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**Subject**

Joint Sustainability Committee Asks Mayor Adler and Council for Light Rail, Bike, Ped and Equity on the November Ballot

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Clean, cost-effective electric mass transit is needed to reduce the carbon footprint of the city, to improve the air quality, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions resulting from motor vehicle use, traffic and congestion. Voters deserve a transit option, and a new transportation choice on the November 2016 ballot.

On Wednesday, July 27, 2016 the City of Austin Joint Sustainability Committee JSC unanimously adopted a resolution requesting that the Austin City Council place on the November 2016 ballot funding for a **light rail minimum operable segment** and approval of a **citywide light rail system concept**. The resolution also requested ballot measures for funding the full build out of the bike plan, funding the completion of high and very high priority sidewalk segments, funding components in the corridor plans which support non-car modes, as well as fostering an equitable approach to prioritize transportation funding citywide.

These are the resolved clauses in the resolution unanimously supported by the JSC on a vote of 8-0:

*NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Joint Sustainability Committee recommends that the City Council pursue a 2016 mobility bond that achieves the following:*

- 1. Fully funds the Bicycle Master Plan, including "Tier 1" Urban Trails; and*
- 2. Fully funds all "very high" and "high" priority sidewalks in the forthcoming 2016 Sidewalk Master Plan; and*
- 3. Approves a comprehensive citywide system concept for light rail; and*
- 4. Provides funding for a minimum operable segment of light rail; and*
- 5. Funds strategic bike, pedestrian, and mass transit components of the Corridor Plans; and*
- 6. Ensures equitable distribution of mobility benefits and burdens from bond proceeds.*

The JSC grounded their resolution on light rail by citing that the **2015 Zandan Voices of the Community Poll** showed 66% support for a tax for building a rail project and that the **2015 MobilityATX Findings Report** proposed a light rail alignment that included the Guadalupe-North Lamar Corridor.

The Joint Sustainability Committee is the principal city body for matters related to conservation and sustainability and review city policies relevant to the Austin Community Climate Plan. The ACCP carries specific recommendations, including implementation of the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan's defined goals with regard to transportation. Those goals include supporting public transit, and an integrated transportation system that minimizes negative impacts on natural resources and that is affordable for all users. Along with an expanded transit network and increased transit use, the ACCP stresses the need for safe bicycle and pedestrian facilities with well-designed routes that provide connectivity throughout the greater Austin area.

This action follows a series of strong statements in support of light rail this year by the **Urban Transportation Commission (UTC)**. Members of the UTC are appointed by Mayor Adler and City Council. **The UTC passed a resolution unanimously on May 10, 2016 asking City Council to consider placing a light rail minimum operable segment on the November 2016 ballot.** The UTC is scheduled to take further action with regard to the proposed transportation bond at their meeting on August 9, 2016.

#### **About The Joint Sustainability Committee**

The Joint Sustainability Committee (JSC) was created and charged by Austin City Council Resolution No. 20150604-048 to advise City Council on matters related to conservation and sustainability and review city policies relevant to the Austin Community Climate Plan. The JSC may make recommendations to the Open Space, Environment and Sustainability Committee before final Austin City Council action on relevant policies or procedures.

The JSC has a multidisciplinary focus and is a keystone body for the commission structure of the City of Austin. It has membership appointed by the City Council, Austin Travis County Food Policy Board, Community Development Commission, Economic Prosperity Commission, Electric Utility Commission, Environmental Commission, Parks and Recreation Board, Planning Commission, Resource Management Commission, Urban Transportation Commission, Water Wastewater Commission, and the Zero Waste Advisory Commission.

#### **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**

July 27, 2016 Joint Sustainability Committee resolution for Light Rail MOS, Bike, Ped on the November Ballot 160727\_JSC\_Resolution\_on\_Light\_Rail-Mobility\_Bond.pdf

May 10, 2016 Urban Transportation Commission resolution for Light Rail MOS on the November Ballot 160510\_UTC\_Resolution\_Supporting\_Light\_Rail\_.pdf

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>

MobilityATX Findings Report pp 26-27 <https://mobilityatx.com/reports/findings.pdf>

Joint Sustainability Committee web page <https://www.austintexas.gov/jsc> City of Austin Seal:

[http://www.austintexas.gov/sites/all/themes/branded\\_site/images/coa\\_seal\\_trans.png](http://www.austintexas.gov/sites/all/themes/branded_site/images/coa_seal_trans.png)

Austin City Council Resolution No. 20150604-048

<http://www.austintexas.gov/edims/document.cfm?id=234102>

Austin Community Climate Plan

[http://www.austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Sustainability/FINAL\\_-\\_OOS\\_AustinClimatePlan\\_061015.pdf](http://www.austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Sustainability/FINAL_-_OOS_AustinClimatePlan_061015.pdf)

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