



Austin's Project Connect: Review of Transit Project Governance and Leadership Scope of Work • December 2021

Summary

The Eno Center for Transportation will conduct stakeholder outreach and prepare a research report that will evaluate the opportunities, drawbacks, and best practices associated with both independent and joint leadership models and any variations thereof for ATP and delivering Project Connect in Austin, Texas. To do so, Eno will apply its innovative thinking and industry expertise on transit project delivery, governance, and leadership to create an in-depth review of foreign and domestic approaches to institutional governance. Eno will prepare a document and presentation summarizing these findings to the Austin Transit Partnership Board for their consideration.

Background

The Central Texas region is about to embark on Project Connect, a multi-billion-dollar build out of a new network of light rail. To ensure the success of this generational investment of taxpayer dollars, stakeholders and community members are looking for feedback on the region's approach to transit leadership and governance. Austin Transit Partnership (ATP) was set up to be the independent local government corporation charged with designing, constructing, and implementing Project Connect. Capital Metro, the existing transit operator in the region, and the City of Austin oversee the governance of ATP.

Capital Metro and ATP also share leadership, including an executive director. This is a change from some of the community's initial understanding that ATP, the City of Austin, and Capital Metro would be three, independently-led organizations participating in the delivery of this program. The validity of this model and, if kept, ways to properly maintain it are central to current questions about the future governance and leadership of ATP. While there is no single way to deliver a transit mega-project, domestic and international best practices can inform the structure of governance and leadership in Austin to enable timely and cost-effective delivery of Project Connect.

Eno proposes a 8-step process for evaluating the advantages and disadvantages of both independent and joint leadership models for the Austin Transit Partnership and to provide the ATP Board clear direction on best practices and options on which to base their future decisions. Eno will engage with staff, community members, and other stakeholders in Austin to determine their values and perspectives. This will be supplemented with examples from regions around the world that have varying approaches to leadership and governance. Eno

will present the findings of the report at the March 2022 ATP Board meeting and create a final report that ATP can publish on its website.

Research Approach

Eno will apply its innovative method for outreach, research, and evaluation to create a comparative analysis of governance and leadership approaches for delivering transit projects. Eno's work is rooted in pragmatic practices, interconnected across policy areas, and collaborative in approach.

Task 1: Participate in project kickoff meeting

Eno staff will participate in a project kickoff meeting in Austin at the beginning of the contract to meet key staff and Board members, discuss the specifics of the approach, and start planning the specifics of the community engagement components of this work (Tasks 3 and 4).

Outcomes: In-person participation in kickoff meeting

Timeline: Mid December, 2021

Task 2: Prepare governance overview memo

Eno research consistently shows that good institutional governance is critical to the success of public transit capital project delivery (see list of relevant publications below). Each region has taken a slightly different approach, with varying outcomes. The Seattle region created Sound Transit, independent from King County Metro, to plan and deliver their light rail network over the past 20 years. Los Angeles has used independent construction authorities as well as an in-house division at Los Angeles Metro to deliver major projects. The Gateway Development Corporation was created to deliver the Gateway program in New York and New Jersey. Madrid and Copenhagen both set up independent public corporations to deliver their major subway projects, while Paris has used both in-house project delivery with a regional public corporation, RATP, and a nationally-owned independent authority for building the Grand Paris Express.

Understanding the different approaches to governance will help develop the questions that the Austin Transit Partnership needs to determine its own optimal institutional arrangement. This task will create a background document that provides context for a range of different approaches, including a discussion of conflicts that could arise under certain approaches. To the extent necessary or possible, this analysis could be supplemented with analysis from law firms on contract with ATP with experience representing the transit agencies and independent authorities selected.

As part of the document, Eno will include a high-level overview of 4 domestic examples and 4 international examples of governance approaches. The purpose of the document will be to set a baseline understanding of the different approaches to governance. It will not be to analyze or evaluate the effectiveness of each approach, but rather to help provoke questions from

Austin stakeholders in Task 3 and Task 4. ATP staff will distribute the document to relevant stakeholders.

Outcomes: Governance background paper ready for public distribution
Timeline: 2 weeks prior to Task 3 public meeting

Task 3: Participate in ATP governance public meeting

Eno staff will travel to Austin in late January/early February 2022 (exact dates to be determined) to participate in a public meeting. This meeting will serve as a public forum to present the Task 2 findings and then determine the types of questions that Austin leaders, community members, and other stakeholders need to know when they are evaluating the governance and leadership of ATP. Candidate questions for the discussion include:

- What are ways ATP's governance and leadership structure can honor the contract with the voters in delivering the Project Connect Program?
- How has the first year of implementation of Project Connect rolled out? How does that compare to the expectations prior to the November 2020 election?
- How do you view institutional independence? Is it important to you?

Eno will be responsible for presenting the background information, answering questions, participating in the discussion, and taking notes. ATP staff will be responsible for leading the overall meeting, securing a venue, and inviting participants.

If needed, Eno will participate in a secondary, virtual, weekend public meeting to capture perspectives unable to attend the in-person public meeting.

Outcomes: 15-minute presentation with Q&A
Internal notes that bring out key takeaways and questions from the community
Timeline: January/February 2022

Task 4: Meet with key stakeholders in Austin Region

During the January/February 2022 trip to Austin, Eno staff will be available to meet with Austin stakeholders over a 3-day period. Following the community engagement process described in the December 2021 board meeting, Eno will meet one-on-one or with groups (as determined by ATP in coordination with Eno) with members of the Community Advisory Committee (CAC), technical advisory committees (TACs), ATP Board Members, ATP staff and leadership, key stakeholders, and other individuals recommended by ATP. Eno staff will take notes, but the meetings will not be directly or indirectly attributable to specific individuals to enable interviewees to be candid with their responses. Eno proposes that the interviews take place in an independent location and be accessible both virtually and in person as requested by stakeholders.

The goal is to get individual perspectives on the approach to institutional governance in the region and the leadership model it is currently working with. Eno will ask questions similar to those posed in the Task 3 public meeting(s). The outcome of these discussions and the Task 3

public meeting(s) will provide more clarity on how to structure the questions for Task 6 and will inform the final report.

Eno will be responsible for conducting the interviews, taking notes, and summarizing the takeaways. ATP staff will secure the venue for conducting the interviews, arranging technology as necessary, and scheduling.

Outcomes: In-person or virtual meetings with key stakeholders in the Austin region, including internal notes

Timeline: January/February 2022

Task 5: Discuss leadership and governance roles with peer regions

Eno will interview current and past leadership (including, where possible, chief executives and Board leadership) involved with 3 domestic examples and 3 international examples of project governance, leadership, and project delivery. Using input from ATP staff, Eno will select the case studies, identify interviewees, and conduct virtual interviews with current and former leadership and other stakeholders in each region to get their perspectives on best practices and lessons learned for institutional governance and leadership. Candidate questions, as well as others given to us through the Task 3 and Task 4 community engagement, include:

- How can governance approaches risk or improve Austin's ability to maintain the delivery dates and sequence?
- How can governance approaches risk or improve Austin's ability to secure funding?
- What protocols do you use to ensure proper implementation of the recommended governance structure?
- How do you incorporate the risks and benefits on technical, operational readiness and future maintenance requirements?
- How do you mitigate risk of the program based on recommended leadership structure?
- Do you share leadership? Do you know of similar programs where shared leadership was the success (or the detriment) of the program? What conflicts arose?
- Based on the research of successful or unsuccessful similar programs, what are leadership elements that could be improved upon? What are the lessons learned?

Eno will also consider the following Key Factors when conducting the case study research, listed below for reference and detailed in the December 2021 ATP Board Resolution. Given the short timeline for this work, full answers to these Key Factors might need to be the subject of future analysis.

- Accountability.
- Partnership with the City of Austin and Capital Metro.
- Innovation and Industry Best Practices.
- Financing for Project Connect.
- Legal Considerations.
- Contract Risk.

- Community Participation.
- Equity and Anti-Displacement.
- Operational Readiness and Maintenance.
- Executive Director Recruitment.

Similar to Task 4, Eno staff will take notes but the interviews will be off the record to enable interviewees to be candid with their responses. Eno will incorporate the feedback from these interviewees into the Task 6 draft report.

Outcomes: Governance and leadership report section with leadership insights
 Timeline: February 2022

Task 6: Draft report for ATP Board with best practices and options

Eno will combine the results from tasks 2-6 into a draft report to share with the ATP Board and staff. The report will include an overview of the issue, a description of the current governance and leadership structure for Project Connect (Task 2), a summary of the feedback from the community engagement (Task 3 and 4), a review of best practices from other regions (Task 5), and a summary of the best practices and options, including the pros and cons of such options.

The report will not make a specific recommendation but lay out the information the ATP Board will need to inform their final decision regarding the leadership structure for ATP. The report will, at a minimum, address each of the questions ten outlined in Task 3 and Task 5.

Outcomes: Draft report for distribution to ATP Board
 Timeline: 1 week prior to March 2022 Board Meeting

Task 7: Present at March meeting of ATP Board

Eno staff will travel to Austin for the March 2022 Board Meeting to present the findings of the report and engage in a dialogue with board members.

Outcomes: Present findings, answer questions
 Timeline: March 2022 Board Meeting

Task 8: Finalize report for posting on ATP website

Based on feedback from the ATP Board meeting, Eno will make changes to the report and format it as a white paper that can be released and posted on the ATP website.

Eno reserves the right to repurpose and republish any or all of the report as part of future publications.

Outcomes: Deliver a final white paper ready for public consumption
 Timeline: Within a month of the March 2022 Board Meeting

Budget and Timeline

Eno proposes a fixed-cost fee of \$150,000 to complete the above work inclusive of all Eno staff time and travel expenses. ATP agrees to conduct the tasks listed above and cover the costs associated with venues and or other meeting costs.

Eno will meet the deadline of the March 2022 board meeting for the draft report and presentation, and will have the final report ready within a month.

About Eno

The Eno Center for Transportation is an independent, non-partisan think-tank that promotes policy innovation and leads professional development in the transportation industry. As part of its mission, Eno seeks continuous improvement in transportation and its public and private leadership in order to increase the system's mobility, safety, and sustainability.

The leader in its field for nearly a century, Eno provides government and industry leaders with timely research and a pragmatic, fact-based voice on policy issues. Eno publishes rigorous, objective analyses on the problems facing transportation and provides ideas for and a clear path toward possible solutions. As an objective convener, Eno brings impartial research as well as a forum for multiple stakeholders and interest groups to voice their concerns and recommendations. Based on research, convening, and analysis, Eno serves as an unbiased, expert source of information on provocative transportation topics many of which have not been examined with academic rigor or independence.

Eno is the right organization to undertake this work. Eno is the only policy research organization that analyzes transportation in the service of broad goals (economic, social, environmental), across multiple levels of government (federal, state, local), sectors of transportation (highways, transit, aviation, maritime), and constituencies (corporate, civic, advocacy, finance.) Much of our previous work is applicable to this project which will build on Eno's recent body of independent and rigorous research and policy development on transit and transportation governance, including:

- Getting to the Route of It: The Role of Governance in Regional Transit, 2015.
- Saving Time and Making Cents: A Blueprint for Building Transit Better, 2021.
- Transit Reform for Maryland: New Models for Accountability, Stability, and Equity, 2020.
- Reforming Americas Transportation System, 2019.
- Delivering Better Outcomes: Recommendations to Improve the Governance and Oversight of DC Circulator and Streetcar, 2019.
- The Need for Regional Transportation Governance in Tampa Bay, 2017.
- A Bid for Better Transit: Improving Service with Contracted Operations, 2017.
- A Budding Model: Los Angeles's Flower Street Bus Lane, 2021.
- UpRouted: Exploring Microtransit in the United States, 2018.
- Tools for a Smoother Ride: Managing Rail Assets and Leveraging Competition, 2018.

- **Mobility Lessons Learned: A Summary of the MOD Pilots in the Los Angeles and Puget Sound Regions, 2021.**