



Connecting the River City to Rail



Jesse Harasta

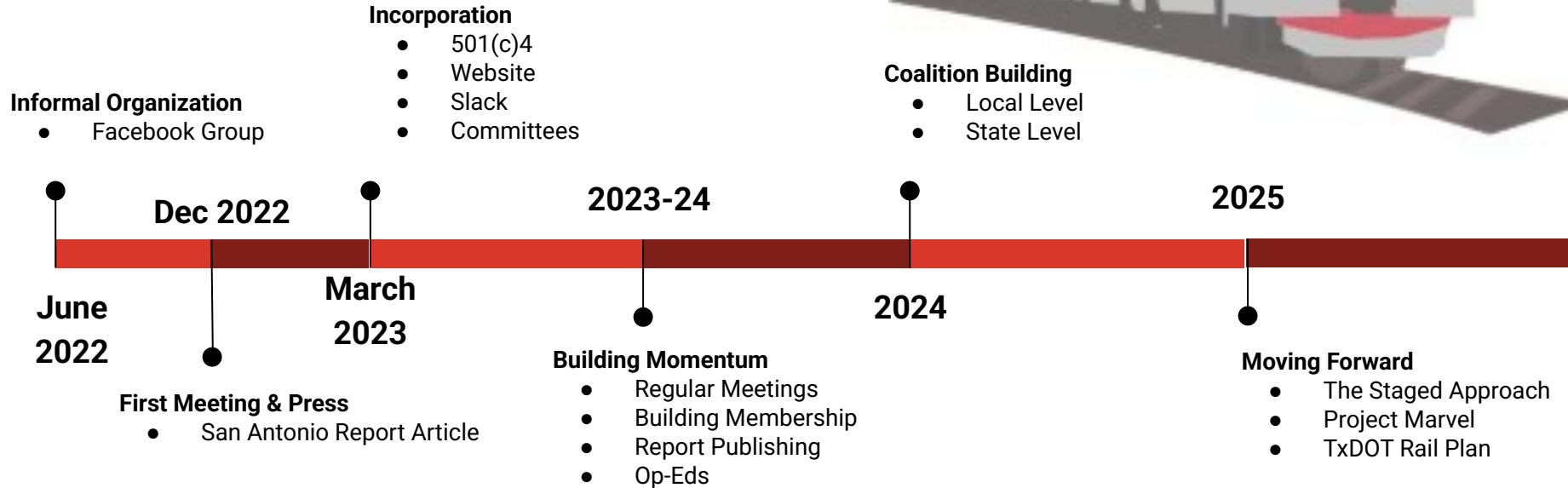
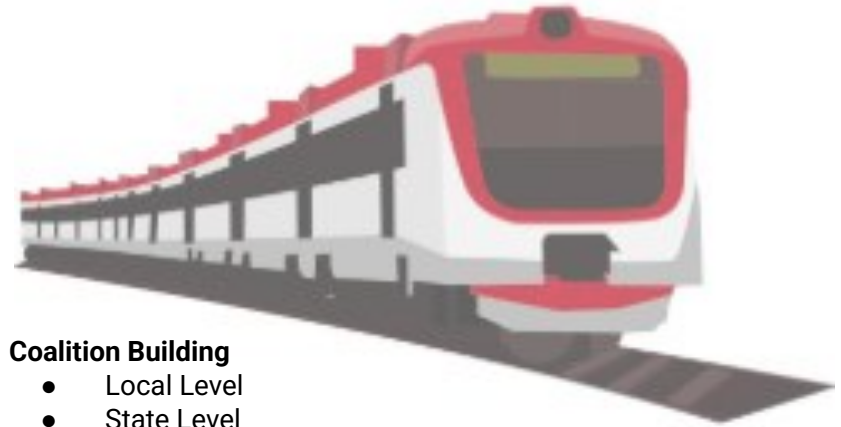
Presenters:

Co-Chairs



Samuel Haas

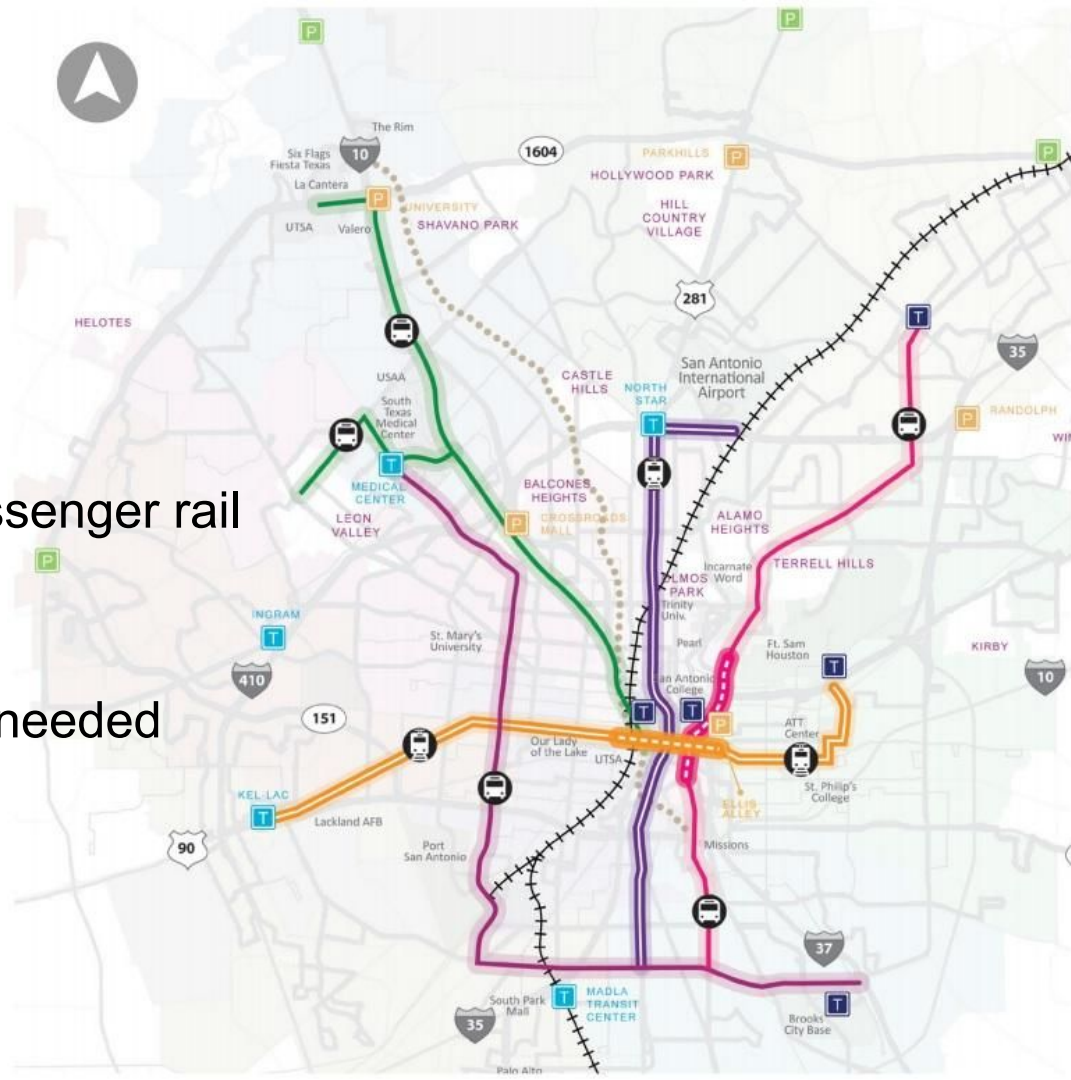
SART Lore



Informal Organization

- Facebook Group
 - Jesse Harasta
 - Robert Moreno
- Why?
 - Earlier local passenger rail efforts failed
 - 2000 & 2014
- Grassroots support needed

June
2022



First Meeting & Press

- Texas Transportation Museum hosted
- San Antonio Report Article



Dec 2022



The image shows the header of a news article from "San Antonio Report". The website's logo is at the top right, with "SAN ANTONIO" in small blue letters above "Report" in large blue letters. Below the logo is a dark blue navigation bar with white text for various categories: Government, Business, Education, Environment, Health, Arts, Tech, Social Issues, and Live Like a Local. To the right of the navigation bar are buttons for "Newsletters" and "Donate", and a search icon. Below the navigation bar is a teal-colored tag labeled "TRANSPORTATION". The main headline is in large, bold, black text: "Back on track: Group wants to convince San Antonio to support rail transit". Below the headline, it says "by Karly Williams" and "December 9, 2022". At the bottom right, there are social media sharing icons for email, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and a generic share icon. A red bell icon is in the bottom right corner.

TRANSPORTATION

Back on track: Group wants to convince San Antonio to support rail transit

by Karly Williams
December 9, 2022

Incorporation

- 501(c)4
- 7-Member Board
 - Committees

●
March
2023

- Tools
 - Social Media
 - Slack
 - Squarespace
 - Action Network
 - Patreon



Inaugural Board



Building Momentum

- Op-Eds

OPINION // COMMENTARY

Commentary: Back on track with linking San Antonio to Austin by rail

By Jesse Harasta and Robert Moreno, *For the Express-News*
Sep 13, 2023



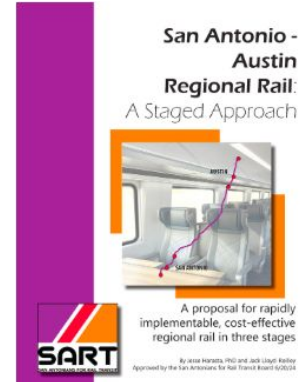
- Rebrand



2023-24



- Reports



TxDOT Study

Contemporary Funding Framework Analysis for the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT).



Research Committee

April 2024

Samuel Haas

Distribution A – Approved for General Release

San Antonio Inter-city Rail Station Upgrade and Expansion Options

15 May, 2024



Research Committee

Revision 3

Written by
Jack Lloyd-Railley

Distribution A – Approved for General Release

Building Momentum

- Tabling



- Meetings



Coalition Building

- Local Level



ActivateSA



Coalition Building

● State Level

● Meetings with Electeds

○ House

- 117 - Phillip Cortez
- 118 - John Lujan
- 122 - Mark Dorazio
- 124 - Josey Garcia
- 140 - Armando Walle (Houston)
- 49 - Gina Hinojosa (Austin)

○ Senate

- 26 - Jose Menendez
- 14 - Sarah Eckardt (Austin)
- 9 - Kelly Hancock (Ft. Worth)
- 15 - Molly Cook (Houston)



Coalition Building

● Bills Drafted

By: _____ .J.R. No. _____

A JOINT RESOLUTION

1 proposing a constitutional amendment providing for the disposition
2 and the use of revenues received from the federal government as
3 reimbursement for state expenditures of transportation funds.

4 BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

5 SECTION 1. Section 7-b, Article VIII, Texas Constitution,
6 is amended to read as follows:

7 Sec. 7-b. All revenues received from the federal government
8 as reimbursement for state expenditures of transportation funds
9 ~~shall be deposited to the credit of the state highway fund and may~~
10 ~~be used only for transportation projects, provided that those~~
11 ~~revenues may be used for a transportation project that involves a~~
12 ~~different mode of transportation than the project for which the~~
13 ~~state received the reimbursement [what are themselves dedicated for~~
14 ~~acquiring rights-of-way and constructing, maintaining, and~~
15 ~~polishing public roadways are also constitutionally dedicated and~~
16 ~~shall be used only for these purposes].~~

17 SECTION 2. This proposed constitutional amendment shall be
18 submitted to the voters at an election to be held November 4, 2025.
19 The ballot shall be printed to permit voting for or against the
20 proposition: "The constitutional amendment providing for the
21 disposition and the use of revenues received from the federal
22 government as reimbursement for state expenditures of
23 transportation funds."

By: _____ .B. No. _____

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

1 relating to the remittance of money in the Texas emissions
2 reduction plan fund to the Texas rail relocation and improvement
3 fund for certain congestion mitigation and air quality improvement
4 projects.

5 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

6 SECTION 1. Section 386.051(b), Health and Safety Code, is
7 amended to read as follows:

8 (b) Under the plan, the commission and the comptroller shall
9 provide grants or other funding for:

10 (1) the diesel emissions reduction incentive program
11 established under Subchapter C, including for infrastructure
12 projects established under that subchapter;

13 (2) the motor vehicle purchase or lease incentive
14 program established under Subchapter D;

15 (3) the air quality research support program
16 established under Chapter 387;

17 (4) the clean school bus program established under
18 Chapter 390;

19 (5) the new technology implementation grant program
20 established under Chapter 391;

21 (6) the regional air monitoring program established
22 under Section 386.252(a);

23 (7) a health effects study as provided by Section
24

1 port authorities located in nonattainment areas or affected
2 counties as provided by Section 386.252(a);

3 (18) the governmental alternative fuel fleet grant
4 program established under Chapter 395;

5 (19) remittance of funds to the Texas rail relocation
6 and improvement ~~(state-highway)~~ fund for use by the Texas
7 Department of Transportation for congestion mitigation and air
8 quality improvement projects in nonattainment areas and affected
9 counties; and

10 (20) the Texas hydrogen infrastructure, vehicle, and
11 equipment grant program established under Subchapter G.

12 SECTION 2. Section 386.250(c), Health and Safety Code, is
13 amended to read as follows:

14 (c) Not later than the 30th day after the last day of each
15 state fiscal biennium, the commission shall transfer the
16 unencumbered balance of the fund remaining on the last day of the
17 state fiscal biennium to the credit of the Texas rail relocation
18 and improvement ~~(state-highway)~~ fund for use by the Texas Department of
19 Transportation for projects described by Section 386.051(b)(19).

20 SECTION 3. Sections 386.252(a) and (a-1), Health and Safety
21 Code, are amended to read as follows:

22 (a) Money in the fund and account may be used only to
23 implement and administer programs established under the
24 plan. Subject to the reallocation of funds by the commission under
25 Subsection (h) and after remittance to the Texas rail relocation
26 and improvement ~~(state-highway)~~ fund under Subsection (a-1), money
27 from the fund and account to be used for the programs under Section

Moving Forward

- Project Marvel



Passenger Rail Stuff

\$ Peanuts

2025



Moving Forward

- Texas Eagle Improvements

San Antonio Inter-city Rail Station Upgrade and Expansion Options

15 May, 2024



Research Committee

Revision 3

Written by
Jack Lloyd-Reilley

Distribution A - Approved for General Release

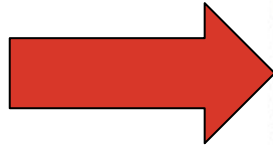


Figure 20: Current Texas Eagle back up maneuver and proposed new northbound and southbound routing, with new junction turnouts

Moving Forward

- Texas Eagle Improvements



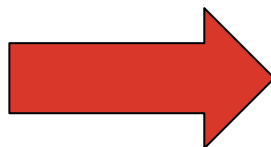
2024 Texas Rail Plan

Chapter 1

The Role of Rail in Statewide Transportation

February 2025

Chapter 3 Page 19



San Antonio Amtrak Improvements

TxDOT is partnering with Amtrak and Union Pacific Railroad (UP) on a program of passenger rail improvements known as the San Antonio Amtrak Improvements Project, which will help streamline rail operations within the San Antonio region. Figure 3-3 shows a map of the project components. Amtrak serves San Antonio with two train services, the *Sunset Limited* and *Texas Eagle* routes, both operated on UP's freight rail network. Amtrak and UP have identified the following improvements to the network that would improve operations for both passenger and freight rail service within the San Antonio region.

Figure 3-3: Project Concepts for San Antonio Amtrak Improvements



Source: TxDOT

The Project includes the following components, which are illustrated in Figure 3-3:

- **Switch Replacement:** Replacement of the No. 10 manual switch at Amtrak's San Antonio Station (MP 209.73) with a new, remote-controlled power switch and installation of a split point power derail (noted with a number 2 in blue on Figure 3-3).
- **Wye Connection:** A new 4,000 track-foot Wye connection between UP's Del Rio and Austin Subdivisions (noted with a number 1 in green on Figure 3-3), which will eliminate a daily backup move through downtown San Antonio for the northbound *Texas Eagle* prior to operating northward toward Fort Worth and Chicago.
- **Siding Installation:** A new 10,000 track-foot siding on UP's Austin Subdivision and upgraded centralized traffic control (CTC) signaling on approximately 23 miles between Tower 112 and North Schertz (noted with a number 3 in purple on Figure 3-3).

Moving Forward

Download the
Report here!



San Antonio - Austin Regional Rail: A Staged Approach



A proposal for rapidly
implementable, cost-effective
regional rail in three stages

By Jesse Harasta, PhD and Jack Lloyd-Reilly
Approved by the San Antonians for Rail Transit Board 6/20/24

2025



The Staged Approach

- What motivated this report?
- Three Stages
- Minimal Viable Service
- Amtrak as Preferred Provider



Why this report?

Project Connect cost projected to double, city officials say it won't affect taxpayers

by Paige Hubbard, Stephanie Becerra | Fri, April 8th 2022 at 12:44 PM
Updated Fri, April 8th 2022 at 11:17 PM



Project Connect officials announced Friday that its new light rail system project will cost nearly double the amount it was initially expected. (CapMetro)



TOPICS: [AUSTIN](#) [DAVID COUCH](#) [STEVE ADLER](#) [KATHIE TOVO](#) [BIDEN](#) [ENVIRONMENT](#) [CAPITAL METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY](#) >

AUSTIN, Texas — Project connect officials say costs are projected to double in order to fulfill the city's vision for transit expansion. If you can remember citizens voted in favor of the proposition back in 2020 but now some may be wondering where the additional funds will come from. Mayor Steve Adler says project connect has been in the works for decades but

- Travis and Bexar County Judges launched the Central Texas Passenger Rail Advisory Committee (CTPRAC)
- There is a challenging political reality
 - Several attempts at passenger rail have failed to achieve traction
 - The costs of Austin's Project Connect are intimidating and possibly not replicable
 - We need to move quickly to access Federal infrastructure money

Threading the Needle

How do we achieve rail to Austin that is:

1. Able to be quickly implemented;
2. Cost effective;
3. Able to meet the current transportation need; and
4. Prepared for future growth.

San Antonio - Austin

Regional Rail:

A Staged Approach



A proposal for rapidly
implementable, cost effective
regional rail in three stages

By Jesse Harasta, PhD and Jack Lloyd-Reilly
Approved by the San Antonians for Rail Transit Board [DATE]



The Three Stages

- **Stage One:** Focuses upon upgrades to San Antonio Station, the current Amtrak station, using entirely small local dollars, greatly improving local service and linking the city to its station (and vice versa) in innovative ways.
- **Stage Two:** Concentrates on achieving “**minimum viable service**,” which means multiple daily trips between San Antonio and Austin at comparable speeds to driving at absolute minimal cost using only a single trainset. By constructing it using three stations in each of the two cities, it also serves as a rudimentary single-line metro, providing intra-city connections.
- **Stage Three:** Completes the system with a full “**regular service**,” including both local and express trains that link not only the two primary cities but also suburban communities and destinations within. Stage three involves the massive expansion of Sunset Station or the creation of a new San Antonio Station.

Stage One: What Can We Do NOW?

How do we improve service using local resources and actors, and set the stage for future improvements to San Antonio Station

- Bicycle Lockers and Racks
- Better Bus-Rail Connections
- Better Wayfinding
- Station Parking
- Research and Planning
- Food Truck
- Public Art



Stage Two: Minimum Viable Service

Concept created by Jack Lloyd-Reilley

Innovative approach, defined as “the lowest level of investment that will consistently fill trains and demonstrate value to the community and taxpayers.”

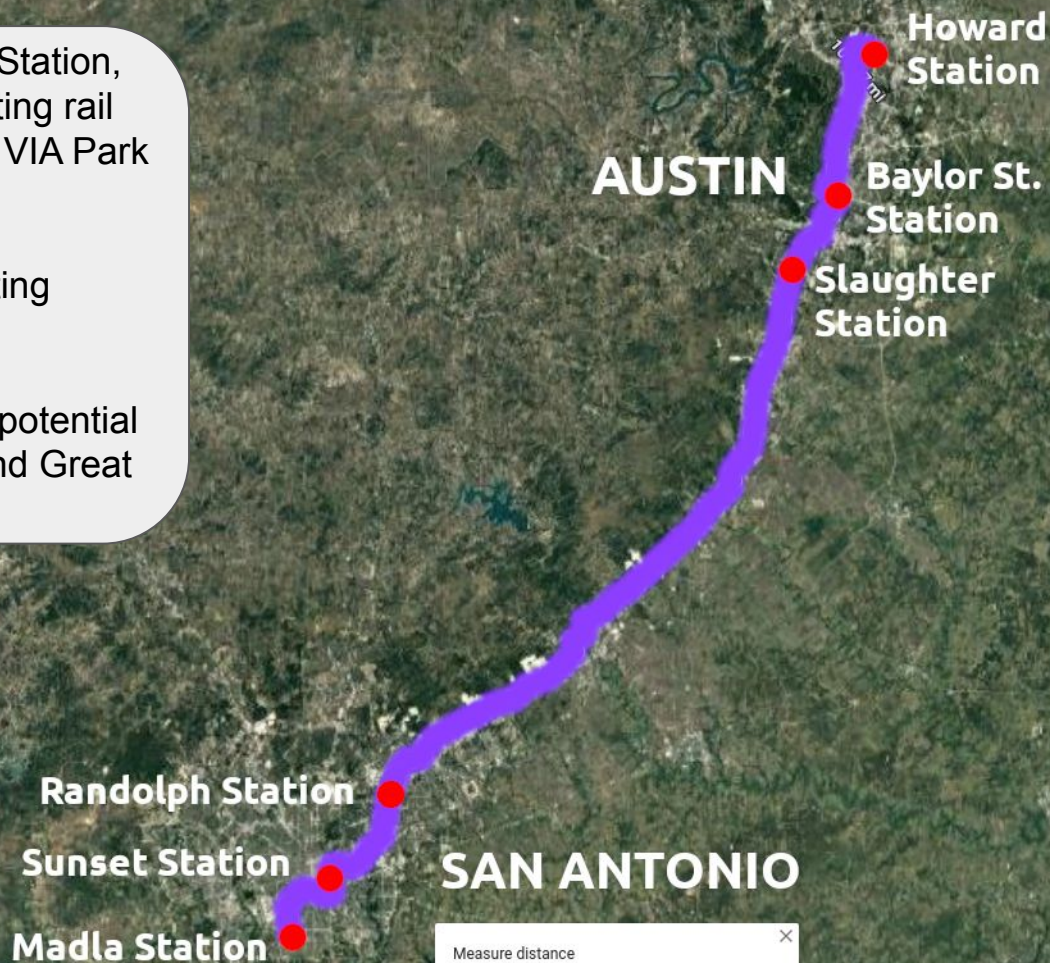
MVS has the following components:

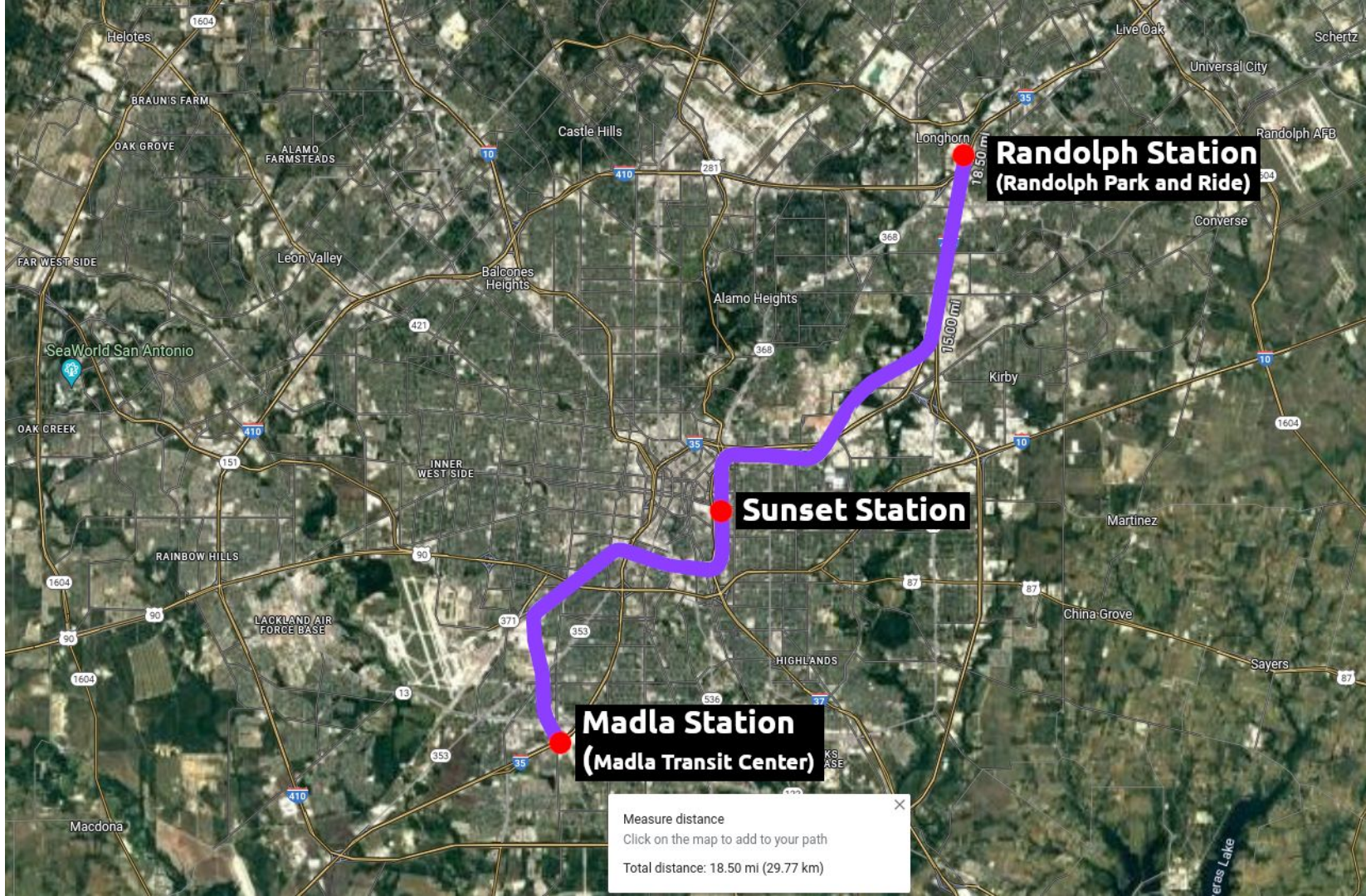
1. Provide service between San Antonio and Austin more than once per day.
2. Provide a city-to-city travel time that is competitive with driving.
3. Provide local service within communities to ensure riders can reach their final destinations.

Except for Slaughter Station,
all are either (a) existing rail
stations or (b) existing VIA Park
and Rides.

Builds upon existing
infrastructure

Randolph Station has potential
to link to Greenway and Great
Springs Trails





Randolph Station
(Randolph Park and Ride)

Sunset Station

Madla Station
(Madla Transit Center)

Measure distance
Click on the map to add to your path
Total distance: 18.50 mi (29.77 km)

Southbound					
Howard	10:55:00 AM	02:41:00 PM			07:22:00 PM
Baylor	11:13:00 AM	02:59:00 PM	6:30 PM (TXE)		07:40:00 PM
Slaughter	11:25:00 AM	03:10:00 PM			07:51:00 PM
Randolph	08:05:00 AM	12:20:00 PM	04:03:00 PM	04:53:00 PM	08:45:00 PM
Sunset	08:21:00 AM	12:35:00 PM	04:15:00 PM	05:15:00 PM	7:45 PM (TXE) 08:58:00 PM
Madla	08:33:00 AM	12:48:00 PM	04:28:00 PM	05:27:00 PM	

Northbound					
Madla	08:33:00 AM	12:48:00 PM	04:28:00 PM	05:27:00 PM	
Sunset	7:30 AM (TXE)	08:45:00 AM	01:00:00 PM	04:40:00 PM	05:40:00 PM 08:58:00 PM
Randolph		09:00:00 AM	01:14:00 PM	04:53:00 PM	05:55:00 PM 09:10:00 PM
Slaughter		09:55:00 AM	02:10:00 PM		06:50:00 PM
Baylor	8:50 AM (TXE)	10:07:00 AM	02:22:00 PM		07:02:00 PM
Howard		10:23:00 AM	02:38:00 PM		07:20:00 PM

Key

San Antonio Service Only

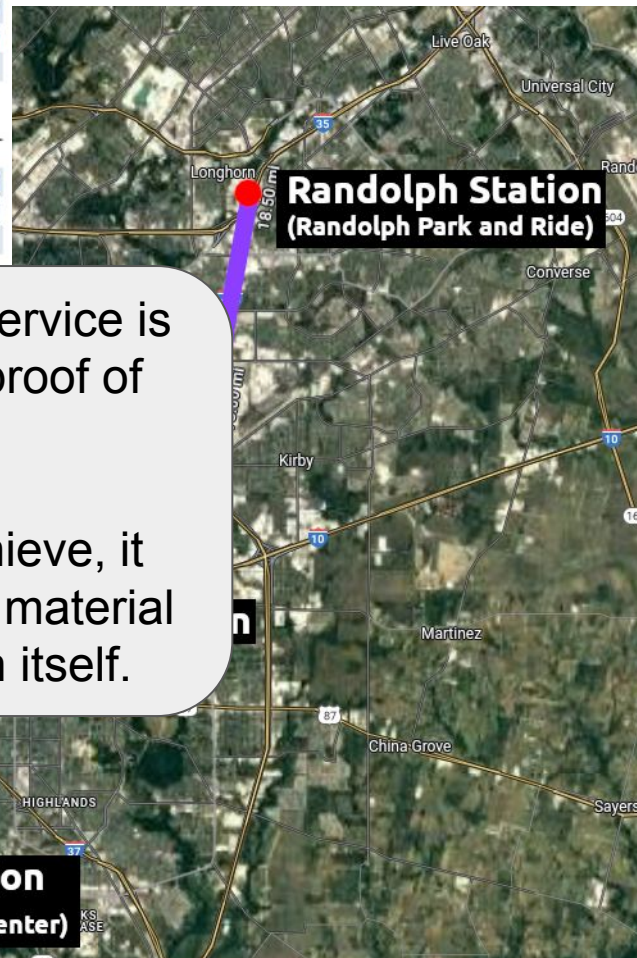
Optional Extension

Amtrak Texas Eagle (TXE)

Additional Special
Event Service

Minimal Viable Service is
NOT merely a proof of
concept.

If it is all we achieve, it
aims to be a real material
improvement in itself.



A Single Trainset



The plan is to use only a **single trainset**:

2 locomotives (one spare)

4 bi-level passenger cars
(one spare)

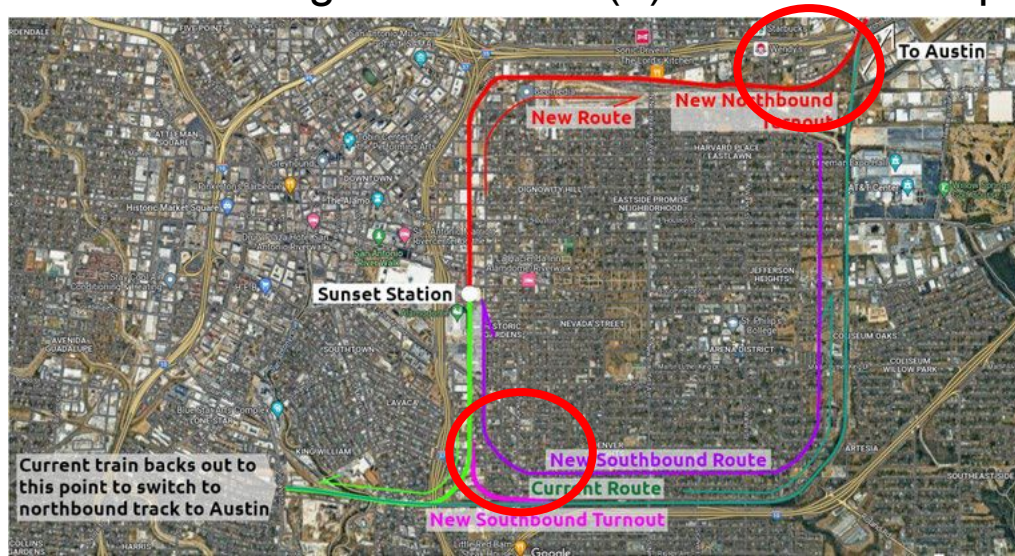
408-486 seats, and space
for 828 standing
passengers

Similar train used by the Utah Transit Authority

Improving Tracks to Improve Travel Times

Minimum Viable Service ***is not possible*** unless travel times are comparable to driving.

Luckily, travel times can be significantly decreased with (a) trains that can travel both directions without turning around and (b) minor track improvements.



Two minor turnouts
(the curves marked)
will significantly
decrease travel times

Stage Three: Regular Service

A full rail system with multiple stops at intermediate locations

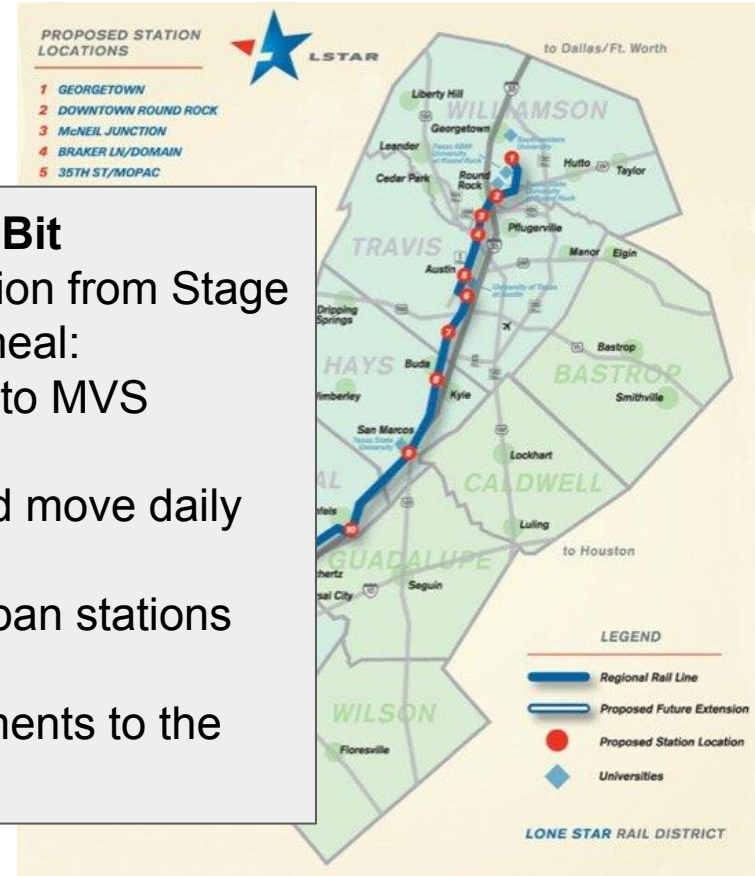
less where individuals can board and forth whenever they need convenience for various play.

Including both Express

Doing it Bit by Bit

It is possible that the transition from Stage 2 to Stage 3 is done piecemeal:

- Adding additional cars to MVS service
- Additional trainsets and move daily round trips
- Adding infill and suburban stations one by one
- Step-by-step improvements to the central station



Why the SART Board calls for Amtrak as the Operator

1. Institutional Depth and Experience
2. Existing Operations and Infrastructure
3. Dedicated Federal Funding
4. Standing Relationship with Union Pacific
5. Unique Legal Position and Powers
6. Broader Plans for Expansion in Texas



Facilities like Amtrak's Beech Grove Shops provide economies of scale we simply cannot duplicate.

Questions?

Download the
Report here!

