

**River Corridor Bus Rapid Transit
Albany, New York
Small Starts Project Development
(Rating Assigned November 2018)**

Summary Description	
Proposed Project:	Bus Rapid Transit 16.0 Miles, 30 Stations
Total Capital Cost (\$YOE):	\$41.41 Million
Section 5309 CIG Share (\$YOE):	\$26.92 Million (65.0%)
Annual Operating Cost (opening year 2020):	\$2.95 Million
Existing Corridor Ridership (Warranted):	10,500 Daily Linked Trips
Overall Project Rating:	Medium
Project Justification Rating:	Medium
Local Financial Commitment Rating:	Medium

Project Description: The Capital District Transportation Authority (CDTA) proposes to implement bus rapid transit (BRT) along the Hudson River connecting Waterford in the north to Downtown Albany in the south via Troy, Watervliet, and Menands. The project includes uniquely branded buses and stations, transit signal priority, replacement of 10 traffic signals, queue bypass lanes in three locations, real-time bus arrival information, and construction of two park and ride facilities. CDTA anticipates purchasing 20 vehicles and expanding an existing maintenance and storage facility to accommodate the additional vehicles. On weekdays, service is planned to operate every 10 minutes during rush hours, every 15 minutes midday and every 30 minutes on weekday evenings, while weekend service would operate every 15 to 30 minutes.

Project Purpose: The project is intended to provide faster, more direct, and more reliable north-south transit service connecting major activity centers and to accommodate increasing ridership along the River Corridor. The project is also intended to improve existing pedestrian access at station locations by providing safer crossings for pedestrians and transit riders. The project is planned to intersect with the existing BusPlus Red Line BRT that connects the downtowns of Albany and Schenectady via New York State Route 5.

Project Development History, Status and Next Steps: CDTA selected a locally preferred alternative and had it adopted into the region's financially constrained long range plan in September 2014. The project entered Small Starts Project Development in July 2015. CDTA completed the environmental review process with receipt of a documented Categorical Exclusion from FTA in March 2016. CDTA anticipates receipt of a Small Starts Grant Agreement in spring 2019, and the start of revenue service in summer 2020.

Significant Changes Since Last Evaluation (November 2017): The total project cost nominally increased from \$40.88 million to \$41.41 million due to refinements to the project design. CDTA decreased its requested amount of CIG funds from \$32.70 million to \$26.92 million, reducing the CIG share from 80.0 percent to 65.0 percent.

Locally Proposed Financial Plan

<u>Source of Funds</u>	<u>Total Funds (\$million)</u>	<u>Percent of Total</u>
Federal:		
Section 5309 Small Starts	\$26.92	65.0%
Section 5339 Bus and Bus Facilities Discretionary Funds	\$5.00	12.1%
State:		
Empire State Development Upstate Revitalization Initiative Funds	\$7.30	17.6%
New York State Department of Transportation Cash Contribution	\$2.10	5.1%
Local:		
City of Albany Cash Contribution	\$0.06	0.1%
City of Troy Cash Contribution	\$0.03	0.1%
Total:	\$41.41	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 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 counties.

- Average population density across all station areas is 4,800 persons per square mile, which corresponds to a Medium-Low rating according to FTA benchmarks. Total employment served is 62,600, corresponding to a Medium-Low rating. Parking costs in the Albany central business district (CBD) are \$11, corresponding to a Medium rating according to FTA benchmarks. The proportion of LBAR housing in the project corridor compared to the proportion in the counties through which the project travels is 3.60, which corresponds to a High rating.
- The southernmost station areas, located within Albany, Menands and Watervliet, are mixed use with sections of commercial and residential land use. The northernmost station areas, within Troy, Cohoes and Waterford, are primarily residential town centers.
- The corridor generally has a grid structure, four lane roads, and a continuous sidewalk network with block lengths varying between 250 and 1,000 feet. Buildings along the project route are mostly oriented towards the street with minimal setbacks, except for portions of Menands where there are significant setbacks and off-street surface parking lots adjacent to the road.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT RATING: Medium

Transit-Supportive Plans and Policies: Medium

- *Transit-Supportive Corridor Policies:* Four of the six municipalities within the project corridor, covering 28 of 30 stations, have recently adopted comprehensive plans that call for intensified development around proposed stations. Albany has prepared sub-area plans to further guide urban redevelopment and identify sites for urban infill. Other localities have prepared plans to improve the transit-friendly characteristics along the BRT project route. Albany, Troy, Cohoes and Watervliet have adopted complete streets ordinances.
- *Supportive Zoning Regulations Near Transit Stations:* Existing zoning in most CBD station areas supports moderate densities and mixed use development, while zoning in other station areas supports moderate to high densities. Albany's recently updated zoning ordinance increases density allowances, while Troy plans to update its zoning ordinance.
- *Tools to Implement Land Use Policies:* Albany, Troy, and Cohoes as well as the three counties that the project serves have Industrial Development Agencies that provide tax incentives and abatements to local development projects. The agencies have primarily focused on downtown areas, village centers, and urban neighborhoods in need of revitalization.

Performance and Impacts of Policies: Medium

- *Performance of Land Use Policies:* There have been at least 37 transit-supportive significant land development projects identified in the project corridor; these total over \$100 million in value. The developments include commercial, residential and mixed use properties in varying states of permitting and construction.
- *Potential Impact of Transit Investment on Regional Land Use:* Albany, Troy, and Menands offer many redevelopment and urban infill opportunities as there are large sections of vacant or underutilized land near the stations. Regional projections anticipate moderate population and employment growth in station areas over the next 20 years.

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

- Albany's zoning ordinance reduces minimum parking requirements for affordable housing developments. Public housing authorities and private developers are conducting some limited investments in new affordable housing units.

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