

Virginia Street Bus RAPID Transit Extension

Reno, Nevada

Small Starts Project Development

(Rating Assigned November 2017)

Summary Description

Proposed Project:	Bus Rapid Transit 3.2 Miles, 7 Stations
Total Capital Cost (\$YOE):	\$80.78 Million
Section 5309 Small Starts Share (\$YOE):	\$40.39 Million (50.0%)
Annual Operating Cost (opening year 2020):	\$0.34 Million
Existing Corridor Ridership (Warranted):	7,300 Daily Linked Trips
Overall Project Rating:	Medium-High
Project Justification Rating:	Medium
Local Financial Commitment Rating:	High

Project Description: The Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) of Washoe County proposes to construct a 1.8-mile extension to its existing bus rapid transit (BRT) service (the RAPID) operating in the Virginia Street corridor, from its existing northern terminus in downtown Reno to the University of Nevada, Reno (UNR). The project also includes upgrades to 1.4 miles of the existing BRT service, from downtown Reno south to the Midtown District. The project includes off-vehicle fare collection, traffic signal priority, real-time schedule information at stations, level boarding, the purchase of two 60 foot electric articulated buses, and sidewalk and roadway improvements including construction of two roundabouts. The service is planned to operate every 10 minutes during weekday peak periods, every 15 minutes during weekday off-peak periods, and every 15 minutes on weekday evenings. On weekends, service is planned to operate every 12 minutes.

Project Purpose: The project is intended to provide a critical link to UNR and improve transit service in a heavily urbanized corridor that is home to a large concentration of low-income persons and households without cars. The project is designed to maintain and increase transit ridership by offering higher frequency, faster, and more reliable service, along with safer and more convenient access to stations. The project supports local and regional planning goals to promote transit-oriented development along the Virginia Street corridor and around RAPID stations.

Project Development History, Status and Next Steps: The project entered Small Starts Project Development in September 2014. RTC designated the project as the locally preferred alternative (LPA) in October 2015. The current LPA was adopted into the fiscally constrained long range transportation plan in February 2016. RTC anticipates completing the environmental review process with the receipt of a Finding of No Significant Impact in early 2018, receipt of a Small Starts Grant Agreement in 2018, and the start of revenue service in late 2020.

Significant Changes Since Last Evaluation (November 2016): No significant changes.

Locally Proposed Financial Plan

<u>Source of Funds</u>	<u>Total Funds (\$million)</u>	<u>Percent of Total</u>
Federal:		
Section 5309 Small Starts	\$40.39	50.0%
FHWA Flexible Funds (Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Program)	\$5.70	7.1%
Section 5307 Formula Funds	\$5.04	6.2%
FHWA Flexible Funds (Surface Transportation Program)	\$3.37	4.2%
Local:		
RTC Local Fuel/Sales Tax	\$26.28	32.5%
Total:	\$80.78	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 county.

- Average population density across all station areas is 8,887 persons per square mile, which corresponds to a Medium rating according to FTA benchmarks. Total employment served is 57,956, corresponding to a Medium-Low rating. The average daily parking cost in the central business district (CBD) of Reno is approximately \$2.40, which is a Low rating. The proportion of legally binding affordability restricted housing in the project corridor compared to the proportion in the county through which the project travels is 2.53, which corresponds to a High rating.
- The project would occur along a regionally significant thoroughfare that is an established commercial corridor with major trip generators, including the University of Nevada, Reno (UNR), the CBD and mixed-use districts.
- Most roads in the station areas feature two lanes of travel and two lanes of on-street parking. While sidewalks and marked crossings are standard for higher volume roads, the condition of pedestrian infrastructure varies.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT RATING: Medium-Low

Transit-Supportive Plans and Policies: Medium

- *Transit-Supportive Corridor Policies:* Regional, municipal, and specific area plans recommend transit-oriented development (TOD) in the corridor. The region's land use plan generally recommends low to moderate minimum densities for the corridor, though Reno's plans for the university and downtown areas recommend relatively high densities. The plans also support improvements to pedestrian and bicycle facilities and transit amenities in the corridor.
- *Supportive Zoning Near Transit Stations:* Zoning in the corridor sets low minimum density requirements for commercial development and moderate minimum requirements for residential development. Reno has adopted overlay zoning for much of the corridor that limits setbacks and the number of new parking spaces, and carries other site layout, architecture and landscaping requirements.
- *Tools to Implement Land Use Policies:* The City of Reno and Truckee Meadows Regional Planning Agency have identified the Virginia Street TOD Corridor as a key component of local economic development. Despite this focus, there is limited evidence of regulatory or financial incentives that promote development.

Performance and Impacts of Policies: Medium-Low

- *Performance of Land Use Policies:* Although transit-supportive development is occurring, mostly on and near UNR's campus, it is unclear whether corridor policies have incentivized this development.
- *Potential Impact of Transit Investment on Regional Land Use:* Approximately 20 percent of the total station area has development or redevelopment potential. At full build-out, the corridor could more than double its total population and employment, but growth in the corridor is expected to be slower than that of the region.

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

- A density bonus is available in Reno for developments that include affordable housing units. Evidence of measures to ensure long-term affordability are limited to provisions by Low Income Housing Tax Credits. A regional forum to address homelessness and affordable housing formed in 2016, but there is little evidence of activity thus far.

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Legend

- Proposed RAPID Stations
- Upgraded RAPID Stations
- Existing RAPID Station (To be Removed/Relocated)
- Existing RAPID Stations
- Proposed Bus RAPID Transit Extension
- 4th St & Prater Way BRT Project
- Existing RAPID Route
- Existing Bus Route
- Existing Bus Stop
- Railroad

2,000

Feet



Service Layer Credits: