

# Virginia Street Bus RAPID Transit Extension

Reno, Nevada

Small Starts Project Development

(Rating Assigned November 2016)

## Summary Description

<b>Proposed Project:</b>	Bus Rapid Transit 3.2 Miles, 7 Stations
<b>Total Capital Cost (\$YOE):</b>	\$77.80 Million
<b>Section 5309 Small Starts Share (\$YOE):</b>	\$38.90 Million (50.0%)
<b>Annual Operating Cost (opening year 2019):</b>	\$0.34 Million
<b>Existing Corridor Ridership (Warranted):</b>	7,300 Daily Linked Trips
<b>Overall Project Rating:</b>	Medium-High
<b>Project Justification Rating:</b>	Medium
<b>Local Financial Commitment Rating:</b>	High

**Project Description:** The Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) of Washoe County proposes to construct a 1.8-mile extension to its existing bus rapid transit (BRT) service (the RAPID) operating in the Virginia Street corridor, from its existing northern terminus in downtown Reno to the University of Nevada, Reno (UNR). The project also includes upgrades to 1.4 miles of the existing BRT service, from downtown Reno south to the Midtown District. The project includes off-vehicle fare collection, traffic signal priority, real-time schedule information at stations, level boarding, two 60 foot electric articulated buses, and sidewalk and roadway improvements including construction of two roundabouts. Service is planned to be provided every 10 minutes in the weekday peak, 15 minutes in the weekday off-peak, and every 15 minutes on weekday evenings. On weekends, service is planned to operate every 12 minutes.

**Project Purpose:** The project will provide a critical link to UNR and improve transit service in a heavily urbanized corridor that is home to a large concentration of low-income persons and households without cars. The project is designed to maintain and increase transit ridership by offering higher frequency, faster, and more reliable service, along with safer and more convenient access to stations. The project will support local and regional planning goals to promote transit-oriented development along the Virginia Street corridor and around RAPID stations.

**Project Development History, Status and Next Steps:** The project entered Small Starts Project Development in September 2014. The RTC designated the project as the locally preferred alternative (LPA) in October 2015. The current LPA was adopted into the fiscally constrained long range transportation plan in February 2016. The RTC anticipates completing the environmental review process with the receipt of a Finding of No Significant Impact in 2017. The RTC anticipates receiving a Small Starts Grant Agreement in fall 2017 and starting revenue service in September 2019.

## Locally Proposed Financial Plan

<u>Source of Funds</u>	<u>Total Funds (\$million)</u>	<u>Percent of Total</u>
<b>Federal:</b>		
Section 5309 Small Starts	\$38.90	50.0%
FHWA Flexible Funds (Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality)	\$5.70	7.3%
Section 5307 Formula Funds	\$5.04	6.5%
FHWA Flexible Funds (Surface Transportation Program)	\$2.86	3.7%
<b>Local:</b>		
RTC Local Fuel/Sales Tax	\$25.30	32.5%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$77.80</b>	100.0%

**NOTE:** The financial plan reflected in this table has been developed by the project sponsor and does not reflect a commitment by DOT or FTA. The sum of the figures may differ from the total as listed due to rounding.

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***LAND USE RATING: Medium***

The land use rating reflects population density within one-half mile of proposed stations, employment served by the line, and the share of legally binding affordability restricted (LBAR) housing in the station areas compared to the share in the surrounding county.

- Average population density across all station areas is 8,887 persons per square mile, which corresponds to a Medium rating according to FTA benchmarks. Total employment served is 57,956, corresponding to a Medium-Low rating. The average daily parking cost in the central business district (CBD) of Reno is approximately \$2.40, which is a Low rating. The proportion of LBAR housing in the project corridor compared to the proportion in the county through which the project travels is 2.53, which corresponds to a High rating according to FTA benchmarks.
- The project would occur along a regionally significant thoroughfare that is an established commercial corridor with major trip generators, including the University of Nevada, Reno (UNR), the CBD and mixed-use districts.
- Most roads in the station areas feature two lanes of travel and two lanes of on-street parking. While sidewalks and marked crossings are standard for higher volume roads, the current condition of pedestrian infrastructure varies.

***ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT RATING: Medium-Low***

**Transit-Supportive Plans and Policies: Medium**

- *Transit-Supportive Corridor Policies:* Regional, municipal, and specific area plans have identified the corridor as a transit-oriented development (TOD) corridor. These plans have also supported multimodal improvements for the corridor, with pedestrian and bicycle facilities and transit amenities.
- *Supportive Zoning Near Transit Stations:* The corridor is included within the Virginia Street Transit Corridor Overlay District, University Regional Center, and downtown CBD. Existing zoning varies and supports low to high level densities. The overlay district designation provides specific development requirements for the area such as setbacks, parking, site layout, architecture and landscaping.
- *Tools to Implement Land Use Policies:* The City of Reno and Truckee Meadows Regional Planning Agency have identified the Virginia Street TOD Corridor as a key component of local economic development. Despite this focus, there is limited evidence of regulatory or financial incentives that promote development.

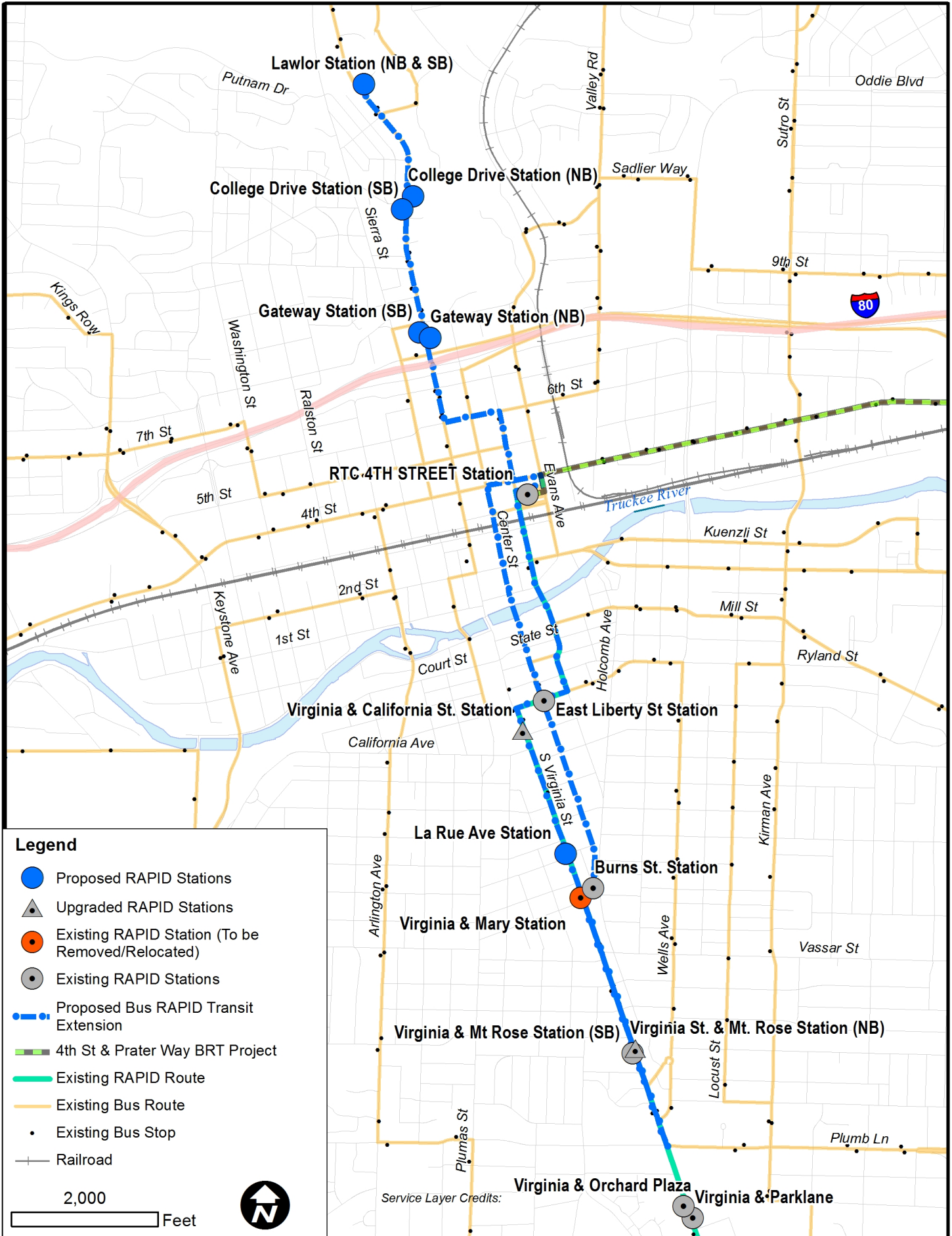
**Performance and Impacts of Policies: Medium-Low**

- *Performance of Land Use Policies:* Although development is occurring, it is unclear whether corridor policies have incentivized this development.
- *Potential Impact of Transit Investment on Regional Land Use:* Approximately 20 percent of the station areas have development or redevelopment potential. Regional projections estimate that up to 52,000 jobs and 42,000 residents will be added to the regional economy by 2020, with the majority of growth occurring in Washoe County. While the economic outlook for the region appears positive, it is unclear how the corridor will benefit from this growth.

**Tools to Maintain or Increase Share of Affordable Housing: Medium-Low**

- Assistance for low-income families and individuals for affordable housing comes from the Washoe County HOME Consortium and the Reno Housing Authority. A density bonus is available in Reno for developments that include affordable housing units. Evidence of measures to ensure long-term affordability are limited to provisions by Low Income Housing Tax Credit funding.

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### Legend

- Proposed RAPID Stations
- ▲ Upgraded RAPID Stations
- Existing RAPID Station (To be Removed/Relocated)
- Existing RAPID Stations
- Proposed Bus RAPID Transit Extension
- 4th St & Prater Way BRT Project
- Existing RAPID Route
- Existing Bus Route
- Existing Bus Stop
- Railroad

2,000 Feet



Service Layer Credits: