



Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority 2910 East Fifth Street Austin, Texas 78702

## **Central Austin Circulator Study Recommendation of a Proposed Streetcar Alignment**

### **Proposed Streetcar Alignment**

The recommended streetcar alignment reflects the results of the past year of analysis, stakeholder involvement, and community input. It is not final and community input is welcome.

A map of the proposed streetcar alignment is provided in Figure 1. The streetcar route is a feasible alignment that will be compared against a similar bus circulator alignment in the next phase of the planning process. The following discussion outlines the reasoning for each segment of the proposed streetcar alignment.

### **West End to Urban Commuter Rail Station**

In Downtown Austin, the proposed alignment starts on the west side at the intersection of Bowie and 5<sup>th</sup> Streets. The proposed route extends south to 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, turning east and running approximately 2 blocks adjacent to the Seaholm power plant. At Seaholm, an intermodal transit station would be provided to connect with future regional passenger rail in the Austin-San Antonio Corridor.

From the intermodal station, the proposed alignment runs northeast to 4<sup>th</sup> Street, bridging over Shoal Creek, and then continues on 4<sup>th</sup> Street to Brazos Street, extending beyond Congress Avenue to intersect with the urban commuter rail line. The 4<sup>th</sup> Street alignment is preferred to an alternate alignment on 3<sup>rd</sup> Street because of the potential impact to the chilled water lines owned by Austin Energy, which would have to be relocated if a 3<sup>rd</sup> Street alignment were selected. The 4<sup>th</sup> Street alignment also provides the opportunity for a future interlined service connection between the Capital Metro urban commuter rail line and the ASA regional commuter rail line.

### **Urban Commuter Rail Station to Capitol Complex**

The proposed alignment runs north on Congress to 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Streets, which are used as a one way couplet to reach San Jacinto. Congress Avenue is strongly supported by the Downtown Austin Alliance in preference to Brazos Street. Congress Avenue is the historic streetcar location in downtown and serves the heart of the major downtown office and retail core. A streetcar would reinforce the already strong alignment of these land uses to Congress Avenue. Connecting to San Jacinto on 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Streets is preferred to using 11<sup>th</sup> Street because of the higher level of traffic on 11<sup>th</sup> Street, which serves as the major through-street for east to west traffic.

### **Capitol Complex through U.T.**

The alignment on San Jacinto serves the Capital Complex area, and continues north through the University of Texas. This alignment was selected with the involvement of U.T. staff and faculty. However, until the Board of Regents acts, there is not a final decision on the alignment through

the campus. The University sees San Jacinto rather than Speedway as the future central spine of the University. Speedway has been closed to vehicular traffic and is being configured as part of the Blanton Museum plaza along MLK. An alignment using Guadalupe Street farther west, would add considerable length to the route (increasing cost and passenger travel times). Using Guadalupe would serve the periphery of the campus. The San Jacinto route provides direct access to the emerging heart of the University as well as good connections to other University transit services.

### **U.T. to Mueller**

At the intersection of San Jacinto and Dean Keeton, the proposed alignment turns east and continues along the Manor Road corridor to the entrance to Mueller at Berkman. This routing is recommended over the use of MLK because of the less steep grades on Manor and because of the generally lower traffic volumes on Manor. Likewise, the route along Dean Keeton is preferred to an alignment that might use Red River to reach Manor Road because it is shorter and can make use of the existing underpass beneath I-35. The Red River alternative would require replacement of the Manor Road Bridge over IH-35.

At the intersection of the urban commuter rail line and Manor Road, a transfer station is envisioned. This additional station would work better than routing the circulator south to the MLK Station, which will be located south of MLK. The proposed circulator alignment would then continue east along Manor Road to Berkman Street where it would enter the Mueller Redevelopment project.

### **Mueller to 51<sup>st</sup>**

Within the Mueller Redevelopment project, the proposed alignment runs northward along Berkman Drive, turning west on Philomena Street and then north on Mueller Boulevard. This alignment connects the heart of the two proposed town centers within the Mueller Redevelopment project. It is preferred to an alternative routing on Airport Boulevard because it serves both of the town centers, while the airport alignment would miss the southern town center. The Berkman - Philomena alignment is also recommended over an alignment continuing north on Berkman to 51<sup>st</sup> Street and then along the northern perimeter of Mueller.

The streetcar alignment would terminate at 51<sup>st</sup> Street on Mueller Boulevard. In the course of this study, it became clear that the 51<sup>st</sup> Street corridor needs a more comprehensive planning effort than could be included in this study at this time before a clear recommendation could be made. In addition, a further extension of the streetcar to 51<sup>st</sup> and Airport Boulevard would require the construction of a new bridge over IH-35 at 51<sup>st</sup> Street. Before recommending that construction, it is important to be sure of the role of 51<sup>st</sup> Street. Access between Mueller and the commuter rail line can be achieved at the proposed Manor Road station where the streetcar and urban commuter rail would cross. The streetcar route could be extended in a future phase if desired.

### **Next Steps**

The following information is being generated for this alignment: estimated construction costs, estimated ridership demand, estimated operating costs, estimated development impact, and potential funding resources.

**Figure 1: PROPOSED STREETCAR ALIGNMENT**

