



Austin Light Rail Phase 1 Project

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Draft Environmental Impact Statement

JANUARY 2025



Austin Light Rail Phase 1 Project Austin, Texas

Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Draft Section 4(f) Evaluation

Prepared by:

U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Transit Administration
and
Austin Transit Partnership

In cooperation with:

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Texas Department of Transportation

Pursuant to:

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (42 U.S.C. § 4332), Federal Transit Law (49 U.S.C. Chapter 53), related statutes (23 U.S.C. § 139 and 49 U.S.C. § 303), and regulations (40 CFR Parts 1500-1508, 23 CFR Part 771, and 23 CFR Part 774)

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Abstract

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and Austin Transit Partnership (ATP) prepared this Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Section 4(f) Evaluation (Draft EIS) for the Austin Light Rail Phase 1 Project (Project). FTA is the federal lead agency and ATP is the local Project sponsor.

The Project is a proposed 9.8-mile light rail transit branched line, including 15 stations, from points north, south, and east of downtown Austin, as well as an operations and maintenance facility, maintenance of way shops, and associated light rail equipment storage functions. The Draft EIS has been prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Section 4(f) of the U.S. Department of Transportation Act, Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, Section 6(f) of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act, the Clean Air Act, Chapter 26 of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Code, Executive Order 11988, Department of Transportation (DOT) Order 5650.2, and related laws.

The Draft EIS, including maps and drawings showing the Project location and design, and other information regarding the proposed Project, evaluates two alternatives: a No Build Alternative and a Build Alternative (the Project), as well as six Design Options. In accordance with NEPA, the Draft EIS evaluates the potential effects of the Project, Design Options, and No Build Alternative on communities and the environment, including any acquisitions and displacements, and identifies the measures that ATP would implement to avoid, minimize, or mitigate the adverse effects of the Project and Design Options. The Project would involve action in a floodplain. The Draft EIS evaluates the potential impacts of this action and identifies measures to avoid, minimize, or mitigate any adverse effects, in accordance with Executive Order 11988 and DOT Order 5650.2. The document also presents preliminary determinations made by FTA regarding impacts and includes proposed Section 4(f) *de minimis* impact findings for parkland and historic properties. A *de minimis* impact under Section 4(f) is one where the partial use of a resource is needed by a public transportation project, but the use would not negatively affect the features, activities, or attributes of the property. Additionally, the Draft EIS concludes that the Project is in conformity with the Clean Air Act because analysis shows that the Project would not cause or contribute to any violations of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards.

Public comments are invited on all aspects of the Draft EIS, including the Section 4(f) and Section 6(f) analyses, findings related to actions in a floodplain, environmental impacts, proposed mitigation measures, and conformity with applicable regulations. The Draft EIS is available for public review on ATP's website (www.atptx.org), and a hard copy of the Draft EIS is available for review Monday through Friday between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. at the following locations:

- Austin Transit Partnership at 203 Colorado Street, Austin, TX 78701
- Austin Central Library at 710 W. Cesar Chavez Street, Austin, TX 78701
- Carver Library at 1161 Angelina Street, Austin, TX 78702
- Montopolis Recreation and Community Center at 1200 Montopolis Drive, Austin, TX, 78741
- Ruiz Library at 1600 Grove Boulevard, Austin, TX, 78741
- Twin Oaks Library at 1800 S. 5th Street, Austin, TX, 78704

The Draft EIS will be circulated for a 60-day public review and comment period beginning on Friday, January 10, 2025, and ending on March 11, 2025. All testimony and written comments must be received on or before 11:59 p.m. on Tuesday, March 11, 2025, to be included in the official record.

How to Comment

- Comment now online at www.atptx.org.
- Send an email to input@atptx.org.
- Call 512-710-2100 and leave a voicemail.
- Mail a comment to 203 Colorado Street, Austin, TX, 78701.
- Attend an in-person public hearing.

Interested persons should send written comments to Attn: Austin Transit Partnership – DEIS Public Comment, 203 Colorado Street, Austin, Texas, 78701. If comments are provided via email, please include “Austin Light Rail Phase 1 – Draft EIS” in the subject line, attach comments in Microsoft Word format, and include the commenter’s United States Postal Service mailing address. All comments are public records and may be publicly posted; do not transmit private information.

Additional Information

Spanish language translation services will be offered at the public hearings. If you need additional interpretation or translation services, or you are a person with a disability who requires an accommodation to review the Project materials or submit information, please contact Sophie Petkus at Sophie.Petkus@atptx.org at least 3 business days prior to the meeting.

If you have any other questions or concerns, please contact ATP at input@atptx.org.