



ALL SYSTEMS GO!
LONG-RANGE TRANSIT PLAN

Future Connections Study Central Austin Circulator

Alternatives Evaluation Final Report

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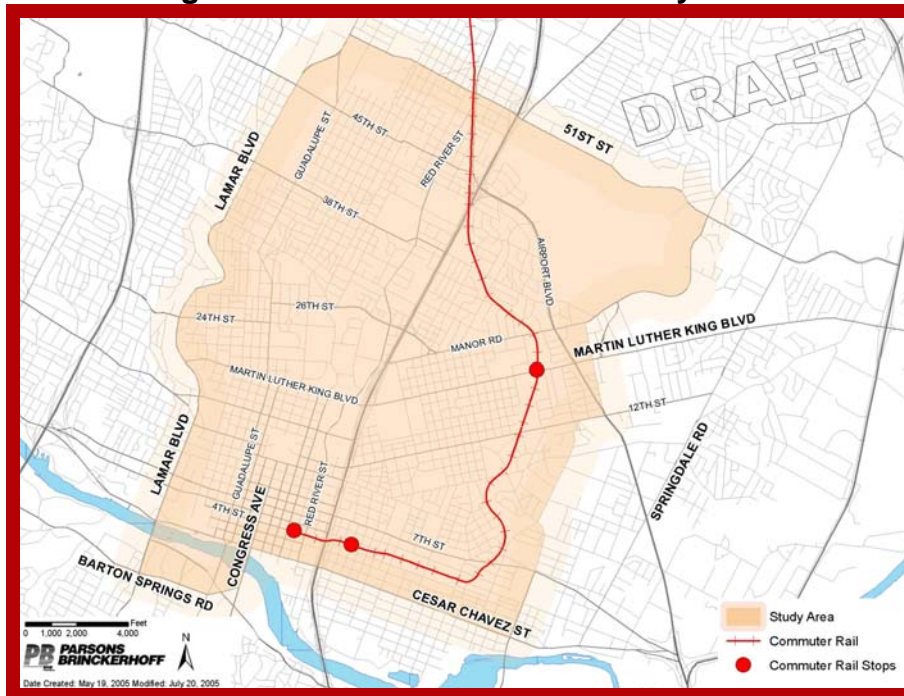
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Executive Summary

The Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Capital Metro) initiated this Alternatives Analysis as the first phase of project development for a transit circulator system serving central Austin. The proposed project would support the planned Urban Commuter Rail system and serve major destinations in Central Austin. The study area is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Future Connections Study Area



In 2004, Capital Metro adopted the All Systems Go Long-Range Transit Plan, including an Urban Commuter Rail line shown in red on the map. The Plan calls for improving transit circulation options within Central Austin and connecting major regional destinations to the Urban Commuter Rail line. In the course of this study, the community has articulated an additional need for transit investment that encourages more compact urban development.

Purpose and Need Statement

Specifically, the proposed project is needed to:

- Address the growing potential market for transportation services and mobility resulting from continuing population and employment growth in Central Austin and the Austin metropolitan area;
- Accommodate and complement urban redevelopment and land use change in Central Austin by providing transit services appropriate for the community that Central Austin is becoming;

- Expand transportation system capacity by providing more premium travel choices for the growing numbers of Central Austin residents, employees, students and visitors; and
- Provide needed connections between major population and employment centers (place connectivity) and between existing transit facilities or services and the planned elements of the All Systems Go Long-Range Transit Plan (transit connectivity).

Based on these needs, the purpose of a Central Austin Transit Circulator System can best be described by a set of goals and objectives jointly developed through a process involving the public, community advisory groups, and technical advisors. The seven goals developed through this process are as follows:

- **Improve Place Connectivity**
- **Improve Transit Connectivity**
- **Improve Circulation within Central Austin**
- **Maximize Community Benefits**
- **Maximize Accessibility**
- **Maximize Environmental Benefits**
- **Maximize Economic Benefits for the Community**

Technology Alternatives

An evaluation of the available transit technologies resulted in the identification of two alternatives:

Modern Streetcar, running primarily in mixed traffic, and,
Bus technology suitable for circulation service.

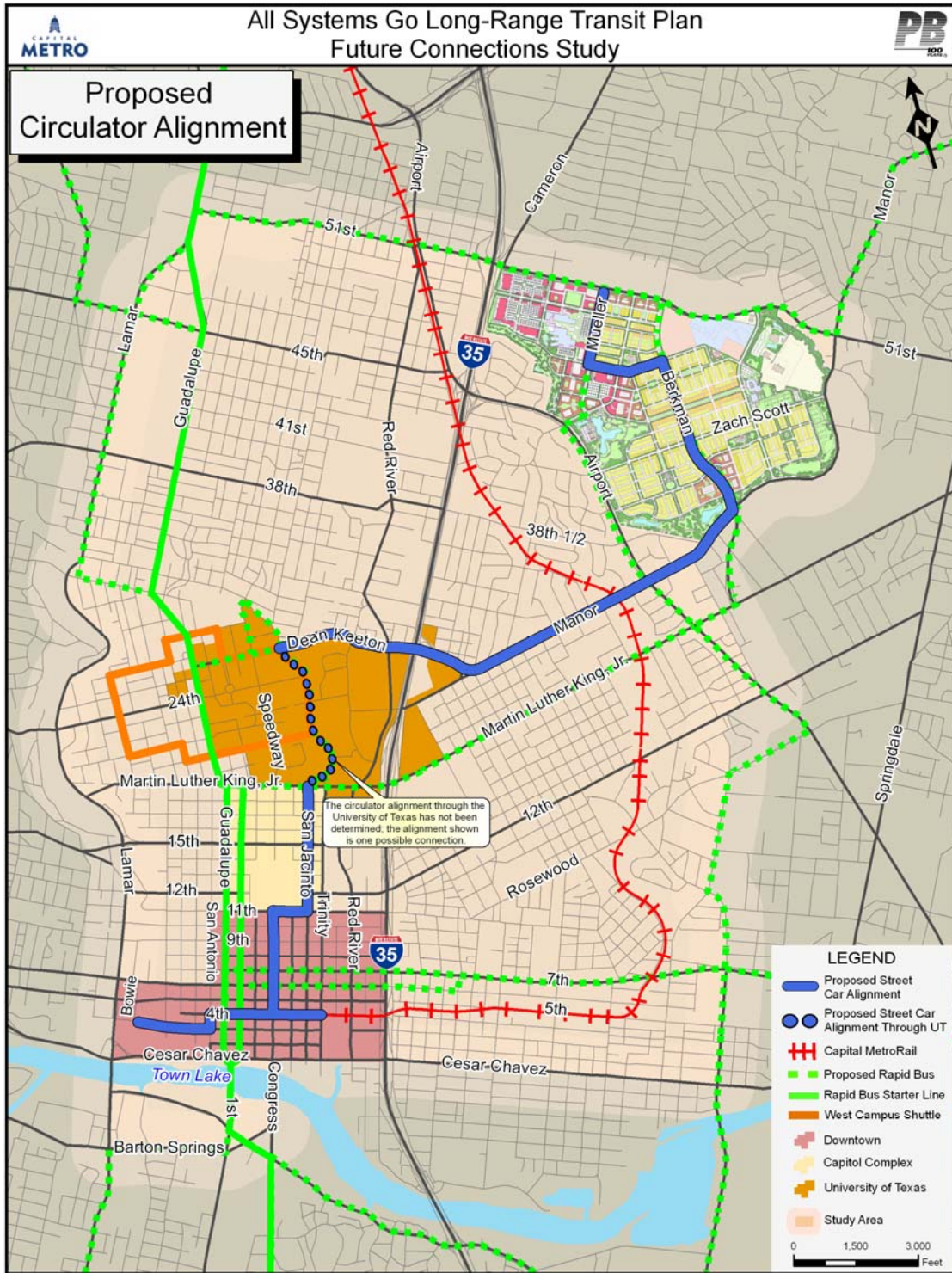
After further analysis and community input, the modern streetcar technology is recommended as best meeting the Goals of this study. Modern Streetcars have the following characteristics that make them most suitable for the proposed circulator:

- Fixed guideway induces development
- Commonly operates in mixed traffic
- Good acceleration and braking capacity for frequent stops
- Attract high ridership compared to bus circulators
- Supports high pedestrian traffic urban environments

Alignment Alternatives

During the course of this study, a number of alternative alignments were considered. Using the Goals of the Study, a process combining the technical resources of this study with an extensive public input process, the alignment shown on the following map is recommended. Factors considered in this process included the slope of an alignment section, the presence of utilities that would need relocation, consistency with existing neighborhood plans for land use, and community input. The recommended alignment is shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Recommended Alignment



The recommended alignment runs from a connection with the Austin-San Antonio Commuter Rail at Seaholm east to the Convention Center connection

with Capital MetroRail. From 4th & Congress, the alignment runs north to 11th Street, then east to San Jacinto. Through both the State Capitol Complex and the University of Texas, the alignment runs on San Jacinto to Dean Keeton. From Dean Keeton & San Jacinto, the route runs east along Dean Keeton and then along Manor Road to the entrance to the Mueller Development at Berkman Drive. (When the route crosses the Capital MetroRail tracks just west of Airport Boulevard, it is anticipated that a cross-platform transfer station would be added to the Red Line operation.) Within the Mueller Development, the route serves both the neighborhood center on Berkman and the regional center on Mueller Boulevard. The route ends at 51st Street and Mueller Boulevard.

Evaluating the Alternatives

The two alternatives for a circulator system were evaluated using the goals of the study. The details of the analysis are contained in this report. Four factors are discussed below. It should be noted that 2017 was used as the basis for ridership and operating cost analysis; development impact is reported for this marker year as well as for 2027, which would be closer to a build-out year. Capital Costs were estimated in 2006 dollars.

1. Development Impact

Along the recommended alignment, there are two large public institutions: the State Capitol Complex and the University of Texas at Austin. In considering land use impacts, all other areas along the alignment were evaluated. These three areas are the Downtown section, the Manor Road section, and the Mueller redevelopment section.

Downtown: The impact of the Streetcar alternative on the Downtown section is estimated to be an increased appraised value of **\$696,000,000 in 2017**. The increased property value due to the impact of a streetcar circulator is estimated to be **\$891,000,000 in 2027**.

Manor Road: The impact on the Manor Road section was evaluated using existing neighborhood plans. The City of Austin and the neighborhoods involved may wish to consider whether the prospect of a streetcar would be sufficient reason to re-evaluate those plans. Given the existing plans, the increased value due to streetcar is estimated to be **\$241,000,000 in 2017** and **\$357,000,000 in 2027**.

Mueller: The Mueller development would be allowed to have increased development if a streetcar alternative were constructed. This increased value is estimated to be **\$122,000,000 in 2017** and **\$256,000,000 in 2027**.

Overall the total impact of the streetcar is estimated to be approximately \$1 billion in 2017 and \$1.5 billion in 2017.

No significant development impact would be created by a bus circulator.

2. Ridership

The streetcar circulator is estimated to have a weekday ridership of 11,500 in 2017, as opposed to an estimated bus ridership of 7600 in 2017. The details of the ridership estimation process are in Appendix B.

3. Costs

The total capital cost of building the streetcar system, including maintenance facility and acquiring vehicles is estimated to be \$229,407,000. The total capital cost for a bus circulator system is estimated to be \$29,337,300. All costs are in 2006 dollars. Appendix G contains the details of the cost estimation.

The operating and maintenance costs for a streetcar circulator are estimated to be \$5,807,700 in 2017, which is \$1.63 per passenger. The comparable costs for a bus circulator in 2017 would be \$4,411,900, which is \$1.82 per passenger. The details of the operating plans and costs are in Appendix H.

Conclusion and Next Steps

A modern streetcar system serving the proposed alignment would best connect the places of Central Austin to commuter rail service and to each other. The following decision points face the community in moving from this recommendation to realization:

- **Locally Preferred Alternative:** The Capital Metro Board has the responsibility of adopting this recommendation as the Locally Preferred Alternative.
- **Funding Partnership Agreement:** IN order to realize this project, the community needs to develop a public-private partnership funding agreement.
- **Referendum:** By state law, Capital Metro needs the approval of the voters in its district to provide a new fixed-guideway service.
- **Implementation Process:** Finally, the streetcar project needs to be designed and built.

The results of this study and its concomitant community process suggest that a streetcar circulator along the recommended alignment would best meet the goals of the study.