

Capital Metro's All Systems Go plan



After light rail's defeat in 2000, Capital Metro took a multifaceted approach to the city's mass transportation needs.

Based on input from citizens and planners, Capital Metro devised the All Systems Go Plan, which integrates rail with buses and other forms of public transit.

The MetroRail was voted in as part of the All Systems Go plan in 2004. The ballot language specifically included that the plan would not issue any bonds, increase or add new taxes.

"This is really a very modest start for a city of our size. People just need to remember that the success of the rail isn't just quantified by ridership," said Austin Mayor Will Wynn. "The MetroRail will change land use patterns in the corridors it cuts through and bring development that wouldn't be there otherwise."

Other parts of All Systems Go

Circulator service

This system aims to get people to and from the railway and major destinations such as the Mueller Redevelopment, malls and events centers. This part of the plan could lead to the introduction of streetcars.

Additional Rail

Although adding any more rail service would require an additional referendum, Capital Metro is considering adding more service along the MoKan railway, which runs north and south through Pflugerville and Manor.

Trails

Feasibility studies are currently being done to put pedestrian and bike trails along the railway.

MetroRail

Project funding: Through Capital Metro's existing one cent sales tax in Austin and Capital Metro serving areas, fare revenue and federal grants and funding

What is the cost: \$90 million in construction and facility expenses and \$6.4 million annual operating cost

When is the completion date: The rail will be operational in 2008

What tracks does it run on: Existing freight tracks owned by Capital Metro

How is it powered: Each vehicle is self-propelled by two diesel-electric engines

How many people does it seat: Each car seats 225 passengers (108 seated and 117 standing)

How many cars: Six now and possibly more in the future

How fast will it go: 70 mph in straightaway sections of the track. The trip from Leander to Downtown Austin will take about 55 minutes.

How many stations will there be: Nine with eight of those in Austin and one in Leander

For more information: www.allsystemsgo.capmetro.org

MetroRapid

What is it: MetroRapid is a type of bus that is longer, articulated and equipped with special technology that talks with bus stops to give riders a real-time estimate of arrival and talks to traffic signals to change stoplights and lower the number of stops.

What is the cost: There is no exact number yet, but the MetroRapid buses cost more because they are longer with more passenger capacity and a longer life span.

When is the completion date: Capital Metro is still in the procurement process for the buses, but the board is preparing to approve the first buses to serve the North Lamar/South Congress corridor by 2009 or 2010.

Regional Commuter Rail

While MetroRail is on time and on budget, Central Texas' other rail project has yet to find a source of funding.

Authorized by the Texas legislature, the Austin-San Antonio Intermunicipal Commuter Rail District brings together the Austin, San Antonio, Bexar County and Travis County governments to look at the reality of bringing a commuter rail to the region. The plan for funding has evolved since the project's inception, but the current plan is to fund half with federal money and half with contributions from cities and counties benefiting from the train.

"Central Texas needs this rail because in 20 years the Austin-San Antonio corridor will be as crowded as Dallas-Fort Worth, and they have 30 lanes in the corridor between the cities and we'll have six," said Alison Schulze, senior planner and administrator of the rail district. The rough plan for rail includes a stop in Northwest Austin at Mopac and Braker Lane.

Austin-San Antonio Intermunicipal Commuter Rail

Who sponsors it: Austin-San Antonio Intermunicipal Commuter Rail District

What is the cost: \$613 million

Start date: 2012, if funding and construction go forward on time. One of the large problems facing the project is that the Union Pacific Lines are currently running at full capacity, and about 80 percent of those trains are going through Texas on their way from Mexico to northern destinations. Union Pacific must divert some of this traffic to other lines before commuter rail can begin running.

How it's funded: Still being determined, but probably through government funds, developer sponsorship or through bonds sold by those cities along the route

Railroad line: Union Pacific, and in some areas of MoKan

For more information: www.asarail.com

Courtesy of JB Goodwin