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Subject

Going Bigger - Adding the option of a \$400 million Light Rail line in the November bond election

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Going bigger - adding the option of a \$400 million light rail line in the November bond election - could give Austin one of the highest ridership per mile light rail lines in the nation. In a study released today, *Average Weekday Ridership for the Guadalupe-Lamar Light Rail Minimum Operable Segment*, the average weekday ridership was estimated at 34,000 for a 5.3-mile Guadalupe-North Lamar light rail project. It confirms that the 5.3-mile Guadalupe-North Lamar starter line would deliver very high ridership on day one.

Austin voters are ready to support a bond that brings high quality transit. The Austin City Council launched the *Mobility Talks* initiative in February to help inform their development of the November transportation ballot measures. That process found that 73% of the Austinites drive alone, but only 15% desire to drive more. Most significantly, 74% would like to use things other than cars to get around, such as more public transportation (42%), bikes (23%) or just walking (9%). Given this response, a transit investment is what Austin voters expect to see on the November 2016 ballot, and it is a choice that the people deserve to be able to make in the voting booth. The deadline for City Council to determine which projects go on the November 2016 ballot is set by state law and falls on August 22, 2016.

Last month, the Central Austin CDC introduced a light rail starter line for funding consideration on the 2016 ballot. It is a 5.3-mile Guadalupe-North Lamar minimum operable segment (MOS) and a first phase of a larger system plan. Its estimated cost is \$397.5 million and it would directly serve council districts 4, 7, and 9 and serve districts 1 and 6 with a Red Line transfer at Crestview Station.

Key Findings: 2016 Central Austin CDC Guadalupe-N Lamar Minimum Operable Segment

- Route: Guadalupe at 4th Street, North on Guadalupe/Lavaca to North Lamar to Airport Blvd.
- Length: 5.3 miles
- 10 Stations

- Northern Terminus: Crestview Station at North Lamar and Airport Blvd
- Southern Terminus: Republic Square at Guadalupe and 4th Streets
- 2010 Population: 44,631
- Jobs, 2011, ½ mile: 184,227
- Average Weekday Ridership: 34,000 +/- 9,000

The ridership per mile of rail would be 6,415 +/- 1,698 (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_United_States_light_rail_systems_by_ridership) The low end of the ridership estimate range would mean that Austin would have the second most successful light rail system in the nation, in terms of ridership per mile. Reaching the high end would mean **Austin would have the most successful light rail system in the United States.** Let's put Austin at the top of *that* list. We can build this for our city!

This ridership estimate is conservative because it does not take into account transfers from buses and trains inside the city's busiest transit corridor. The model draws on static population, jobs, and parking data and does not incorporate linked trip demand into its ridership model. Riders resulting from those dynamic trip demands would only add to the 34,000 weekday estimate, and should be determined by future research.

Cities across the US rely on rail mass transit to effectively carry large numbers of people through their densest corridors quickly, cleanly, cost effectively, and without their cars. Austin is decades behind its peer cities due to a combination of factors including poor planning, political stagnation, and a failure of leadership. Today's study confirms what has been known about the Guadalupe-North Lamar corridor for decades: Light rail would cost-effectively serve a corridor with the highest transit ridership, the highest population density, and the highest employment density of any other corridor in the city.

About the Study

Average Weekday Ridership for the Guadalupe-Lamar Light Rail Minimum Operable Segment is published by the Central Austin Community Development Corporation and authored by Andrew Mayer, a local transit advocate and planner with specific training and expertise in community and regional planning and geographical information systems (GIS). The analysis used a spreadsheet-based model developed by the Transportation Research Board's Transit Cooperative Research Program with support from the Federal Transit Administration. Mr. Mayer included in his report links to his source data and a detailed methodology.

Who We Are

The Central Austin CDC has been privileged to serve as a community organizer at a most unique time in our city's history. Over the last four years, we have engaged the public to work on an issue of utmost importance: planning for Austin's first phase investment of light rail. This work has empowered a diverse coalition of communities, non-profit groups, transit professionals, and light rail advocates. A consensus vision has emerged from this grassroots process for a north-south, expandable backbone of light rail service in the Guadalupe-North Lamar Corridor.

Resources

- Central Austin CDC/A. Mayer *Average Weekday Ridership for the Guadalupe-Lamar Light Rail Minimum Operable Segment* Light_Rail_Ridership-A_Mayer_rev04b.pdf

- City of Austin *Mobility Talks Public Engagement Report* <https://goo.gl/eizXLc>
- Wikipedia *List of US Light Rail Systems by Ridership*
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_United_States_light_rail_systems_by_ridership
- System Map with MOS Proposal 1605-CACDC_alignment_rev02.jpg
- Press Release: Light Rail Project Defined for November Ballot
160602_Light_Rail_Project_for_Nov_Ballot.pdf
- Press Release: Light Rail Progress Since the November 2014 Election
160607_Light_Rail_Progress_Since_the_November_2014_Election.pdf
- Press Release: Statement Supporting Light Rail on November Ballot
160614_Statement_Supporting_Light_Rail_on_November_Ballot.pdf
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