

BROAD STREET RAPID TRANSIT STUDY PROJECT OVERVIEW AND HISTORY

The Richmond GRTC Transit System (GRTC), with support from the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT), is proposing a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) System along a seven-mile long segment of Broad Street in Richmond, Virginia (Figure 1). As defined by Federal Transit Administration (FTA), “BRT includes bus services that are, at a minimum, faster than traditional “local bus” service and that, at a maximum, include grade-separated bus operations. The essential features of BRT systems are some form of bus priority, faster passenger boarding, faster fare collection, and a system image that is uniquely identifiable. BRT represents a way to improve mobility at relatively low cost through incremental investment in a combination of bus infrastructure, equipment, operational improvements, and technology”.¹ The proposed project would introduce a premium transit service on Broad Street, using specialized vehicles, distinctive branding, limited stops, dedicated rights-of-way and/or other transit vehicle priority measures.

Currently, much of Broad Street is served by transit. Over 20 routes operate along Broad Street for some portion of their alignment. Over 20,000 daily boardings occur on Broad Street between Willow Lawn and Williamsburg Road. The quality of service and volumes of ridership along Broad Street demonstrate the existing demand for transit in the study area. By improving the speed and reliability of services along Broad Street, there is an opportunity to leverage this existing demand onto a system that appeals to a broader segment of the local travel market.

PROJECT HISTORY

Studies by the Richmond Regional Planning District Commission (RRPDC) and GRTC in the early 2000s pointed to both the opportunity and the need for rapid transit in the region. GRTC’s 2008 Comprehensive Operational Analysis (COA) specifically recommended further study of rapid transit in the Broad Street Corridor traversing the City of Richmond, with the full segment for study reaching from Willow Lawn in the west to Rockett’s Landing in the east. Figure 2 provides a timeline history of the development of the Broad Street Rapid Transit Study, culminating in a Recommended Alternative in spring of 2014.

The Broad Street Rapid Transit Study began in 2009 and proceeded through project scoping, development and screening of alternatives, review of environmental impacts, a study of economic impacts, and further refinement of the study alternatives in response to public input. The FTA criteria for this type of project under their Small Starts program also changed significantly in 2013, and those changes also prompted some project refinements. The alternatives screening process led to the development of one Build Alternative that includes BRT service from Willow Lawn to Rockett’s Landing, with the BRT vehicles running in a BRT-only median lane from Thompson Street to Adams Street, and all buses running in a dedicated curb lane from 4th Street to 14th Street. Based on stakeholder input and, to some extent in response to the changes in FTA criteria, the service plan for the Build Alternative was finalized in 2013

¹ Transit Research Board of the National Academies and sponsored by FTA, in cooperation with the Transit Development Corporation. Transit Cooperative Research Program. TCRP Report 90. *Bus Rapid Transit. Volume 1: Case Studies in Bus Rapid Transit*. Washington, D.C. 2003. Accessed 8/14/14 at http://bussafety.fta.dot.gov/uploads/resource/2986_filename.

and 2014. The service plan for the Recommended Alternative has bus service frequency of 10 minutes in peak periods and 15 minutes in off-peak periods. The environmental impacts of this Build Alternative were documented for FTA in 2014 and FTA determined the project meets the criteria of a Class II documented Categorical Exclusion (as set forth in 23 CFR 771.118(d)). Public meetings to be held in May of 2014 will be followed by outreach to the GRTC Board, City of Richmond, Henrico County, and Richmond Area Metropolitan Planning Organization to determine if the Recommended Alternative will become the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA). The project will then move forward with design of the LPA.

FIGURE I: RECOMMENDED ALTERNATIVE

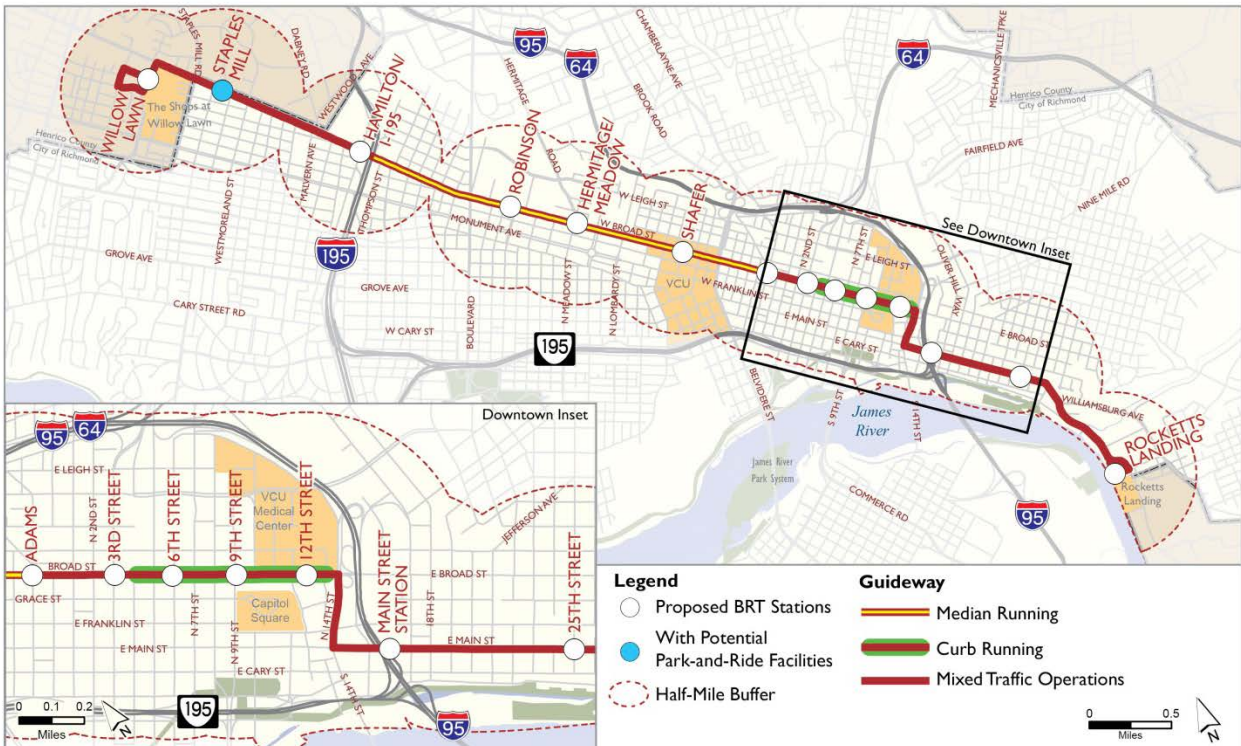


FIGURE 2: BROAD STREET RAPID TRANSIT STUDY TIMELINE

TIME PERIOD	ACTIVITIES
PROJECT INITIATION 2008 TO 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GRTC COA Recommends BRT (May 2008) • DRPT and GRTC Initiate Small Starts Process (July 2008) • Alternatives Analysis and Environmental Analysis Initiated (June 2009) • 1st Meeting of Policy Advisory Committee (PAC) and Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) (Oct 2009)
PROJECT SCOPING 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Public Meeting (Feb 2010) • Stakeholder Meetings (July to Oct 2010) • PAC/TAC Meetings (May to Sept 2010) • Va Department of Historic Resources (DHR) Coordination
ALTERNATIVES DEVELOPMENT & SCREENING 2010-2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Station Selection, Transition Selection, Alternative Screening (Spring to Summer 2010) • Detailed Definition of Build Alternative (Fall to Winter 2010) • Second Public Meeting (Oct 2010)
ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS 2011 TO 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PAC/TAC Meetings (Jan to Apr 2011) • DHR Coordination (Ongoing) • Completion of Environmental Analysis (Jan 2011 to May 2012) • Draft Environmental Document to FTA (May 2012) • Economic Impact Analysis (July to Sept. 2012)
PROJECT UPDATE 2013 TO 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FTA Comments Addressed (Early 2013) • PAC/TAC Meetings (July 2013) • Third Public Meeting (Aug 2013) • Revisions to Operating Plan (Jul to Dec 2013) • Revisions to Environmental Documents (Jan to Mar 2014) • Categorical Exclusion Letter from FTA (Apr 2014)

PROJECT DOCUMENTS

On the project website accompanying this document, the following technical reports and memoranda can be found. Collectively, these documents provide the history, technical analysis, and basis for decision-making for the Broad Street Rapid Transit Study. The public outreach materials also found on the website provide additional documentation of the information provided at different stages of project development and the public input received.

- Problem Statement
- Station Area Assessment Methodology

- Technology Screening Technical Report
- Initial Definition of Alternatives Technical Report
- Evaluation Methodology for Alternatives Technical Report
- Initial Screening of Alternatives Technical Report
- Broad Street to Main Street Connection Technical Report
- Station Area Screening Technical Report
- Detailed Screening of Alternatives Technical Report
- BRT Fare Collection Strategies Technical Report
- Transportation Systems Technical Report
- Land Use and Multimodal Connectivity Technical Report
- Richmond Broad Street BRT Calculation of Linked Trips on Project Technical Report
- Operating Cost Estimate Technical Report
- Capital Cost Estimate Technical Report