

MetroRapid BRT

Austin, Texas

(November 2009)

The Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority (CMTA) proposes to construct a 37.5-mile street-running bus rapid transit (BRT) system along two interconnected corridors: the 21-mile North Lamar/South Congress Corridor and the 16.5-mile Burnet/South Lamar Corridor. The North Lamar/South Congress Corridor extends from the North Interstate Highway 35 park-n-ride lot at Tech Ridge to the planned South IH-35 Transit Center. The Burnet-South Lamar Corridor extends from St. David's North Austin Medical Center to 38th Street at West Avenue near the Medical Center. The BRT lines would share a 3-mile segment in central Austin between 38th Street, north of the University of Texas-Austin, and Cesar Chavez Street at the southern end of downtown Austin. The project is the first phase of CMTA's *All Systems Go (ASG)* ten-corridor long-range transit plan.

The project includes 18 paired stations in the North Lamar/South Congress Corridor and 17 paired stations in the Burnet/South Lamar Corridor, with a real-time passenger information system, traffic signal priority and the purchase of 40 low-floor, multi-door, branded vehicles. Several BRT stations would also link with CMTA's locally-funded commuter rail line (currently under construction). The BRT system would operate via existing arterial streets and would parallel the region's main highways that serve central Austin: I-35 to the east and Loop-1 to the west. The service would operate with ten-minute headways during peak periods and 15-minute headways during off-peak periods. An existing bus maintenance facility would be used to accommodate the BRT vehicles.

Summary Description

Proposed Project:	Bus Rapid Transit
	37.5 Miles
	35 Stations
Total Capital Cost (\$YOE):	\$47.00 Million
Section 5309 Small Starts Share (\$YOE):	\$37.60 Million (80.0%)
Annual Operating Cost (\$YOE):	\$1.82 Million
Opening Year Ridership Forecast (2012):	20,300 Average Weekday Boardings
FY 2011 Local Financial Commitment Rating:	Medium
FY 2011 Project Justification Rating:	Medium
FY 2011 Overall Project Rating:	Medium

Project Development History and Current Status

In August 2004, CMTA updated its long-range transit plan. In June 2005, the *ASG* plan was incorporated into the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization's long-range transportation plan (*Mobility 2030*). The long-range plans envision several transit improvements, including commuter rail, BRT, express buses and other transit investments. Initially, CMTA planned to implement the BRT system with local funds; however, after a review of the plan in 2008, CMTA chose to pursue Small Starts funds. A simplified alternatives analysis was completed in summer 2008. FTA approved the *MetroRapid* BRT project into project development as a Very Small Start in February 2009. FTA issued a Categorical Exclusion in March 2009. A project construction grant agreement is anticipated in June 2010. Revenue operations are scheduled to begin in March 2012 for the North Lamar/South Congress corridor and in March 2013 for the Burnet/South Lamar corridor.

Significant Changes Since FY 2010 Evaluation (April 2009)

The capital cost of the project has remained nearly the same, decreasing slightly from \$47.03 million to \$47.00 million. However, the schedule changed due to significantly less than anticipated sales tax revenue collections resulting from the economic recession. Rather than revenue operations of both corridors beginning in 2011, the dates are now March 2012 for the North Lamar/South Congress corridor and March 2013 for the Burnet/South Lamar corridor. Escalation cost increases resulting from the longer schedule were offset by reductions in materials, construction and vehicle costs.

Project Justification Rating: Medium

The project justification rating is based on the weighted average of the ratings assigned to each of the following criteria: the cost-effectiveness criterion is weighted 33 percent; the transit supportive land use criterion is weighted 33 percent and the economic development criterion is weighted 33 percent.

Cost Effectiveness Rating: Medium

The project qualifies as a Very Small Start. The project includes low-cost elements such as service branding, low-floor buses operating at improved frequencies, substantial transit stations with real-time passenger information, and traffic signal priority to speed service, all of which FTA has determined to be cost-effective by their very nature, and therefore, the project receives a *Medium* rating for cost effectiveness.

Transit-Supportive Land Use and Economic Development Rating: Medium

FTA considers Very Small Starts projects that meet the minimum existing ridership threshold of 3,000 daily boardings/benefiting riders to be, by definition, in corridors with transit-supportive land use appropriate to the proposed level of investment. Therefore, FTA has assigned these projects a *Medium* rating for transit-supportive land use and economic development.

Local Financial Commitment Rating: Medium

The rating for local financial commitment, based upon CMTA's acceptable financial condition; a reasonable plan for funding for the non-New Starts share of capital costs; and evidence that operations and maintenance costs of the proposed project is less than five percent of the agency's operating budget.

Locally Proposed Financial Plan		
Source of Funds	Total Funds (\$million)	Percent of Total
Federal:		
Section 5309 Small Starts	\$37.60	80.0%
Local:		
Dedicated Sales Tax	\$9.40	20.0%
Total:	\$47.00	100.0%

NOTE: The financial plan reflected in this table has been developed by the project sponsor and does not reflect a commitment by DOT or FTA. The sum of figures may differ from total as listed due to rounding.

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