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Subject

Sometimes the Highest Form of Leadership is the Ability to Listen - Council to Consider Mobility Bond Thursday

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

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

Bobby Levinski, Transit Advocate, 512-636-7649 robert.levinski@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

The Central Austin CDC has developed ballot language for **adding a \$400 million starter line Light Rail project** to the current **\$720 million corridors mobility bond** proposal. Together, these two proposals would present the voters with \$1.12 billion in transportation projects on the November ballot. There is a precedent for a similar level of funding request. In 2014, Austin City Council found both the political will and the bonding capacity to unanimously recommend a \$1 billion transportation ballot measure. Given the strong polling of the \$400 million Guadalupe-N Lamar Light Rail project, and the high level of support Mayor Adler has garnered for his \$720 million corridors proposal, they have a very high probability of success in November. This summer, [Seattle's Sound Transit put a \\$54 billion light-rail plan on the ballot](#). If Austin is serious about solving its mobility challenges, it's not time to just "Go Big." It's time to "Go Bigger."

This ballot language provides council with a turnkey amendment language as the structure conforms entirely with ordinance 20140807-017, which sent Proposition 1 to the ballot in August 2014. The general provisions have been redacted to facilitate integration with the main election ordinance, and specific values needed from the Capital Planning Office to complete the ordinance have been left blank. The Light Rail ballot language was delivered to City Council last week.

The Guadalupe-North Lamar minimum operable segment (MOS) is first step to build a citywide light rail system will be an enduring legacy of this Council and a transformative investment in the future of our great city.

Days ago, Mayor Adler and City Council members received 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 held last week, 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.

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. 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 would be more successful unbundled from other modes.

The poll shows 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. The full proposal can be found [here](#).
- 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. 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 1,293 ordinary Austinites saying "[I want to ride light rail on Guadalupe-N Lamar!](#)"
- The MOS proposal incorporates the lessons learned from the 2014 referendum. 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, to give Austin its most inclusive, unfettered voice on rail.
- A poll of likely voters cross tabbed by district, which Mayor Adler requested from our group in a meeting on June 15th, which shows that the Guadalupe-North Lamar Light Rail project leading by 29 points.
- Draft ordinance language and ballot language for the inclusion of the Guadalupe-North Lamar Light Rail project in the 2016 mobility bond election.

There is no cost, or no political risk, for City Council to do the right thing, to - put this proposal on the ballot and let the people decide. Sometimes the highest form of leadership is the ability to listen.

Among the members of our grassroots coalition are experienced transit professionals with the track record for positive political advocacy that are ready to make the case for rail on its own merits.

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: A New Proposal for 2016

http://centralaustincdc.org/transportation/austin_light_rail.htm

Light Rail Ballot Language and Ordinance PROPOSITION_TWO_Ordinance_rev04.pdf

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>

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