

**4th Street/Prater Way Bus RAPID Transit**  
**Reno, Nevada**  
**Small Starts Project Development**  
**(Rating Assigned November 2015)**

Summary Description	
<b>Proposed Project:</b>	Bus Rapid Transit 3.1 Miles, 8 Stations
<b>Total Capital Cost (\$YOE):</b>	\$52.57 Million
<b>Section 5309 Small Starts Share (\$YOE):</b>	\$6.47 Million (12.3%)
<b>Annual Operating Cost (opening year 2018):</b>	\$1.00 Million
<b>Current Year Ridership Forecast (2015):</b>	6,200 Daily Linked Trips 2,000,300 Annual Linked Trips
<b>Horizon Year Ridership Forecast (2035):</b>	7,700 Daily Linked Trips 2,500,600 Annual 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 plans to implement a bus rapid transit (BRT) line linking the business districts of Reno and Sparks. The project includes seven new passenger stations and upgrades to an existing station, off-vehicle fare collection, transit signal priority, real-time schedule information at stations, a bus charging facility, and four specially-branded all-electric buses. The project also includes conversion of the roadway from two lanes in each direction with no center turn lane to one lane in each direction with a center turn lane, new sidewalks, and bicycle lanes. Service is planned to be provided seven days a week every 10 minutes in the weekday peak and off-peak periods and every 30 minutes on weekday evenings. On weekends, service is planned to operate every 12 minutes.

**Project Purpose:** BRT service would reduce transit travel times in the corridor via more frequent and convenient service. Due to traffic congestion, existing transit service struggles with poor on-time performance, falling below 75 percent during peak traffic conditions, which makes the service less dependable. The project would improve the speed and reliability of transit service in the corridor via transit signal priority upgrades. The corridor, which includes several historic structures, is the core of an emerging industrial arts district, and has been identified in local land use plans for higher density, mixed used, transit-oriented development since it has many vacant or underutilized buildings.

**Project Development History, Status and Next Steps:** The project was adopted into the fiscally constrained long range plan in April 2013. Subsequent to that action, RTC refined the design of the project. The revised design was designated as the Locally Preferred Alternative by RTC in November 2013. The project entered Small Starts Project Development in February 2014. RTC completed the environmental review process with receipt of a Documented Categorical Exclusion in February 2014. RTC anticipates receiving a Small Starts Grant Agreement in September 2016, and starting revenue service in January 2018.

**Significant Changes Since Last Evaluation (November 2014):** The project's operating and maintenance cost estimate increased from \$0.52 million to \$1.0 million since an updated RTC analysis showed higher passenger volumes, which necessitates operation of an additional electric bus. Local officials increased the amount of Federal Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality funds from \$1.90 million to \$5.32 million and lowered the amount of Federal Surface Transportation Program funds from \$15.20 million to \$11.78 million. The requested \$6.47 million in Small Starts funds was not changed.

<b>Locally Proposed Financial Plan</b>		
<b><u>Source of Funds</u></b>	<b><u>Total Funds (\$million)</u></b>	<b><u>Percent of Total</u></b>
<b>Federal:</b>		
Section 5309 Small Starts	\$6.47	12.3%
FHWA Flexible Funds (Surface Transportation Program Funds)	\$11.78	22.4%
FHWA Flexible Funds (Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Funds)	\$5.32	10.1%
TIGER Discretionary Grant	\$16.00	30.5%
<b>Local:</b>		
RTC Fuel/Sales Tax	\$13.00	24.7%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$52.57</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

**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-Low***

The land use rating reflects population and employment densities within ½-mile of proposed station areas, as well as the share of legally binding affordability restricted housing in the corridor compared to the share in the surrounding county.

- Average population density across all station areas is 7,200 persons per square mile, which corresponds to a Medium rating according to FTA benchmarks. Total employment served is 40,300, which corresponds to a Medium-Low rating.
- There are 1.28 parking spaces per employee in the central business district (CBD), corresponding to a Low rating. Nearly all parking in the CBD is free, which corresponds to a Low rating.
- The proportion of legally binding affordability restricted (LBAR) housing in the project corridor compared to the proportion in the counties through which the project travels is 1.40, which corresponds to a Medium-Low rating.
- The termini of the project are Downtown Reno and Downtown Sparks. In Reno, the corridor is primarily business oriented, including commercial and industrial enterprises. There is a small residential area north of the Sutro Station, as well as some small apartments and residential motels. In Sparks, there are businesses located along most of the corridor, though with a much higher percentage of residential use served by the stations than in Reno. Adjacent residential neighborhoods have a higher density than the commercial corridor itself.

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

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

- *Transit-Supportive Corridor Policies:* Regional, municipal, and specific area plans have identified the corridor as a transit-oriented development corridor. These plans have also supported multimodal improvements for the corridor, with pedestrian and bicycle facilities and transit amenities. Despite a corridor-wide policy framework, there is limited evidence of implementation or tangible policy provisions that support transit. Station area conceptual plans have not been developed.
- *Supportive Zoning Near Transit Stations:* A portion of the corridor is designated as an overlay district with specific development requirements such as setbacks, parking, site layout, architecture and landscaping. Other station areas have mixed-use zoning. Floor area ratio minimums in these zoning designations do not support substantially higher density, and parking requirements are generally high for transit-oriented development.
- *Tools to Implement Land Use Policies:* The Cities of Reno and Sparks, as well as the Truckee Meadows Regional Planning Agency, have identified the corridor as a key component of local economic development. Despite this focus, there is limited evidence of regulatory or financial incentives that promote development. Outreach was performed under the corridor study's National Environmental Policy Act process, but efforts to engage the development community have been limited.

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

- *Performance of Land Use Policies:* Since RTC's downtown Reno transit station opened in 2010, a minor-league ballpark has opened nearby and the surrounding Freight House District Area has experienced redevelopment. In Sparks, an outlet mall opened in an area designated for transit-oriented development near the east end of the corridor and two multi-family developments are proposed for the same area. Most development is occurring near the BRT route termini and not all of it is transit-supportive in character.
- *Potential Impact of Transit Investment on Regional Land Use:* The corridor has an abundance of opportunity for revitalization, including vacant historic buildings and former roadside motels that have been converted to weekly rentals. While the economic outlook for the region appears favorable, corridor-specific data has not been provided, and it is unclear whether there is potential for balanced demand and growth throughout the corridor.

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

- Approximately 30,000 renters and 39,000 owners are cost-burdened households within the City of Reno and Washoe County, meaning that housing costs represents more than 30 percent of income. These households represent 42 percent of the overall renters. A corridor-specific evaluation of needs and supply has not been conducted.
- Reno and Sparks's municipal plans include general affordable housing goals; however, there is limited evidence of specific policies, strategies, and implementation mechanisms for reaching these goals.
- 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.
- No evidence of developer activity to preserve or increase affordable housing in the corridor was provided.
- Information on how policies from the City of Reno's Master Plan will be implemented to ensure long-term affordability was not provided.

