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Therese McMillan, Acting Administrator
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1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
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To Ms. McMillan:

In November 2014, a coworker and I traveled to Albuquerque, New Mexico as representatives of the Institute for Transportation and Development Policy's United States Program (ITDP US). The purpose of our visit was to evaluate the city's plans to construct a bus rapid transit (BRT) system. ITDP US found the Albuquerque Rapid Transit (ART) Central Avenue corridor to have high potential to be a top quality BRT corridor.

During the three day visit, ITDP met with the transit authority (ABQ RIDE), the City Planning department, and the design consultants hired in relation to the BRT project (HDR and Dekker/Perich/Sabatini). We also had the opportunity to tour the sections of Central Avenue where the BRT will be implemented. We were left with the impression that the Central Avenue was the best place in Albuquerque for BRT. The corridor currently carries about 42% of the bus ridership in the city, totaling approximately 17,000 daily boardings. Another strength is that the corridor runs through key areas of the city including the downtown and the area around the University of New Mexico. A strong existing ridership and well-placed location will ensure that the system will prove to be a well-ridden success.

From a technical standpoint, the ART proposal is strong. Using materials prepared for ABQ RIDE, we evaluated the system by looking at *The BRT* Standard's BRT Basics. *The BRT Standard* is a tool developed by ITDP and maintained by an independent technical committee. T*he BRT Standard* was designed to recognize and publicize high-quality BRT, while encouraging the developers of new systems to design them with international best practices in mind. The BRT Basics, as defined in the standard, are the five essential features of BRT. A system must score 20 points including a minimum of 4 points in both the dedicated right-of-way and busway alignment categories to meet the lowest standard of BRT.

The Central Avenue corridor scores well on the standard's BRT Basics, earning 33.6 points out of 38. The Central Avenue corridor will run in an exclusive, median-aligned busway with center stations for 9 miles with the exception of the downtown sections. In the downtown, the current plans have the BRT operating in mixed traffic on one-way streets parallel to Central through the downtown. In addition to the median-aligned lanes and dedicated right-of-way, the plans also detail the elimination of many of the left turns across the busway, off-board proof-of-payment fare collection and platform-level boarding.

Dedicated right-of-way - Minimum 4 points	*8*	7.8
	Describe in detail the type of busway separation/delineation and length (km) of each section of the trunk corridor.	There are dedicated lanes the entire 17 mile corridor other than the 0.5 miles in the downtown
Busway alignment - Minimum 4 points	*8*	7.8
	Describe in detail the alignment and length (km) of each section of the trunk corridor.	There are median aligned lanes the entire 17 mile corridor other than the 0.5 miles in the downtown
Off-board fare collection	*8*	7
	Explain the pre-boarding process at stations on the corridor. If not all stations are the same, include the % of stations with each type of fare collection.	Proof of payment planned
Intersection treatments	*7*	4
	Describe turning restrictions when the busway approaches intersections. Include the rough % of intersections with each type of treatment.	TSP at all intersections, some turning movements banned
Platform-level boarding	*7*	7
	Describe the % of stations, the % of buses, and/or the % of doors on each bus w/ platform level boarding. Describe the measures for reducing the gap.	Level boarding planned

Table 1: *BRT Standard* BRT Basics scorecard

Beyond meeting and scoring well on the basics, the ART system will also feature center stations and already has several proposed station designs. While not enclosed, the stations are attractive and local businesses are interested in using the stations to enhance the street environment. A prominent, attractive station has the potential to inspire the communities around it while encouraging further improvement in the surrounding neighborhood. This gives the ART system the potential to serve as a catalyst for further urban development in the areas around the corridor. BRT has a proven track record in this regard. The Cleveland HealthLine BRT, for example, has stimulated $5.8 billion in development.[1] Such investment would prove transformative in Albuquerque and lead to significant quality of life improvements for its citizens.

The BRT plans also include plans for bike lanes and some sidewalk rehabilitation therefore extending the benefits of the project to pedestrians and cyclists in addition to transit riders. Albuquerque Bike Share is also available in sections of the downtown where the ART will be running, resulting in the potential for a strong connection between the two systems. Such improvements will create a virtuous cycle of development in Albuquerque's downtown and the surrounding neighborhoods. BRT will anchor a more walkable and attractive downtown that attracts and retains the type of talent individuals that Albuquerque needs.

The ART Central Avenue corridor project is critical to the future of Albuquerque. It will create a significant improvement to the transportation system and provide thousands of people with faster, more reliable commutes. The prominent stations will serve as a catalyst for urban renewal, especially in the downtown. The project will also serve as an inspiration for other cities in the United States as it has the potential to provide an example of how high

[1]Hook, Lotshaw, and Weinstock. "More Development for Your Transit Dollar: An Analysis of 21 North American Transit Corridors". The Institute for Transportation and Development Policy p35, Table 4: https://www.itdp.org/more-development-for-your-transit-dollar-an-analysis-of-21-north-american-transit-corridors/

quality bus rapid transit projects can serve not only as a form of rapid transit but as an engine for economic development.

I hope that as you consider Albuquerque's application that you remember the strength of their system's design and its potential to transform Albuquerque and turn the city into an urban success story.

Sincerely,

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