



DOWNTOWN CIRCULATOR STUDY

Recommendations Report

February 2021

**DOWN
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ALLIANCE**

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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

STUDY OVERVIEW

The Downtown Austin Alliance initiated a Downtown Circulator Study in February 2020 to determine the most viable option for a transit circulator. Representatives from Capital Metro and Austin Transportation Department were invited to the project kickoff meeting to help establish goals and identify opportunities and challenges.

The initial goals of the study were to develop an implementation plan for a transit circulator to improve downtown mobility and enhance connectivity with adjacent districts. Over the course of the study, which was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, an additional goal emerged: support the economic recovery of downtown businesses and institutions.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

The Downtown Austin Alliance invited a diverse group of stakeholder representatives to participate in three rounds of virtual meetings at key milestones during the study. The first round of stakeholder meetings included a summary presentation of existing conditions and discussion of mobility challenges and opportunities. Subsequent stakeholder discussions focused on potential alignments and operating characteristics.

Participating stakeholders included Austin Community College, Austin Convention Center, Austin Parks and Recreation Department, Austin Transportation District, Austin Visitor Center, ARCH, Capital Metro, Office of Council Member Kathie Tovo, Office of Mayor Steve Adler, Movability, Rainey Neighborhood Association, Red River Cultural District, State Preservation Board, The Trail Foundation, Waterloo Greenway, Whole Foods, and several downtown property managers.

RECOMMENDED ROUTES

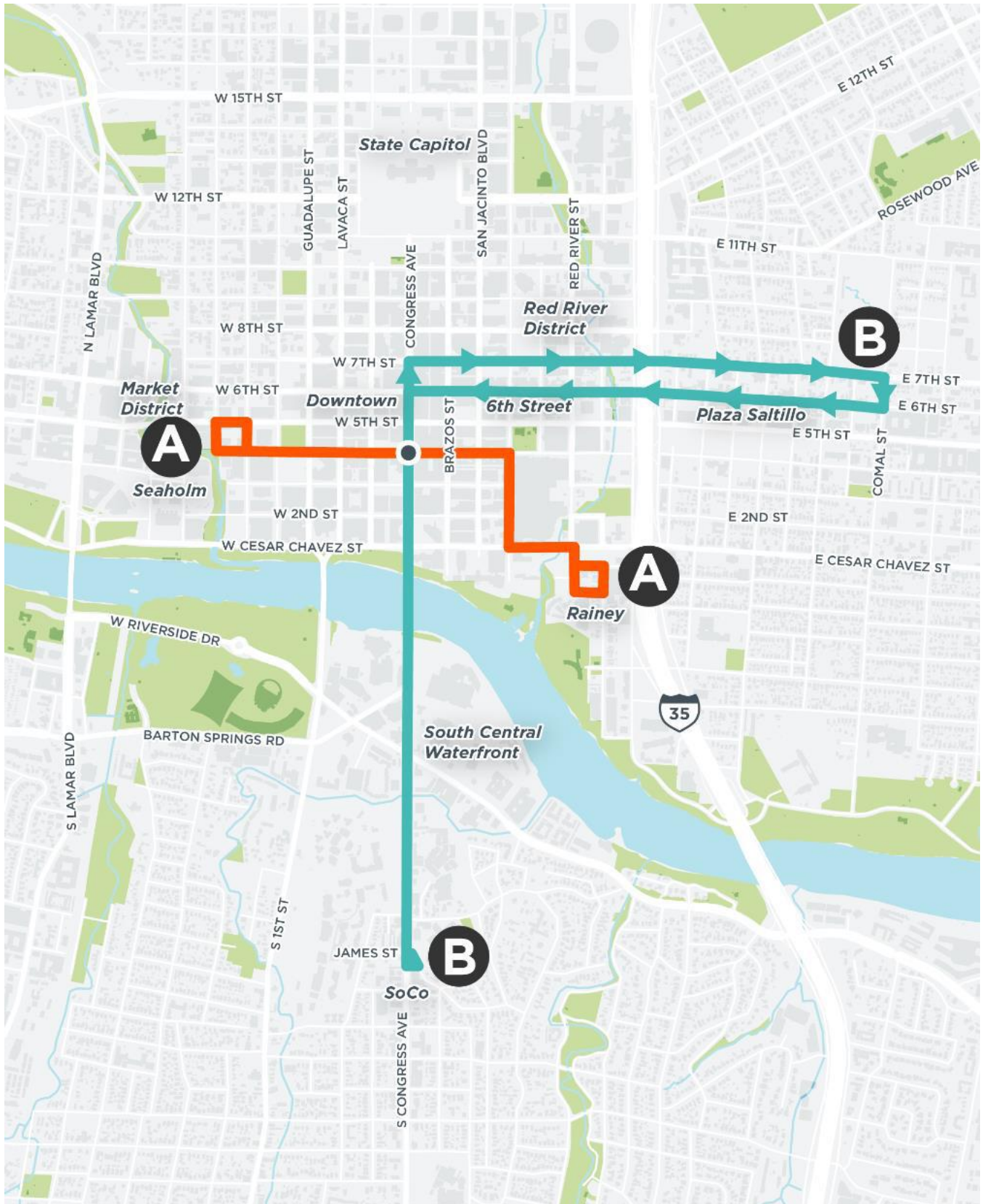
A frequent circulator system connecting multiple districts is a sustainable solution for improving mobility in Downtown Austin. The optimal configuration, based on recent travel patterns and stakeholder feedback, consists of two complementary bi-directional routes:

- **Route A** would operate entirely within downtown, connecting the Market and Rainey Street districts and traversing the Central Business District. The route would primarily operate along 4th Street, providing convenient access to thousands of employees. The route would directly serve convention attendees and hotel guests, as well as downtown residents living in the Market District and Rainey Street. The route would provide direct connections to Capital Metro bus routes at Republic Square and MetroRail at the Downtown Station.
- **Route B** would cross both Lady Bird Lake and I-35, connecting SoCo, South Central Waterfront, Central Business, 6th Street, Red River, and Plaza Saltillo districts. Route B would primarily operate along Congress Avenue, 6th, and 7th Streets. The route would cross a prominent pedestrian obstacle in I-35 while also spanning Lady Bird Lake. The route would serve a combination of established commercial and entertainment districts along with areas of recent and planned mixed-use redevelopment.

Annual operating costs assume that Downtown Austin Alliance contracts with Capital Metro or private transportation provider that owns, operates, and maintains the vehicles. Annual operating costs include vehicle leases, operation and supervision, fuel, maintenance, insurance, etc. Additional startup costs would be required to construct circulator stops with amenities such as signage, route and schedule information, shelter, and lighting.

| Route Option | Annual Operating Cost | Startup Capital Cost |
|--------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| Route A | \$2,080,000 | \$120,000 |
| Route B | \$3,200,000 | \$135,000 |
| Both Routes | \$5,260,000 | \$255,000 |

Recommended Routes



IMPLEMENTATION

The successful implementation and continued operation of a new downtown transit circulator requires a lead managing organization. For a pilot program, Downtown Austin Alliance may take on this role so that it has complete flexibility regarding the route, schedule, and policies. Long term, it is more beneficial for Capital Metro to manage the service.

The most critical element of a downtown circulator is funding. Potential public and private funding partners include City of Austin, Capital Metro, Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO), Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ), Austin Transportation Partnership, Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), developers, major employers, event management companies, non-profit organizations, private philanthropy, and neighborhood associations.

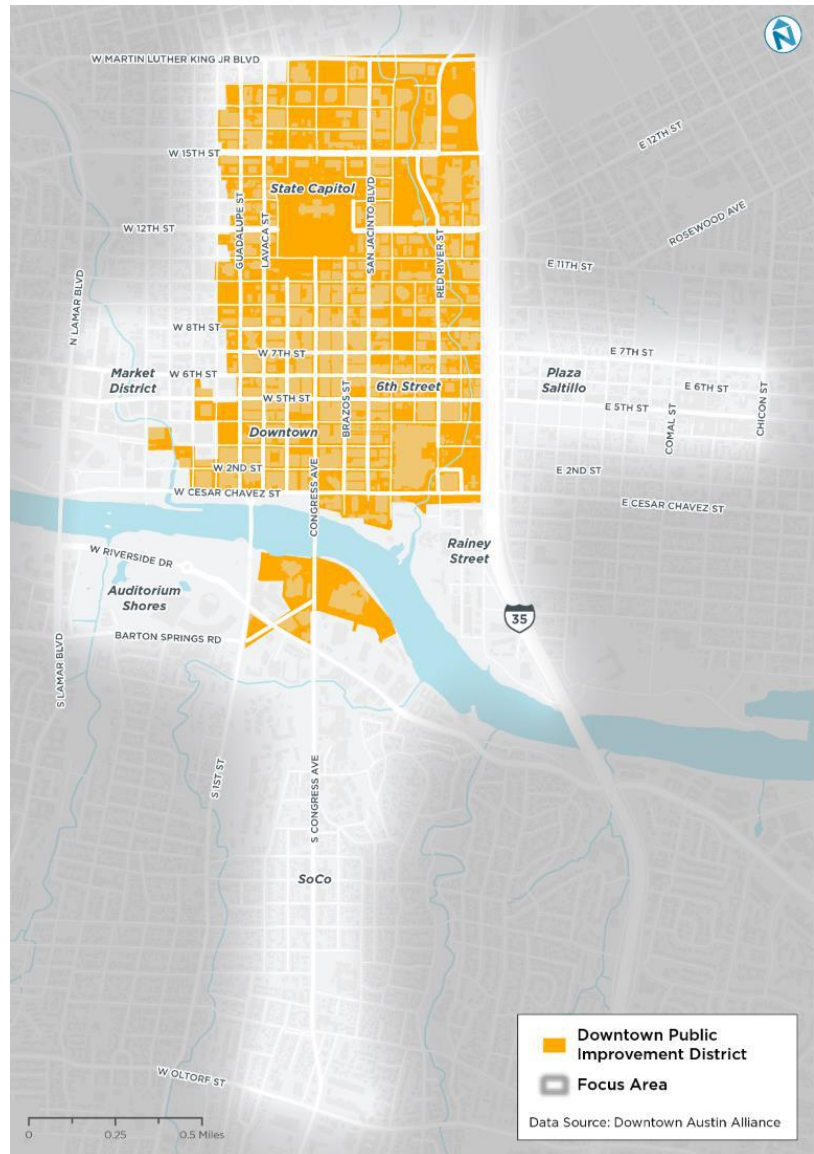
The implementation of a pilot circulator program should not begin until after the COVID-19 pandemic. Pre-implementation steps include finalizing the service plan, securing funding, entering into an agreement with a service provider, coordinating with City of Austin on traffic and parking changes, and initiating a marketing campaign.

2 STUDY PARAMETERS

STUDY AREA

An expansive study area was established to ensure a comprehensive mobility assessment. The study area extended beyond the boundaries of the Downtown Public Improvement District to also include the following adjacent districts:

- Plaza Saltillo
- Rainey Street
- South Congress (SoCo)
- Auditorium Shores
- Market District



STUDY TIMELINE

The first phase of the study focused on evaluating pre-pandemic market conditions. The first deliverable was an Existing and Future Conditions Report that summarized land use, transportation infrastructure, travel patterns, and planned development. The report also reviewed circulators in peer cities, as well as Capital Metro's former 'Dillo circulator system, to identify best practices and potential pitfalls. In addition to analyzing conditions prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, changes in auto travel patterns throughout 2020 were examined using mobile device location data.



3 EXISTING CONDITIONS

MARKET GROUPS

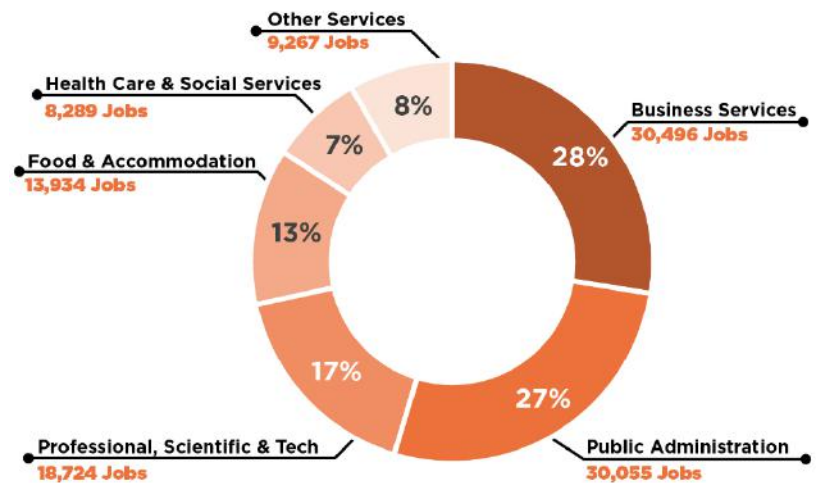
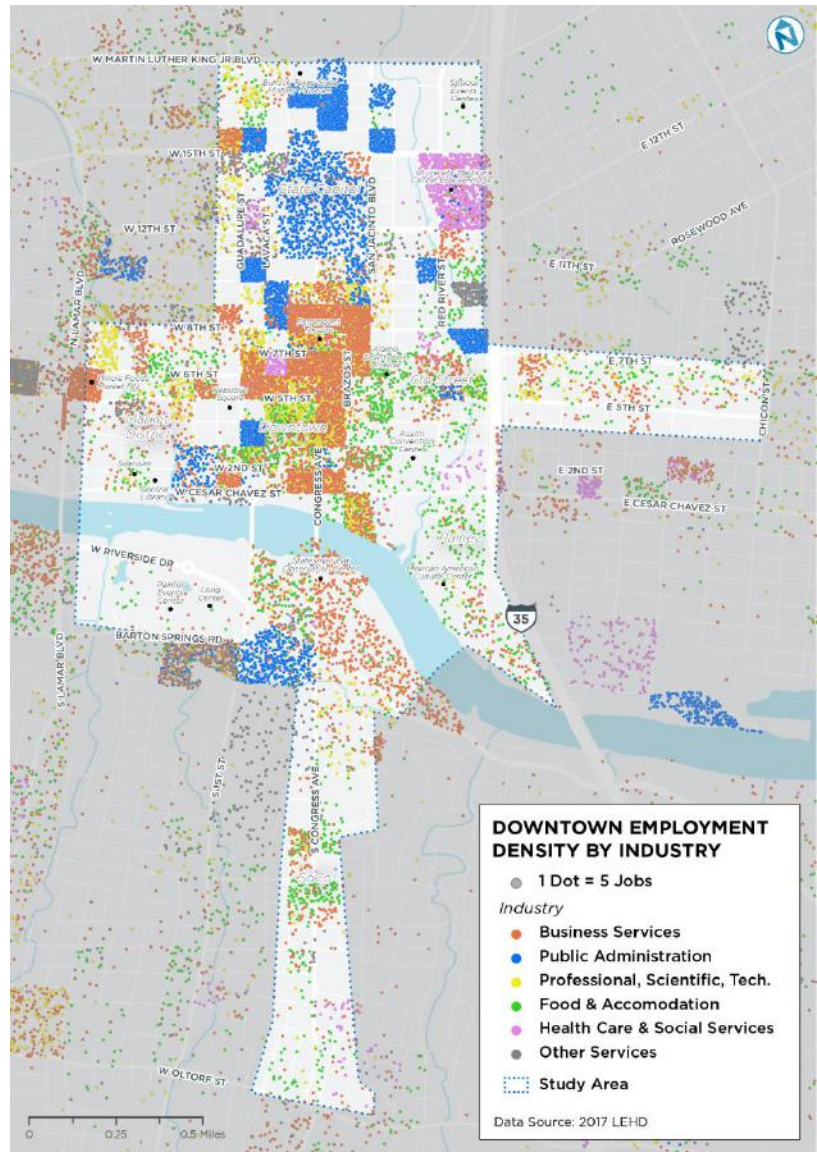
The study examined the characteristics of three market groups: employees, visitors, and residents.



Employees

Downtown Austin hosts a strong mix of employment sectors, led by business services, public administration, and tech (professional, scientific, and technical) industries.

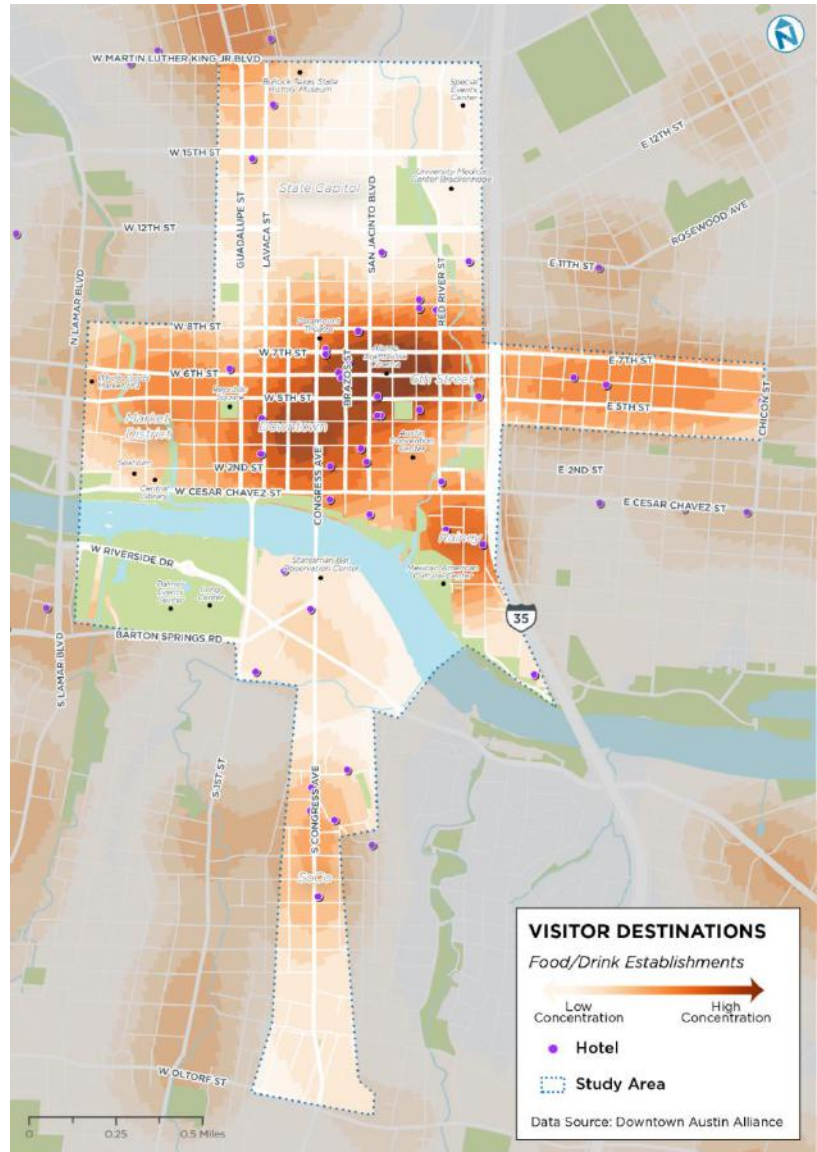
Employment in Downtown Austin increased by approximately 25% between 2010 and 2019. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Downtown Austin was approaching 100,000 employees. Employees most likely to use a circulator include those in the food and drink, accommodation, business, and tech sectors. Jobs in these sectors are primarily located between Cesar Chavez Street and 9th Street.



Visitors

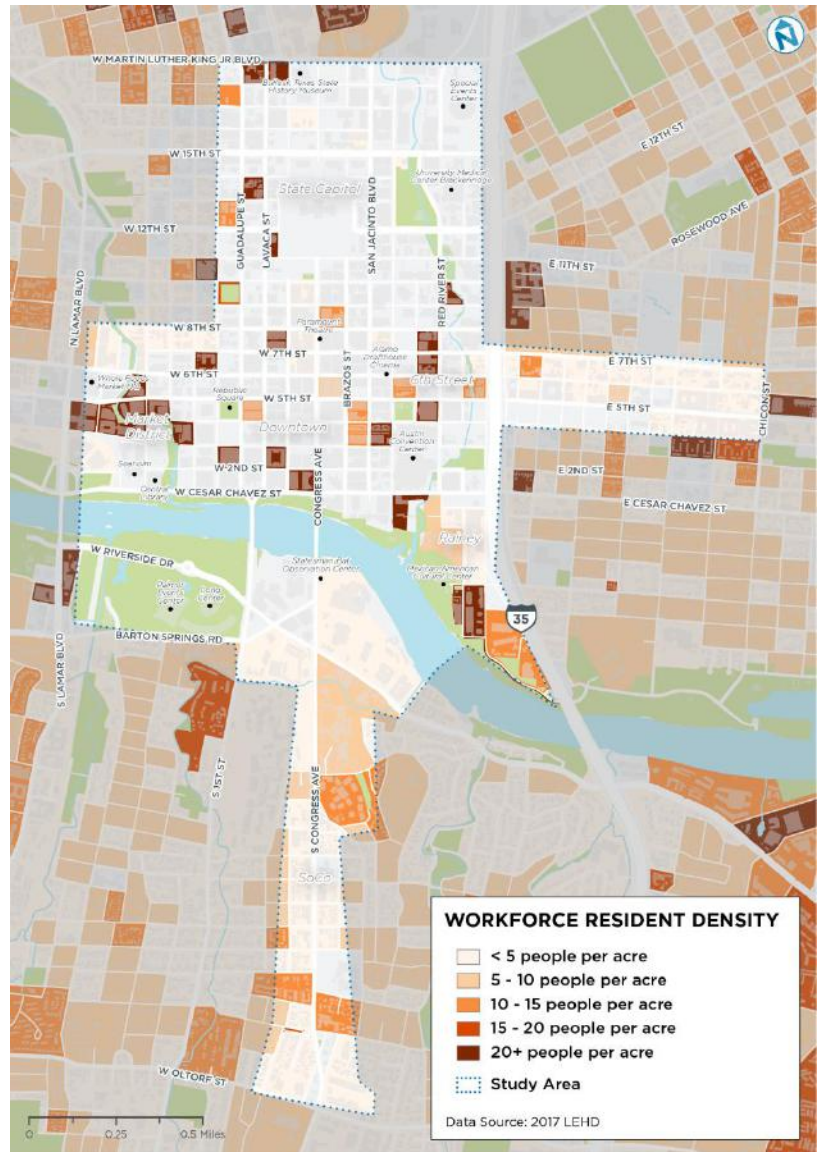
Downtown Austin attracts local, out of town, and out of state visitors. Events such as South by Southwest (SXSW) and Austin City Limits draw several hundred thousand visitors each year. The Convention Center is also a large draw for visitors throughout the year. As a result, Downtown Austin's bustling tourism and hospitality industry reached an all-time high in 2019. The largest concentration of hotels is within a few blocks of the Convention Center.

In addition to festivals, conferences, and other cultural events, Downtown Austin also offers an eclectic mix of vibrant entertainment districts, including Sixth Street, Red River, Warehouse, Rainey, East End, SoCo.



Residents

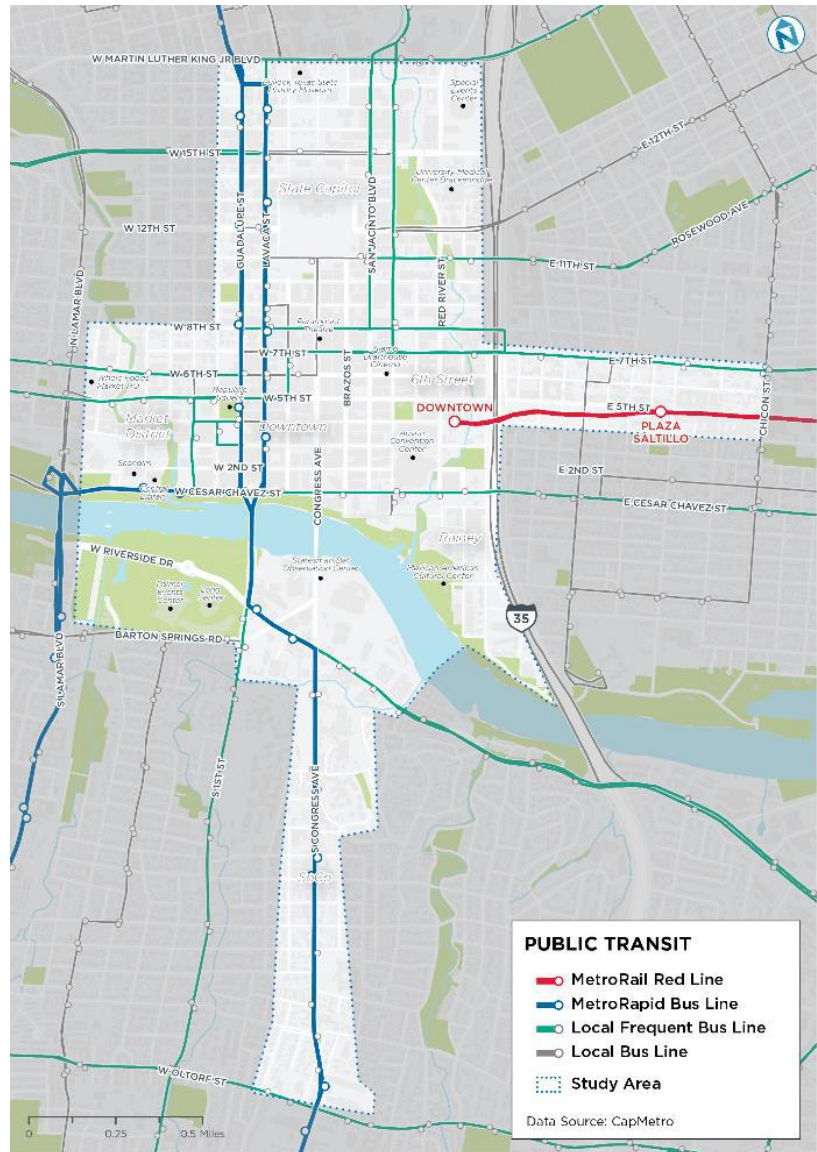
Downtown Austin's population more than doubled between 2010 and 2019 to approximately 15,500 residents. The most significant residential growth has occurred along Shoal Creek, Rainey Street, and east of downtown at the Plaza Saltillo mixed-use development.



TRANSPORTATION

Capital Metro

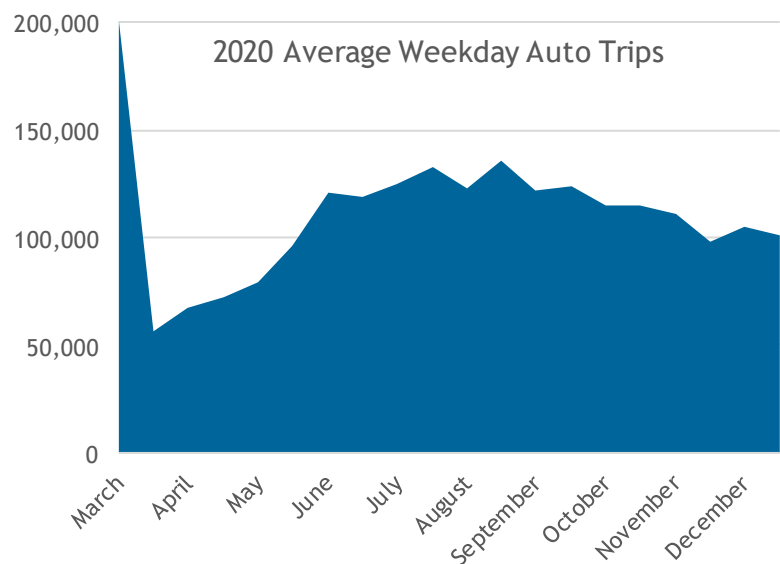
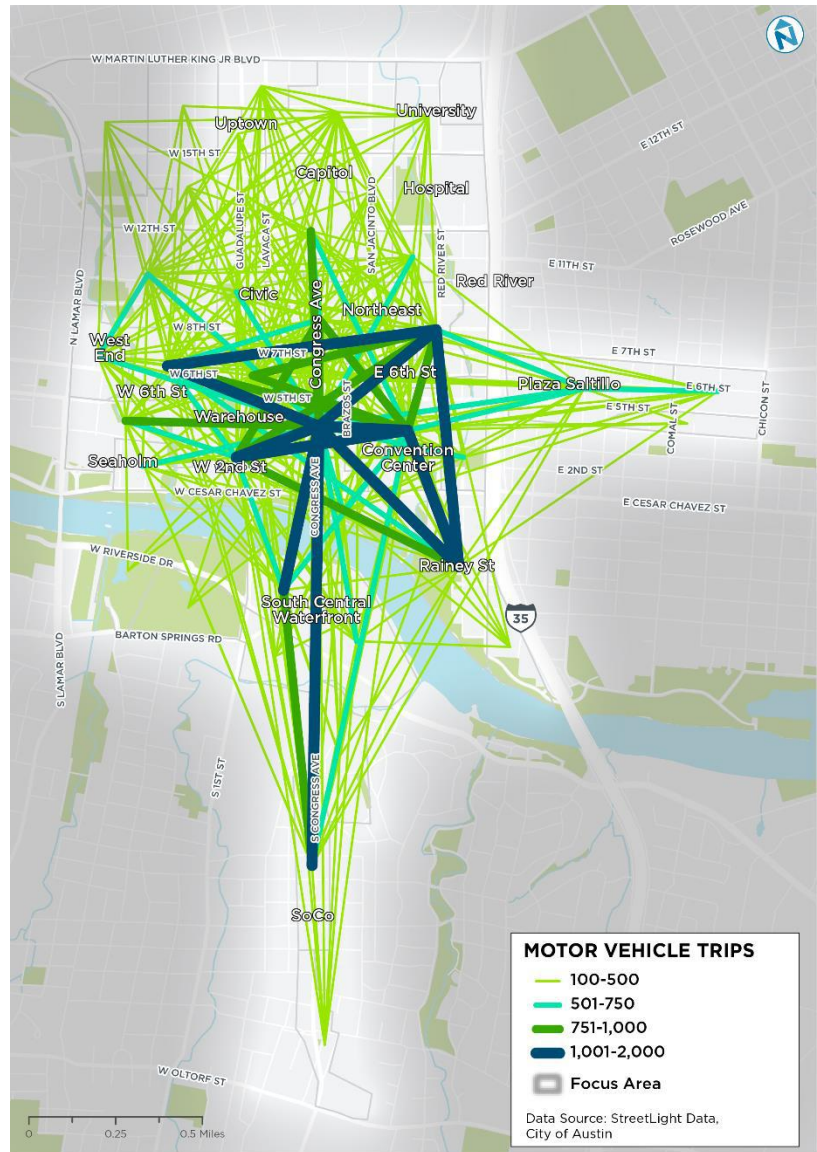
Capital Metro bus service in Downtown Austin is primarily concentrated along Guadalupe and Lavaca Streets. Bus stops along these corridors facilitate thousands of connections daily. Although frequent bus service is available along East Cesar Chavez and 7th Streets, bus coverage is generally lacking east of Congress Avenue. Located at 4th Street and Trinity Street, the new Downtown Station is the southern terminus of the MetroRail Red Line.



Auto Activity

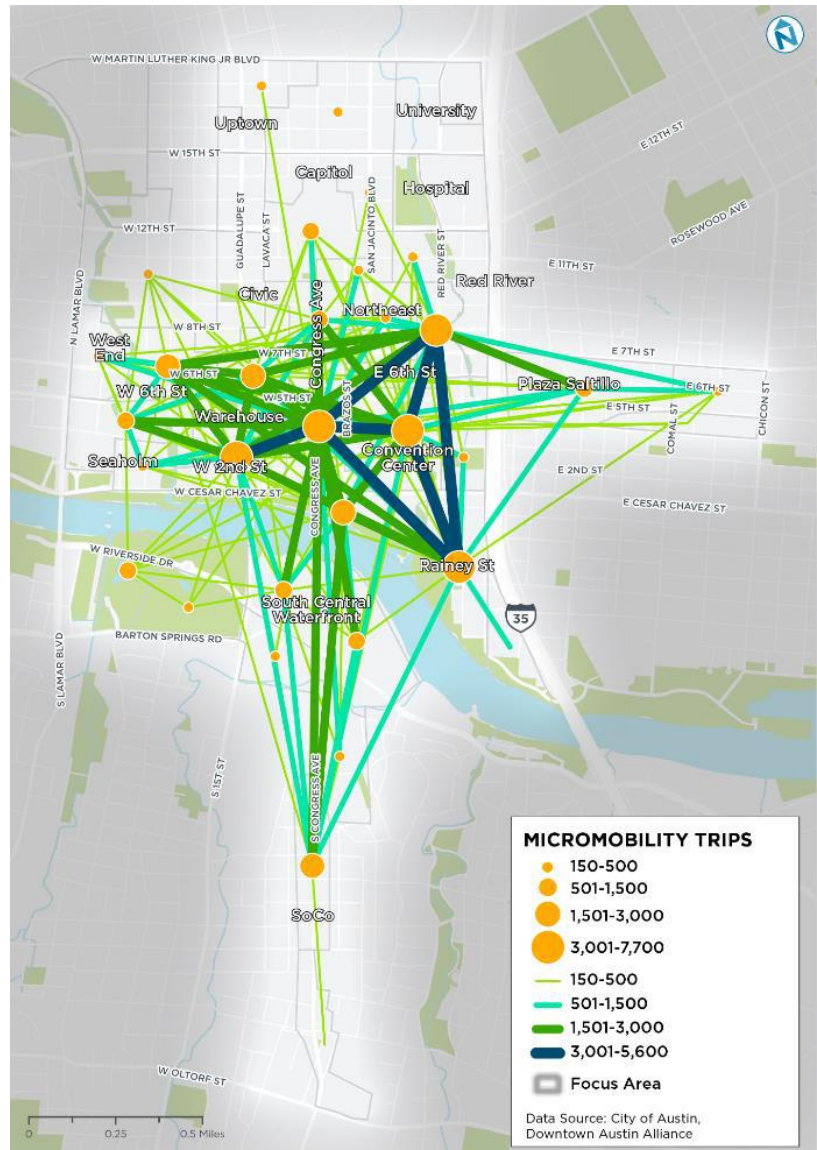
Auto activity within the study area during 2019 was highest between West Avenue, 7th Street, I-35 and Lady Bird Lake. Popular districts and destinations include the Central Business District, SoCo, 6th Street, Red River, 2nd Street, Rainey Street, and the Convention Center.

As of December 2020, auto trips starting and ending within the study area are at approximately 50% of pre-COVID-19 levels.



Electric Scooter Activity

Rentable e-scooters were introduced to Downtown Austin in April 2018. The City of Austin requires e-scooter operators to report the start and end of each trip, which average just over a mile in length. E-scooters are most popular in core downtown districts. E-scooter usage peaked in March 2019 and plummeted at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.



OPPORTUNITIES

The existing conditions analysis and stakeholder engagement phases of the study resulted in the identification of several opportunities, most notably the following:

Improve mobility for all members of the Downtown community.

Prior to 2009, Capital Metro's 'Dillo routes served as a last-mile connection for downtown employees, ACC Rio Grande students, Travis County jurors, Eastside residents, and tourists. Since 2010, Downtown Austin has experienced unprecedented office, hotel, and residential development. While the future of many businesses and venues are uncertain, a new circulator has the potential to improve access to employment, entertainment, and cultural destinations.

Promote economic recovery.

This report was produced during the COVID-19 pandemic. To shed light on what mobility needs will be most pressing, this study includes an analysis of travel patterns in two-week intervals from throughout 2020. What is clear is that activity is slowly returning to downtown. As downtown businesses re-open, emerge, or re-invent themselves in 2021, a circulator has the potential to be a catalyst for economic recovery by improving access to employment, particularly low-income jobs.

Provide an alternative to parking, ridehailing, and e-scooters.

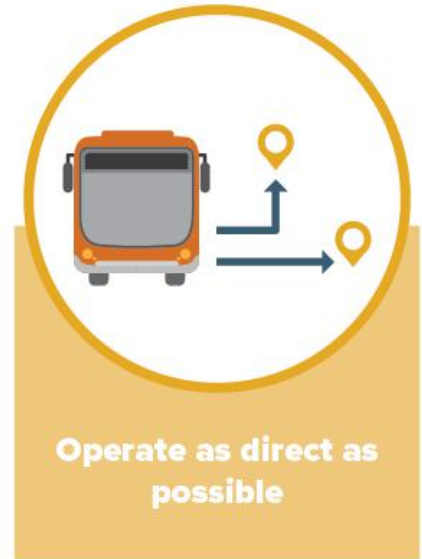
A growing number of visitors and employees have turned to ridehailing and e-scooters for short trips within Downtown Austin. A downtown circulator would minimize congestion created by ridehailing and offer a safer mobility option than e-scooters. Visitors driving to downtown would also have the flexibility to park once at underutilized parking facilities outside the downtown core and use the circulator to reach one or more destinations.

Support Project Connect during construction and operation.

Project Connect is a comprehensive plan to expand the regional transit system. In November 2020, Austin voters approved local funding for a light rail system with underground stations in Downtown Austin. While light rail is not anticipated to be operational until 2030, a downtown circulator with transit priority treatment could address short-term mobility needs, mitigate construction impacts, and complement the future Orange and Blue light rail lines.

CIRCULATOR BEST PRACTICES

Successful transit circulators must serve areas with sufficient employment and visitor activity to generate regular ridership. Successful transit circulators should also follow the following transit service planning principles:



4 RECOMMENDATIONS

ROUTE OPTIONS

A frequent circulator system connecting multiple districts is a sustainable solution for improving mobility in Downtown Austin. The optimal configuration, based on recent travel patterns and stakeholder feedback, consists of two complementary bi-directional routes:

- **Route A** would operate entirely within downtown, connecting the Market and Rainey Street districts and traversing the Central Business District. The route would primarily operate along 4th Street, providing convenient access to thousands of employees. The route would directly serve convention attendees and hotel guests, as well as downtown residents living in the Market District and Rainey Street. The route would provide direct connections to Capital Metro bus routes at Republic Square and MetroRail at the Downtown Station.
- **Route B** would cross both Lady Bird Lake and I-35, connecting SoCo, South Central Waterfront, Central Business, 6th Street, Red River, and Plaza Saltillo districts. Route B would primarily operate along Congress Avenue, 6th, and 7th Streets. The route would cross a prominent pedestrian obstacle in I-35 while also spanning Lady Bird Lake. The route would serve a combination of established commercial and entertainment districts along with areas of recent and planned mixed-use redevelopment.

Route A is 2.5 miles long round-trip, so a one-way trip from the Market District to Rainey Street should take approximately 7-8 minutes assuming an average speed of 10 miles per hour. **Route B** is 4.8 miles long round-trip, so a one-way trip from SoCo to Plaza Saltillo should take approximately 14-15 minutes assuming an average speed of 10 miles per hour.

If funding is limited to only one route, **Route B** is recommended as the pilot as it serves more districts, has more potential origin and destination pairs, and obtain broader support from stakeholders and survey respondents.

Recommended Routes

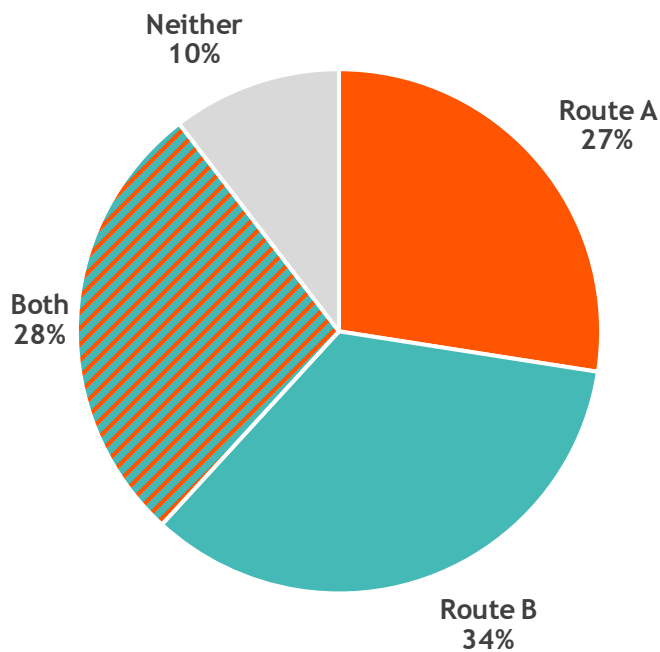


COMMUNITY SURVEY FEEDBACK

An online survey was conducted in December 2020 to obtain feedback on the two proposed circulator alignments. A total of 366 responses received over an 11-day period.

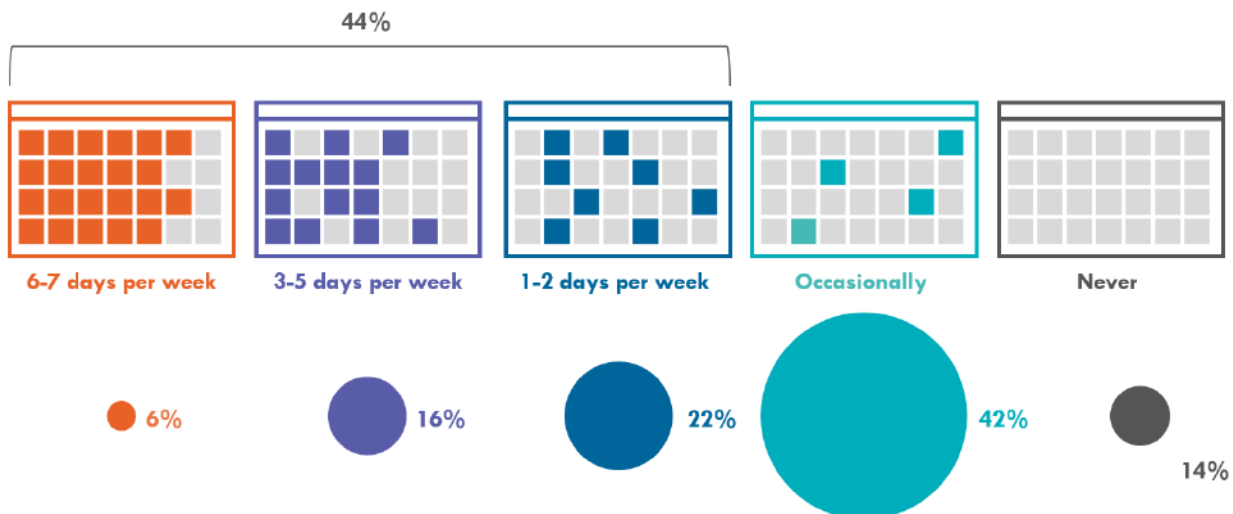
Preferred Alignment

Approximately 90% of survey respondents indicated a preference for at least one of the proposed circulator routes.



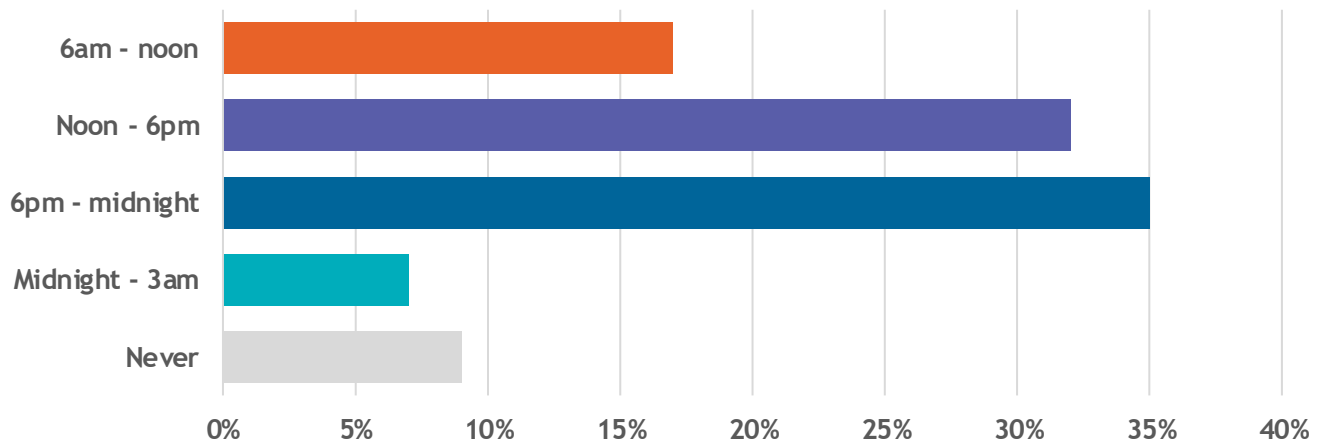
Anticipated Usage

Nearly half of survey respondents would use a proposed circulator at least 1-2 days per week.



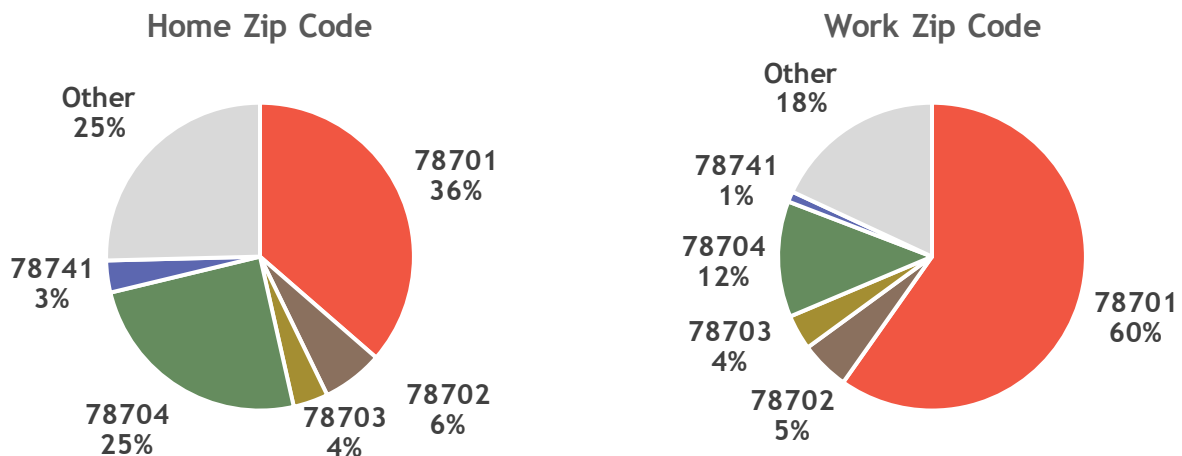
Preferred Times

Survey respondents would most likely use a circulator during the afternoon and evening.



Home and Work Locations

Survey respondents were asked to provide the home and/or work zip code. More than 60% of respondents live in zip codes 78701 (Downtown) or 78704 (East Austin). Downtown was by far the most popular work zip code.



Open-Ended Comments

106 survey respondents provided open-ended comments, which are included in the appendix.

CONCEPTUAL SERVICE LEVELS

Service levels should vary by day and time period, based on demand, and have the flexibility to increase during major events, such as South by Southwest and Austin City Limits Festival.

Conceptual Operating Characteristics

| Days | Time Period | Frequency | Peak Vehicles | |
|-----------------|------------------------|------------|---------------|---------|
| | | | Route A | Route B |
| Monday-Thursday | 7:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m. | 5 minutes | 4 | 6 |
| | 7:00 p.m. – 1:00 a.m. | 10 minutes | 2 | 3 |
| Friday | 7:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m. | 5 minutes | 4 | 6 |
| | 7:00 p.m. – 3:00 a.m. | 10 minutes | 2 | 3 |
| Saturday | 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. | 10 minutes | 2 | 3 |
| | 12:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. | 5 minutes | 4 | 6 |
| | 7:00 p.m. – 3:00 a.m. | 10 minutes | 2 | 3 |
| Sunday | 7:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m. | 10 minutes | 2 | 3 |

FARE POLICY

It is recommended that circulator service be provided at no fare. Advantages of a fareless operation include:

- Less of a barrier to entry for visitors and employees
- High ridership potential
- Reduced dwell time, higher speeds, and better on-time performance
- Most downtown circulators in peer cities are free

If it is determined that fares must be charged, an off-board or mobile payment system would be preferable to maximize speed and efficiency.

STOP LOCATIONS

Based on the recommended route design, approximate stop locations have been identified. Precise locations would need to be defined more explicitly based on several factors, including but not limited to sidewalk accessibility, traffic conditions, and adjacent land uses.

Route A should include 8 stops at the following locations:

1. Rio Grande Street at West 5th Street (northbound)
2. 4th Street at Republic Square (eastbound)
3. 4th Street at Republic Square (westbound)
4. 4th Street at Congress Avenue (eastbound)
5. 4th Street at Congress Avenue (westbound)
6. Trinity Street at Austin Convention Center (northbound)¹
7. Trinity Street at Austin Convention Center (southbound)²
8. Davis Street at Red River Street (westbound)

Route B should include 9 stops at the following locations:

1. Between The Circle and Congress Avenue (westbound)³
2. Congress Avenue at Barton Springs Road (northbound)
3. Congress Avenue at Barton Springs Road (southbound)
4. Congress Avenue at 4th Street (northbound)
5. Congress Avenue at 4th Street (southbound)
6. 7th Street at Red River (eastbound)
7. 6th Street at Navasota Street (westbound)
8. 6th Street at Red River (westbound)
9. Davis Street at Red River Street (westbound)

Additional stops could be added to Route B in the vicinity of Congress Avenue and 11th Street during Texas Legislative Session.

¹ Requires two-way conversion of Trinity Street

² Requires two-way conversion of Trinity Street

³ Requires removal of on-street parking

VEHICLE OPTIONS

While a wide range of vehicle types are possible for a downtown circulator, a traditional ADA-accessible transit vehicle is recommended for a pilot program. The most suitable transit vehicle types based on the recommended route design and operating characteristics are:

- Light-duty shuttle buses
- Heavy-duty low-floor buses
- Heavy-duty low-floor all-electric buses

Light-duty shuttle buses have adequate capacity for a circulator pilot service and are relatively inexpensive but are not optimal due to their single door and high floor. Shuttle buses are ADA-accessible through wheelchair lifts; however, this method of accessibility is significantly more time-intensive than the wheelchair ramps on low-floor buses.

Heavy-duty low-floor buses provide front and rear door access, curb-level boarding and alighting, higher seating capacity, and longer lifespans but also have high purchase costs.

The vehicle selection for the downtown circulator will likely be based on several factors including purchase or lease costs, availability, anticipated ridership, and environmental considerations.

Potential Vehicle Types

Light-Duty Shuttle Bus

Typical uses: Demand-response service and fixed-route service

Length: 25 to 32 ft

Seating capacity: 20 to 33

Estimated useful life: 5-7 years

Average lease cost: included in hourly rate



Credit: Community Impact

Heavy-Duty Low-Floor Diesel Bus

Typical use: Fixed-route service

Length: 29-40 ft

Seating capacity: 28 to 40

Estimated useful life: 12+ years

Average lease cost: included in hourly rate



Credit: Community Impact

Heavy-Duty Low-Floor All-Electric Bus

Typical use: Fixed-route service

Length: 35 to 40 ft

Seating capacity: 28 to 40

Estimated useful life: 12+ years

Average lease cost: included in hourly rate



Credit: KXAN Austin

5 COST ESTIMATES

OPERATING COSTS

Operating costs are based on a calculation of the annual service hours of each route option. Annual operating costs associated with each route are broken down by day of service.

Operating costs assumes that Downtown Austin Alliance contracts with Capital Metro or private transportation provider that owns, operates, and maintains the vehicles. A rate of \$100 per hour was used to conservatively project annual operating costs, summarized in the following table. The hourly rate covers vehicle leases, operation and supervision, fuel, maintenance, insurance, etc.

| Route Option | Day | Estimated Annual Service Hours | Annual Operating Cost |
|--------------|-----------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Route A | Monday-Thursday | 13,000 | \$1,310,000 |
| | Friday | 3,250 | \$330,000 |
| | Saturday | 3,000 | \$300,000 |
| | Sunday | 1,500 | \$140,000 |
| | Total | 20,750 | \$2,080,000 |
| Route B | Monday-Thursday | 20,250 | \$2,030,000 |
| | Friday | 5,000 | \$510,000 |
| | Saturday | 4,500 | \$450,000 |
| | Sunday | 2,000 | \$210,000 |
| | Total | 31,750 | \$3,200,000 |
| Both Routes | Monday-Thursday | 33,250 | \$3,330,000 |
| | Friday | 8,250 | \$840,000 |
| | Saturday | 7,500 | \$750,000 |
| | Sunday | 3,500 | \$340,000 |
| | Total | 52,500 | \$5,260,000 |

CAPITAL COSTS

Vehicles

Ten vehicles are required to operate both routes during peak service. However, it is recommended that a service operator have at least one spare vehicle available per route for transitions between driver shift changes, refueling, and maintenance relief.

| Route Option | Peak Vehicles | Total Vehicles (Peak + Spare) |
|--------------|---------------|-------------------------------|
| Route A | 4 | 5 |
| Route B | 6 | 7 |
| Both Routes | 10 | 12 |

Vehicle costs are included in the operating costs as vehicles should be leased and not owned by Downtown Austin Alliance. If Capital Metro becomes the permanent operator of the circulator, the agency has access to Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funding including the Section 5339 Low or No Emission Vehicle Program, which requires a 15% local match and Section 5339 Grants for Buses and Bus Facilities Program, which requires a 20% local match.

Circulator Stops

Proposed circulator stop locations will require several new amenities to ensure a positive experience for riders. The cost of installing amenities is approximately \$15,000 per stop. Therefore, the total cost of installing stop amenities is \$120,000 for Route A and \$135,000 for Route B.

| Circulator Stop Amenities | Estimated Unit Cost |
|--|---------------------|
| Circulator Stop Sign | \$250 |
| Static Information Display (maps, schedules, etc.) | \$750 |
| Shelter with Lighting | \$14,000 |
| Cost per Stop | \$15,000 |

Source: Estimated costs adapted from Brown University South Street Landing Shuttle Study (2016) and Memphis MPO/Memphis Area Transit Authority Bus Stop Design Accessibility Guidelines (2017)

6 IMPLEMENTATION

MANAGEMENT

Pilot Program

The successful implementation and continued operation of a new downtown transit circulator requires a lead managing organization. For a pilot program, Downtown Austin Alliance may take on this role so that it has complete flexibility regarding the route, schedule, and policies.

Permanent Program

Long term, it is more beneficial for Capital Metro to manage the service. Approximately three-quarters of downtown circulators are managed and operated by a local transit agency⁴. Capital Metro has been Austin's regional public transportation provider for 36 years and operated the 'Dillo downtown circulator system until 2009. Capital Metro also has bus operators trained in navigating the congested downtown area and personnel dedicated to safety and security. Capital Metro has the ability to provide vehicle maintenance, vehicle storage, operator logistics, facilities maintenance, planning, marketing, communications, and other essential functions. The agency is also an eligible recipient of state and federal operations and capital funding for public transit service. Based on these reasons, Capital Metro is the best long-term candidate to manage a new downtown circulator.

⁴ "TCRP Synthesis 87: Practices in the Development and Deployment of Downtown Circulators," Transportation Research Board, 2011. <https://www.nap.edu/download/14499>.

PILOT PROGRAM SERVICE DELIVERY OPTIONS

Partner with Capital Metro

Downtown Austin Alliance's first option for service delivery should be to partner with Capital Metro. Under this model, Downtown Austin Alliance would be responsible for hiring a liaison to work with Capital Metro, represent Downtown Austin Alliance's interest, and administer the contract.

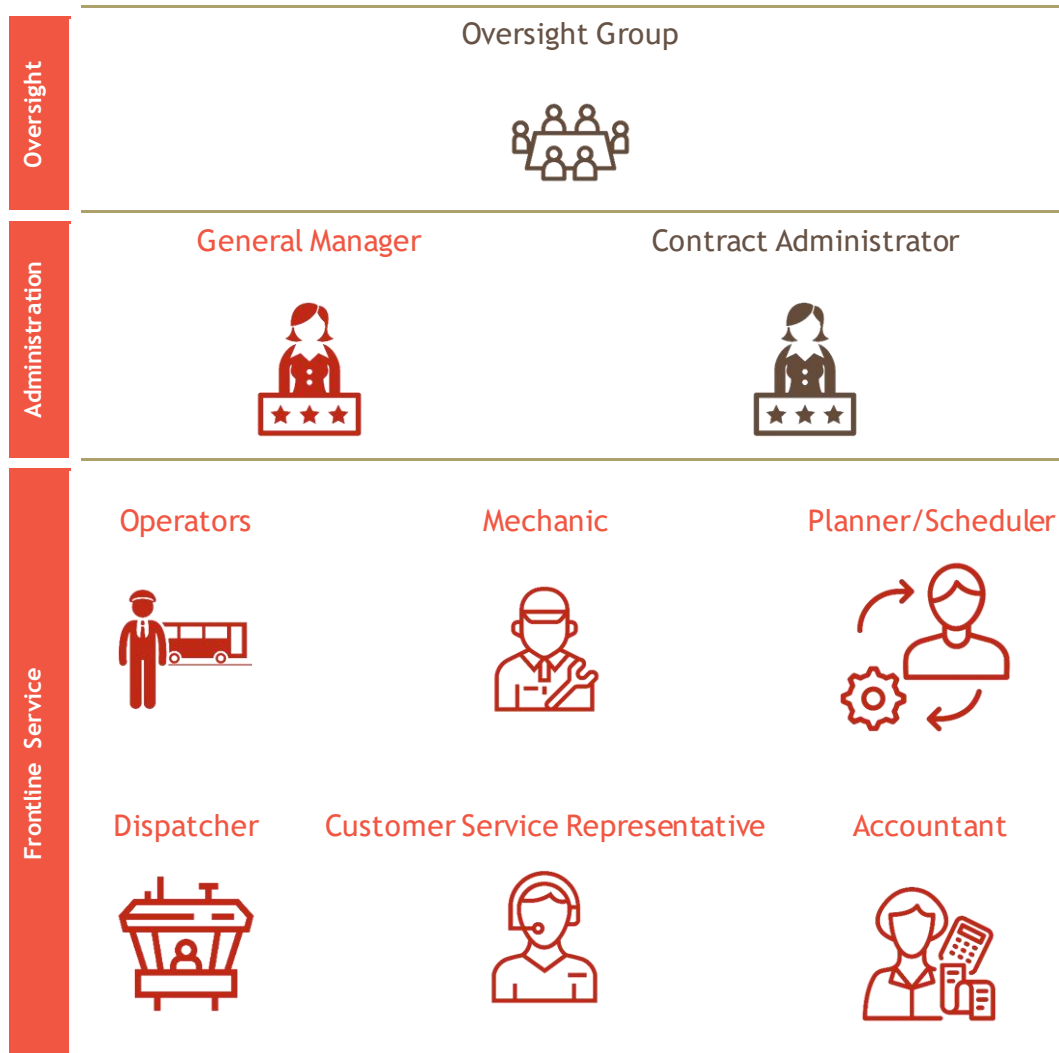
Partnering with Capital Metro means that day-to-day aspects such as fare collection (if a fare is instituted), operations, supervision, and maintenance are managed by the region's established public transportation provider. Under this model, Capital Metro takes responsibility for ensuring that services are compliant with state and federal regulations.

Benefits and Challenges

| Benefits | Challenges |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Compliance: Capital Metro is responsible for compliance with all state and federal regulations▪ Experience: Capital Metro has experience operating transit service in downtown Austin | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Control: Downtown Austin Alliance has less of a say in day-to-day operations▪ Flexibility: Decreased ability to quickly respond to service needs▪ Resources: Capital Metro may not have vehicles readily available▪ Cost: Transit agencies typically have higher hourly rates than turnkey operators▪ Timeline: Capital Metro's service change policy only provides three opportunities to implement new service each year |

Organization

Under this structure, Downtown Austin Alliance continues to provide oversight and must establish a contracts administrator to oversee the contract with the Capital Metro. All other positions are employees of Capital Metro or its contractor(s).



 Downtown Austin Alliance employee

 Contract employee

Turnkey Contract

If Capital Metro is unable to manage and operate the circulator service, a private operator could be contracted by Downtown Austin Alliance, to provide service. If this service model is used, an operator should be chosen from existing, local, and established operators in the immediate area.

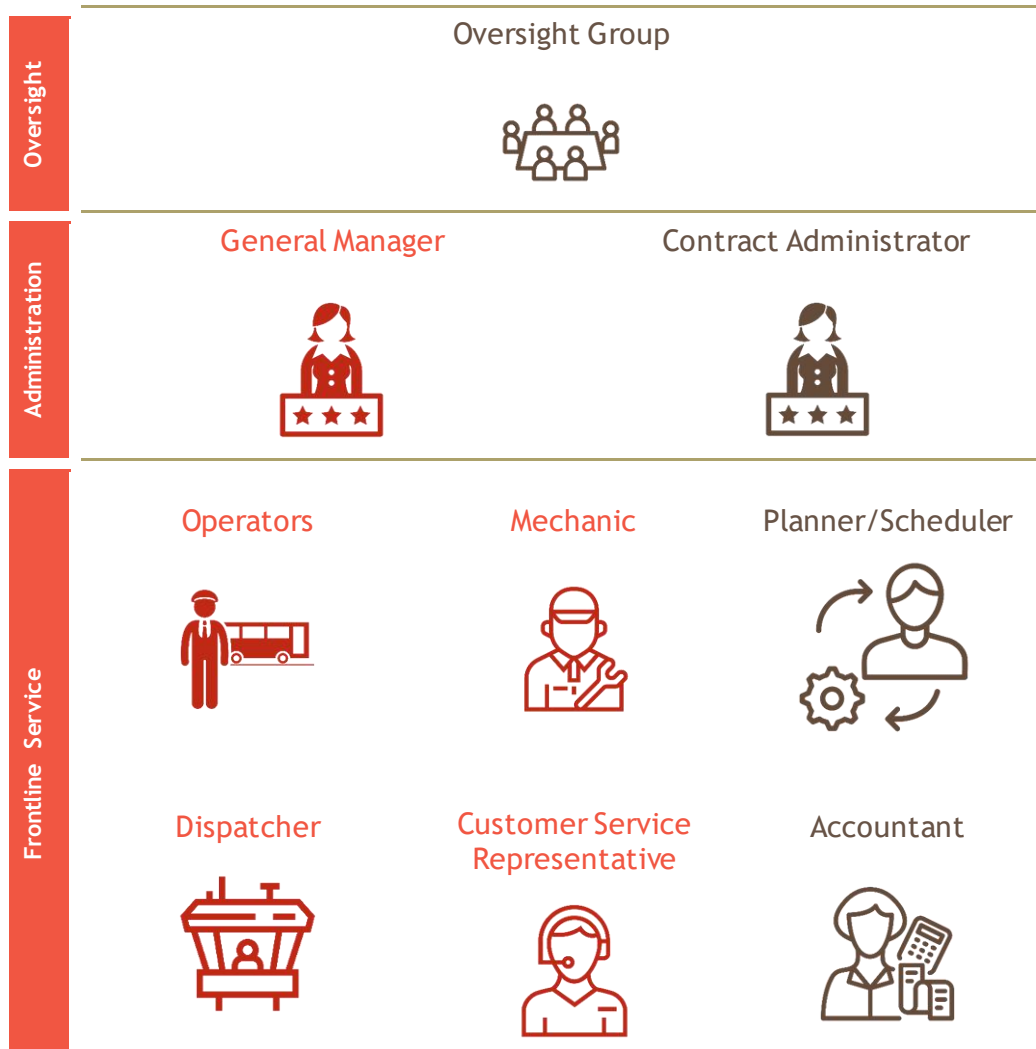
Day-to-day aspects such as fare collection, schedule design, and maintenance are managed by the contractor. A key difference of this model is that Downtown Austin Alliance remains responsible for ensuring that the contractor meets all state and federal requirements.

Benefits and Challenges

| Benefits | Challenges |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Performance: Can develop incentives and penalties for service performance and quality ▪ Resources: Turnkey providers manage many clients and contracts and can provide more resources to clients ▪ Timeline: With existing resources, it is possible to start up service in a short timeline ▪ Control: Downtown Austin Alliance has more say in day-to-day operations ▪ Flexibility: Increased ability to quickly respond to service needs ▪ Competition: Bidding process allows for selection that is most beneficial to the community ▪ Cost: Turnkey operators typically to have lower hourly rates than transit agencies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Compliance: Downtown Austin Alliance is responsible for ensuring that the contractor meets all state and federal regulations |

Organization



Under the turnkey structure, Downtown Austin Alliance continues to provide oversight and must establish a contract's administrator to oversee the contract with existing providers. Under complete turnkey, Downtown Austin Alliance may also be responsible for accounting, planning, and scheduling functions. All other positions are employees of the third-party contractor. Turnkey contracts can also include planning and scheduling responsibilities.



Downtown Austin Alliance employee

Contract employee

Comparison

| Service Delivery Type | Benefits | Challenges | Organization |
|---|---|---|--|
| Partner with Capital Metro  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compliance Experience | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Control Flexibility Resources Cost Timeline | Requires a contracts administrator |
| Turnkey Contract  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performance Resources Timeline Control Flexibility Competition Cost | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compliance | Requires a contracts administrator, accountant, and planning/ scheduling staff |

FUNDING AND PARTNERSHIPS

The most critical element of a downtown circulator is funding. Potential public and private funding partners and their type of funding contribution are listed in the table below. A full-time equivalent (FTE) employee would be needed to develop potential partnerships, secure funding agreements, maintain relationships, and administer the operating contract with a transportation provider.

| Potential Funding Partners | Type |
|--|---|
| Downtown Public Improvement District | Revenue allocation |
| City of Austin Hotel Occupancy Tax | Revenue allocation |
| City of Austin Parking Benefit Districts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Downtown ▪ SoCo | Revenue allocation |
| Capital Metro | Revenue allocation |
| Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO) | Transportation improvement project (TIP) funding |
| Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) | Grant |
| Austin Transportation Partnership | Revenue allocation |
| Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) | Construction mitigation funding |
| Private Developers via City of Austin Transportation Demand Management Program | Street impact fee |
| Major Employers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Whole Foods ▪ Google ▪ Facebook ▪ Indeed | Annual contribution |
| Event Management Companies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ South by Southwest (SXSW) ▪ C3 Presents (Austin City Limits Festival) | Service fee on ticket sales |
| Non-Profit Organizations and/or Private Philanthropy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Austin Parks Foundation ▪ Pecan Street Association | Annual contribution |
| Neighborhood Associations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Downtown Austin Neighborhood Association ▪ Rainey Neighborhood Association ▪ South River City Citizens ▪ Red River Cultural District | In-kind contribution (marketing, incentivizing, etc.) |

CONCEPTUAL IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

The following timeline of implementation will be dependent largely on which agency or agencies takes responsibility for management, operations, and securing funding. The following timeline assumes that pilot implementation of the circulator would not begin until after the COVID-19 pandemic. The timeline summarizes high-level action items only. It is also recommended that Downtown Austin Alliance assign a staff member to manage implementation.

Pre-Implementation Timeline

| Phase | Duration | Summary of High-Level Actions |
|-------|-------------|---|
| 1 | 1-2 months | Downtown Austin Alliance and downtown stakeholders select a preferred service plan. |
| 2 | 3-6 months | Downtown Austin Alliance builds a team of funding partners. |
| 3 | 3-6 months | Downtown Circulator partners determine the agency or contractor responsible for management and operations. |
| 4 | 1-3 months | Establish a contract detailing partnership roles and responsibilities. |
| 5 | 6-12 months | Prepare for implementation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Secure vehicles ▪ Finalize route schedules and operator work assignments ▪ Develop marketing materials ▪ Coordinate with Austin Transportation Department on traffic and parking changes ▪ Begin comprehensive marketing campaign |
| 6 | - | Implement new downtown circulator service. |

Post-Implementation Timeline

| Phase | Duration | Summary of High-Level Actions |
|-------|----------|---|
| 1 | 6 months | Continuously collect ridership, on-time-performance, and rider satisfaction data. |
| 2 | 1 month | Determine if route, scheduling and stop adjustments are necessary and plan accordingly. |
| 3 | - | Implement any necessary adjustments. |
| 4 | 5 months | Continuously collect ridership, on-time-performance, and rider satisfaction data. |
| 5 | 2 months | Conduct a one-year performance review and determine next steps. |

BRANDING AND MARKETING

An effective branding and marketing strategy provides customers with the information they need to make informed transportation choices while creating a dynamic and captivating public image that helps retain existing ridership, attract new riders, and, when done well, cultivates support and enthusiasm within the community. As the conceptual shuttle circulator is a new service that is intended to supplement existing services, its branding and marketing strategy must distinguish it as a convenient, efficient, or comfortable option, while disassociating it from the existing services.

Branding

A distinguishable branded identity allows each of these media to promote and provide information about the new service in a way that is easily recognizable, easy to understand, and attractive. A strong branded identity should contain the following basic components:

- **Name:** The name should be catchy, easy to remember, and, if possible, convey a message of the purpose or strength of the particular service.
- **Logo:** A good logo is immediately identifiable and distinguishable from other services. If possible, the logo will further convey the message of the purpose or strength of the service.
- **Color Scheme:** The color scheme will be used for the logo as well as all signage, printed or online materials, buses, stops, etc.

Marketing

Marketing is an important part of any public transportation service, but it is an especially important part of any new service. When moving forward with implementation, Austin should develop a comprehensive marketing plan to ensure the successful startup of the new service. The marketing plan should be driven by goals and strategies, which can be achieved through marketing initiatives. The following information provides an outline of what a comprehensive marketing plan should consider. Additional resources such as the Transportation Cooperative Research Program's Report 50, *A Handbook of Proven Marketing Strategies for Public Transit*⁵ are available and an excellent source for developing a comprehensive marketing strategy.


Transit stops are the basic marketing assets of all fixed route services and have traditionally served as the primary medium of informing residents, employees, and visitors about a new service. Transit websites, social media, and smartphone apps on the other hand, have become the preferred sources of information about a service. Traditional media outlets and strategic partners such as district and neighborhood associations, still serve an important role in publicizing a new service, particularly prior to launch.

⁵ http://onlinepubs.trb.org/onlinepubs/tcrp/tcrp_rpt_50-a.pdf



Marketing Goals and Strategies



When effectively utilized, marketing can have significant impacts on the success of new public transportation service. To maximize the impact of marketing, it is important to establish a clear goal. Each goal should include a set of strategies by which to achieve the goal and each strategy should be supported by an actionable initiative.

Marketing Goal

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|  | <p>Establish ridership: The primary goal of all public transportation marketing for new service is to establish a ridership base. Marketing efforts should focus on identified transit markets (e.g., visitors, employees, and residents). All marketing strategies should support this primary goal.</p> |
|---|--|

Marketing Strategies

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|  | <p>Build support: Building a broad coalition of support for a downtown circulator transit in Austin with groups and organizations will help to demonstrate how important the service is for both riders and non-riders. Initiatives to achieve this strategy include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Produce annual report▪ Acquire functional, attractive transit swag▪ Participate in community events▪ Conduct a marketing campaign |
|  | <p>Cultivate awareness: Awareness within the community, including how the service is managed and funded, provides a basis for understanding and builds support among stakeholders. Initiatives to achieve this strategy include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Develop a brochure▪ Leave materials with employers and attractions |

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|  | <p>Share information: Make information easy to find, understand, and use reduces barriers and encourages ridership. This includes accessible information in print, on the web (desktop and smartphone), and in-person at key locations. Initiatives to achieve this strategy include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Develop a website or webpage on Capital Metro’s website▪ Develop a rider guide |
|  | <p>Develop identity: Build familiarity by projecting a clear and consistent visual identity. Make the service visible and recognizable as a public transit service for the entire community. Initiatives to achieve this strategy include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Keep all branding and marketing consistent▪ Build compelling social media presence▪ Keep vehicles clean and branded▪ Keep circulator stops clean and branded |

APPENDIX

Community Survey Open-Ended Feedback

Downtown Circulator Study | Recommendations Report

| Do you have any questions or comments? |
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| A is for drunks and B is for folks going somewhere. |
| A trolley from the Downtown Station to the capitol area would be great to get state workers and other workers in the area to take the train rather than drive into town. Having to walk 7 blocks each way in the Summer heat/inclement weather is a big deterrent from taking the train. Even reworking Route A so it drives past 8th and congress or so would be great for a quick stop there to let folks off. |
| An alternative to walking from Rainey Street area to downtown and the Seaholm area would be great, especially when the hike/bike trail is dark. |
| Because of the unbelievably bad homeless situation in downtown Austin, how would you make this service something the average resident would feel comfortable using? This will probably be a trolley service overrun with homeless people. |
| Both routes seem to cater to tourists and not daily commuters or short-distance business travelers. Not sure if it's something that is practical for people living and working downtown. |
| Bring back the Dillo trolleys! Riding in the back part of those as a kid is such a fond memory. |
| Bring back the 'Dillo! |
| Bring back the Dillo! Seriously this would replace so many short uber rides and bad drunken scooter decisions. |
| Bring back the trolleys! |
| Can you explain the mechanics for using the circular (cost, how to get on/off optimally)? |
| Circulator is a GREAT Idea. Let's make this happen! |
| Concern about the cost on the city's already-taxed infrastructure, but would support it if it could show high utilization. So many of Austin's buses appear (even pre-COVID) to be under-utilized. |
| ELECTRIC PLEASE> NO NEED FOR MORE LOUD DIESEL BUSSES ON OUR STREETS. |
| exciting proposal - especially access to and from east Austin to be included in proposal B. proposal A is more similar to those I've seen in Denver on 16th St and would be useful but would not create access for as many people |
| Extending the SoCo line to the "SoCo Station" at Monroe & S Congress might make more sense than James. |
| Fix the roads and quit working on trails and bike paths and quit raising our taxes. Get rid of the camping on the sidewalks. |
| Getting around without a car is of paramount importance and interest |
| great idea! I hope it works |
| great survey, easy, well done! |
| Have the old Dillo route. That served the workers of downtown very well. Going to entertainment districts and expensive trendy shops/restaurants do no good for those who work downtown. |
| How about an old-time trolley - maybe one that is eco friendly? Those big electric golf carts don't feel safe and buses feel too confined. |
| how about going from Lamar to Congress then east? combine the two east west routes and eliminate the Rainey portion. |
| I am looking forward to this. |
| I like the concept but I think its flawed. Basically you need 1 east-west line and 2 north-south lines. I don't think your north-south line goes far enough north. It should go all the way to UT. Both lines shouldn't make many turns - they should just stick to 1 street like Denver's does or stick with paired streets like Portland's Streetcar. I would have a N-S line down Trinity and San Jacinto from Cesar Chavez to MLK. I would have a second N-S line down Guadalupe and Lavaca from Cesar Chavez to MLK as well. I would have your E-W line extend past downtown to bring in folks from surrounding |

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| neighborhoods that usually drive. Run it down 5th and 6th St. from Campbell to Chicon. Based on the success of these 3 you can expand to South Lamar, South First and South Congress later. |
| I like the idea of the circulator routes. However, the previous fake trolley vehicles were awkward, uncomfortable, had poor accessibility features. & I heard were difficult to drive. Use any armadillo theme/decoration, but please don't bring back those vehicles. |
| I love the circulator idea and would love to see other connections to other business districts as well in the future. This is a great start! |
| I love the open-air trolley idea - super cool. Thank you for this survey! |
| I miss the Dillo! |
| I miss the old Dillo routes. The electric trolley is preferable during the pandemic (and if you could hop on it for free). But after the pandemic, the electric bus would be better because Austin's weather is SO hot. |
| I picked vehicle type based on looks because I didn't have much information but I encourage you to pick it based on functionality! I'm sure whatever is picked will be great! Also, I love the Rainey connection because I live on west side of downtown and getting to Rainey is a pain. |
| I think a circulator could be a good idea, but the routes proposed to not help me. Also, once the pandemic is over and people return to downtown, I expect the newly installed bike lanes on Congress Avenue are going to create traffic clogging that would make a circulator very inefficient. That was the problem with the Dillo. I could get there faster on my feet. Now, the traffic problems are significantly more than they were when we had the Dillo. |
| I think circulators are a great idea and I think we need both. I might give the edge to the Saltillo route, but both are great. |
| I think extending the area serviced to the UT area, west to W. 6th Street, and east to E. 6th St. past I-35 to give mobility to all the entertainment areas around downtown would be important. |
| I think going forward it would be helpful to better understand what role the circulator would serve for users. Where does it fit and how does it compliment the current fixed routes, planned rail and buses, pickup service, as well as shared mobility and walking? |
| I think that Route B traverses a few more barriers to walking/biking compared to Route A. That is, it might be more attractive for many people to take transit on Route B than to walk/bike/scoot. In particular, the hill on South Congress to the south of Riverside could discourage people from active transportation and incentivize some to use the circulator. Thanks for all your hard work on this exciting project! |
| I think this is a tremendous idea to provide added mobility while reducing traffic and the use of those godawful scooters. Scooter litter reduction would be greatly appreciated too. |
| I used the Dillo Express and have been wishing it would return. |
| I work at 10th & Congress. Every tenant in the building would be more likely to use a circulator that starts closer to the Capitol that takes you to restaurants on |
| I work north of 7th Street near Congress. I was hoping for a circulator that included the Capitol area. |
| I would tie this into the other mass transit downtown --- bus and future rail stops. people should have more mobility options |
| I would use the circulator if it connected the Bouldin neighborhood to downtown to avoid exorbitant parking fees. As proposed I likely won't use it at all. |
| I write surveys as part of my job and thought this one was really well done, which I don't always see. Thanks for the effort! |
| If a trolley is used, is there a way to protect passengers when it rains? |
| If there are going to be trolley stops, would love to make sure they stay clean and free of homeless |

Downtown Circulator Study | Recommendations Report

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| I like the idea of light transit for the downtown corridors, especially in the east west directions as nothing currently serves that need. I miss the Dillo cars, they really worked great for service workers including musicians and their merchandisers (like me!) |
| I'm certain y'all are giving everything a thorough amount of consideration, but for what it's worth, the two primary concerns that leap to my brain are 1) How each of these lines navigate regular street closures (6th Street, 4th at Republic Square), and 2) How they ultimately interface with the Project Connect lines. And speaking of things that are still several years away from being realized and yet still pretty important, 3) How to integrate the fully realized Med School/Brackenridge redevelopment/Waterloo Park into a circulator system. Personally, I'm jealous y'all get to have these questions keep y'all up at night. Keep up the great work! |
| I'm disappointed this service is not designed to alleviate the need to park downtown. Would be better if it was connected to a central parking area or public garage. |
| Instead of surface transportation, please consider next generation below ground tunnels built by boring company to connect downtown Austin, which will alleviate surface traffic on roads. |
| Is it at all possible to go underground? How frequent will the bus come around? Will it expand to the east side? |
| It would be great to see Dillo return, it was good for kids to get to school, employees, tourists |
| It would be nice to have a more detailed view of the route in the Rainey district. |
| Just make whichever route you go with as accessible as possible - have plenty of space for wheelchairs, strollers, have visual and audio announcements for stops and other information, etc. I like the idea of using electric vehicles. Space for bikes would be good. Integrate fare with Cap Metro if the route requires a fare. |
| Love this idea! Both routes would be valuable. |
| Loved the Dillo, and would love a trolley. |
| Make sure the stops are very clear and obvious to people who may not know downtown very well. Also keep the circular out of the traffic of other cars. |
| Make this happen! I think it'll really help bar hoppers at night |
| Market to Rainey circulator should extend further west towards Lamar |
| nice if there were a route to UT area.... |
| North/south Downtown circulator is much more important than south of the lake. PID biased not a good look. |
| Not sure whether a bus would fit on Rainey; and therefore chose trolley. |
| Please bring this back. I never understood why it went away. |
| Please expand the service to MLK to get to UT and Acc |
| Please have route B go near the train station downtown. Bit of a wasted opportunity if you don't service the downtown train station. Lots of potential riders getting off the train which dumps people off in a weird part of downtown (meaning they likely need to go other places). Getting south of the river is a big barrier for people and Route B actually helps. Not sure Route A does anything. I typically avoid Rainey street |
| Please help ensure Cap Metro keeps their promise to put the trains in tunnels. This will help the system run most efficiently and allow it to grow without the street friction. And could we get more bike lanes like the ones on 3rd Street? |
| Police presence is keeping me from going downtown. Fix that then we can talk about the circulator. |
| Q. Why did we ever get rid of the 'Dillo? Comment. I think both routes need to primarily deliver people to a central downtown location, from where they can complete the last mile either on foot or by scooter or electric bicycle. |
| Rainey circulator May get less use over time as bars are replaced by high rises. |

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Rainey street would really benefit from a regular shuttle during many hours of the day. Connections to transit are also important.

Route b *SoCo* is the best solution. This provides transportation to those whose bus route ends south of the river, it provides much needed transportation to those of us who used route #5. It connects the two busy areas, so co, to downtown. An open trolley is much better too, more people who may think negatively about riding "the bus", will ride a trolley.

Route B is largely duplicated by Routes 801 and 4 (also MetroRail) -- the only reason to use this route is as a tourist -- going from SoCo to Saltillo, but SoCo is mostly a daytime district and Saltillo is mostly a nighttime district -- so I'm not sure they need to be connected in this way (especially when there is high-frequency connections in place currently). ANYWAY -- I live on South Congress, so Route B would require the same transfer as taking Route 4. 4TH STREET -- I don't think the route shown on the map is possible. 4th Street stops going westbound around Mellow Johnny's (might make sense to divert to 2nd Street at that point to get to Seaholm / Market District) RAINEY STREET -- Would the circulator run at night? There is a condo-dweller market for this service AND a night-reveler market for this service (might make sense to connect circulator to district parking at night)

route should also serve tourist destinations up to the Capitol and museum district. less circuitous, the better.

SO glad to see an idea like this go around! Austin needs a circulator or two very badly. Big project connect fan, as I sold my car and moved downtown two years ago. This would be such an equitable solution to transportation centrally!

Thanks for conducting this survey. In my view, the more public transportation Austin has, the better!

The 'dillos never should have been taken out of service. Enough study! Implement this today! We're already paying increased taxes for the mobility project, let's see some results - now!

The east side circulator would make a huge impact for the Holly neighborhood -- if you turn around at Chicon or Robert Martinez, rather than Comal. Comal and 6th is around a mile away for most people in Holly. If you're only looking to go 2 miles to downtown, it doesn't make sense to walk half the total distance to catch a bus/train -- so driving is always by far the best option. The Red line causes this same dilemma, because the stop that's closest to me (Plaza Saltillo at 5th and Comal) is further away from my house than the station is to the destination. It just doesn't make sense to use, as much as want to take public transportation. So I end up driving and contributing to the gridlock at traffic bottlenecks at I-35 crossings and bridges. The center of gravity on 6th street has moved further east than Comal. There are new offices, apartments, a hotel, and some of the densest single family homes in the city (including mine) all along 6th st. down to its terminus at the massive HEB digital office on Pedernales. Extending this circulator further east would allow the residents, office workers, and tourists in my neighborhood to use this circulator instead of cars to get to downtown and South Congress.

The electric bus should carry bicycles

The old Dillo routes were wonderful for suburban folk seeking to enjoy downtown without bringing our cars there. Please publicize how these routes connect to fast park n ride routes like the 803.

The Rainey area and westward desperately needs some form of public transit.

The Rainey circulator should cone down as far as the River roundabout to pick up the many buildings at the end oh the street.

The vehicle chosen should prioritize rapid onboard/offboarding for a wide variety of users.

This is a great idea. Have suggested it to friends for many years. Works well in other cities. Sad that Austin is so behind on this! Like both these routes. Will get folks out of cars plus since there's no easy parking, it will get people who are further away into businesses in downtown and east Austin.

This does nothing for the problem: Construction outside the city center. is the problem. Spending on downtown doesn't help at all.

This is amazing!!! I'm such a fan of the Market and Rainey Route, but think both would make Austin a better place to live. Would these be free to use, or a small price?

Downtown Circulator Study | Recommendations Report

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| This is an important project to remove car trips into and around downtown. More public transit, less cars. |
| This project was said to connect Lamar to Plaza Saltillo. I don't see any Lamar stops. That's a huge missed opportunity. Also, why go down S. Congress when you're already planning rail there? Once again, a transit option for the busy south Lamar corridor is ignored. |
| This would be great if it happened! |
| Trolley is MUCH better than a bus |
| Unsatisfied with both proposed routes |
| WASTE OF MONEY!!! NO PUBLIC FUNDS!!! |
| We used to have wonderful Dillios that drove around downtown that you could hop on or off of. Seems like somebody sold them to their cousins real cheap when we should've kept them all along. |
| What about serving the Capitol Complex? There are a lot of employees in this area and we have no options to get near our buildings or go to bars and restaurants south of us. |
| Whatever you choose, keep it simple |
| While I do like option B I think both options are just serving the gentrified areas of the city. |
| While I no longer work Downtown, I would likely use the circulator to get from my house to the various areas around Downtown or to East Austin. This might occur after work or on the weekends. If I still worked Downtown, I would use the circulator to access SoCo or East Austin during lunch time, so I didn't have to get into my car. |
| Why are the proposed routes out and back only versus short loops? It would seem like short loops provide more points of contact / interest with minimally more distance covered. |
| Why are there only two options for vehicle type? How were they selected? |
| Why is Austin investing in Mass transit when so many other cities' mass transit systems are a total disaster because of the pandemic - no one wants to share transportation when communicable disease is rampant. Waste of taxpayer money. |
| Why isn't the Capitol Complex part of the proposed routes? |
| Will the routes be expanded in the future? |
| Will the trolley fit as many people as the electric bus? |
| With all the condo residents in the area the trolley would be used quite a bit. The bikes and scooters are not for everyone and certainly should not be used after drinking in the area. |
| would like a route from Rainey to Plaza Saltillo. As a resident to downtown Austin it's not very easy to get to East of 35 on scooters or foot except for the trail. Would be nice to have a circulator between the high level areas of downtown Austin (Plaza Saltillo, Rainey, South Congress, and West 6th) |
| Would like more than 1 point of crossover between the 2 routes! Thus, I would like route A to turn north on Trinity, turn right on 5th, and then turn south on Red River. And then on route B, rather than using 7th st to use 5th st (easy u-turn under I35). With these modifications, there would be a second transfer point at 5th & Red River. Also, 7th street is definitely a little rough from the people experiencing homelessness & transients. 5th street is by far a more attractive eastbound route and hits all the businesses by Plaza Saltillo (Target, Whole Foods,) |
| Would there be stops along the way? I can see it being very helpful to run from the train to Seaholm with stops at like Congress and Republic Square |
| Wow! Such a great idea! I would actually use both routes, though I'd use #2 more. |