

RTA Virtual Town Hall: West and Airport Corridors - January 18, 2024

Questions & Answers

On January 18, 2024, a Virtual Town Hall was held by the Regional Transportation Authority of Central Oklahoma (RTA) on Zoom. This document is a summary of the questions submitted during the Virtual Town Hall's panelist Q&A session. For the full responses, you may view the recording of the Virtual Town Hall available on RTAmoves.com.

Q: Will a recording be sent out later if we need to leave early?

A: Yes! A recording of the Town Hall is available on RTA moves.com. To request a Spanish translation of the PowerPoint presentation, please email us at info@rtamovesprojects.com.

Q: How will this project be funded?

A: Currently, the RTA is funded via member city contributions. To advance implementation of projects, the RTA anticipates two main funding sources: federal grant programs and local funds.

The RTA anticipates this project qualifying for federal funding, either through the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) or the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA). There is significant federal funding currently available through programs under both agencies. The RTA is conducting work in a manner to be eligible for federal funding.

The ongoing operations and maintenance costs would be funded by a sales tax as the legislation that the state of Oklahoma approved to form the RTA specified this funding source. This type of funding has been used by other transit authorities around the country and would present a stable funding source to maintain and operate the RTA's future transit assets.

Q: Has the RTA considered 24/7 operations at the Mike Monroney (Federal Aviation Administration) FAA Complex?

A: We have been coordinating with FAA staff at the Mike Monroney Aeronautical Complex to understand their potential transit needs. This includes overnight operations.

Q: Has the RTA considered the possibility of the county jail relocating to the FAA/Airport area?

A: Through stakeholder conversations with the FAA complex and other City of Oklahoma City staff, the relocation of the county jail has come up. This is something that the RTA will continue to monitor as those plans develop.

Q: Who decides which alternative you will be moving forward with?

A: The selection of a Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) will be approved by the RTA Board of Directors. The RTA anticipates that LPAs on the West and Airport corridors will be adopted by June of 2024.

Q: With the other transit projects going on in Oklahoma City, where will these routes connect? How could I transfer between the systems?

A: For the RTA, all things are aimed at the Santa Fe depot in downtown Oklahoma City, which is currently served by Amtrak and the Oklahoma City Streetcar. The RTA is looking to connect all the transit lines there and leverage the investment that the region has made in that facility.

Outside of the purview of the RTA, there are a couple of other bus rapid transit (BRT) and transit studies underway that are also planning to serve the Santa Fe Depot.

The RTA is also studying other potential connection points with EMBARK. Since the RTA is still studying these opportunities, no announcements can be made at this time, but the RTA will communicate these opportunities and plans as they progress.

Q: What is still possible after this phase? Does an LPA lock in a recommendation that's impossible to change moving forward?

A: The LPA simply represents a community's preferred alternative at this moment in time. Before diving into the project further into engineering and construction, the RTA will revisit the LPA to confirm that the LPA still makes sense and will serve the communities it was intended to serve at the point of entering the formal project development process. This will allow the RTA to look at how Oklahoma City has grown and changed since the LPA was adopted.

Q: How do the RTA corridors relate to the MAPS 4 BRT projects?

A: The RTA is the regional transportation authority responsible for implementation of regional, high-capacity transit. The MAPS 4 BRT projects are being planned by the City of Oklahoma City and EMBARK, who currently provides transit services to Oklahoma City.

The RTA project team has been in coordination with the MAPS 4 project to ensure that transit investments in the Central Oklahoma Region are being planned in a smart and effective manner. The goal is for riders to have access to an efficient and well-designed transit system.

Q: Will there be park and ride spots near bus stations?

A: Park and rides will be an important part of the access to the region's transit network, including the West and Airport corridors. It is common to have park and rides at the end of regional transit lines. One of the next steps the RTA will take in the study of these corridors is the exploration of potential station locations. As the study advances, the RTA will make sure that stations include amenities, like park and rides, that are appropriate to serve the community they are placed in.

Q: Would the Airport line take me right to the airport terminal?

A: The RTA is still working out the details of how the Airport Corridor would connect with the terminal, and actively coordinating with staff at Wil Rogers World Airport. The goal is to make as seamless a connection to the terminal as possible.

Q: Looking many years out, what is in the planning for connectivity with other community transportation agencies, including rural systems?

A: The RTA introduced the Transit System Plan for the region in 2021. To implement that plan, the RTA has been in ongoing coordination with the City of Edmond, the City of Norman, and the City of Oklahoma City, as well as with partners at the Association of Central Oklahoma Governments (ACOG).

Outside of that, the RTA the ability to coordinate with other transportation providers in the region through the Oklahoma Transit Association and the Oklahoma Department of Transportation (ODOT).

ODOT has previously identified their own goals of improving connections between the rural systems and connecting those rural systems into the metro areas across the state.

Q: There seems to be many benefits to each mode the RTA is looking at for these corridors. How will the RTA balance travel time efficiency, reliability, ROW acquisition, and costs when deciding between bus or rail for each corridor?

A: As the RTA continues to perform detailed analyses of the three remaining Alternatives for each corridor, the project team will compare how each Alternative performs in support of the RTA's goals and objectives. The selection of transit mode is part of the analysis and public engagement process to support the selection of the Locally Preferred Alternative. The project team is analyzing the benefits and tradeoffs of Bus Rapid Transit and Light Rail Transit alongside the remaining transit alignments (how the transit will traverse the corridor) and results will be shared with the public and the RTA Board in the Spring of 2024.