

What You Can Do:

- Attend public meetings that will be held at key points during the study
- Visit the project website at www.itp-project.com for news about upcoming meetings and to stay informed with project updates
- Have your name added to the project mailing list to receive the next issue of *Moving Forward* and be notified of public meetings and other project-related events
- Provide your written or verbal comments at public meetings, via the project website, or by e-mail to the RPCGB contact person below

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MOVING FORWARD

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In-Town Transit Partnership Project

WWW.ITP-PROJECT.COM

Transit Study Moves Forward for Birmingham

Alternatives Evaluated and Refined

The In-Town Transit Partnership Project (ITP) took a large step forward this spring as the study team narrowed down the pool of options for a new transit system coming to the Birmingham region.

Faced with the challenge of providing a wider array of transportation choices to meet the needs of a growing metropolitan area, the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham assembled the partnership and began looking at alternatives in 2005. The partnership includes funding sponsors Jefferson and Shelby counties along with the cities of Birmingham, Homewood, Hoover, Irondale, Mountain Brook, and Vestavia Hills; the Birmingham-Jefferson County Transit Authority; and the Federal Transit Administration.

The study team has been analyzing transit options as part of a two-tier process. Options being studied include the kind of vehicles and technologies that would be used as well as the specific streets on which the vehicles would run. A "no build" alternative is also under consideration, in which no new transit system of any kind would be constructed.

Tier 1 of the evaluation is now complete and available for review on the project website, www.itp-project.com (click on "Publications"). The purpose of Tier 1 was to "measure" the performance of the different transit choices against a set of goals and objectives that the partnership wants to achieve (see table on Page 2). For example,

Goal 1 of the study is to find a transit solution that would help improve mobility and access in the study area. With that goal in mind, the study team measured each of the alternatives and rated them according to how well they would provide transportation choices, connect the places people want to go, increase transit ridership, and serve people who are dependent on transit. The higher each alternative scored in terms of meeting the project goals and objectives, the more likely it would move on to Tier 2 for further study.

After analyzing the alternatives, the study team made recommendations for five build alternatives to be advanced to the second tier of evaluations. Maps and descriptions of the alternatives to be studied further are included in this newsletter.

These are the five Goals of the ITP Study

Goal 1: To Improve Mobility and Access within the Study Area

Goal 2: To Support Local Economic Development Initiatives

Goal 3: To Enhance Cost Effectiveness of Transit Service

Goal 4: To Protect Environmental Quality

Goal 5: To Enhance Regional Transit Services

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Build Alternatives Recommended for Further Study

The study team is looking at two corridors—one that runs north-south and one that runs east-west—that intersect in the middle of Downtown Birmingham. There are currently five “build alternatives,” or scenarios in which a new transit system would be constructed for either Light Rail Transit or Bus Rapid Transit vehicles. They are described below with accompanying maps. Note that in addition to providing information about where the new transit vehicles would run, the maps also show current bus routes and proposed bus circulator routes that would connect with the new transit service.

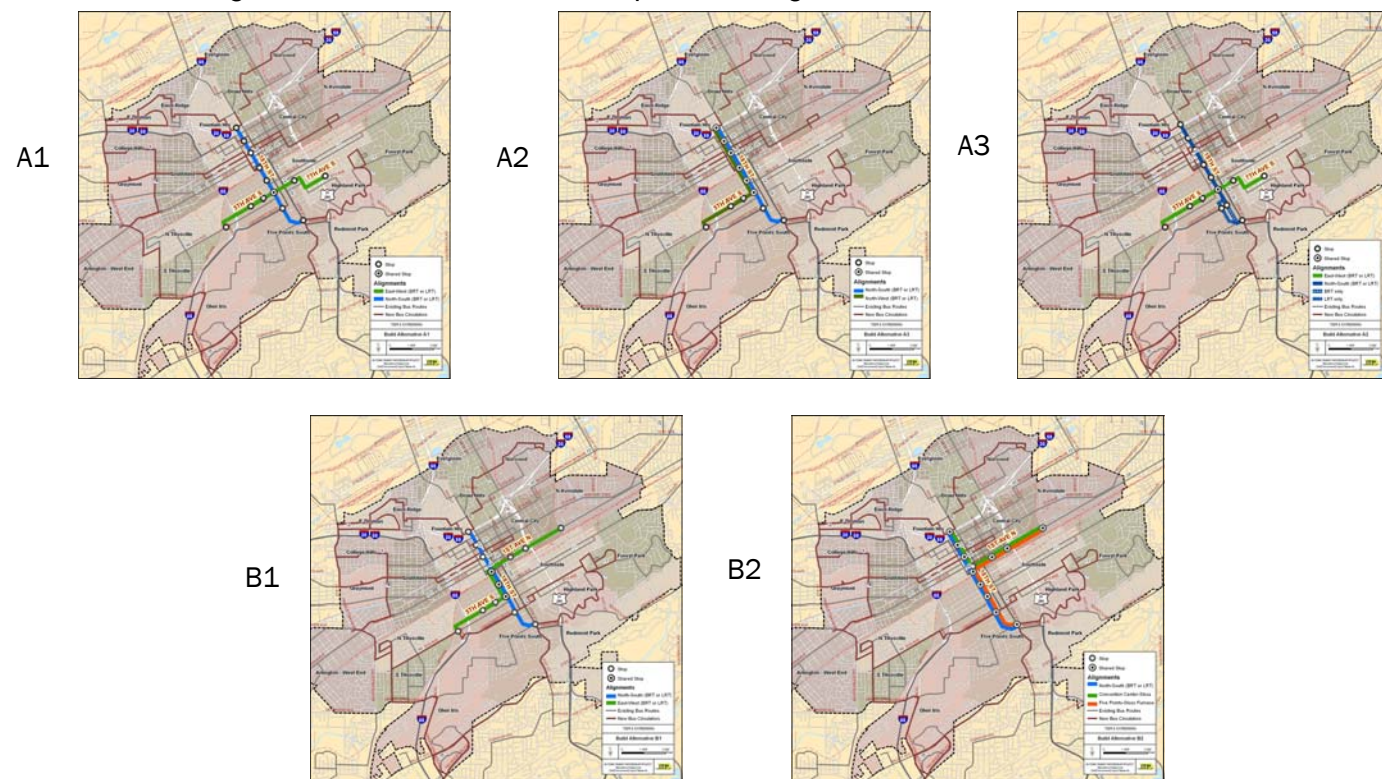
In Build Alternative A1, the north-south alignment begins at I-20/59 and proceeds down 18th Street to the intersection of 20th Street and Highland Avenue in the Five Points South neighborhood. The east-west alignment begins at the corner of 6th and 8th Streets and proceeds along 5th Avenue and 7th Avenue South, ending just east of US 31/280.

The north-south alignment for Build Alternative A2 is 19th Street (rather than 18th Street as in A1). At 7th Avenue South, the alignment runs down either 19th street or 18th Street to its terminus at 20th and Highland. The east-west alignment for Alternative A2 is the same as A1.

The north-south alignment for Build Alternative A3 is the same as A1. Like A1 and A2, the east-west alignment goes along 5th Avenue South from the corner of 6th Avenue and 8th Street, but stops at the intersection with the north-south alignment at 18th Street.

Just as Build Alternatives A1, A2, and A3 are variations of one alternative, B1 and B2 are similar to each other, but different enough from Alternative A to be considered an entirely separate approach. The north-south alignment for Build Alternative B1 is the same as A1 and A3. And the western part of the east-west alignment is the same as all three A options. However, the eastern portion of the east-west alignment begins at 18th Street and proceeds east along 1st Avenue North to 32nd Street.

B2, the fifth of the five build alternatives, has the same north-south alignment and the same eastern portion of the east-west alignment as B1, but the western portion along 5th Avenue South is omitted.



Community Public Meetings held throughout Study Area

ITP Show & Tell, and Receive Process for the Public

To capture the input of the public in the planning stage of the ITP study process, Community Public Meetings have been held in and around the study area to give the general and interested public the opportunity to share their thoughts and concerns in planning for transit improvements. In the month of April 2006, five Community Public Meetings were held during the week of April 3rd through April 8th. For five consecutive days, ITP Community Public Meetings were held with-in the study area with one meeting per day, at convenient meeting venues in the North, South, East, West, and Central-City neighborhoods to encourage participation from the public.



To be sure, that input has been considered from all areas included in the study, as well as, those surrounding the study area, meeting participants comments from the Public Meetings were gathered and reviewed as possible Alternative Routes have emerged for consideration to aid in recommending a Locally Preferred Alternative – the combination of technologies and alignments that will meet the goals and objectives of the study.

Meeting participant's comments ranged from topics on expanding area services for the existing bus service, dependability of service vehicles for current and new transit technologies, convenience of access and egress for any new improved transit services, Park and Ride lots and possible locations to encourage ridership, right down to the most frequently expressed comment “Let’s not just talk about it, let’s improve transit.”

Participants had an opportunity not only to provide input concerning possible alternative routes for transit improvement planning, in addition, they were able to review and gain an understanding of the different existing transit improvement technologies, as detailed during the presentation phase of the meetings. Discussions of the benefits of improving the existing bus service, the addition of Bus Rapid Transit, and alternatives such as light rail or streetcar were addressed during the Public Meetings. All topics were presented to aid in conveying the overall impact that improved transit will have on all of the Birmingham communities. In addition, on – going presentations on the project’s progress have been made to other interested business organizations, political action groups, and to individuals interested in transit improvements *MOVING FORWARD* in Birmingham. As the ITP study process continues, the project team will prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), in compliance with federal law, which considers the environmental issues associated with recommended transit improvements. There will be more opportunities for the public to participate in comment and review phases of the study through other Public Meetings. The Regional Planning Commission encourages citizens to offer their comments about transportation improvements for the area. So, make plans and get involved to contribute to the success of improved transit for the Greater Birmingham region!

