

Rapid Transit Project MOS

Austin, Texas
(November 2002)

Description

The Austin Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Capital Metro) is proposing to develop a light rail transit (LRT) system with phased implementation. The Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) of a 20-mile light rail transit (LRT) system is currently proposed to run north-south from McNeil Road to Ben White Boulevard, and east-west from the central business district (CBD) to 5th Street and Pleasant Valley. Capital Metro and local officials are re-examining the Locally Preferred Alternative in terms of alignment, length and transit technologies.

Capital Metro is currently evaluating a 14.6-mile, 16-station minimum operable segment (MOS) of the rapid transit system, extending from McNeil Road in north Austin to the CBD. The MOS is planned to provide direct access to the University of Texas, the State Capitol Complex and the Austin CBD. Service has been proposed to operate at ten-minute frequencies during peak periods, and 20-minute frequencies during the off-peak. Capital Metro and the City of Austin have partnered to reexamine the Rapid Transit Project and redefine the initial MOS to be undertaken.

This project has not been rated because the grantee did not submit project information for the New Starts criteria. Capital Metro is reexamining the project definition and scope, including technology and alignment, on the basis of local considerations.

Status

In March 1997, Capital Metro and the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization jointly completed a major investment study that recommended a proposed LRT line in the northwest/north central corridor, designated as the Red Line from the CBD to the City of Leander. The southeast corridor, referred to as the Orange Line, was designated as the second highest priority. In October 1997, the Federal Transit Administration authorized Capital Metro to initiate Preliminary Engineering and to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement for the Red Line alignment.

The Capital Metro Board, in conjunction with selection of a new General Manager in October 1998, initiated additional planning efforts to refine the LPA to ensure that the final plan incorporated the area's major destinations and activity centers. The Austin Area in Motion study was a comprehensive market research, public involvement and technical analysis addressing future transportation options. Following extensive public involvement, the Capital Metro Board and the MPO formally adopted the revised plan in fall 1999. In May 2000, Capital Metro initiated the environmental review process for the proposed 20-mile LRT system, focusing Preliminary Engineering on the 14.6-mile MOS. After an unsuccessful November 2000 local referendum on the service area's preferences regarding light rail, the Capital Metro Board

decided to complete the Preliminary Engineering phase and Environmental Impact Statement of the project. The project was renamed the Rapid Transit Project, and planning and environmental review process efforts have been reactivated, in partnership with the City, to reconsider the project scope. Another local referendum is anticipated in November 2004.

TEA-21 Section 3030(a)(4) authorizes the “Austin -- NW/North Central/SE -- Airport LRT” for Final Design and construction. Through FY 2002, Congress has appropriated \$3.96 million in Section 5309 New Starts funds to the project.

Evaluation

This project has not been rated because the grantee did not submit project information for the New Starts criteria.

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