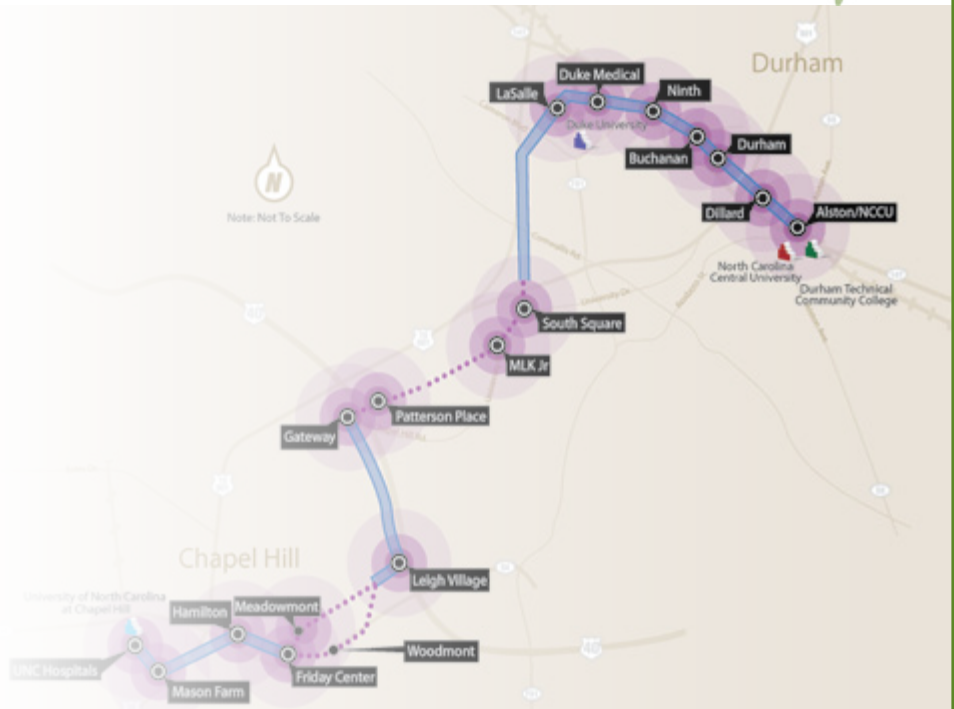


Our Transit Future

Triangle Regional Transit Program

Durham-Orange Light Rail Transit Project: Officials Briefing



Below: Conceptual Transit-Oriented Development near Durham Station





Ellen Reckhow
Chair, Board of Trustees
Triangle Transit

Our Transit Future

Triangle Regional Transit Program



Honorable Elected Federal, State and Local Officials,

I am contacting you to share information about the Triangle Regional Transit Program (TRTP) as we embark on a very important step – the scoping phase of the Durham-Orange Light Rail Transit (D-O LRT) Project. As you know, we have spent the last 18 months in an intensive study of the best way to connect Durham and Chapel Hill with a fixed guideway transit option. This project is being undertaken by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), as the lead Federal agency, and Triangle Transit, the local sponsor, in partnership with the Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO).

During the scoping phase, we will actively consult with the public, elected officials and government agencies on the issues to be addressed in the federal environmental review process. The attached document describes the project and highlights opportunities for you and your constituents to participate in the scoping process.

You are invited to an Officials Briefing and listening session where the project team will present the corridor, technology, details, and timeline, and address your questions. You will have the opportunity to comment at this meeting and until June 18, 2012.

Date: May 3, 2012
Time: 10:00 A.M. – 12:00 Noon
Location: The Durham Armory, 212 Foster Street, Durham, NC 27722
Presenters: Triangle Transit and project team
RSVP: online at www.ourtransitfuture.com

The Triangle Regional Transit Program, led by Triangle Transit, will build the D-O LRT Project and work with area transit partners to expand bus service in Durham and Orange counties. This is an important investment that will provide high capacity transit service between the University of North Carolina Hospitals in Chapel Hill and Alston Avenue in east Durham, connecting the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Duke University, regional medical centers, downtown Durham, North Carolina Central University, and other activity centers, as well as thousands of residents and workers along the corridor. It will likely become a magnet for growth as new buildings are developed near transit stations, putting people back to work in the real estate and construction trades and enabling companies to establish their business on the transit line. This is a sustainable way to grow our economy and will help us preserve open space.

We have experienced great public participation with this project, with more than 1,100 people attending public workshops and more than 74,000 unique visits to the project website. More importantly, Durham County residents voted in favor of a November 2011 referendum with 60 percent supporting a one-half cent sales tax for transit. A similar transit sales tax referendum is under consideration in Orange and Wake counties.

We offer this Briefing Packet for your review and consideration. I welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss these issues and others in our collective future. Please feel free to contact either General Manager David King or Director of Communications and Public Affairs Damien Graham at 919-485-7424 to ask questions or request additional information. I invite you to join me on May 3, 2012, from 10:00 A.M. -12:00 Noon for a very important briefing about this project.

Sincerely,

Ellen Reckhow
Chair, Board of Trustees
Triangle Transit

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Updated material with links to more detailed information may be found at:
www.ourtransitfuture.com

How to Get Involved & Submit Comments

In Person:	Attend the Workshops
Online:	www.ourtransitfuture.com
By email:	info@ourtransitfuture.com
By mail:	TRTP P.O. Box 530 Morrisville, NC 27560
By phone:	1-800-816-7817

Deadline to Submit Comments : June 18, 2012

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Introduction

Triangle Transit and area partners have been working together on expanded transit service. A component of this is called Our Transit Future, the Triangle Regional Transit Program (TRTP).

This briefing highlights the evolution of the TRTP from previous concepts and summarizes the current Durham–Orange Light Rail Transit (D-O LRT) Project, anticipated benefits and costs, and level of local and regional cooperation and support for the project.

Proposed transit expansion in Durham and Orange counties will include:

- ▶ Expanded bus coverage
- ▶ Increased bus frequency on high performance routes
- ▶ 17 miles of double track light rail service between Durham and UNC Chapel Hill

The Triangle Region is now home to 1.5 million residents with an additional million people expected by 2035. With the expected growth, we will experience high levels of traffic congestion. The D-O LRT Project was developed to help serve some of these growing mobility needs.

The Durham-Orange LRT Project will provide connections to North Carolina Central University, downtown Durham, Duke University, Duke University Medical Center, Durham Veterans Administration Medical Center, the Friday Center, UNC Hospitals and several park-and-ride lots. Convenient connections will be made to Amtrak, local, regional, and intercity buses in downtown Durham.

The trains will be electricified light rail, similar to the Lynx line connecting downtown Charlotte to points south along South Boulevard.

Travel time between the Alston Avenue/NCCU Station and UNC Hospitals will be approximately 35 minutes. The Project will generally follow the North Carolina Railroad Corridor, US 15-501, I-40, and NC 54.



Passengers board the Piedmont Amtrak service at the Durham Amtrak Station. Photo/Katy Warner, NCDOT

The total estimated costs for the Durham–Orange LRT Project is \$1.4 billion in 2011 dollars, not including finance charges.

Significant private real estate investments are anticipated with LRT in the Durham–Orange Corridor, providing new opportunities for employment, retail, residential, and institutional development.



Visualization of light rail over NC 54 at the Friday Center in Chapel Hill

Project Background & Purpose

Planning for fixed-guideway transit in the Triangle Region began over 20 years ago, and a number of transit studies have been conducted to advance the program. Recently:

- ▶ Between 2007 and 2009, Triangle Region stakeholders collaborated to identify a transit vision through the leadership of a Special Transit Advisory Commission (STAC). The vision was adopted into the 2035 Joint Long-Range Transportation Plan, which included LRT in the D-O Corridor.
- ▶ In 2009, the NC General Assembly passed House Bill 148 to enable local funding with a one-half cent sales tax, subject to referenda. Durham, Orange and Wake counties are now able to fund transit investments through local sales tax initiatives.
- ▶ In 2010, all fixed-guideway transit corridors were analyzed and implementation priorities were determined, including the D-O Corridor.
- ▶ In 2011, Durham County passed a transit sales tax referendum with 60 percent of the popular vote.

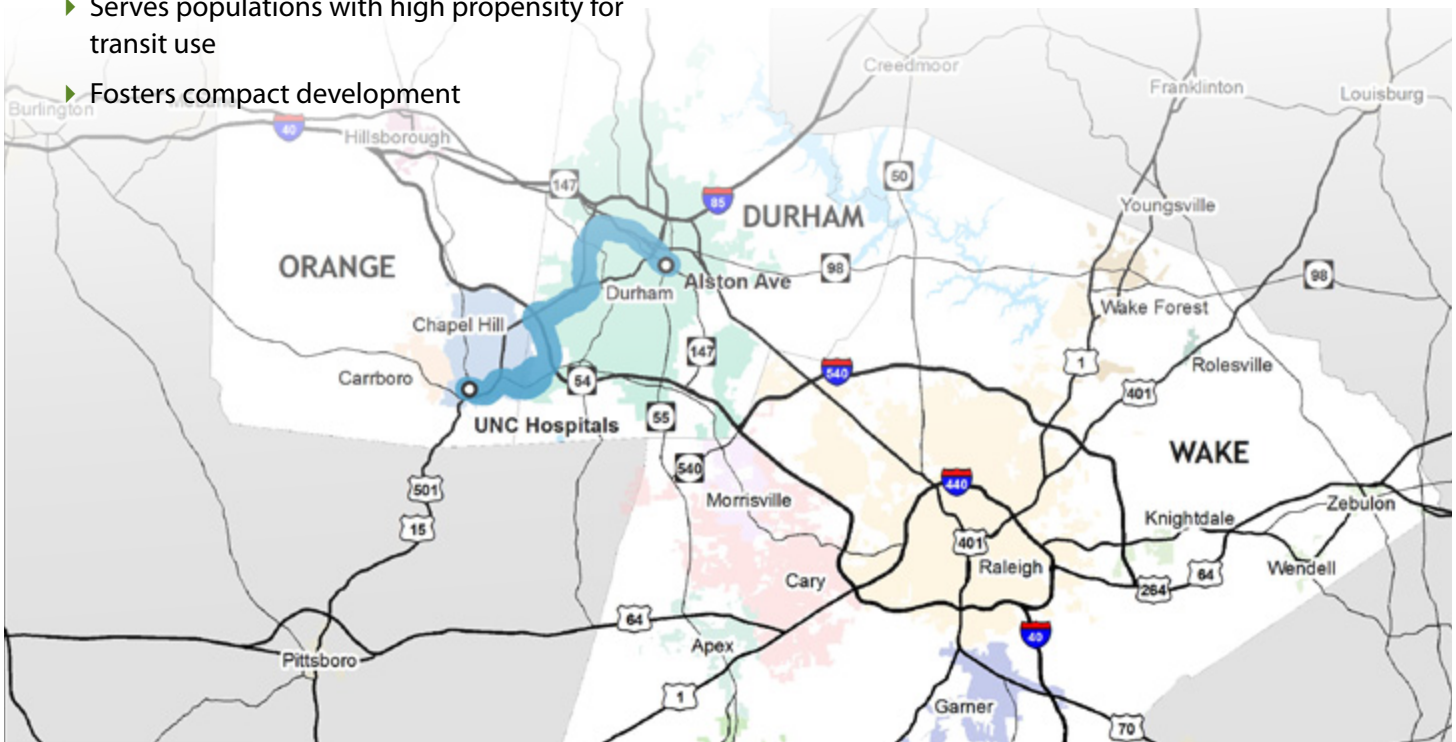
The Durham–Orange LRT Project will help provide a transit solution that:

- ▶ Enhances mobility
- ▶ Expands transit options
- ▶ Serves populations with high propensity for transit use
- ▶ Fosters compact development

Over the next 20 years, the area served by the Durham–Orange LRT Project will be home to an additional 56,000 residents and 81,000 new jobs. High levels of traffic congestion are now common and are anticipated to worsen. Daily person trips will increase 73 percent in the corridor. Additional tools are needed to address growing transportation challenges. The D-O Corridor needs a better multi-modal transportation system which offers travel choices – including improved bus and rail transit service.

Challenges to accommodating growth in the corridor include:

- ▶ Roads unable to accommodate increased travel demand
- ▶ Current limited capacity and availability of transit service
- ▶ Bus delays due to traffic congestion
- ▶ Limited transit service for university-related trips
- ▶ Limited service for transit-reliant people
- ▶ Existing transit infrastructure not supportive of adopted land use plans
- ▶ Existing transit infrastructure unable to serve economic development objectives



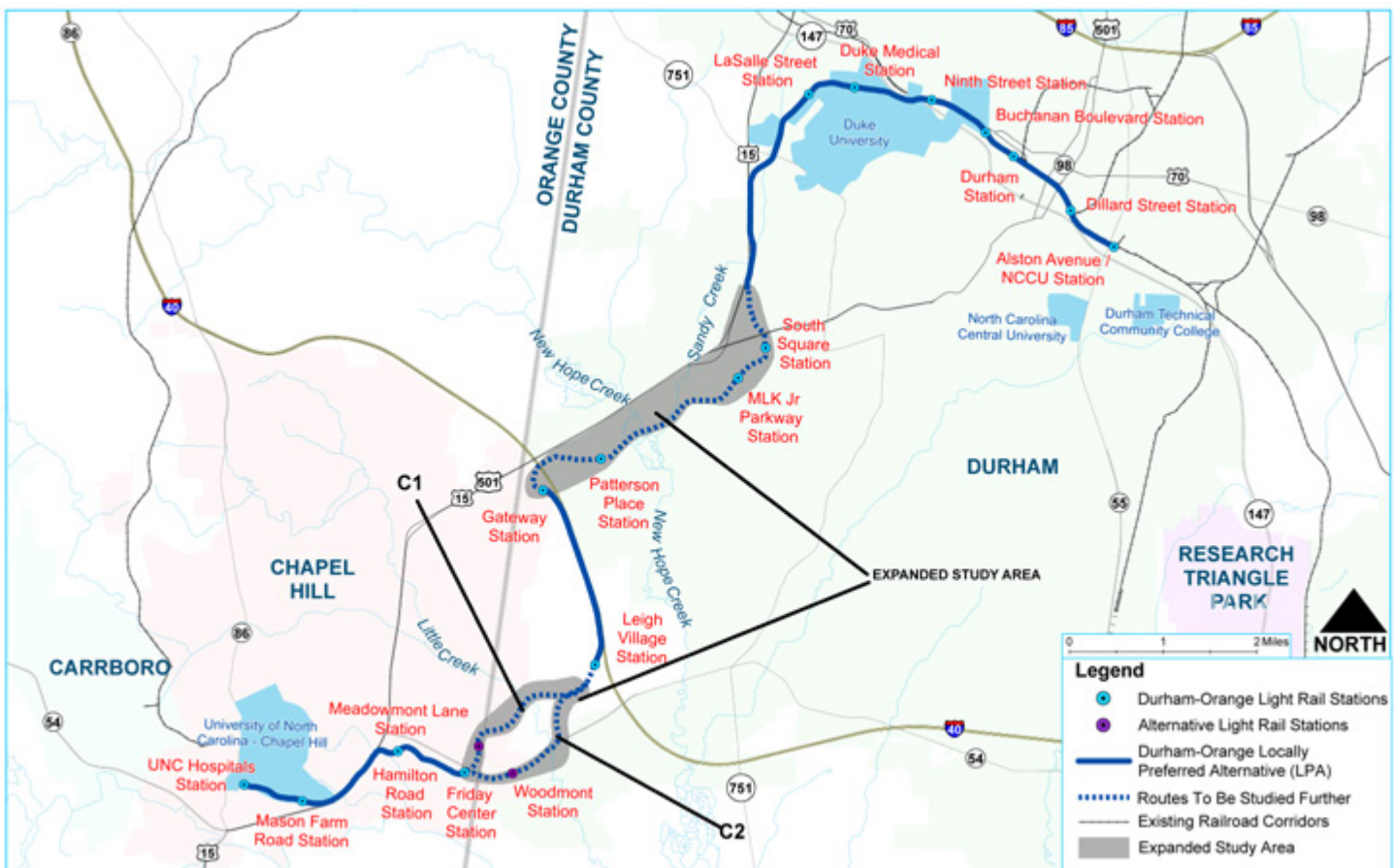
Alternatives Analysis

Through an Alternatives Analysis (AA), a range of alignments or routes were analyzed and the most promising transit alternatives were identified for further evaluation. The AA identified LRT as the transit technology that best satisfies the draft Purpose and Need for premium transit service in the Durham-Orange Corridor by enhancing mobility, expanding transit options between Durham and Chapel Hill, serving populations with a high propensity for transit use, and fostering compact development and economic growth.

While an exclusive-running Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) alternative has the potential to meet the project's draft Purpose and Need and is competitive in meeting most project goals, it does not perform as well as LRT in supporting compact development and economic

growth, travel time savings, and the cost effectiveness of expanding long-term transit capacity. Local and regional stakeholders place a high level of importance on economic development potential and focusing growth within the proposed transit corridor through transit-oriented development. LRT has a high level of demonstrated public support and a proven record of producing local and regional economic development benefits by enhancing and focusing growth within corridors. On February 8, 2012, the Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro MPO Transportation Advisory Committee unanimously adopted the LRT Alternative as the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA). The Alternatives Analysis findings are available on the project website at <http://www.ourtransitfuture.com/index.php/projects/durham-orange/>.

Proposed Durham-Orange Light Rail Transit Project



Technology

Light Rail Transit (LRT) is the recommended technology for the Durham–Orange Corridor. LRT uses lighter-weight electrically-powered rail cars operating in a fixed guideway. It typically operates trains of up to three cars and is well suited for closely-spaced stations. LRT operates on its own exclusive track within a railroad corridor or in city streets next to travel lanes.

The Durham–Orange LRT route, which is 17 miles long, generally follows the North Carolina Railroad Corridor, US 15-501, I-40, and NC 54. These roads are congested during peak periods and have a high demand for transit service. The LRT route features three travel markets which include trips throughout the day:

- ▶ Work and student trips to Duke University, Duke University Medical Center, the Durham VA Medical Center, and downtown Durham from the west
- ▶ Work and student trips to UNC and UNC Hospitals from the east
- ▶ Work and shopping trips from East Durham to retail stores along US 15-501

The Durham–Orange Corridor features significant special event attractions such as Durham Performing Arts Center, the Durham Bulls Athletic Park, Brightleaf Square, Ninth Street District, the Friday Center and the Dean Smith Center at UNC. Some of the most densely populated areas in the Triangle, including UNC’s main campus and Duke’s east campus, are within a short walk of the proposed rail stations. This rail corridor is well-positioned to capture some of the approximately 6,000 current daily bus riders from points east traveling to UNC.



Light Rail Transit in Seattle. Photo/Peter Ehrlich

Coordinating Bus and Rail Service



Quality bus and rail systems depend on each other. Expanded bus service -- improved scheduling, additional service and longer hours -- will be the first phase to be rolled out in the Triangle. The increase in bus service will be implemented by Triangle Transit and transit service provider partners to ensure this network connects to the rail lines as well.

As the region’s transit and ridesharing agency, Triangle Transit is working closely with elected and appointed officials, as well as staff from DATA, Chapel Hill Transit, Duke University Transit, the City of Durham, Durham County, Orange County and the towns of Chapel Hill, Carrboro, and Hillsborough, and the DCHC MPO to coordinate future service improvements and enhancements.

Proposed Funding Structure and Partnerships

Similar to other projects across the country, we will need a combination of funds to implement the Durham-Orange Light Rail Transit Project.

Federal Support

Federal support will be requested to supplement state and local funding. A New Starts application will be made to the Federal Transit Administration by Triangle Transit in August 2012. New Starts is a discretionary federal program that funds major transit projects. The federal funding share is anticipated to be 50 percent to match state and local shares.

State Support

State funding will be requested to supplement the federal and local shares. A future appropriation will be pursued to provide 25 percent of the project costs.

Local Support

When House Bill 148 was passed in 2009, it enabled Durham, Orange and Wake Counties to levy a one half-cent sales tax for public transportation, subject to referendum. In June 2011, the Durham County Board of Commissioners approved the Durham Bus and Rail Investment Plan and voted to put a one-half cent sales tax on the November 2011 ballot to fund public transportation improvements. On November 8, 2011 Durham County voters approved a one-half cent sales

tax, with more than 60 percent of voters in support of the measure. On February 8, 2012, the Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro MPO approved the D-O LRT Project as the Locally Preferred Alternative to be advanced for further study.

The Durham transit tax would to generate approximately \$19 million in 2013. If Orange County's transit tax is approved, it would generate approximately \$5 million in 2013.*

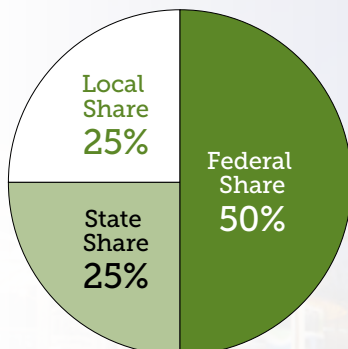
* Estimates from Durham and Orange County Finance Officers, Spring 2012

Regional Coordination

Transit planning is a collaborative process involving many regional partners in the Triangle. The results include:

- ▶ Regional Transit Vision, Special Transit Advisory Commission (2008)
- ▶ 2035 Joint Long-Range Transportation Plan (2009)
- ▶ Congestion Relief and Intermodal Transportation 21st Century Fund (HB 148) (2009)
- ▶ Triangle Regional Transit Program Transitional Analysis (2010)
- ▶ Durham County Bus and Rail Investment Plan (June 2011)
- ▶ Alternatives Analyses for Durham-Orange, Durham-Wake, and Wake corridors (2011)

Future Project Development Requests
\$1.4 billion (2011 dollars)



The Scoping Process

Scoping is the juncture at which open coordination with Federal, state, and local agencies, elected officials, project partners, and the public is conducted to identify and define the issues to be studied in detail through the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process.

Public input has been a key element in the development of the Durham–Orange LRT Project. A proactive, meaningful, and effective approach to soliciting public input has been used to reach a broad cross-section of the public, including local and regional agencies, transit operators, current transit users, minorities, and residents and employees in different localities.

Tools and Techniques

- ▶ Public Workshops and Open Houses
- ▶ Public Meetings and Traveling Exhibits
- ▶ Call-in line, postal mailing address, and email
- ▶ Public Presentations
- ▶ Opinion Surveys
- ▶ Project Website – www.ourtransitfuture.com
- ▶ Agency Coordination Meetings
- ▶ Steering Committee Meetings
- ▶ Email Updates
- ▶ Project Videos
- ▶ Social Media

Past Efforts

Nineteen public workshops have been held throughout the region. To date, more than 1,100 people have attended.

Next Step: Scoping

There are four scoping meetings. The Elected Officials Briefing and Listening Session will take place on May 3, 2012, from 10 A.M. to 12 Noon at the Durham Armory, which is located at 212 Foster Street in downtown Durham. The Scoping Information meeting for Regulatory Agencies will be held on May 2, from 1:00 to 3 P.M. at Extraordinary Ventures.

We hope you will encourage your constituents to participate in one of Public Workshops which are being held in Chapel Hill and Durham as listed below:

- ▶ **Public Workshop 1 – May 2 from 4:00 to 7:00 P.M. at Extraordinary Ventures in Chapel Hill**
- ▶ **Public Workshop 2 – May 3 from 4:00 to 7:00 P.M. at the Durham Armory**



Public Workshops will be held May 2 & 3, 2012.

May 2
Wednesday

**Durham–Orange
LRT Project Briefing
for Regulatory Agencies**

1:00 to 3:00 P.M.

Public Workshop
4:00 to 7:00 P.M.

Extraordinary Adventures
200 S. Elliott Rd., Chapel Hill

May 3
Thursday

**Durham–Orange
LRT Project Briefing
for Federal, State
and Local Officials**

10:00 A.M. to 12:00 Noon

Public Workshop
4:00 to 7:00 P.M.

Durham Armory
212 Foster St., Durham

Project Schedule

Following environmental scoping, an application will be made to the Federal Transit Administration for funding through the New Starts Program.

Transit projects that may be considered for Federal funding must follow the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Planning and Project Development process and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process. Upon completion of the D-O LRT Project scoping process and related FTA and NEPA requirements, authorization to begin Preliminary Engineering (PE) and preparation of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) will be sought from FTA.

As projects are developed and advanced through preliminary engineering, more in-depth information is developed about the design, cost, benefits, and potential environmental impacts and mitigation measures. FTA authorization is required to proceed with each phase.

Alignment options and/or alternative(s) may be eliminated after environmental impacts are documented and examined. After completion of the DEIS, the NEPA Preferred Alternative will be selected based on the evaluation of environmental considerations, determinations by regulatory agencies and comments received from the public and project participants. The project will then move into the Final EIS (FEIS) phase. Once the FEIS is complete and all NEPA and FTA requirements have been satisfied, FTA will issue a Record of Decision (ROD), thereby establishing completion of the environmental review process. Advancement to subsequent phases will depend on implementation priorities and available federal, state and local funding.

Thank you for your interest and continued support of the D-O LRT Project. We look forward to working with you on each phase of this project to build Our Transit Future.

