



*Get Involved,
Stay Involved*
**Orange Line
Project**

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)
Public Environmental Scoping Process

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AA	Alternatives Analysis	HPD	City of Austin Housing and Planning Department
ACC	Austin Community College	HUD	U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act	LCRA	Lower Colorado River Authority
AISD	Austin Independent School District	LPA	Locally Preferred Alternative
ATD	Austin Transportation Department	LRT	Light Rail Transit
BRT	Bus Rapid Transit	MACC	Mexican American Cultural Center
CAMPO	Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization	NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
CAPCOG	Capital Area Council of Governments	NOES	Notice of Early Scoping
CARTS	Capital Area Rural Transportation System	NPS	National Parks Service
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations	NRCS	Natural Resources Conservation Service
CIG	Capital Investment Grant	PARD	City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department
COA	City of Austin	PCAN	Project Connect Ambassador Network
CTRMA	Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority	PEL	Planning and Environmental Linkages
DAA	Downtown Austin Alliance	ROD	Record of Decision
DEIS	Draft Environmental Impact Statement	RTP	Regional Transportation Plan
EDD	City of Austin Economic Development Department	TAC	Technical Advisory Committee
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement	TCEQ	Texas Commission on Environmental Quality
EJ	Environmental Justice	THC	Texas Historical Commission
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency	TPWD	Texas Parks and Wildlife Department
FAA	Federal Aviation Administration	TxDOT	Texas Department of Transportation
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency	USACE	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration	USDA	U.S. Department of Agriculture
FTA	Federal Transit Administration	USDI	U.S. Department of Interior
HACA	Housing Authority of the City of Austin	USFWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
HCT	High-Capacity Transit	UT	University of Texas

THE PURPOSE OF THIS SCOPING BOOKLET

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Capital Metro) have initiated the environmental review process for the Orange Line Project (the Project) in Austin, Texas in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other regulatory requirements. An Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is being prepared as part of this process, with the FTA as the Federal Lead Agency and Capital Metro as the Local Sponsor Agency responsible for implementing the Orange Line Project under NEPA.

To determine the scope, content and significant issues to be addressed in the EIS, FTA and Capital Metro are conducting agency and public "scoping." Scoping is "an early and open process for determining the scope of issues to be addressed and for identifying the significant issues related to a proposed action" (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] 1501.7). This scoping booklet is intended to help interested parties understand the scoping process, provide pertinent information about the Project and establish an early and open process for obtaining public and agency input.

HISTORY OF PROJECT CONNECT AND THE ORANGE LINE PROJECT

Capital Metro began developing the Project Connect Vision Plan in 2016. The need for the Project Connect vision is the result of Central Texas' booming population which is projected to double by 2040. This growth will cause additional strain on the roadway network, result in increased travel times and travel costs, decrease our mobility, hinder our region's economic health and threaten our air quality. Implementation of Project Connect will move people more sustainably and equitably by offering mobility options that don't require ownership of a car.

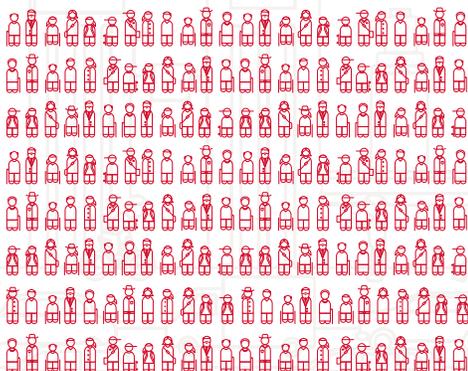
In December 2018, the Capital Metro Board of Directors approved the Project Connect Vision Plan, which identified corridors for potential investment in high-capacity transit (HCT), in addition to other improvements like new MetroRapid routes, Red Line improvements, development of the Green Line, additional MetroExpress routes with Park & Rides and Neighborhood Circulators. Constructing and operating HCT is an effective tool to address the region's growth pressures, improve mobility and connect Central Texans to their travel destinations. HCT will make peak transit travel times faster

than peak automobile travel times and create transit service that is reliable. Project Connect is a multi-generational investment and will be planned to accommodate the latest vehicle technology when it comes to market.

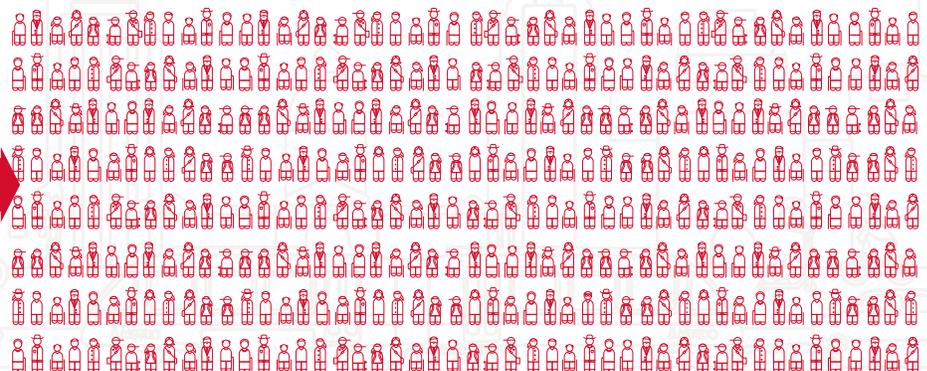
In 2019, the Austin City Council approved the Austin Strategic Mobility Plan (ASMP), which establishes a policy goal to quadruple the share of commuters who use transit by 2039 and achieving the goal of 50/50 mode split. The Project Connect Vision Plan is included as an integral part of the ASMP, and both initiatives provide a way forward for addressing the current and future mobility challenges the region faces.

Engagement included public open houses and other organized events, both in-person and online, as well as meetings with community stakeholders, such as the Project Connect Ambassador Network (PCAN), and the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) comprised of local and regional agency representatives.

2019
Population: **2M+**



2040
Population: **4M+**





SYSTEM PLAN

Adopted June 10, 2020

LEGEND

- LIGHT RAIL**
- Orange Line
 - Blue Line
 - Gold Line

- METRORAIL**
- Red Line
 - Green Line
 - Potential Future Extension

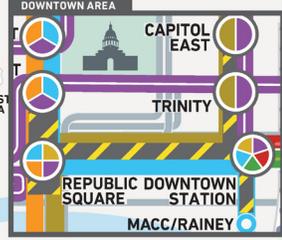
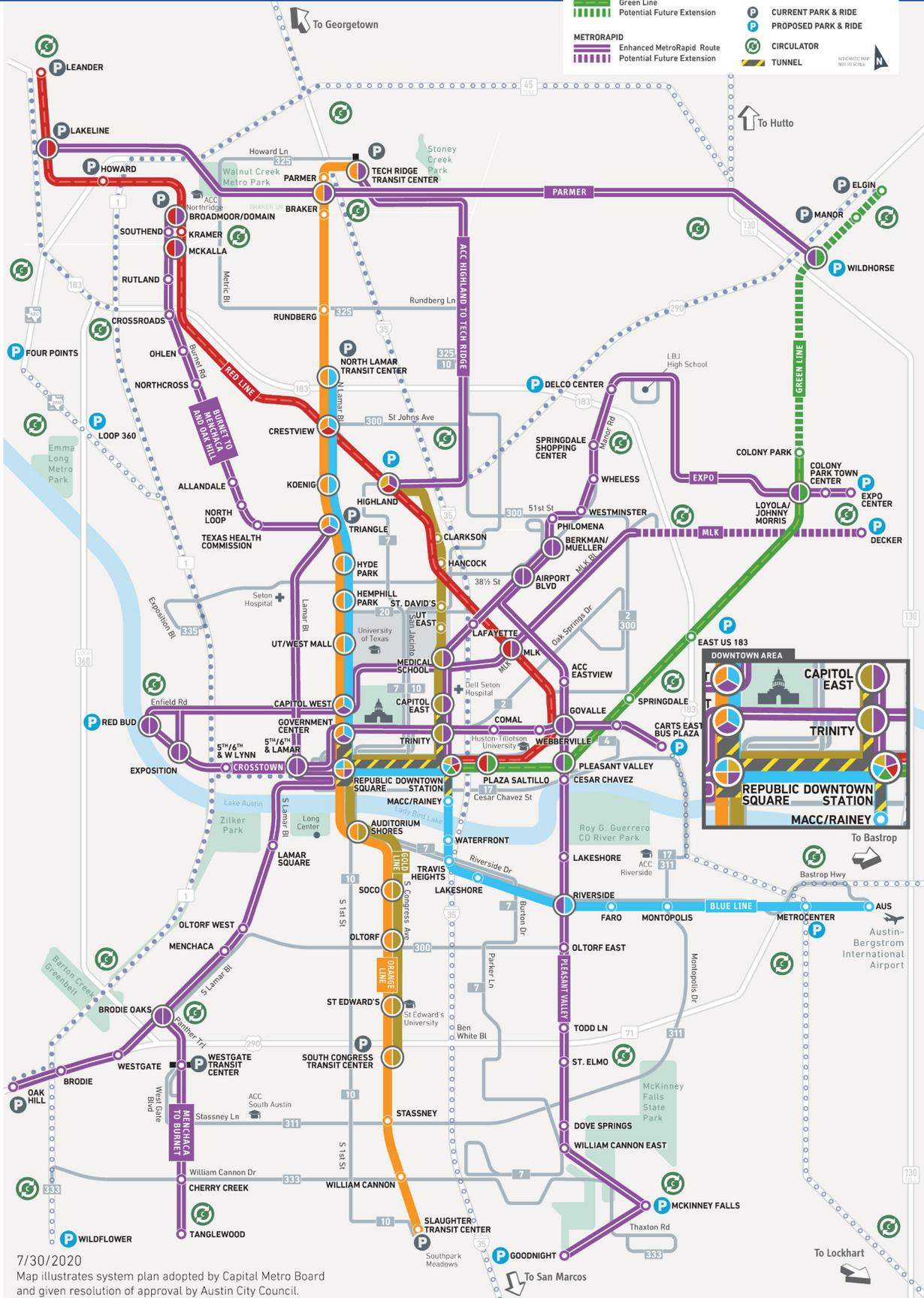
- METRORAPID**
- Enhanced MetroRapid Route
 - Potential Future Extension

- METROBUS**
- Current Frequent Local Routes

- METROEXPRESS**
- Current MetroExpress
 - Future MetroExpress

ADDITIONAL AVAILABLE SERVICES

- MetroAccess
- MetroBike
- CURRENT PARK & RIDE
- PROPOSED PARK & RIDE
- CIRCULATOR
- TUNNEL



7/30/2020
 Map illustrates system plan adopted by Capital Metro Board and given resolution of approval by Austin City Council.

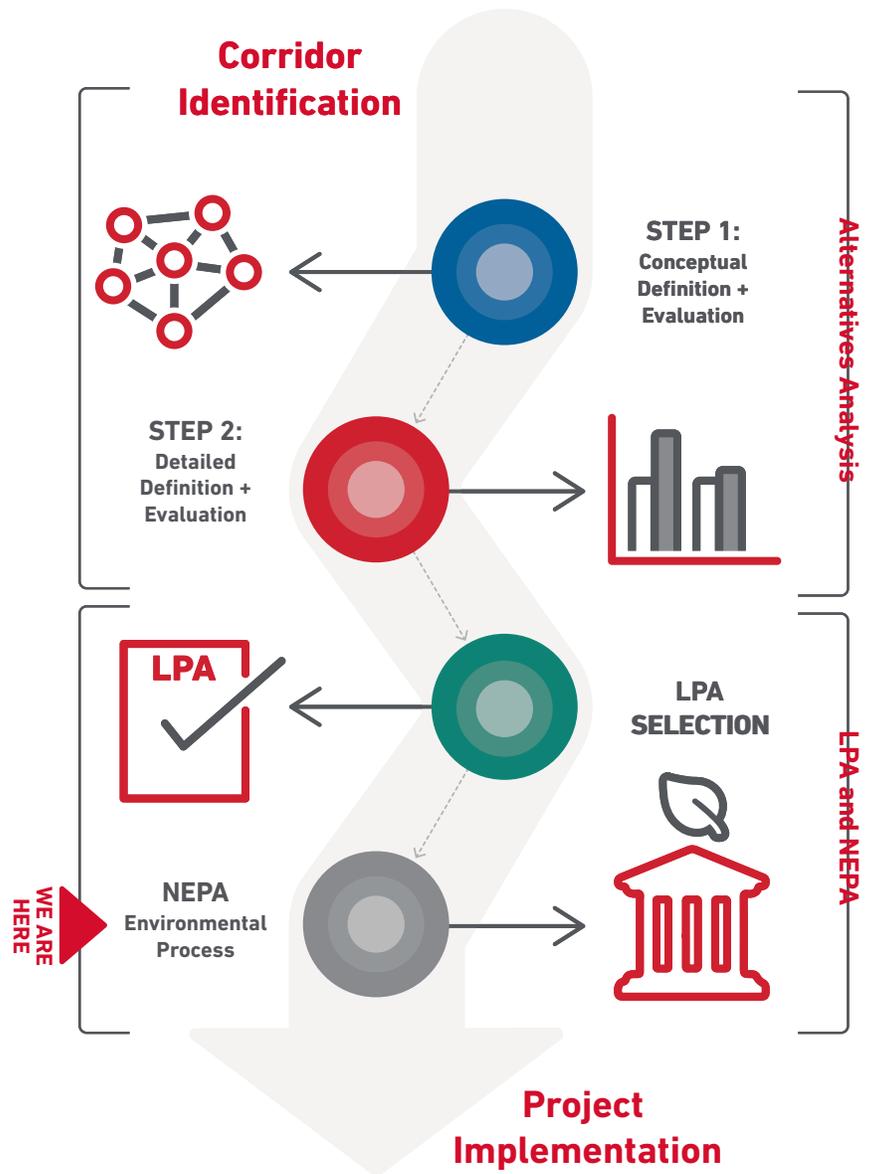
The Orange Line was identified as one of the dedicated pathway HCT corridors and consists of a 20-mile corridor currently served by Capital Metro's MetroRapid 801 from the Tech Ridge Park & Ride in north Austin to the Slaughter Lane in south Austin. As described in the Project Connect Long Term Vision Plan, the Orange Line would serve as the spine of the regional HCT network and provide faster, more reliable transit connections. The Vision Plan also cites HCT as a safe and economically competitive means of travel compared to the automobile.

The Alternatives Analysis (AA) process provided information to the decisionmakers and the public that helped them balance costs and benefits to propose a Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) in order to most effectively maximize a transit investment. Capital Metro analyzed a combination of mode, transitway and alignment alternatives that meets the Purpose and Need for the Orange Line Corridor, is financially feasible and has strong local support.

The Orange Line Corridor AA, as a component of the Orange Line Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Study, used a phased approach with a tiered screening process, where alternatives were defined, evaluated, and refined or eliminated in each step of the process:

Step 1 (The Definition and Evaluation of Conceptual Alternatives) assessed the implementation viability of each of the four transitway types within the context of each of the seven corridor segments. This step did not address modes or transitway types; it was simply an assessment of each segment's implementation viability.

Step 2 (The Definition and Evaluation of Detailed Alternatives) paired each of the mode alternatives with the transitway and segment pairings that emerged from Step 1 and compared the benefits and impacts of each. Step 2 concluded with the identification of the Preliminary Preferred Alternative.



Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO) adopted the 2045 Long-Range Transportation Improvement Plan on May 4, 2020. The Orange Line Project was included in the Regional Transportation Plan Project List.

Each distinct project can be considered as part of a sequence of investments in implementing the long-term vision. At the June 2020 joint meeting of the Austin City Council and Capital Metro Board of Directors, the Blue Line Project, Gold Line Project,

Orange Line Project and MetroRapid routes were selected as distinct and separate projects with their own LPAs to advance to the environmental review process, as well as the FTA's Capital Investment Grant (CIG) funding program. The graphic on the following page shows the Orange Line LPA.

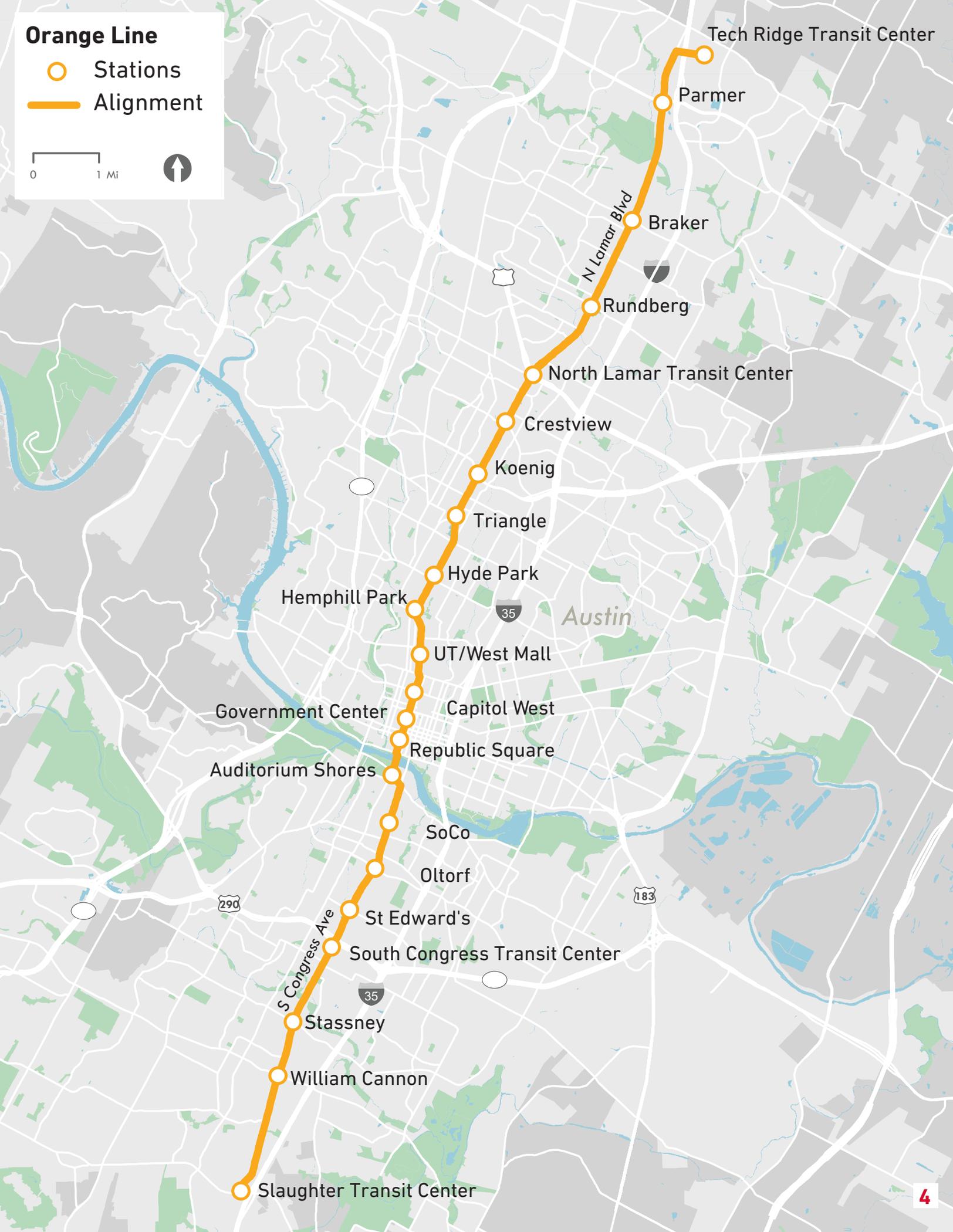
In November 2020, Austin voters approved Proposition A, a transit funding measure enabling Capital Metro to advance Project Connect and the Orange Line Project.

Orange Line

○ Stations

— Alignment

0 1 Mi

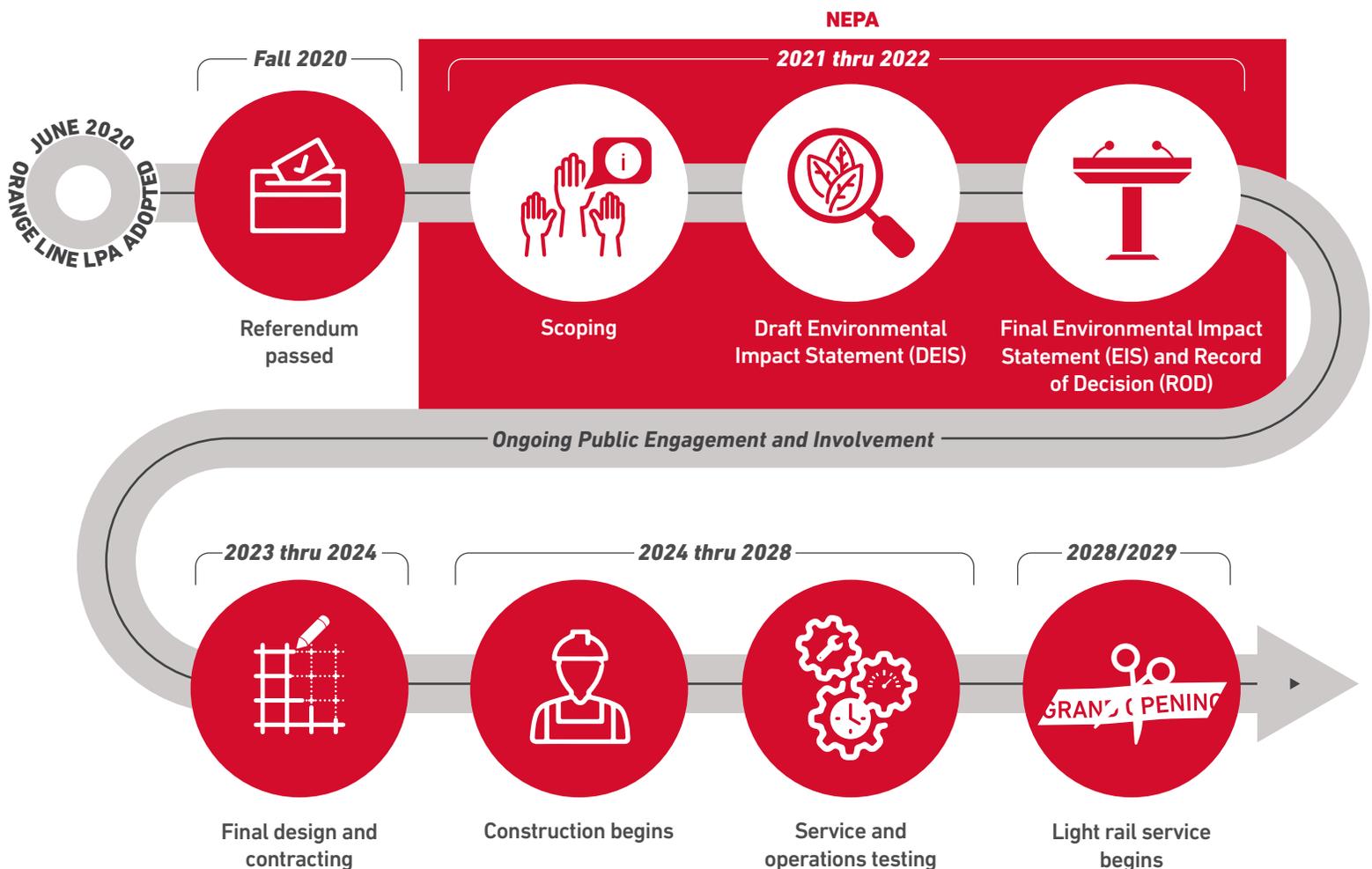


ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS

NEPA requires federal agencies to assess the potential impacts of their actions on the human and natural environment and to avoid, minimize or mitigate adverse effects where reasonably feasible. Since Capital Metro intends to seek federal funding for the Project, the FTA and Capital Metro must comply with NEPA. The purpose of the environmental review process under NEPA is to promote informed decision-making by considering

the potential environmental and social impacts of the Orange Line Project. The FTA and Capital Metro will engage regulatory agencies with a defined interest in the Orange Line Project and the public that could potentially be affected by the project. The environmental review process is structured to encourage participation between government officials, agencies, private businesses, and citizens.

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE



*Schedule subject to change.



THE ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS INVOLVES THE FOLLOWING STEPS:

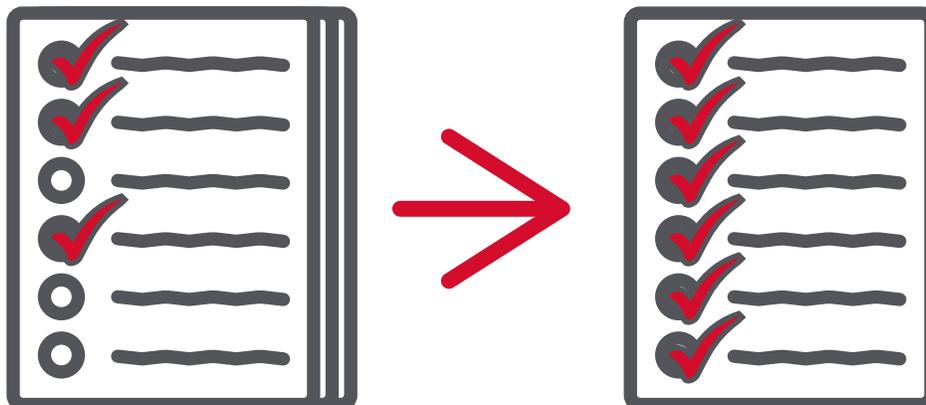
- Scoping
- Draft Environmental Impact Statement
- Final Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision

SCOPING

Scoping is the first step in the environmental review process under NEPA. It is an early and open process for the public and agencies to provide input on the scope, or range, of issues to be addressed and identify the issues related to the Orange Line Project. The input received during scoping will help to identify the appropriate alternatives and the depth and breadth of environmental analysis to be completed. It will also serve to identify and eliminate from detailed study the issues that are not significant or have been covered by prior studies.

The following key steps will be conducted during the environmental scoping process:

1. Invite local, regional, state and federal agencies, tribal governments and other interested parties to comment on the scope of the project, including the purpose and need, alternatives considered, key issues evaluated and evaluation methods;
2. Connect previous planning decisions with current project development;
3. Establish a decision-making framework; and
4. Determine the scope and significant issues to be analyzed in depth in the EIS.



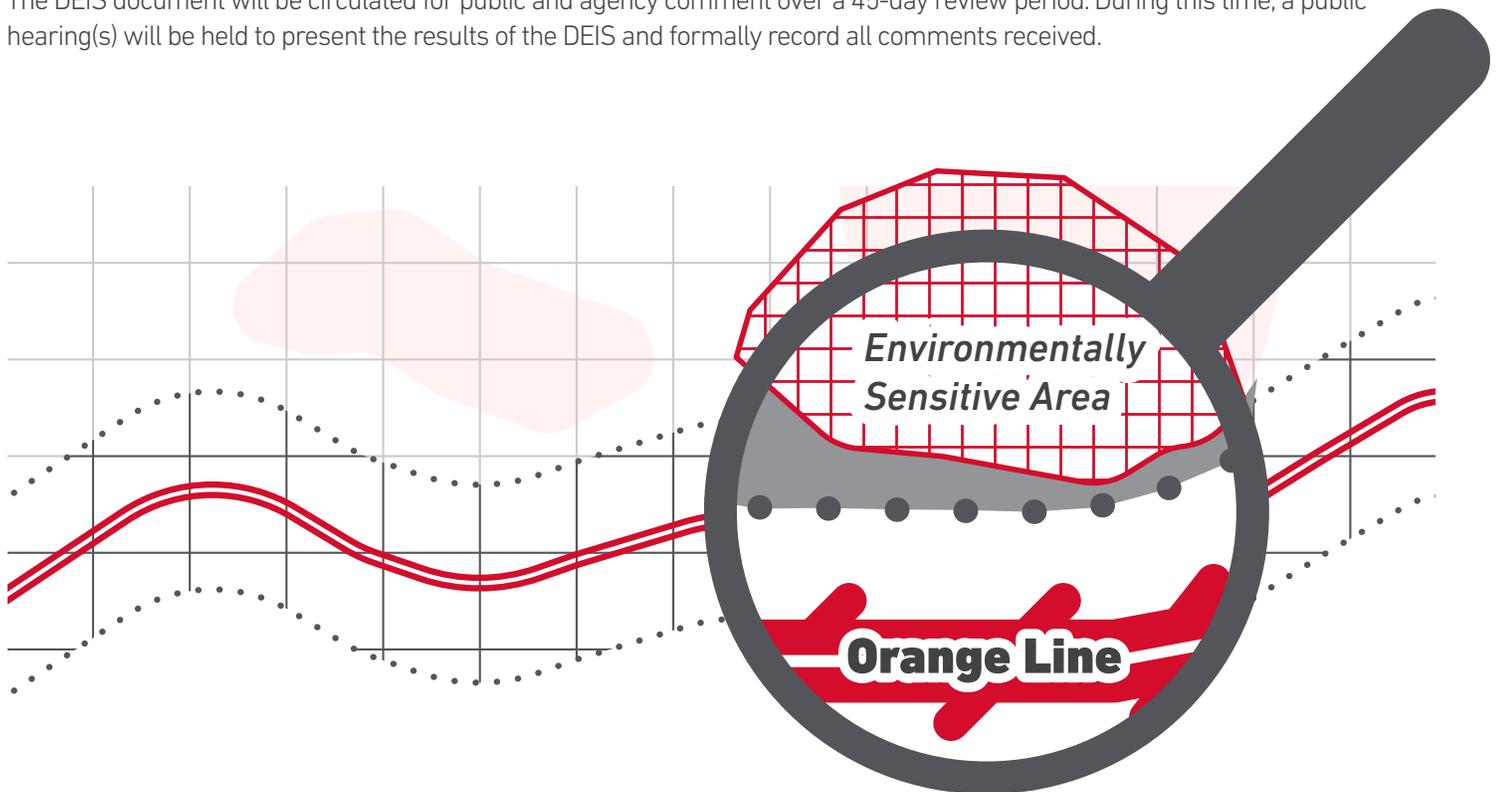
DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

A Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) document will be prepared following scoping to more fully assess the Orange Line Project.

The DEIS will:

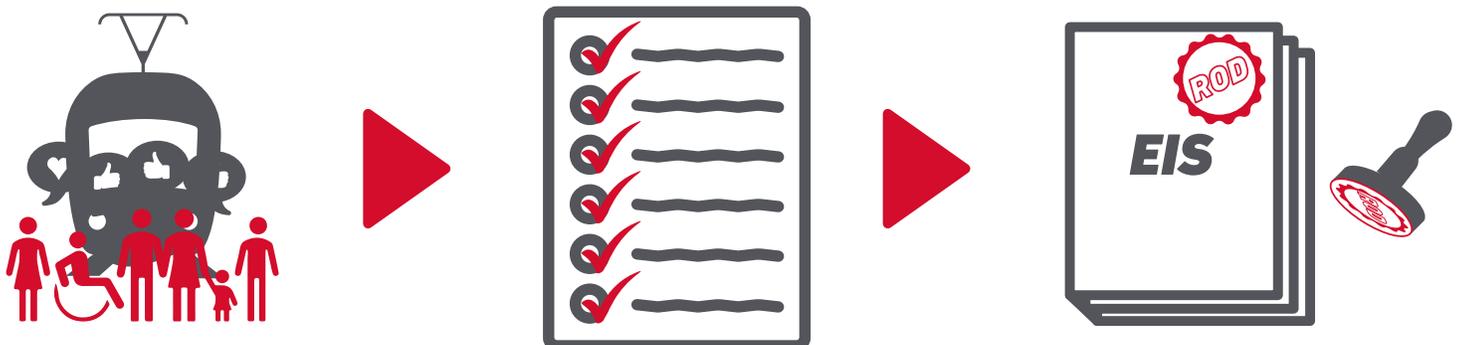
- The purpose of and need for action;
- Description of alternatives, including the proposed action;
- Discussion of the affected environment; and
- Environmental consequences.

The DEIS document will be circulated for public and agency comment over a 45-day review period. During this time, a public hearing(s) will be held to present the results of the DEIS and formally record all comments received.



FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT (EIS) AND RECORD OF DECISION (ROD)

Unless new information is brought forward through the 30-day public and agency comment period of the DEIS, FTA intends to issue a combined final EIS and ROD. The combined final EIS/ROD will respond to comments received on the DEIS, and state the proposed action, environmental findings and mitigation requirements. If FTA and Capital Metro make substantial changes to the proposed action that are relevant to environmental or safety concerns, or there is a significant new circumstance or information relevant to environmental concerns that bears on the proposed action or the impacts of the proposed action, FTA will issue a separate EIS and ROD in accordance with 23 CFR 771.



PURPOSE AND NEED OF THE ORANGE LINE PROJECT

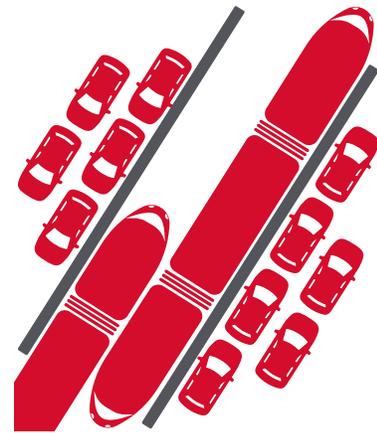
As the region grows, highway congestion continues to worsen, leading to a degradation of local and express bus services combined with greater demand for improved transit access. The lack of mobility options and limited roadway capacity to accommodate this growth has hindered the continued vitality and economic health of the City of Austin and the greater region. Inadequate transit access for many city residents and rising travel demand are resulting in increasing travel times, decreasing mobility and additional travel costs for residents and businesses. Austin's transportation system must accommodate this continued growth in population and employment. Therefore, it is appropriate to consider a range of strategies for meeting the need identified for increased transit investment that will support plans for growth throughout the City of Austin and greater region.

The purpose of the Orange Line Project is to meet growing corridor travel demand with a reliable, safe, cost effective, time competitive, state-of-the-art high-capacity transit option that is congestion-proof.

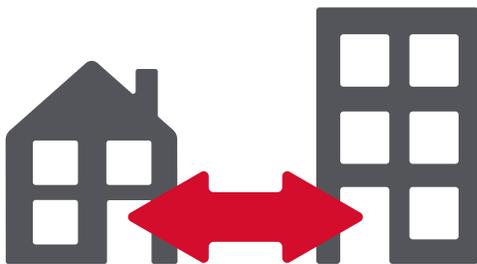
The four needs the Orange Line Project would address are:



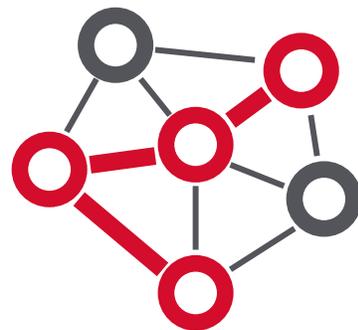
Sustainably Support Austin's Population and Economic Growth



Increase Transportation Network Capacity to Meet Increasing Travel Demand



Improve Transit Access between Affordable Housing and Jobs



Support Growth of and Connectivity to Regional Activity Centers

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The goals and objectives for the Orange Line Project are based on the goals established for the Project Connect Vision Plan and the project's Purpose and Need. The extensive planning and public outreach efforts that culminated into the Orange Line Project served to establish project-related goals and objectives. The goals are high-level to capture the needs, whereas the objectives are more specific measures in support of the broader goals for the project. They form the basis for evaluating transit investment alternatives for the Orange Line Project.



EQUITY

Commit to an inclusive transit investment that benefits disadvantaged communities and identify strategies to mitigate displacement

OBJECTIVES

- Proactively engage all community members in the NEPA process regardless of race, color, disability, ethnicity or income level
- Incorporate consideration of the unique impacts and trade-offs faced by disadvantaged communities into the transit investment design and decision-making process



RELIABILITY

Provide frequent reliable HCT service along transitways within the Orange Line Project corridor

OBJECTIVES

- Provide reliable, frequent HCT service
- Efficiently use the existing transportation network and provide transitways for transit



SUSTAINABILITY

Contribute to a socially- and environmentally sustainable transit network

OBJECTIVES

- Mitigate the rising cost of living by providing safe, affordable alternatives to car ownership
- Improve accessibility for transit-dependent riders and people who prefer transit over cars
- Reduce energy usage and pollution while minimizing impacts to the natural environment



CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

Increase efficiency, attractiveness and utilization of HCT service within the Orange Line Project corridor

OBJECTIVES

- Provide a travel experience that is competitive with the automobile
- Provide safe and comfortable transit service, amenities and facilities
- Coordinate with existing and planned transit services
- Enhance modal choices to encourage walking and biking to transit stations

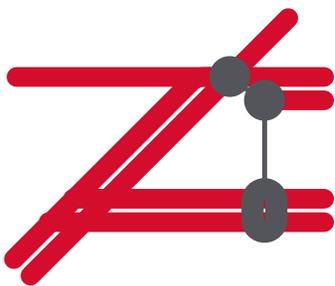


LAND USE AND POLICY

Support "compact and connected" land use and development patterns

OBJECTIVES

- Expand transit access to local and regional destinations, activity centers and employment centers
- Support compact revitalization and mixed-use development opportunities within the Orange Line corridor



IMPLEMENTATION AND OPERATIONS

Develop and select a community-supported Orange Line Project investment for implementation

OBJECTIVES

- Develop and select an Orange Line HCT transit investment with strong public, stakeholder and agency support
- Develop and select an Orange Line HCT transit investment that balances cost and benefits
- Develop and select an Orange Line HCT transit investment that is "future-proofed" to facilitate the incorporation of emerging technologies and designed for interoperability with future HCT corridors

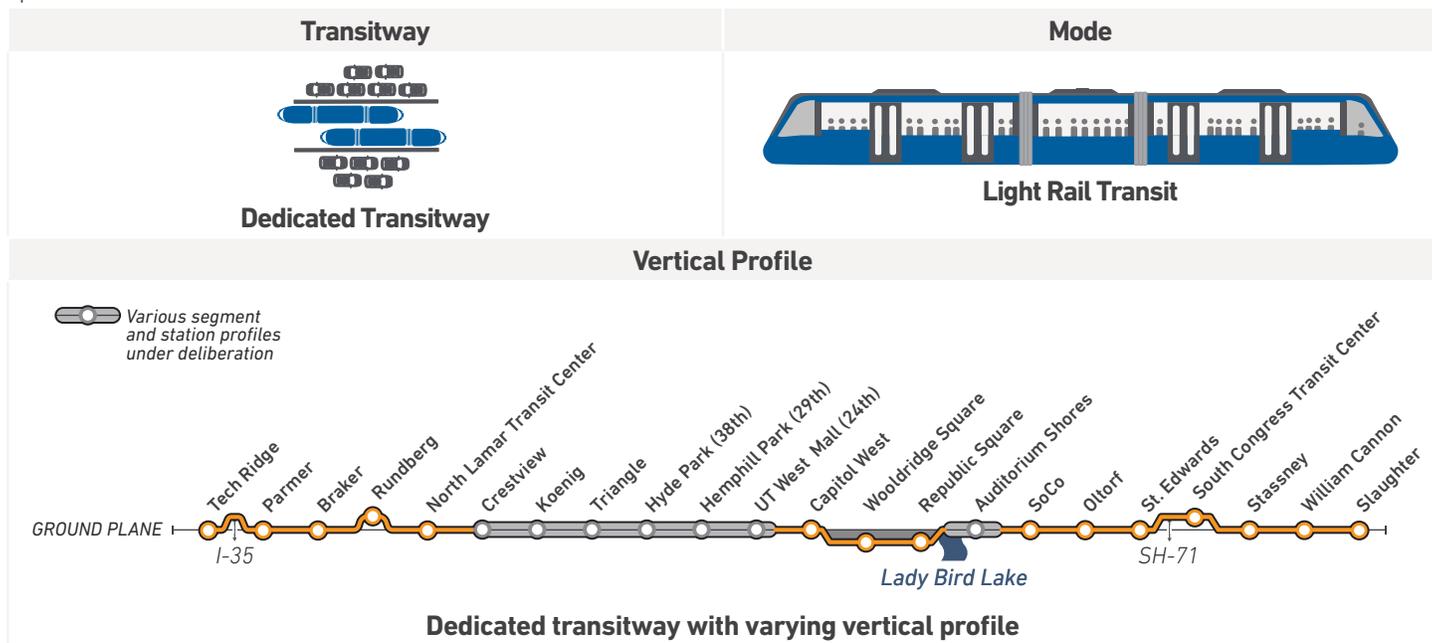
ALTERNATIVES TO BE CONSIDERED

The EIS will evaluate a Light Rail Transit (Build) Alternative and a No Action Alternative. A description of each alternative is provided below:

LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT (BUILD) ALTERNATIVE

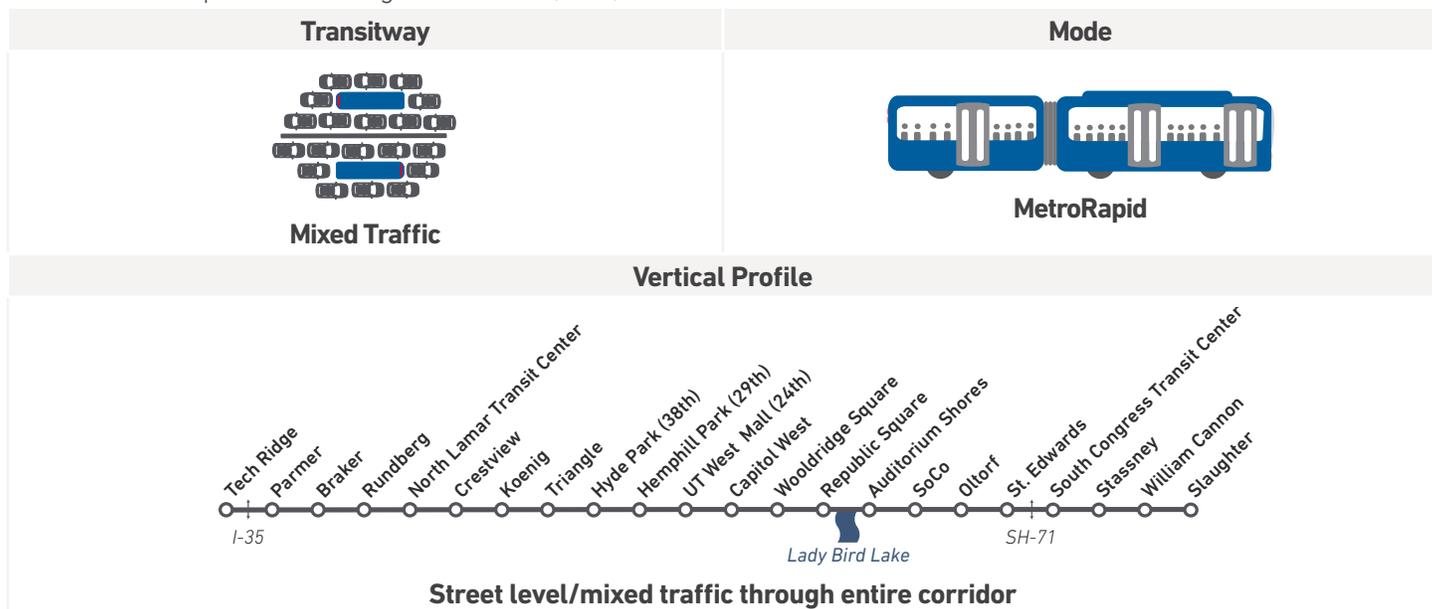
The Build Alternative is light rail operating in a 20-mile dedicated transitway from Tech Ridge on Parmer Lane at the northern end of the corridor to just north of Slaughter Lane on South Congress Avenue at the southern end of the corridor. The transitway is proposed to operate at street level (center-running) throughout most of the corridor. Select locations between MLK Jr. Blvd and Crestview Station may use an elevated transitway, if necessary. Through Downtown, a tunnel will be implemented for two reasons: 1) to avoid conflicts at the surface and 2) to allow for longer trainsets to accommodate future growth.

The Orange Line will serve 22 stations. Service is currently planned to operate every 10 to 15 minutes, seven days a week. The Orange Line will feature off-board fare collection, larger stations with level boarding, ADA accessibility and intersection signal prioritization.



NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE

The No Action Alternative consists of Capital Metro's system overhaul changes referred to as Cap Remap. The No Action Alternative also includes the committed projects within the Project study area that are documented in the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization's (CAMPO) 2045 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). The No Action Alternative serves as the baseline for comparison to the Light Rail Transit (Build) Alternative.



ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES TO BE STUDIED

The EIS will evaluate potential effects to the human and natural environments under the No Action Alternative and Light Rail Transit Alternative. The environmental resources to be analyzed in the EIS include:



PHYSICAL & NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

- Air Quality
- Soils and Geology
- Water Quality
- Threatened and Endangered Species
- Energy
- Hazardous Materials
- Noise and Vibration
- Temporary Construction Impacts



HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

- Environmental Justice (EJ)
- Safety and Security
- Land Use and Zoning
- Socioeconomics and Economic Development
- Transportation
- Utilities
- Land Acquisitions and Displacements



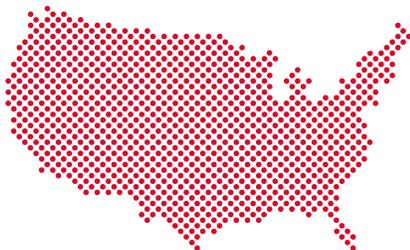
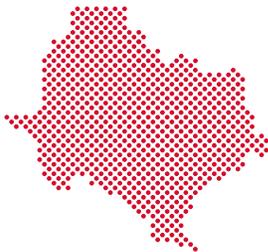
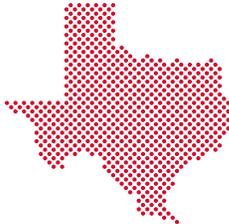
CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT

- Cultural, Historic and Archeological
- Parks and Recreational
- Section 4(f) Evaluation
- Visual and Aesthetic
- Neighborhood and Community Resources

AGENCY AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The FTA emphasizes early coordination with agencies to ensure that the environmental review process satisfies NEPA and other regulatory requirements. Early and continuous involvement with agencies will be critical to advancing the project into the next implementation phase. Therefore, FTA and Capital Metro have invited the local, regional, state and federal agencies listed in the following sections to participate in the environmental review process.

The purpose of the scoping process is to inform government agencies, affected stakeholders and the general public about the Project and solicit their input and feedback. Public Scoping Meetings are an opportunity for the public to learn more about the Project and to submit their comments. After scoping, Capital Metro will continue to provide opportunities for public involvement, including holding public meetings and hearings on the DEIS during its public comment period.



LOCAL

- Austin Independent School District (AISD)
- City of Austin (COA) Project Connect Office
 - Austin Transportation Department (ATD)
 - COA Corridor Program Office (CPO)
 - COA Economic Development Department (EDD)
 - COA Housing and Planning Department (HPD)
 - COA Parks & Recreation Department (PARD)
- Downtown Austin Alliance (DAA)
- Housing Authority of the City of Austin (HACA)
- Travis County

REGIONAL

- Capital Area Council of Governments (CAPCOG)
- Capital Area Rural Transportation System (CARTS)
- Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO)
- Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority (CTRMA)
- Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA)

STATE

- Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ)
- Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT)
- Texas Historical Commission (THC)
- Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD)
- University of Texas (UT)

TRIBES

- Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas
- Apache Tribe of Oklahoma
- Comanche Nation, Oklahoma
- Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana
- Tonkawa Tribe of Indians of Oklahoma
- Wichita and Affiliated Tribes (Wichita, Keechi, Waco & Tawakonie), Oklahoma

FEDERAL

- Bureau of Indian Affairs
- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)
- Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)
- U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA - NRCS)
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)
- U.S. Department of Interior - National Park Service (USDI - NPS)
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)

SCOPING MEETINGS

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Capital Metro has worked to safely provide engagement opportunities to the public and collect public feedback on the Orange Line Project. In order to reach a broad range of people, make information easier to access and encourage input, Capital Metro will conduct live virtual Scoping meetings. The scoping materials are available in English and Spanish online at ProjectConnect.com/Get-Involved, with accompanying survey questions and comment form.

PUBLIC SCOPING MEETINGS

Virtual Public Scoping Meetings

Monday Jan. 25, 2021 6:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m. in English

Tuesday Jan. 26, 2021 6:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m. en Español

Wednesday Jan. 27, 2021 10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. in English

Friday Jan. 29, 2021 Noon - 1:00 p.m. in English

To register for a meeting, go to ProjectConnect.com/Get-Involved or call (512) 904-0180.

Presentation content will be the same at each meeting, with a question-and-answer session to follow. Requests for language translations or accommodations must be made to Capital Metro at least three working days (72 hours) prior to the virtual scheduled meeting date by calling (512) 904-0180.



HOW CAN COMMENTS BE SUBMITTED?

In addition to submitting comments at a Virtual Public Scoping Meeting, other ways to submit comments include:

Project Website: ProjectConnect.com/Get-Involved

E-mail: OrangeLine@capmetro.org

Project Hotline: (512) 369-7703

Mail: Orange Line Project Team
Capital Metro
607 Congress Avenue
Austin, TX 78701



The scoping review and comment period is from Jan. 25, 2021 through March 5, 2021.

NEXT STEPS

Scoping comments will be documented and considered in refining the Orange Line Project's Purpose and Need, alternatives considered, potential environmental effects to be studied and agency coordination and public involvement process for the Project. The DEIS will be prepared following the scoping process, with a 30-day public circulation period targeted for spring of 2022. Following the comment period on the DEIS, a combined final EIS/ROD will be prepared by the FTA and Capital Metro to complete the environmental review process. The environmental review process will be followed by more detailed design, engineering, vehicle acquisition and construction.



QUESTIONS?



The Project Connect Community Office is located at 607 Congress Ave.

Office hours have been disrupted because of COVID-19 restrictions. Please check website for updates.



Visit ProjectConnect.com

We value your input. Sign up to receive updates or learn about upcoming meetings.



Follow us on Twitter [@CapMetroATX](https://twitter.com/CapMetroATX) and [@ATP_org](https://twitter.com/ATP_org)



Join us on Facebook.com/CapitalMetro and Facebook.com/AustinTransitPartnership