

# Pleasant Valley Bus Rapid Transit Project

## Austin, Texas

### Small Starts Project Development

(Rating Assigned November 2020)

*The rating reflected in this profile was based on the information provided by the project sponsor in the fall of 2020. Subsequent to the completion of FTA's evaluation, the sponsor increased the total capital cost and Capital Investment Grants (CIG) program share request. Those changes cannot be reflected in the project profile until FTA receives a complete revised submission from the sponsor so the rating can be updated accordingly.*

Summary Description	
<b>Proposed Project:</b>	Bus Rapid Transit 14 Miles, 19 Stations
<b>Total Capital Cost (\$YOE):</b>	\$36.56 Million
<b>Section 5309 CIG Share (\$YOE):</b>	\$18.28 Million (50.0%)
<b>Annual Operating Cost (opening year 2023):</b>	\$10.01 Million
<b>Current Year Ridership Forecast (2020):</b>	4,200 Daily Linked Trips 1,257,300 Annual Linked Trips
<b>Horizon Year Ridership Forecast (2040):</b>	6,900 Daily Linked Trips 2,052,100 Annual Linked Trips
<b>Overall Project Rating:</b>	Medium-High
<b>Project Justification Rating:</b>	Medium
<b>Local Financial Commitment Rating:</b>	High

**Project Description:** The Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority (CapMetro) proposes to implement a corridor-based Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project along Pleasant Valley Road between the Mueller neighborhood in northeast Austin and the Goodnight Ranch neighborhood in southeast Austin. The Project includes near-level boarding stations, shelter, shade panels, banners, benches, trash cans, solar lighting, totem shells, platforms, bus pads, off-vehicle fare collection equipment, transit signal priority, mobile ticket validators and the purchase of 12 40-foot electric buses and four 60-foot articulated electric buses. The service is planned to operate for 23 hours on weekdays, 21 hours on Saturdays, and 18 hours on Sundays. Buses are planned to run every 10 minutes for most of the day on weekdays and every 15 minutes during early morning and late-night hours. On weekends buses are planned to run every 15 minutes for most of the day and every 20 minutes during early morning and late night hours.

**Project Purpose:** The Project corridor includes several major employment areas and key activity centers including Dell Children's Medical Center, Austin Community College Eastview, CapMetro Headquarters, Mendez Middle School, Widen and Hillcrest Elementary Schools, and the Dove Springs Recreation Center. The Project is intended to improve mobility by providing a direct, high quality transit connection from northeast Austin to southeast Austin including a one-seat ride from the growing Mueller neighborhood in northeast Austin through multiple activity centers to the growing mixed-use mixed-income neighborhoods of Easton Park and Goodnight Ranch. It is expected to provide east Austin, an area that has seen rapid population and

employment growth, a more direct connection to the Austin metropolitan region's transit network. The Project is one of the first steps in implementation of the Project Connect program, a long-term transit vision plan that would institute high capacity transit throughout the region.

***Project Development History, Status and Next Steps:*** CapMetro adopted the locally preferred alternative (LPA) for the Pleasant Valley BRT corridor in June 2020. The Project entered Small Starts Project Development in August 2020. The LPA was adopted into the fiscally constrained long-range transportation plan in November 2020. CapMetro anticipates completion of the environmental review process with a Categorical Exclusion in Spring 2021, receipt of a Small Starts Grant in 2021, and the start of revenue service in Summer 2023.

<b>Locally Proposed Financial Plan</b>		
<b><u>Source of Funds</u></b>	<b><u>Total Funds (\$million)</u></b>	<b><u>Percent of Total</u></b>
<b>Federal:</b> Section 5309 CIG	\$18.28	50.0%
<b>Local:</b> City of Austin Property Tax	\$16.18	44.3%
CapMetro Sales Tax	\$2.10	5.7%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$36.56</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

**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 the figures may differ from the total as listed due to rounding.

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#### ***LAND USE RATING: Medium***

The land use rating reflects population density within one-half mile of proposed stations, employment served by the line, and the share of legally binding affordability restricted (LBAR) housing in the station areas compared to the share in the surrounding county.

- The population density in station areas is about 6,700 persons per square mile, corresponding to a Medium rating by FTA benchmarks. Total employment served is about 22,700 jobs, corresponding to a Low rating. The average daily parking cost in the central business district is \$28, corresponding to a High rating. The ratio of station area to county LBAR housing is 2.38, corresponding to a Medium-High rating.
- Land use in the project corridor is primarily single-family residential with a segment of multi-family residential and includes pockets of industrial, park, and agricultural uses. Commercial use is concentrated at major intersections on the route.
- The pedestrian network is somewhat well-connected, with sidewalks in adequate condition on almost the entire corridor, but lacking on many side streets. Much of the corridor consists of wide streets with higher traffic volumes that can be deter pedestrians.

#### ***ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT RATING: Medium-Low***

#### **Transit-Supportive Plans and Policies: Medium**






- *Transit-Supportive Corridor Policies:* The City of Austin and institutional stakeholders adopted transit-supportive corridor plans and policies but did not establish density targets for development along the project corridor. Adopted plans link land use and transportation priorities to support transit-oriented development (TOD), specifically along BRT corridors. Small area and neighborhood plans are transit-supportive, but do not focus on the corridor station areas.
- *Supportive Zoning Regulations Near Transit Stations:* The City of Austin adopted zoning that moderately or strongly supports TOD in many station areas. The Austin Land Development Code includes TOD zoning, a vertical mixed-use overlay, a special corridor zoning regulation near East Riverside, and accessory dwelling units. The corridor has low-density residential and Planned Unit Development zoning at both its northern and southern termini for master-planned developments that are intended to be mixed-use.
- *Tools to Implement Land Use Policies:* The City of Austin and CapMetro conducted extensive public outreach as part of citywide planning efforts, held design workshops with developers to include TOD elements in developments, and created a *TOD Priority Tool* (2016) guidebook to attract and assist in the development of TOD. The City offers a TOD Development Bonus to projects in the Martin Luther King TOD District, which includes the Airport Boulevard station area.

#### **Performance and Impacts of Policies: Medium-Low**

- *Performance of Land Use Policies:* Along the corridor, there are currently 69 projects in development that are over 10 acres, including over 20 residential units, five million square feet of commercial development, and 25,000 residential units. These include a shopping center, biomedical research facilities, and multi-family housing projects. There are some station areas with little to no development, or only single-family development with limited evidence of transit-supportive character.
- *Potential Impact of Transit Investment on Regional Land Use:* There are over 1,000 acres of land considered to have a high likelihood of redevelopment along the corridor, with the highest potential areas being in Far Southeast Austin and Near East Austin. However, existing plans do not clearly support redevelopment in these areas.

<b>Tools to Maintain or Increase Share of Affordable Housing: Medium-Low</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The City of Austin has conducted analyses that indicate the need for 135,000 new affordable units by 2027 to meet the City's housing demand. The City has objectives to develop affordable units for very low-income households. The Austin Strategic Housing Blueprint recommends 25 percent of affordable housing created or preserved be within 1/4-mile of high-frequency transit.</li><li>• The City of Austin has several financing tools to preserve or increase affordable housing, including housing bonds to support developments; development bonus programs; Homestead Preservation Districts, including reinvestment zones, land trusts, and land banks; and anti-displacement funds.</li><li>• Developers are including affordable units in a few of the new planned developments.</li></ul>

# Project Location - Pleasant Valley Corridor

-  Pleasant Valley Corridor Stations
-  Pleasant Valley Corridor
-  Water
-  Park and Open Spaces
-  Activity Centers

Source: CapMetro, 2019

