



## **Austin-San Antonio Regional Passenger Rail Project**

The Austin-San Antonio passenger rail project is an important priority in Central and South Texas to help alleviate the congestion and safety problems on I-35 due to extraordinary population growth and increased NAFTA traffic. The locally preferred alternative (adopted by the San Antonio and Austin MPOs in 2005) is a 112-mile regional passenger rail system located in the existing Union Pacific rail corridor for most of its length. Fifteen stations are planned along the route, which is anchored by the Austin and San Antonio metropolitan areas with additional stations in Schertz, New Braunfels, San Marcos, Kyle/Buda, Round Rock and Georgetown. The intercity rail operation will provide travel times competitive with, if not faster than, travel by automobile.

Economic development is also an important benefit of this project; a recent study conducted by the Austin-San Antonio Rail District estimates, if this project were implemented, personal income in the region could increase by \$20B over the next 30 years with state and local tax revenues increasing by \$2.3B. Additionally, the project will improve the safety of over 130 at-grade rail crossings along the existing freight railroad that goes through the centers of the cities along the corridor.

The capital cost of the project is estimated at \$613M (2006 dollars), with an annual operating cost of \$41M (2006 dollars) for the full service plan. Significant technical work has been completed for the regional passenger rail project, including:

- Conceptual Engineering
- Station Location Studies
- Station Economic Impact Analyses
- Capital and Operating Cost Estimates
- Operating Plans
- Ridership Studies
- Financial and Economic Benefits Studies

To ensure on-going local and regional coordination and collaboration, the Rail District is governed by a Board of Directors that represents local governments and transportation providers throughout the Austin-San Antonio Corridor. Jurisdictions and organizations represented on the Board:

- Cities: Austin, Georgetown, New Braunfels, San Antonio, San Marcos, Schertz
- Counties: Bexar, Hays, Travis, Williamson
- Transit Authorities: Alamo Regional Transit, Capital Metro, CARTS, VIA Metropolitan Transit
- MPOs: CAMPO, SA-BC MPO
- Business Communities: Austin, San Antonio (appointed by the respective City Councils)
- General Public: Austin, San Antonio (appointed by the Texas Transportation Commission)

### **Purpose and Need for the Project**

- Improve mobility throughout the Austin-San Antonio Corridor
- Improve safety in the I-35 corridor
- Maintain air quality status (Austin and San Antonio both near-non-attainment areas)
- Create a regional, seamless, multi-modal transportation system
- Provide a predictable, reliable travel choice
- Create economic development opportunities

## Objectives of the Regional Rail System

- Express and Local trains (travel time):
  - Express: 90 minutes, Austin CBD – San Antonio CBD
  - Local: 105 minutes, Austin CBD – San Antonio CBD
- Initial Operations:
  - 6 a.m. to 11 p.m.
  - Every 30 minutes during peak hours
  - Every 45 minutes during off-peak hours
- Passenger trains will have priority over freight trains
- Start service within LPA in 2011-2012

## Amtrak Feasibility Study

TxDOT and Amtrak are studying the potential for improving intercity passenger rail service in the Austin-San Antonio Corridor. The study will identify the improvements needed in the existing Union Pacific freight corridor to concurrently run passenger rail service. Because Amtrak has right of access to freight rail lines to provide intercity rail service, a partnership with Amtrak could provide early access to the freight corridor before UP's through freight is relocated. Preliminary results are expected in early 2009.

## Recent Accomplishments

### 2006

- Completed revenue forecasts for transportation infrastructure zones around rail stations
- Completed Seaholm station location study in downtown Austin in partnership with City of Austin and Capital Metro
- Executed interlocal agreement with VIA Metropolitan Transit for Westside Multimodal Center study of station location in downtown San Antonio
- Received federal FY06 appropriation to continue planning and engineering studies
- Completed financial analysis and developed local funding strategies
- Completed Phase 2 and Phase 3 ridership modeling
- Completed *Station Design Report*
- Completed *Conceptual Engineering Design Report*
- Conducted peer review of engineering cost estimates
- Completed 9 presentations to corridor jurisdictions' elected officials on the project's costs and benefits

### 2007

- Awarded federal metropolitan mobility funds from San Antonio-Bexar County MPO: \$10 million in FY11 and \$10 million in FY12
- Completed *Financial and Economic Benefits Study*
- Completed 20 presentations to corridor jurisdictions' elected officials and senior staff on project's costs and benefits
- Added three new members to Rail District: Hays County, cities of New Braunfels and Schertz
- Completed *Existing Conditions Report*
- Completed *Alternatives Analysis Report*
- Approved station location evaluation criteria and process
- Completed Westside Multimodal Center study of station location in downtown San Antonio
- Redesigned website and upgraded website functions
- Continued speakers bureau, made presentations to government agencies and civic organizations throughout the Austin-San Antonio corridor

**2008**

- Awarded federal metropolitan mobility funds from Capital Area MPO: \$5 million in FY09 and \$5 million in FY10
- Conducted meetings and discussions with Union Pacific executive-level staff on rerouting and exchange of existing right-of-way
- Assisted Texas Department of Transportation with launch of Amtrak Feasibility Study
- Completed high-level feasibility analysis of SH 130 corridor as possible future route for regional passenger rail service
- Investigated and pursued state funding through the Texas Emissions Reduction Program for Rail District members
- Executed agreement with Texas Department of Transportation to fund San Antonio Freight Study Phase 3
- Initiated branding services for Rail District, selected consultant team

**Regional Rail Route and Preliminary Station Locations**

