



MEMORANDUM

TO: Austin Transit Partnership Board Chair and Board Members

FROM: Awais Azhar, Chair, Project Connect Community Advisory Committee

CC: Greg Canally, Interim Executive Director, Austin Transit Partnership
Casey Burack, Executive Vice President, Business and Legal Affairs, Austin Transit Partnership
Rebecca Giello, Chief of Staff, Austin Transit Partnership

DATE: February 20, 2023

SUBJECT: Austin Transit Partnership Executive Director Selection Recommendations

After careful deliberation and considering the importance of the role of the Executive Director of the Austin Transit Partnership (ATP) in delivering a successful Project Connect that will serve the needs of Austin's riders, and in light of the further need to prioritize the challenging light rail implementation decisions that lie ahead, the Community Advisory Committee (CAC) acknowledges the right of the ATP Board to proceed with the decision to appoint Mr. Canally as Executive Director. We affirm that Mr. Canally is a strong candidate, has proven clear leadership in his role as Interim Executive Director for the organization, and we appreciate his commitment to working closely with the CAC.

We understand that the ATP Board has faced a challenging choice and has brought this decision to the public with the intention of finding the outcome that will best support the health and success of the project. We appreciate the efforts of the Board Chair and the Board in engaging with the CAC and the community to get their feedback on this decision in the past several weeks.

However, the unfolding sequence of events of the past month among all parties tasked with guiding Project Connect have led to serious concerns in the community about governance, transparency, and decision-making processes. As an independent entity, it is vital that Austin Transit Partnership work to affirmatively build trust with the community.

To this end, we ask that Board carefully consider the following recommendations moving forward:

- ATP Board members should discuss and establish a clear protocol for making public announcements about Project Connect. It is critical that all communication with the public is clear and transparent so that there is no confusion among community members regarding key decisions, including distinguishing between personal board member opinions and official communication.

- In the past, the ATP Board has made key commitments to the public about equity, transparency, and community engagement. It is vital that in communications with the community and with the CAC, all board members communicate and engage with the community in a manner that upholds these commitments.
- It is crucial that, in all future processes that may impact service and equity outcomes, the Board and staff commit to fully abiding by the Community Engagement Guiding Principles outlined in article 3.2.3 of the Joint Powers Agreement, wherever appropriate. This includes the following commitments:
 - *“Opportunities shall allow time for community members to review materials, provide informed and meaningful feedback, and understand how feedback is incorporated before a decision is made.”*
 - *“The Project Connect Community Advisory Committee shall be comprehensively consulted and involved in the process...”*
 - *“All public engagement opportunities shall be highlighted on a publicly available and accessible calendar and shared through various communication methods with clear information on how community members can obtain further information.”*
 - *“Prior to any public meeting, outreach, or engagement opportunity, the responsible party shall provide advance notice for meaningful participation to individuals, businesses, and organizations that will be impacted by the project.”*

While the CAC was not involved in the decision-making regarding the appointment of the President and CEO of the Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority (CapMetro), we hope that in the future all three parties in charge of the implementation of Project Connect will provide the CAC with an opportunity to give feedback on key decisions.

CAC Recommended Commitments and Characteristics for Executive Director, President, and CEO

The CAC has also taken time to consider some key characteristics and commitments we believe the Executive Director of the ATP and the President and CEO of CapMetro, both tasked with a project of such monumental importance, should uphold.

- **Commitment to Equity throughout Project Connect, including within the organization’s internal managerial culture and hiring practices.** This includes a commitment to striving to hire and maintain pay equity for a diverse workforce, with professionals from Black, Brown, Indigenous, and Immigrant communities, as well as people with disabilities, and people of all genders and sexual orientations, and people who have active lived expertise as transit users.
- **Commitment to serving the needs of Austin’s core transit users.** This includes taking time to use public transit, and striving to listen to, and understand the challenges faced by Austin's transit users, and making the attention to those needs a priority for the organization at every stage in design, construction, and operation of the project.
- **Commitment to labor justice and workplace safety.** This includes striving to ensure that contractors working on the project are upholding labor standards and maintaining safe job sites, including providing third-party monitoring opportunities.
- **Commitment to Accountability.** This includes meeting goals, making realistic promises, delivering on deadlines in a timely manner, engaging with the community, and taking responsibility for the organization’s work.

- **Commitment to actively consulting and working with the Community Advisory Committee.**
This includes feedback on planning, implementation, construction, operation, governance, community engagement, and all other equity related matters.

Next Steps Associated with Project Governance

Furthermore, the CAC recommends that the following tasks associated with project governance and implementation be considered in the coming months, particularly at the staff level. The ATP Board and leadership of the other parties should consider taking any necessary actions after the critical decision-making process associated with updating the light rail implementation plan this spring and summer is completed.

- Coordinate with the City of Austin and CapMetro to review, revise, and expand, as necessary, the work done on the Joint Powers Agreement to further delineate roles and responsibilities for each party in a manner that leads to a successful Project Connect and further details ATP as the principal entity responsible for implementing the project in an independent manner.
- Coordinate with the Austin City Council and CapMetro Board to identify concerns related to board structure and appointments and move forward with joint action by the three governing bodies to advance comprehensive governance changes. This includes working with the CAC to equitably advance any conversation on potential board expansion and appointment of new board members.

If you should have any questions, I can be reached at bc-awais.azhar@austintexas.gov.

Date of Approval: February 20, 2023

Record of the vote: Approved on a 8-0-0 vote (Committee Members Almanza, Broadwater, Gorse, Snitchler, and Taylor absent)

Attest:  , Project Connect Community Advisory Committee Chair



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We understand that the ATP Board has faced a challenging choice and has brought this decision to the public with the intention of finding the outcome that will best support the health and success of the project. We appreciate the efforts of the Board Chair and the Board in engaging with the CAC and the community to get their feedback on this decision in the past several weeks.

However, the unfolding sequence of events of the past month among all parties tasked with guiding Project Connect have led to serious concerns in the community about governance, transparency, and decision-making processes. As an independent entity, it is vital that Austin Transit Partnership work to affirmatively build trust with the community.

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Date of Approval: February 20, 2023

Record of the vote: Approved on a X-X-X vote (Committee X and X absent; one vacancy)

Attest: , Project Connect Community Advisory Committee Chair