



For Immediate Release: August 2, 2016

Subject

New Polling Shows Light Rail on Guadalupe-N Lamar Would Win on the November Ballot

Contact

Andrew Clements, Treasurer Our Rail PAC, 512-783-6027 andrewwclements@gmail.com

Mario Champion, Urban Transportation Commissioner, 512-576-0824
mario@mariochampion.com

Jay Blazek Crossley, Transit, Equity, Safety Advocate and Policy Analyst, 713-244-4746,
jcrossley@gmail.com

Dave Dobbs, Texas Association for Public Transportation, 512-282-1149

Jonathon Gins, Urban Transportation Commissioner, 512-289-7460 gins.jd@gmail.com

Steven Knapp, Central Austin CDC Director, 318-278-2598 steboknapp@gmail.com

Andrew Mayer, Transit Advocate and Planner, 512-983-3456 andrew.mayer92@gmail.com

Scott Morris, Central Austin CDC Director, 512-371-7961 smorris@centralaustincdc.org

Gabriel Rojas, Zoning and Platting Commissioner, 512-468-4455 grcity@gmail.com

Kaiba White, Joint Sustainability Committee, 607-339-9854 kwhite@citizen.org

Mike Wong, Resource Management Commissioner, 512-944-6370 mikew@tgce.com

In 2014, the last City Council found both the political will and the bonding capacity to bring forward a \$1 billion transportation bond proposal. Two years later, this Council should be able to offer the voters both a corridor proposition and a light rail proposition totaling \$1.1 billion. If we are really serious about our mobility challenges, it's not time to "Go Big." It's time to "Go Bigger."

A few minutes ago, we hand delivered to Mayor Adler and City Council members a copy of a poll conducted by the Our Rail political action committee, "Austin Light Rail Survey of Likely Voters for the November 2016 Election."

The poll shows that if the election were to happen today, a 5.3-mile, \$400 million light rail starter line in the Guadalupe-North Lamar corridor would pass with a substantial margin. With a 4.4% margin of error, the results were 56.34% Yes, 26.56% No, and 17.1% undecided. The poll results show a 29-point lead. Redacted survey responses have been posted to facilitate further independent analysis of the results.

This is a confirmation of the Zandan Voices of the Austin Community polling released in 2015 that showed a 66% level of support for building a rail project and paying for it with taxes. But, today's polling looks deeper at the issue within the context of a specific route. It is a likely voter poll, which Zandan was not, and asks for a specific increase of property taxes. Voters will embrace light rail on the Guadalupe-North Lamar corridor, and accept the taxes to build it. If the election were held tomorrow, it would be a landslide.

This poll, combined with Zandan, tells us that the voters didn't have an issue with rail, their concern was the 2014 Project Connect route. Today, we know with certainty that rail does not need to be bundled with other modes to succeed. As the first route-specific measure since the

roads and rail ballot measure in 2014, this poll also should tell leadership: Don't bundle your propositions and don't assume that the right rail alignment rail is the weaker side of anything. Give the people the choice they want to support.

The poll shows the question leading in all City Council districts except District 8 in Southwest Austin. There is also a strong level of familiarity of the proposal's larger context. When asked about specific features present in our citywide light rail plan, for which the Guadalupe-North Lamar MOS serves as the starter line, 48% likely voters had heard of a citywide light rail system plan before the poll, 44% hadn't, and 8% were unfamiliar.

To date, we have delivered to the Mayor and City Council:

- A 5.3 mile light rail proposal for a Guadalupe-North Lamar minimum operable segment (MOS) that falls within the footprint of an alignment the FTA previously approved in 2000
- An order of magnitude study using an FTA model to determine a cost estimate of \$397.5 million for the Guadalupe-North Lamar MOS, based on average cost per mile of several light rail starter lines nationwide.
- A ridership study based on a Transportation Research Board model drawing from historical census and jobs data showing that the MOS would serve Austinites with 34,000 weekday boardings.
- Data-backed testimony showing light rail on Guadalupe-North Lamar MOS is a bond proposal that will ultimately pay for itself many times over and build enormous tax-base to pay for future city infrastructure and services. Houston and Phoenix have demonstrated an ROI of 1800% and 500%, respectively, around their light rail starter lines.
- Countless strong, and often unanimous, resolutions of support from community based organizations and city commissions like the Urban Transportation Commission and the Joint Sustainability Committee asking for a light rail measure to be put on the ballot, and a petition of 1,200 ordinary Austinites saying "I want to ride light rail on Guadalupe-N Lamar!"

Leaders in transit-progressive communities that have built robust rail systems do not waste the opportunity of a general election. If they have a failure at the polls, as Austin did in 2014, they identify what was wrong with the proposition and put it back before the voters as soon as possible. With a presidential election on the ballot that has garnered unprecedented interest, this November will see an unprecedented turnout. It will be the best opportunity, and perhaps the last, to pass a transit ballot measure in Austin in a generation.

There is no cost, no political risk, and no dishonor for City Council to do the right thing, to put this proposal on the ballot and let the people decide. The people deserve this choice and are ready to accept it. That is the leadership this city needs right now.

Among the members of our grassroots coalition are experienced political professionals with the track record to run a winning campaign.

We are standing by to serve.

What is Light Rail?

Light rail is a form of mass transit that runs on electricity with trains that can carry hundreds of passengers at once, on frequent schedules of departures and arrivals. Light rail combines

attributes of heavy rapid transit found in subway-type trains with the flexibility of street-running vehicles. In comparing how forms of surface-running transit react as demand increases, buses, express buses, and bus rapid transit require an increase in frequency and more vehicles and drivers to be added. By simply adding a car to the train, light rail vehicles have a uniquely scalable capacity. Light rail was the mode chosen in the FTA-approved study that led to a 2000 referendum to build an MOS in the City of Austin.

What is a Minimum Operable Segment MOS?

A minimum operable segment (MOS) is a designation that defines the shortest planned segment possible of a transportation system that would be built at the lowest cost possible, while maintaining service effectiveness. MOS is often used when describing a starter line of a larger system, whether a phase one of light rail or other fixed guideway mode.

About The Central Austin Community Development Corporation

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 five 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

Austin Light Rail Survey of Likely Voters for the November 2016 Election

Austin_Light_Rail_Poll_rev11.pdf

20 Questions A Journalist Should Ask About Poll Results by the National Council on Public Polls http://www.ncpp.org/files/20%20Questions%203rd%20edition_Web%20ver_2006.pdf

Citywide light rail system proposal map with Guadalupe-N Lamar MOS 1605-

CACDC_alignment_rev02.jpg

2015 Zandan Voices of the Community Poll pg 5

<https://austinsurvey.files.wordpress.com/2015/03/zandan-poll-2015-voices-of-the-austin-community-c2ad-results.pdf>

CACDC logo CACDC-logotype_full.png

CACDC logo CACDC-logotype_sm_72.png

###