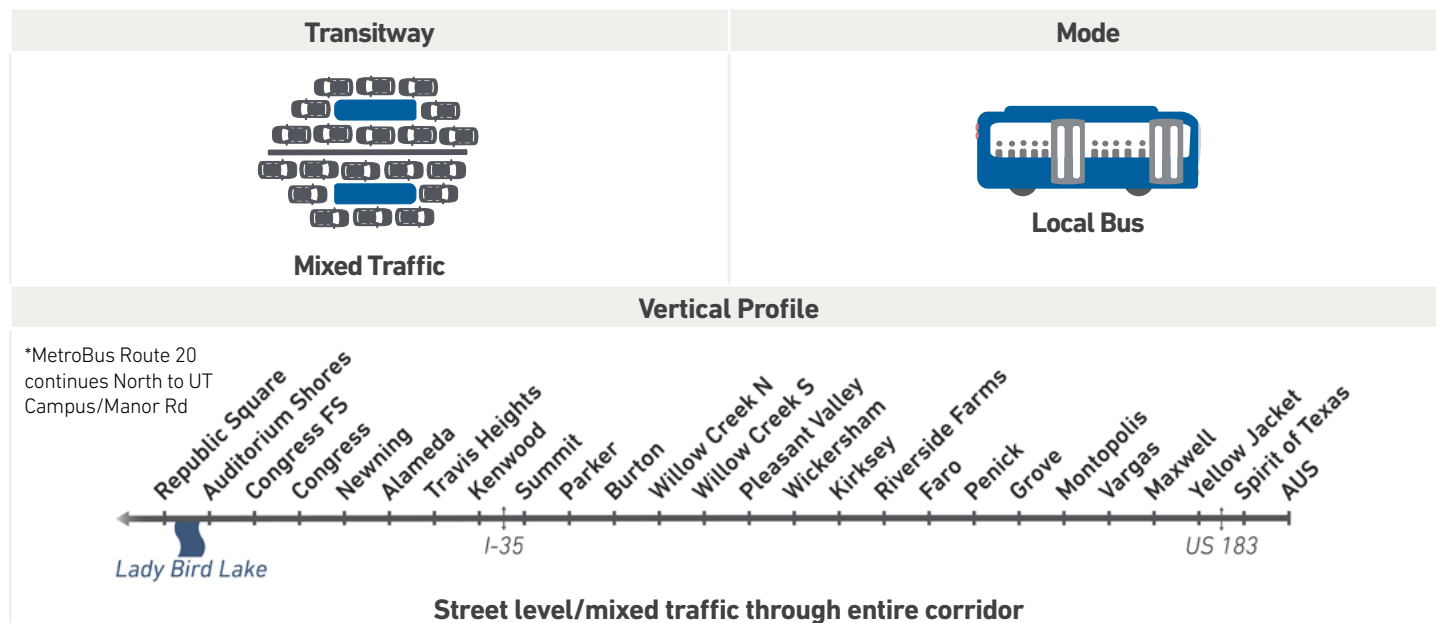
The Light Rail Transit (Build) Alternative is a proposed 8.2-mile dedicated transitway from Republic Square on the northern end of the study area to AUS on the southern end of the study area, utilizing a new bridge to cross Lady Bird Lake. The transitway is proposed to operate at street level (center running) throughout most of the study area, except where elevated at the southern end from US 183 to AUS and underground through downtown Austin.

Up to 11 stations are proposed along the route. Service would operate every 10 to 15 minutes, seven days a week. The Light Rail Transit (Build) Alternative would feature off-board fare collection, larger stations with level boarding, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessibility and intersection signal prioritization. The Project would connect with the Orange Line and Gold Line in downtown Austin.



NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE

The No Action Alternative consists of Capital Metro's system overhaul changes referred to as Cap Remap. The No Action Alternative also includes the committed projects within the Project study area that are documented in the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization's (CAMPO) 2045 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). The No Action Alternative serves as the baseline for comparison to the Light Rail Transit (Build) Alternative.



ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES TO BE STUDIED

The EIS will evaluate potential effects to the human and natural environments under the No Action Alternative and Light Rail Transit Alternative. The environmental resources to be analyzed in the EIS include:



PHYSICAL & NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

- Air Quality
- Soils and Geology
- Water Quality
- Threatened and Endangered Species
- Energy
- Hazardous Materials
- Noise and Vibration
- Temporary Construction Impacts



HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

- Environmental Justice (EJ)
- Safety and Security
- Land Use and Zoning
- Socioeconomics and Economic Development
- Transportation
- Utilities
- Land Acquisitions and Displacements



CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT

- Cultural, Historic, and Archeological
- Parks and Recreational
- Section 4(f) Evaluation
- Visual and Aesthetic
- Neighborhood and Community Resources

AGENCY AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The FTA emphasizes early coordination with agencies to ensure that the environmental review process satisfies NEPA and other regulatory requirements. Early and continuous involvement with agencies will be critical to advancing the project into the next implementation phase. Therefore, FTA and Capital Metro have invited the local, regional, state and federal agencies listed in the following sections to participate in the environmental review process.

The purpose of the scoping process is to inform government agencies, affected stakeholders and the general public about the Project and solicit their input and feedback. Public Scoping Meetings are an opportunity for the public to learn more about the Project and to submit their comments. After scoping, Capital Metro will continue to provide opportunities for public involvement, including holding public meetings and hearings on the DEIS during its public comment period.

LOCAL

- Austin-Bergstrom International Airport (AUS)
- Austin Independent School District (AISD)
- City of Austin (COA) Project Connect Office
 - Austin Transportation Department (ATD)
 - COA Economic Development Department (EDD)
 - COA Housing and Planning Department (HPD)
 - COA Parks & Recreation Department (PARC)
- Downtown Austin Alliance (DAA)
- Housing Authority of the City of Austin (HACA)
- Travis County

REGIONAL

- Capital Area Council of Governments (CAPCOG)
- Capital Area Rural Transportation System (CARTS)
- Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO)
- Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority (CTRMA)
- Central Health (formerly the Travis County Healthcare District)
- Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA)

STATE

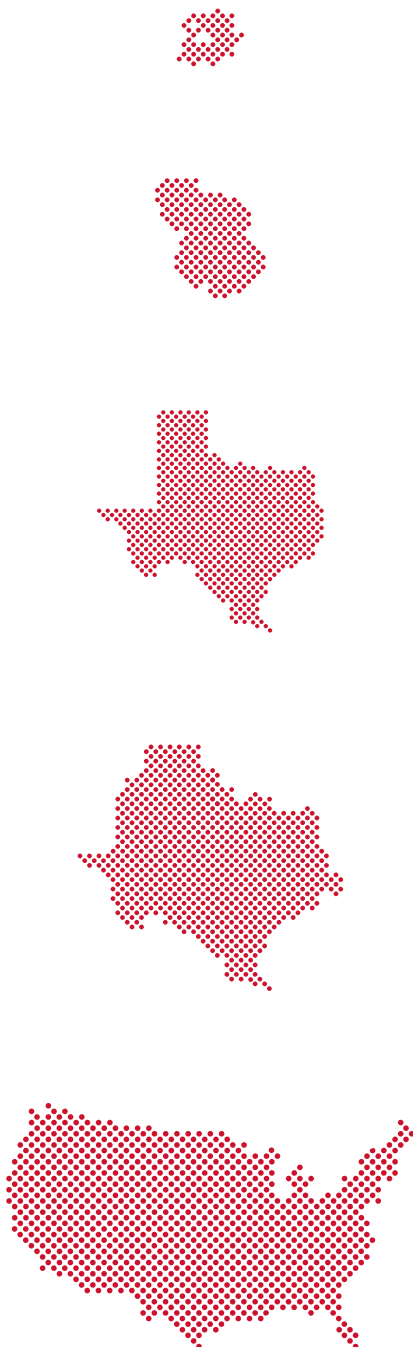
- Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ)
- Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT)
- Texas Historical Commission (THC)
- Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD)
- University of Texas (UT)

TRIBES

- Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas
- Apache Tribe of Oklahoma
- Comanche Nation, Oklahoma
- Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana
- Tonkawa Tribe of Indians of Oklahoma
- Wichita and Affiliated Tribes (Wichita, Keechi, Waco & Tawakonie), Oklahoma

FEDERAL

- Bureau of Indian Affairs
- Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)
- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)
- Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)
- U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA - NRCS)
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)
- U.S. Department of Interior - National Park Service (USDI - NPS)
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)



SCOPING MEETINGS

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Capital Metro has worked to safely provide engagement opportunities to the public and collect public feedback on the Blue Line Project. In order to reach a broad range of people, make information easier to access and encourage input, Capital Metro will conduct live virtual Scoping meetings. The scoping materials are available in English and Spanish online at ProjectConnect.com/Get-Involved, with accompanying survey questions and comment form.

PUBLIC SCOPING MEETINGS

Virtual Public Scoping Meetings

Tuesday Jan. 26, 2021 12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m. in English

Wednesday Jan. 27, 2021 6:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m. en Español

Thursday Jan. 28, 2021 6:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m. in English

Friday Jan. 29, 2021 10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. in English

To register for a meeting, go to ProjectConnect.com/Get-Involved or call (512) 904-0180.

Presentation content will be the same at each meeting, with a question-and-answer session to follow. Requests for language translations or accommodations must be made to Capital Metro at least three working days (72 hours) prior to the virtual scheduled meeting date by calling (512) 904-0180.



HOW CAN COMMENTS BE SUBMITTED?

In addition to submitting comments at a Virtual Public Scoping Meeting, other ways to submit comments include:

Project Website: ProjectConnect.com/Get-Involved

E-mail: BlueLine@capmetro.org

Project Hotline: (512) 369-7774

Mail: Blue Line Project Team
Capital Metro
607 Congress Avenue
Austin, TX 78701



The scoping review and comment period is from Jan. 25, 2021 through March 5, 2021.

NEXT STEPS

Scoping comments will be documented and considered in refining the Blue Line Project's Purpose and Need, alternatives considered, potential environmental effects to be studied and agency coordination and public involvement process for the Project. The DEIS will be prepared following the scoping process, with a 30-day public circulation period targeted for spring of 2022. Following the comment period on the DEIS, a combined final EIS/ROD will be prepared by the FTA and Capital Metro to complete the environmental review process. The environmental review process will be followed by more detailed design, engineering, vehicle acquisition and construction.



QUESTIONS?



The Project Connect Community Office is located at 607 Congress Ave.

Office hours have been disrupted because of COVID-19 restrictions. Please check website for updates.



Visit ProjectConnect.com

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



Follow us on Twitter @CapMetroATX and @ATP_org



Join us on Facebook.com/CapitalMetro and Facebook.com/AustinTransitPartnership