

Capital Metro Transit Development Plan: *Frequently Asked Questions*

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A TRANSIT PLAN FOR THE FUTURE



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Frequently Asked Questions

Below is a list of the common questions about Connections 2025 that have been asked recently. Have a question not included below? Email us at Feedback@capmetro.org or call 512-369-6000.

What are the operating costs for the proposed Connections 2025 network?

The operating cost for the network as proposed by our staff and Planning consultant, Transportation Management and Design (TMD) Inc., is approximately \$265 million for the first year of operation. (The existing system cost is approximately \$259 million.) As additional frequency is added to MetroRapid and MetroRail lines, costs would increase in year three of implementation. Subsequently in year eight, costs would increase again due to the implementation of downtown circulators and as IH-35 BRT is implemented (contingent on TxDOT approval and construction). Additionally, each year's budget development process will consider potential service adjustments arising from ongoing system monitoring and evaluation.

Why can't Capital Metro keep the service that is proposed for elimination?

The Connections 2025 team has recommended the removal of segments of routes that have consistently performed poorly with low productivity (passengers per hour) and a high subsidy per passenger. In addition, these segments are in areas where the land use does not support fixed-route transit. According to industry guidelines, there needs to be at least 16 residents or 16 employees per acre to support fixed-route transit. Transit also works best where there is a mix of employees and residents. The segments proposed for elimination are located in areas that don't meet these guidelines and aren't likely to do so over the ten-year period of Connections 2025.

Retaining these poor performing segments would have tradeoffs, affecting the availability of funding for other services or capital projects. Some of these tradeoffs could include:

- Expansion of the frequent network – The same investment in High-Frequency Routes would result in an additional 833,000 annual trips compared to the 161,000 annual trips from poor performing service, if retained.
- Bus or Rail capital projects – Purchasing new vehicles, upgrading facilities, etc.

Ensuring financial sustainability was a key goal in the creation of the Connections 2025 Draft Transit Plan. Retaining these segments would conflict with this goal as Capital Metro would need to divert funds from other needed projects.

Are there options for implementing Connections 2025?

There are four options for implementing Connections 2025. Each option will be discussed in greater detail at the Feb. 17 board work session:

- A. Implement the network as recommended by Capital Metro staff and TMD.
- B. Implement the network as recommended **and** keep routes proposed to be eliminated that the public has requested Capital Metro retain.
- C. Implement the network as recommended, **but** extend some routes to serve areas where service is proposed to be eliminated.
- D. Implement the network as recommended, **but** include Mobility Innovation Zones.

The following table summarizes the cost and impact for each option:

	Option	Year One Cost	Impact: Fixed Route Trips	Impact: ADA Clients	Meets Guidelines
	Existing System	\$259M	0	0	Mostly
A	Proposed Network	\$265M	630	227	Yes
B	Network + Keep Routes	+5.6M	220	100	No
C	Network + Extensions	+2.5M	220	100	No
D	Network + Mobility Innovation Zones	+2.8M	220	100	Yes

What are the capital costs for Connections 2025?

Excluding the capital costs for IH-35 BRT, the capital costs are approximately \$39 million for the first three years of the plan. These capital expenses are currently unbudgeted and would need to be included in the upcoming budget process.

The capital program includes:

- **Regional Mobility Hubs** – Two new regional mobility hubs and (10) community mobility hubs for a total cost of \$19 million. A mobility hub is a central location where the community will connect to various mobility options, including connections between routes, taxis, vanpools, TNCs, BCycle, Car2Go, and ultimately autonomous vehicles. The regional mobility hubs would also include parking.

- **Transit Priority Treatments** – Transit priority treatments including transit priority lanes, queue jumps, signal priority and roadway improvements, estimated to cost \$3 million. Capital Metro would work with the city of Austin to share costs as appropriate.
- **MetroRapid Stations** – (75) pairs (150 total) of new MetroRapid stations needed for the proposed new MetroRapid Routes 804/820, and the extension of the existing MetroRapid Route 803 to Slaughter Lane, for a total cost of \$15 million.
- **Articulated Vehicles** – Additional articulated vehicles needed for MetroRapid Route 801 to operate at the proposed frequency of every 7.5 minutes. These vehicles will cost an additional \$2 million over what is currently planned for fleet acquisition.

What project materials are available to review now?

The Connections 2025 team has maintained an updated [Resources](#) archive on the project website. An [Executive Summary](#) and [Financial Plan](#) have been posted on Connections2025.org for public review in advance of the final board work session on Feb. 17.

The Executive Summary reviews the key elements that the team has worked on for the past 15 months:

- Goals & Guiding Principles
- Market Assessment
- Service Evaluation
- Community Input
- Plan Summary
- Capital Program
- Implementation
- Customer Impacts and Benefits

This summary is subject to change, based on the final work session and subsequent board meeting on Feb. 27. A final report will be available after board approval.

What is the process for implementing the Mobility Innovation Zones?

The Connections 2025 team has proposed Mobility Innovation Zones in a number of areas with low productivity and high passenger subsidy, where the land use and/or street & pedestrian networks do not support traditional bus service, but where the community has requested to maintain service. Additionally, the Connections 2025 Draft Transit Plan was constructed using eight Design Principles, one of which includes, “matching the right service to the right market” — developing new Mobility Innovation Zone options for these areas would be an appropriate solution.

The overarching goal for Mobility Innovation Zones would be to significantly reduce the subsidy per passenger in these areas. This can be achieved by leveraging emerging mobility options. Since these cutting-edge alternatives are new services, Capital Metro believes it would take about 12–18 months to develop these mobility solutions.

Proposed Implementation Process for Mobility Innovation Zones:

1. Maintain fixed-route bus service, through current routes or via an extension of another route, while the pilot is being developed.
2. Develop a pilot project with community input. Mobility Innovation Zone options may vary by areas, depending on the needs of the community.
3. Provide a briefing to the board of directors and seek approval prior to implementation.
4. Implement and test pilot project for at least six months. Remove fixed-route bus service at implementation of pilot project.
5. Adjust pilot project as necessary.
6. Determine if the pilot should continue, be removed, or modified at the end of the trial period.

Will Capital Metro retain access to jobs and schools?

Maintaining access to schools and jobs was an important consideration during the planning process, the Connections 2025 team worked hard to minimize these impacts. The team focused on maintaining access to middle and high schools, along with ACC campuses, as these students tend to be old enough to use public transit alone.

When comparing service to schools today versus the proposed network, only one school would not be served that currently has service, Anderson High School. A review of ridership showed approximately nine students taking the bus to Anderson, and 2-5 from Anderson.

While the remaining schools continue to be served, the individual route may change. The proposed frequent and connected network would provide opportunities for more students to travel to school using Capital Metro.

The impact on jobs is harder to measure as Capital Metro does not have detailed data on our riders employment locations. However, there will be approximately 333,000 jobs within a ten-minute walk of frequent service (running every 15 minutes or better). This is an increase of approximately 30,000 jobs.

What are the options to maintain or expand access to MetroAccess?

MetroAccess is a demand-response, shared-ride service for people whose disabilities prevent them from riding regular bus and rail service. MetroAccess service operates parallel to fixed-route bus service, defined by a 0.75-mile buffer. Any adjustment, expansion or contraction, of fixed routes results in a revision to the MetroAccess service area.

An estimated 100 to 227 MetroAccess clients could lose access to the service¹ depending on the final MetroAccess service area reflected by the reconfiguration of the network. Of these clients, most do not use the service daily, resulting in an estimated 33–69 average weekday trips affected².

¹ Passengers who are eligible for MetroAccess ADA paratransit service are eligible no matter where they live. Eligibility is based on the passenger and not an address.

² This data is based on trips originating in the MetroAccess service area. It does not include trips to this area.

When a MetroAccess client loses access to service, the current policy dictates a 90-day transition window from the date service is removed. The transition window can be extended up to a year on an individual basis.

There are three additional options the board of directors could consider:

1. **Enhanced Transition Window** – An enhanced transition window where all affected clients are automatically granted a one-year transition window.
2. **Service Retention** – Retain MetroAccess service while alternatives are developed. These options would likely be part of the Mobility Innovation Zones. Staff would subsequently return to the board with options for approval.
3. **Exceptions** – Exempting a client's home address from MetroAccess policy. This would require an ongoing annual cost of approximately \$500,000 to \$1.25 million. Providing an exemption to maintain access to service would also raise equity concerns that would need to be addressed.