

Albuquerque Rapid Transit Project

Albuquerque, New Mexico

Small Starts Project Development (Rating Assigned November 2015)

Summary Description	
Proposed Project:	Bus Rapid Transit 8.8 Miles, 20 Stations
Total Capital Cost (\$YOE):	\$126.16 Million
Section 5309 Small Starts Share (\$YOE):	\$69.02 Million (54.7%)
Annual Operating Cost (opening year 2017):	\$2.37 Million
Current Year Ridership Forecast (2012):	16,100 Daily Linked Trips 4,843,200 Annual Linked Trips
Overall Project Rating:	Medium-High
Project Justification Rating:	Medium-High
Local Financial Commitment Rating:	Medium

Project Description: The City of Albuquerque's Transit Department (ABQRide) is implementing bus rapid transit (BRT) along Central Avenue (Historic Route 66) from Tramway Boulevard in the east to Atrisco Vista Road in the west, although physical right-of-way improvements are planned for only the innermost 8.8 miles. The project includes dedicated stations with raised platforms accommodating level boarding, off-board fare collection, a mix of exclusive bus lanes and operation in mixed traffic, traffic signal priority, and the purchase of 18 vehicles. Service is planned to operate every 7 ½ minutes on weekdays, every 10 minutes on Saturdays, and every 15 minutes on Sundays.

Project Purpose: Central Avenue is one of the region's key east-west roadways and one of the few roads that crosses the Rio Grande connecting the burgeoning residential development on the west side of the river with the region's major employment and activity centers east of the river. The corridor connects downtown Albuquerque with other key activity centers such as the University of New Mexico, the Presbyterian Hospital complex, the Old Town and Nob Hill historic districts, and the Albuquerque BioPark (zoo). Existing transit services along Central Avenue account for approximately 40 percent of ABQRide's daily ridership. Improving service along this key regional spine will improve mobility by providing easier and faster access to key job centers.

Project Development History, Status and Next Steps: A locally preferred alternative (LPA) was originally selected in 2011, and adopted into the region's fiscally constrained long-range transportation plan shortly thereafter. The project entered Small Starts Project Development in February 2014. A revised LPA was selected and adopted in March 2015. ABQRide completed the environmental review process with receipt of a Categorical Exclusion in August 2015. ABQRide anticipates receiving a Small Starts Grant Agreement in October 2016, and starting revenue service by September 2017.

Locally Proposed Financial Plan

<u>Source of Funds</u>	<u>Total Funds (\$million)</u>	<u>Percent of Total</u>
Federal:		
Section 5309 Small Starts	\$69.02	54.7%
Section 5309 Bus and Bus Facilities (SAFETEA-LU)	\$1.50	1.2%
Section 5339 Bus and Bus Facilities Formula Funds (MAP-21)	\$3.21	2.5%
FHWA Flexible Funds (Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality)	\$26.91	21.4%
Local:		
City of Albuquerque Capital Program	\$0.42	0.3%
Bernalillo County General Funds	\$1.00	0.8%
City of Albuquerque Gross Receipts Tax Revenue Bonds	\$13.00	10.3%
City of Albuquerque General Obligation Bonds	\$5.10	4.0%
Department of Municipal Development Transportation Infrastructure Tax	\$6.00	4.8%
Total:	\$126.16	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 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 and employment densities within ½-mile of proposed station areas, as well as the share of legally binding affordability restricted housing in the corridor compared to the share in the surrounding county(ies).

- Average population density across all station areas is 4,950 persons per square mile, corresponding to a Medium-Low rating. Total station area employment is 54,420, corresponding to a Medium-Low rating. The CBD has 0.51 parking spaces per employee, corresponding to a Low rating.
- The proportion of legally binding affordability restricted housing units in the corridor as compared to the proportion in the county is 2.27. This corresponds to a Medium-High rating.
- The corridor's east and west ends are auto-centric in character. Approaching the Central Business District (CBD) from both ends, the corridor's transit-supportive character strengthens. The CBD and close-in segments exhibit higher densities, recent multi-story redevelopment with mixed uses, and street features that support pedestrian activity.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT RATING: *Medium-High*

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

- *Transit-Supportive Corridor Policies:* The *Albuquerque/Bernalillo County Comprehensive Plan* designates Central Avenue as a Major Transit Corridor, which allows for higher density and mixed uses along the corridor. Plans for several subareas along the corridor include design guidelines to shape a denser, more walkable built environment.
- *Supportive Zoning Regulations Near Transit Stations:* The City of Albuquerque's commercial zoning code allows for medium to high density residential development allowances within 660 feet of Central Avenue. The zoning code contains parking reductions for development that lies within 300 feet of the corridor. Station areas in the Nob Hill-Highland and Downtown areas have form-based zoning codes that promote transit-supportive characteristics.
- *Tools to Implement Land Use Policies:* The Metropolitan Redevelopment Agency (MRA) promotes redevelopment in neighborhoods through direct financial incentives, the creation of public/private partnerships for anchor projects, and public investment in infrastructure. There are nine MRA designated redevelopment areas directly adjacent to the corridor. A new streamlined entitlements process for the Downtown area allows a development plan to go straight to building permit if it meets the broad range of permitted uses by district and the form-based regulations.

Performance and Impacts of Policies: *Medium-High*

- *Performance of Land Use Policies:* Several mixed-use, higher density, pedestrian-friendly projects have been constructed in the Downtown area over the last decade and more are under development in the central portion of the corridor. Little development of any nature has occurred in other parts of the corridor over the last decade.
- *Potential Impact of Transit Investment on Regional Land Use:* There are numerous vacant parcels along the corridor and the development market is strengthening. Analysis by a local commercial development association indicates that there is potential for nearly \$1 billion and four million square feet of development along the corridor.

Tools to Maintain or Increase Share of Affordable Housing: *Medium-Low*

- The City of Albuquerque has a Workforce Housing Trust Fund that provides funding for workforce housing; these monies can also be used to "land bank" throughout the city. The State also has several energy assistance programs that help low-income families and individuals with their heating and cooling costs. Government assistance is also available for weatherization assistance.
- There are no tools or efforts to increase or maintain affordable housing specific to the corridor.

