

# DOWNTOWN AUSTIN MOBILITY FRAMEWORK

DOWN  
AUSTINTOWN  
ALLIANCE

ARUP



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## PURPOSE OF THE DOCUMENT

The Downtown Mobility Framework is an internal document developed by the Downtown Austin Alliance with feedback from partners and stakeholders.

This framework will guide the work of the Downtown Austin Alliance in the near-term and it will continue to advance the Downtown Vision by focusing on its fourth priority - Leading Mobility.

A series of mobility-focused actions were identified as critical to supporting this framework and the Downtown Austin Alliance will organize and prioritize these actions through a lens of **Lead-Partner-Advocate (LPA)**. This structure helps identify the Downtown Alliance's role in relation to the actions identified and will guide the integration of specific actions into the organization's strategic plans moving forward.

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The development of the Downtown Austin Mobility Framework would not have been possible without the extensive work of project team members as well as priceless insight provided by City of Austin Transportation Department staff and Downtown Austin Alliance staff, committee and board members.

## DOWNTOWN AUSTIN ALLIANCE

- Board of Directors
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# THE DOWNTOWN YOU WILL ALWAYS LOVE



## ABOUT THE VISION

The Downtown Austin Alliance undertook an expansive and inclusive visioning effort in 2017-2018 resulting in the Downtown Austin Vision. More than 3,000 Austinites helped shape the vision work, identifying four priorities that work together to create and sustain **the downtown you will always love.**

## STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

### THRIVING CENTER

Downtown is the thriving center of business and community life, creating economic prosperity for the entire region.

### WELCOMING PLACES

Downtown is beloved for diverse and engaging parks, places and experiences that attract and welcome everyone.

### GROWING NEIGHBORHOODS

Downtown is a growing and ever-evolving tapestry of complete, vibrant and walkable neighborhoods and districts that express Austin's authentic character.

### LEADING MOBILITY

Downtown is the leader and champion of innovative urban transportation and mobility alternatives.

- 1 Create compact centers and corridors in Austin's central core.
- 2 Provide a robust, safe, and effective transit network via a variety of modes to move people around, to and from downtown.
- 3 Provide a variety of options for people to get around downtown.
- 4 Position downtown as the leader and hub of smart mobility technology.
- 5 Improve the experience and availability of parking in downtown while planning smartly for the future.
- 6 Maximize the safe and effective transportation options for downtown commuters, visitors and residents.

## WHY LEADING MOBILITY MATTERS NOW?

Since the Downtown Austin Vision's release in 2018, Austin continues to experience rapid growth and several new development and infrastructure projects are planned for downtown, including but not limited to, the massive Project Connect transit investment, the innovative redesign of Congress Avenue, advances in autonomous infrastructure programs, and the renovation of I-35 that will include new plazas and enhanced bridges across the highway. After this period of great investment and change, transportation experiences and the mobility systems that support them will be revolutionized. To approach this correctly, the Downtown Austin Alliance is expanding on the fourth priority of the Downtown Vision, **Leading Mobility**, to establish a downtown mobility framework that responds to evolving present and future conditions through careful and proactive planning.

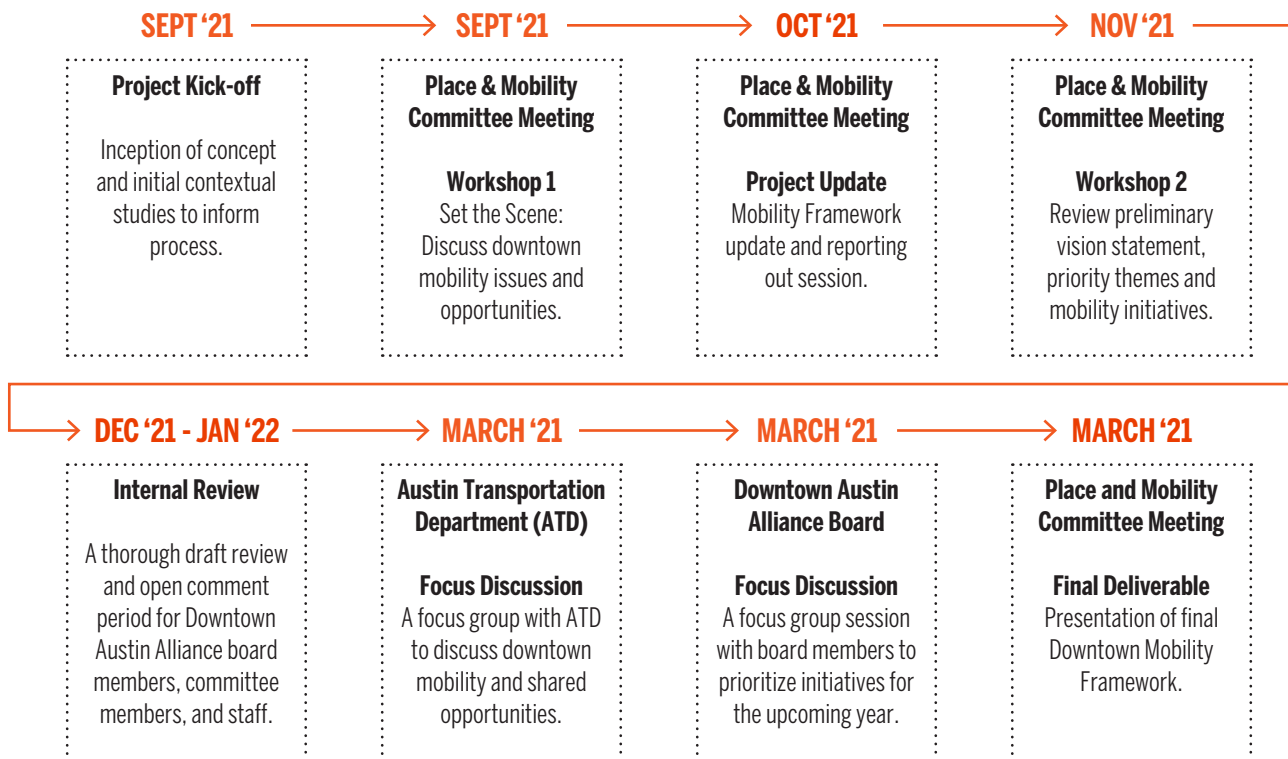
# ENGAGEMENT PROCESS FOR MOBILITY FRAMEWORK



## ABOUT THE PROCESS

The Downtown Austin Alliance and Arup outlined a process to stakeholder engagement and framework development to ensure the success of the vision for mobility.

## ENGAGEMENT TIMELINE



## FRAMEWORK DEVELOPMENT

The Downtown Austin Alliance in collaboration with Arup established the Downtown Austin Mobility Framework through an iterative and collaborative process. The visioning work commenced in September 2021 with an initial contextual study to better understand the existing transportation conditions downtown and to inform the document's structure. The team then conducted a series of workshops and meetings to further refine the key themes, initiatives and overall function of the document. The Downtown Mobility Framework is designed to be a living document, used as a roadmap for organizing and prioritizing downtown mobility initiatives. The plan considers initiatives from inception through planning and implementation.

# THE DOWNTOWN MOBILITY FRAMEWORK

PHOTO CREDIT: PATRICK Y. WONG



## LEADING MOBILITY A Vision for Downtown Mobility:

**Everyone can access downtown, when and how they want.**

Downtown Austin is a welcoming and vibrant place for all. It is not only a global destination, but it's a home, where we play, study and work for the future. A diverse range of sustainable, safe and eco-friendly transit options connect seamlessly to the places people desire. Downtown districts and all the places in between feel connected, healthy, safe and desirable. Thoughtful and innovative transportation planning harnesses and guides Austin's rapid growth, embedding within and celebrating the identity of the city. Transportation experiences make Austin more equitably connected, more accessible and more multi-modal than ever before.



# THE DOWNTOWN MOBILITY THEMES



## DOCUMENT STRUCTURE

Five key themes were identified by stakeholders, each having an overarching goal as well as a set of objectives and potential actions that together make up the mobility framework for downtown Austin.



**ACCESSIBLE AND  
WELCOMING TO ALL**



**WELL CONNECTED  
AND EASY TO GET  
AROUND**

**Everyone can  
access downtown,  
when and how they  
want.**



**COORDINATED  
PLANNING OF  
MAJOR PROJECTS**



**CLEAR COMMUNICATION  
AND COLLABORATIVE  
ENGAGEMENT**



**GREATER AND  
GREENER MOBILITY  
EXPERIENCES**

# ACCESSIBLE AND WELCOMING TO ALL



## GOAL

A user-centered downtown with a range of travel options that is easy, safe and equally accessible to everyone.

## OBJECTIVES

- Accessible transit services
- Improved pedestrian sidewalks
- Dedicated space for bikes, scooters and last-mile travel options
- Improved parking access and affordability
- Reduced congestion from commercial vehicles
- Plan for accommodating autonomous vehicles

## POTENTIAL ACTIONS

### DISCOVER

Identify priority corridors for bike, bus, commercial vehicle, construction vehicles and emergency access.

Undertake a downtown accessibility audit and compare to relevant standards.

Develop survey and outreach material to better understand individual users' needs and accessibility requirements.

Collect data on downtown parking demand and usage.

Collect data on location and distribution of public amenities (e.g. restrooms and water fountains) along priority transit corridors.

### PLAN

**ACT** Develop a Downtown Accessibility and User Experience Plan identifying problem areas and solutions.

Develop a governance and management strategy for rideshare vehicles and last mile mobility services.

**ACT** Revisit the Downtown Parking Strategy and prioritize actions for improved usage of existing parking (curbside and garage), pricing structures and location.

Develop a plan for installing public amenities along priority transportation corridors.

### IMPLEMENT

**ACT** Deploy accessibility improvements (e.g. upgraded sidewalk, crosswalks, accessible parking and ramps).

**ACT** Deploy end of trip facilities such as bike corrals, designated scooter parking, lockers and shelters.

**ACT** Enhance protection on existing lanes for bikes and scooters.

**ACT** Deploy changes in curb allocation to support and manage rideshare vehicles and last mile mobility services (e.g. scooters and bikeshare).

Locate destinations along priority transportation corridors for public amenities.

**ACT** Action to be addressed as part of the Austin Core Transportation (ACT) Plan

## WHY THIS MATTERS

Access to downtown is currently impeded by lack of viable alternative modes of transportation; therefore, many people need to drive and park their personal vehicles. This condition is exacerbated by congestion during rush hour and special events. The continued growth of downtown indicates a need to provide affordable parking and transportation options that will improve access for all Austinites. Creating a mobility network with a variety of options for people to get around (such as by car, bike, foot, scooter, bus, etc.) is critical to the long-term success of Project Connect.

# WELL CONNECTED AND EASY TO GET AROUND



## GOAL

A better designed and managed street grid reduces congestion, promotes access to a range of travel options and supports 24-hour downtown operation.

## OBJECTIVES

- Improve traffic, bike and pedestrian circulation
- Dedicated loading areas
- Protected bike lanes
- Expanded sidewalk network
- Better pedestrian signage

## POTENTIAL ACTIONS

### DISCOVER

Identify underutilized streets, alleys, and spaces that could be used for other functions.

Identify streets and intersections that are underperforming in terms of traffic flow and safety.

Consider strategies for reducing congestion, improving circulation and develop toolkit of solutions that can be used.

Identify key gateway corridors and intersections with surrounding communities and prioritize for improvement.

Investigate transportation, public realm improvement and activation opportunities around light rail transit stops.

Explore 'Rail-to-Trail' connectors that link bike and pedestrian trails and pathways to rail lines, providing first and last-mile connections.

### PLAN

Develop a curb use plan that can adapt curb usage depending on time of day to better support deliveries, parking, drop-off, biking and pedestrians.

Develop a downtown street improvement plan to target problem congestion areas and identify design or management improvements.

**ACT** Develop a gateway corridor plan and identify enhancements to improve travel along these routes.

**ACT** Develop a plan for the 'The Urban Greenbelt' concept identified in the Downtown Vision, including closing trail gaps and improving signage.

Establish station area activation plans around each of the proposed light rail transit stops that incorporate equitable transit oriented development principles.

### IMPLEMENT

Use innovative technology to help manage traffic conditions through signal improvements, real-time signage and centralized traffic control systems.

**ACT** Reorganize the street network to improve traffic flow, respond to changes in the wider road network and allow re-purposing of underutilized streets to other functions (e.g. wider sidewalks, street closures, bike lanes, parking, bus corridors).

Pilot autonomous and on demand vehicles to transport people around the downtown.

**ACT** Deploy a gateway corridor plan.

**ACT** Deploy a plan for 'The Urban Greenbelt' concept.

**ACT** Pilot local routes identified in Downtown Circulator Study aligned with Project Connect proposals.

**ACT** Action to be addressed as part of the Austin Core Transportation (ACT) Plan

## WHY THIS MATTERS

The existing street grid provides numerous opportunities to enhance access to downtown and improve the flow and distribution of traffic. During street closures, such as for construction or events, segments of the grid can be switched on/off to redistribute traffic accordingly. Innovative technologies that go beyond traffic signal coordination and one-way systems can significantly improve traffic flow during peak periods. The grid also provides a simple system for vehicular and pedestrian navigation.

# GREATER AND GREENER MOBILITY EXPERIENCES



## GOAL

A downtown street network that supports vibrant street life as well as safe, healthy and environmentally-friendly travel options.

## OBJECTIVES

- Design standards that ensure individual streetscape elements are durable, functional, beautiful and well-coordinated
- Activated streetscapes
- Achieved 'streets for people'
- Integrated arts, culture and design opportunities to make the mobility experience more fun, engaging, and meaningful

## POTENTIAL ACTIONS

### DISCOVER

Develop a downtown greening toolkit identifying opportunities for integrating trees, rain gardens and other planting into the streetscape.

Collect data on pedestrian, bicycle and micro-mobility movement in downtown and undertake an accessibility audit to determine problem areas.

Undertake lighting audit of the downtown to identify under lit and potentially unsafe areas.

Investigate infrastructure requirements to support electric and low emission vehicles in the downtown.

Analyze policies and develop recommended changes to relevant codes, standards and criteria manuals.

### PLAN

**ACT** Co-create a plan for the I-35 Cap and Stitch, including public space and corridor improvement initiatives.

**ACT** Update 'Great Streets Master Plan' accounting for downtown's unique places and districts and incorporate lessons learned from the program.

**ACT** Develop downtown electric vehicle charging plan.

**ACT** Update codes, standards and criteria manuals to reflect priorities and enable strategies to be implemented.

**ACT** Develop design standards that are specific to and appropriate for downtown transportation infrastructure and streetscapes.

### IMPLEMENT

**ACT** Support new emission-reduction programs for private and commercial vehicles.

**ACT** Address utility infrastructure issues that impact street quality and maintenance.

**ACT** Pilot lighting and safety amenities strategy on key mobility corridors.

**ACT** Install electric vehicle charging hubs.

**ACT** Action to be addressed as part of the Austin Core Transportation (ACT) Plan

## WHY THIS MATTERS

As the availability of sustainable public and private transportation options grow, there is a need to cater to their infrastructure demands (e.g. charging facilities and electrical capacity). There is also an opportunity to update and improve the 'Great Streets' program and its progress to date. Expanding the systems in place will better support the vibrancy, environmental quality, lifestyle and identity that downtown Austin represents.



# CLEAR COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATIVE ENGAGEMENT



## GOAL

Deploy smart communication strategies that inform users of available mobility options and provide insightful data on current mobility conditions.

## OBJECTIVES

- Enhanced communication of mobility amenities
- Improved education on alternative modes of transportation
- Incorporated real-time travel information

## POTENTIAL ACTIONS

### DISCOVER

Develop digital engagement strategy to demonstrate and communicate the walkability and bike-ability of downtown.

Investigate innovative and smart technologies that could support better travel management in the downtown.

Promote and encourage widespread use of the existing City of Austin ParkATX parking payment app.

### PLAN

**ACT** Develop digital and physical educational materials for active mobility and public transit networks.

**ACT** Develop Smart Downtown Plan identifying potential technology solutions and tools that are integrated with digital infrastructure and address data collection needs.

### IMPLEMENT

**ACT** Establish a real-time Downtown Mobility dashboard detailing information including congestion, closures, public transit and parking.

**ACT** Deploy downtown digital infrastructure improvements to support the Smart Downtown Plan.

**ACT** Deploy pilot programs for testing and refining new mobility technologies and downtown traffic management systems.

**ACT** Action to be addressed as part of the Austin Core Transportation (ACT) Plan

## WHY THIS MATTERS

There are numerous technologies and communication methods available to manage mobility in downtown more efficiently. In the downtown area projects, communication is critical to success during construction and operation. People need to understand and visualize each project's future benefits, the implementation process and the potential added value. Additionally, access and information of existing resources, such as parking, needs to be centralized to create a technology-enhanced system that everyone can access.

# COORDINATED PLANNING OF MAJOR PROJECTS



## GOAL

A coordinated planning and construction process for downtown maximizes opportunities to leverage project benefits while minimizing the impacts.

## OBJECTIVES

- Coordinated schedules for major projects
- Minimized disruption to downtown mobility and user experience
- Enhanced communications across stakeholders regarding the impacts of planning and construction on mobility

## POTENTIAL ACTIONS

### DISCOVER

Document major infrastructure projects in the downtown area with potential impacts or opportunities for downtown transportation.

Initiate contact between districts and neighborhoods adjacent to downtown to enhance cross-network infrastructure collaborations.

Undertake regular analysis of new and emerging planning studies and initiatives relevant to downtown mobility and respond where necessary in this vision document.

### PLAN

Develop a Construction Mitigation Plan to support and coordinate with downtown operations and major infrastructure and development projects.

Create a working group of mobility and infrastructure project leaders to identify points of collaboration on projects in the downtown area.

### IMPLEMENT

**ACT** Leverage mitigation improvements to build out long-term multi-modal infrastructure needs.

Establish a Project Management Office to oversee major improvement projects downtown.

**ACT** Action to be addressed as part of the Austin Core Transportation (ACT) Plan

## WHY THIS MATTERS

As the central hub of transportation, events, and business, the downtown area is critical to the everyday functions of Austin. Multiple major investments are currently underway or planned that will directly impact downtown mobility during construction and operation. It is crucial that all major infrastructure and development projects and their impacts on the network are coordinated to provide minimal disruption to the day-to-day operations of the downtown area. This is a once in a lifetime opportunity to rethink urban mobility in the city.

# DOWNTOWN AUSTIN ALLIANCE NEXT STEPS



## THE SELECTED INITIATIVES

The identified initiatives will address mobility concerns and opportunities downtown in the upcoming years and set the stage for future mobility initiatives.

## WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

Through engagement with Downtown Austin Alliance staff, the Place and Mobility committee, Downtown Austin Alliance Board members, and the Austin Transportation Department (ATD), the team identified key priority initiatives to be elevated as next steps following the completion of the Downtown Mobility Framework:

- » **Construction Mitigation Plan.** Develop a comprehensive Construction Mitigation Plan that supports and coordinates with downtown operations as well as major infrastructure and development projects. As part of this plan, conduct a multi-agency workshop to understand stakeholders' needs and concerns.
- » **Austin Core Transportation (ACT) Plan.** Partner with ATD to accomplish the overlapping initiatives and priorities of the ACT Plan and the Downtown Mobility Framework. Support and collaborate with ATD on initiative development and partnership opportunities moving forward.

Everyone can  
access downtown,  
when and how they  
want.



### ACCESSIBLE AND WELCOMING TO ALL

14 INITIATIVES TO COMPLETE



### WELL CONNECTED AND EASY TO GET AROUND

17 INITIATIVES TO COMPLETE



### GREATER AND GREENER MOBILITY EXPERIENCES

14 INITIATIVES TO COMPLETE



### CLEAR COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATIVE ENGAGEMENT

8 INITIATIVES TO COMPLETE



### COORDINATED PLANNING OF MAJOR PROJECTS

7 INITIATIVES TO COMPLETE

