



BOARD/COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

Urban Transportation Commission

Recommendation Number: 20160913-03A: A resolution of the Urban Transportation Commission of the City of Austin, Supporting the Continued Funding of Lone Star Rail and a Commuter Rail Project in the Central Texas Corridor and Opposing the Removal of Lone Star Rail from the CAMPO 2040 Regional Transportation Plan.

WHEREAS, Central Texas, known for its quality of life, environmental resources and economic vitality, has seen its population grow by 475,000 within the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO) counties between 2000 and 2010 (from 1.284 million to 1.759 million population) and is expected to grow by an additional 380,000 by 2040.

WHEREAS, In 1997, the Texas Legislature passed legislation creating the Lone Star Rail District, and the District formed in 2003 to begin studying how to build a 117-mile passenger line on Union Pacific's line running through the center of San Antonio, New Braunfels, San Marcos, Austin, and Round Rock.

WHEREAS, To address the growing transportation needs and facilitate the safe, reliable, and efficient transport of people while improving mode choice, mobility, and access to educational, employment, and commercial center as well as to promote connectivity, and provide an alternative to the use of major regional highways, cities and counties within the CAMPO region took actions designed to provide funding for the operation of a passenger rail service system to serve the CAMPO region and entered Interlocal Agreements to provide specific funding levels to the Lone Star Rail system,

WHEREAS, In June 2011, the CAMPO Transportation Policy Board allocated \$20 million in Surface Transportation Program – Metropolitan Mobility (STP-MM) funds to the Lone Star Rail District for the purpose of conducting feasibility and environmental studies in the Union Pacific corridor between the greater regions of Austin and San Antonio.

WHEREAS, On August 8, 2016, the CAMPO Transportation Policy Board passed a resolution asking TxDOT to order Lone Star to stop funding an \$8 million environmental impact study (EIS) of passenger rail in the corridor, and to work with CAMPO instead on any possible rail project there in the future.

WHEREAS, On September 12, 2016, CAMPO held a public hearing on proposed amendments to the 2040 Plan and 2017-2020 Transportation Program, which include a proposal to remove the Lone Star Rail project from the CAMPO 2040 Regional Transportation Plan, and will continue to receive public comments until September 26, 2016, before voting on the proposed amendments on October 10, 2016.

WHEREAS, At the August 8, 2016 CAMPO meeting, Mayor Steve Adler, as member of CAMPO's Transportation Policy Board, requested that any final action by TxDOT on Lone Star Rail not commence until after October 9 to allow time to reach out to Union Pacific, which withdrew from the project in February 2016, and suggested that federal officials may be involved in such discussions.

WHEREAS, Union Pacific has withdrawn from other similar projects that eventually were successfully built after local communities fought back against UP's early resistance, such as the Alameda Corridor in Los Angeles and Tower 55 in Dallas-Fort Worth.

WHEREAS, Congressional testimony indicates that the average nationwide large infrastructure project takes 15 years to complete, even after funding has been identified. An analysis of every other environmental impact statement in the United States initiated at the same time demonstrates that Lone Star's EIS is on or ahead of schedule.

WHEREAS, Texas Department of Transportation representatives told a recent joint meeting of the Austin/San Antonio MPOs that Lone Star's costs were comparable — even lower — than other projects of similar size and scope. They also stated that Lone Star — not the MPO — was the appropriate agency to complete the current EIS.

WHEREAS, Lone Star has successfully leveraged about \$5 million in local investment into over \$50 million in state and federal funding commitments to the project, which produces a 10-to-1 leveraging of local dollars.

WHEREAS, To date, \$25 million has been expended — about 1 percent of total project costs — on planning, engineering and environmental clearances. That investment could be wasted if CAMPO removes the project from the 2040 Plan, which will essentially end the project.

WHEREAS, Neither MPO involved in the Lone Star Rail project (CAMPO and the Alamo Area MPO) has ever conducted an EIS — and CAMPO's director says he must hire more people to do so. Experienced Lone Star staff have participated in five separate environmental impact statements in the past.

WHEREAS, The EIS process must proceed to a Record of Decision, so the region can access potentially billions in the federal and private sector funding — both of which require political certainty and regional consensus on major investments. Shutting down Lone Star Rail would deprive our communities of that investment opportunity and could delay Austin to San Antonio passenger rail for a generation or more.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Urban Transportation Commission requests the City of Austin representation to CAMPO reflect the positions:

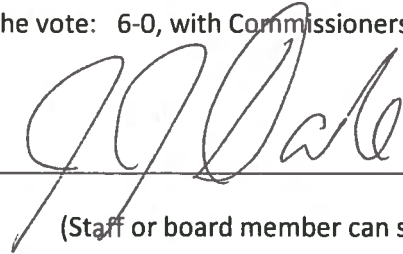
PART 1. The Urban Transportation Commission opposes removing Lone Star Rail from the CAMPO 2040 Regional Transportation Plan, and supports continued funding of Lone Star Rail.

PART 2. The Urban Transportation Commission supports the completion of the Environmental Impact Study begun by Lone Star Rail to consider all options for the routing of the passenger rail line, even if Lone Star Rail ceases to be the lead agency to bring commuter rail service to the Central Texas Region.

Date of Approval: September 13, 2016

Record of the vote: 6-0, with Commissioners Johnson, Baez, Calistrat, Hosek, and Silas absent

Attest: _____

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "J. Dale", written over a horizontal line.

(Staff or board member can sign)