



# Public Scoping Briefing Materials

Ogden – Weber State University  
Transit Corridor Project

# What is the Ogden-Weber State University Transit Project?

## What is it?

The Ogden-Weber State University Transit Corridor project is looking at ways to improve transit service in a 5-mile corridor between downtown Ogden and Weber State University (WSU) and McKay Dee Hospital Center. This is one of the busiest bus transit corridors in the Wasatch Front area, but it has high levels of traffic, making transit trips slower and less reliable. Many people rely on transit for trips to jobs, school, or to reach other places in the region. In the future, as more people and jobs move into the area, there will be an even greater need for higher quality transit service.

## Where is it?

The corridor is in the city of Ogden. It connects the Ogden Intermodal Center/*FrontRunner* commuter rail station on the west side of Downtown Ogden to the area's major employment, housing, commercial and education destinations, including Downtown Ogden, WSU and McKay-Dee Hospital Center.

## Who is involved?

The **Utah Transit Authority (UTA)** is leading the project in partnership with the **City of Ogden**, **Weber County**, **Weber State University**, **McKay Dee Hospital Center**, the **Utah Department of Transportation**, and the **Wasatch Front Regional Council**. Because this project could use federal funds, the **Federal Transit Administration (FTA)** is also involved.



## The Project Area in Ogden

The project is considering:

- Streetcar
- Bus Rapid Transit
- General improvements to existing bus service

And the following basic corridors for connecting Downtown Ogden to the areas south and east:

- On north/south streets like Washington and Harrison
- On east-west streets like 25<sup>th</sup> or 26<sup>th</sup>, 30<sup>th</sup> or 36<sup>th</sup>
- Connecting to Weber State University and McKay Dee Hospital Center

# Why is This Project Being Proposed?

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## Background

In 2005, UTA and its partners studied a range of options for improving transit in this area. This study found that a connection between downtown Ogden and WSU would see the most benefits from a major transit investment, and that streetcar or Bus Rapid Transit were the most promising approaches. Since then, the need for improved transit has only continued to grow.

## The Project's Purpose

The project partners have drafted the following statement of purpose to identify the intent of this project.



The purpose of the Ogden-Weber State University Transit Corridor Project is to provide high-quality transit service that:

- Improves the level of service and transit ridership between the Ogden Intermodal Center, the Ogden Central Business District, Weber State University, and McKay-Dee Hospital.
- Assists the City of Ogden in achieving vital economic and community development goals.
- Is affordable, enjoys wide public support, and encourages local partnerships.

*This statement will help guide decisions about the project as it moves forward: we want your comments! Are there other purposes that should be considered?*

## Why the Project is Needed

The project partners have identified key reasons that explain why they believe the project is needed. This project is needed to:

- Provide high quality, rapid transit service that increases ridership between the McKay Dee Hospital/Weber State University Area, Downtown Ogden and the Ogden Intermodal Center.
- Support a Long-Term Solution to serve future population and employment growth while minimizing transportation impacts.
- Provide a coordinated collection/distribution service that connects with the *FrontRunner* Regional Commuter Rail and other major transit services at the Ogden Intermodal Center.
- Create public transportation improvements that support downtown and community revitalization and benefit its citizens.
- Provide new service of a clearly better quality that should include many of the following characteristics: frequency, reliability, comfort, travel time, simple routing, capacity, convenience, and/or design.
- Create a more visible presence for transit in Ogden.
- Improve transit service while maintaining the financial health of UTA and its partners.

# Why Are We Asking You to Get Involved?

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UTA and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) are holding these meetings as part of an “early scoping” process. The project may apply for federal funding grants, so UTA is following federal procedures for:

- **Alternatives Analysis.** A planning process for defining the project in more detail, after considering a range of possible alternatives. This process will help us select the best alternative to meet the Purpose and Need. This is called the “Preferred Alternative.”
- **Environmental Review.** A study of the environmental effects and performance of the project, in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The environmental study will compare the Preferred Alternative to a No-Build Alternative. The environmental study will be released to the public for review and comment. Depending on the project and its potential impacts, the project may produce an Environmental Assessment or an Environmental Impact Statement.

## The Federal Requirements

Transportation projects with federal funding have specific requirements for involving the public and agencies in major decisions. An **Alternatives Analysis (AA)** is required by Title 49 United States Code (U.S.C.) Sec. 5309, and leads to the selection of alternatives or a “Preferred Alternative” that will be subject to the appropriate environmental process under the **National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)**.

**Early Scoping and Formal Scoping** are key steps in the process, allowing the public and other agencies to help shape the proposed project and minimize its potential environmental effects.

## What You Can Do Now

We need to hear your thoughts about how transit can be improved in the Ogden-WSU corridor. Our project is starting now with this early planning and scoping phase, asking the public and other government agencies to help us with:

- The purpose for the project and why it is needed.
- The kinds of alternatives we should consider.
- Any benefits or possible environmental impacts that you think are important.

We have provided a comment form on the last page.

# What Are Our Alternatives?

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In addition to having a “No Build” alternative, UTA and its partners are putting together a set of “build” alternatives. These alternatives include recommendations from a previous study of Ogden’s transit needs in 2005, which identified streetcar and Bus Rapid Transit as promising alternatives. The alternatives currently being considered include:

- Different transit types and technologies.
- Route or “corridor alternatives”.

## Transit Types and Technologies

**Streetcar.** A streetcar features frequent service using electric powered cars running on rail tracks. The routes are primarily in local street rights-of-way, either in dedicated or shared lanes, with stations in key ridership areas. To help keep travel times fast, there may be fewer stops than a typical bus route. Streetcar lines can run along the sides of streets or operate in center lanes with a median. They can also operate with two sets of tracks, serving in-bound and out-bound trains, or with sections of single track with trains running both directions, controlled by signals.



**Bus Rapid Transit (BRT).** BRT uses rubber-tired vehicles but is operated and branded to emphasize that it is faster and more reliable than regular bus service. BRT uses low-floor vehicles that carry more passengers and allow fast boarding and unloading. BRT service runs frequently all day in both directions, and avoids traffic delays through technology and other strategies. Some BRT systems use lanes dedicated to transit, while others run with traffic but with priority treatments at intersections and other congested points.



## Other Design Features

For either streetcars or BRT, there are several options for deciding how transit operates on streets. This includes streetcar or BRT in its own lane or shared traffic lane running curbside, serving stations beside the roadway. Streetcar or BRT can also operate in center lanes, with stations located in a median.

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## What About Just Improving Existing Bus Service?

In addition to streetcar and Bus Rapid Transit, the project’s alternatives analysis is also considering a “Best Bus” approach. This type of alternative would not require major capital investments, but would instead focus on:

- Increasing bus service
  - Adjusting traffic signals to reduce bus delays
  - Revising existing transit routes
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## Corridor Alternatives

The map on page 7 shows the basic corridors that are being considered, and page 8 provides a larger set of conceptual alignment options that have been suggested by the project partners and others to date. These corridors connect three major areas that have been targeted for improved transit service, including Downtown Ogden, the East Central neighborhood, and the WSU/McKay Dee Hospital area.

**Downtown Ogden.** The basic corridor for this area would connect from the Intermodal Center at 23<sup>rd</sup> Street/Wall Avenue and head east toward Washington Boulevard and then south on Washington Boulevard or potentially Grant Avenue to 26<sup>th</sup>, 30<sup>th</sup> or 36<sup>th</sup> Streets.

### **East Central Neighborhood (Cross-town Connectors).**

Between Washington and Harrison Boulevards, the basic east-west routes follow the area's major arterial streets, including 26<sup>th</sup>, 30<sup>th</sup> and 36<sup>th</sup> Streets.

### **Weber State University and McKay Dee Hospital Center.**

This area covers the corridor generally along Harrison Boulevard between 36<sup>th</sup> Street and 4600 South, serving the WSU campus and McKay Dee Hospital Center area, ending at the Dee Events Center, where transit parking could be provided.

## The No-Build Alternative

Federal environmental regulations require that a "No Build Alternative" be considered, providing a way to compare the benefits and environmental effects of a project against taking no action. The study will consider the transportation and environmental effects if no new major transit investments are made beyond those that already in place or already underway in this corridor through the year 2030, including projects that are named in the region's long range transportation plan.

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## Conceptual Alignment Options

The project is asking the public and stakeholders for comments and suggestions on other routes or "alignment options" that could help meet the project's purpose and need. The map on page 8 shows some of the conceptual alignments that have been identified to date, including:

**Downtown.** Alignments that could support a "downtown loop". A loop could be formed from the Intermodal Center by using Washington Boulevard, Grant Avenue and 26<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> Streets.

**East Central Neighborhood.** In addition to 26<sup>th</sup>, 30<sup>th</sup> and 36<sup>th</sup> Streets, other east-west and north-south options may also be possible. The cross-town routes offer different choices not only about which east-west streets could be used, but also about how far the route would travel on Washington or Harrison Boulevards, as well as other north/south streets such as Grant or Monroe.

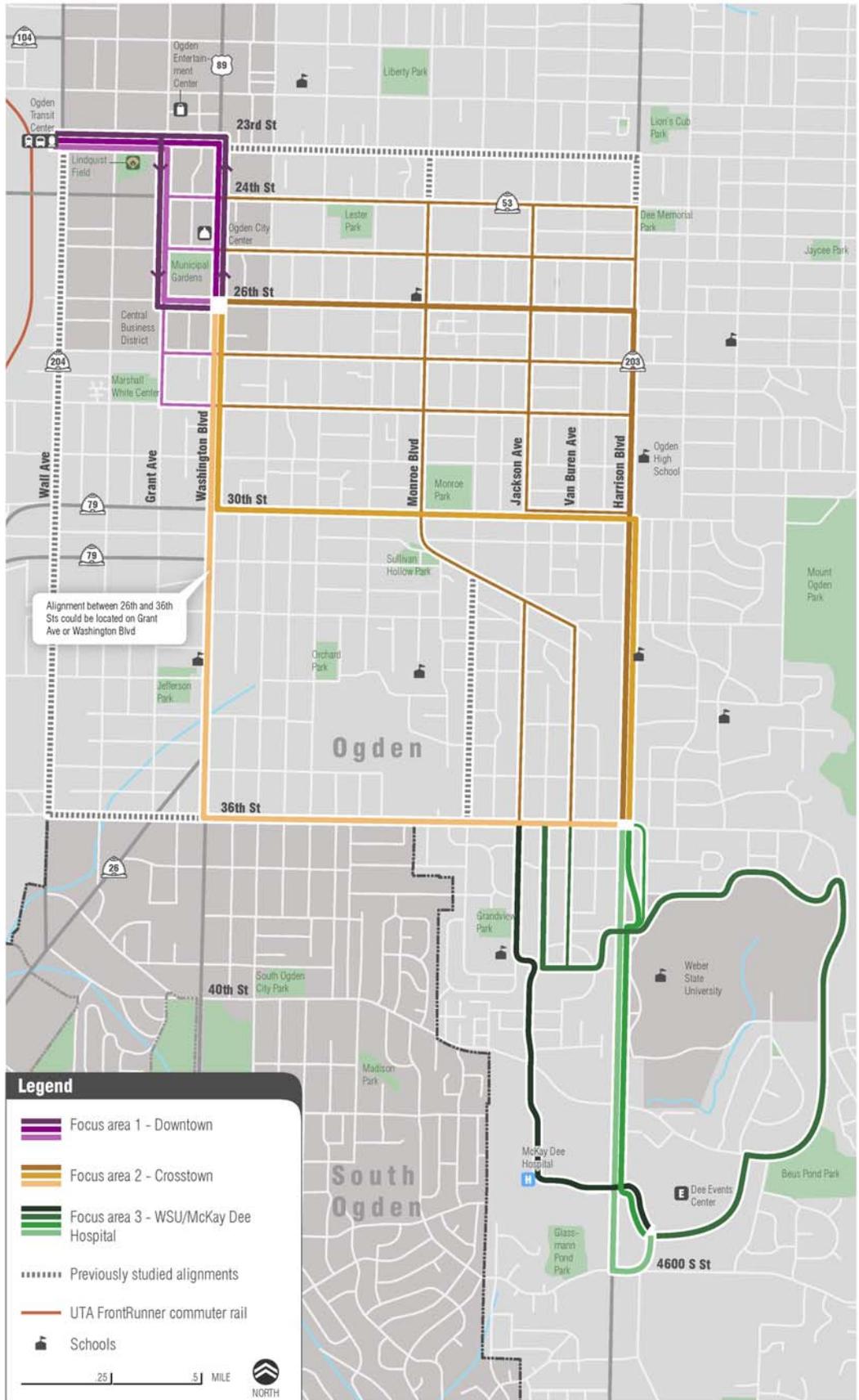
**WSU and McKay Dee Hospital Area.** Several other options have been suggested in this area, including:

- At 36<sup>th</sup> Street, following Eccles Drive and proceeding south through the old McKay Dee Hospital campus, serving the new hospital through a shuttle bus connection. This route crosses Harrison at the new signalized intersection and enters the WSU campus at Tyler Ave. and proceeds east through the campus on Edvalson St. to Skyline Dr. and then south along Skyline Dr. and Country Hills to the Dee Events Center where it terminates at a park and ride lot.
  - From the intersection of 36<sup>th</sup> Street/Harrison Boulevard, turning south to enter the WSU campus on Tyler and proceeding on a new right of way to a stop near the WSU Administration Building. The route returns to Harrison Blvd. at a new signalized intersection and proceeds south to 4400 South where it would turn left and use an existing driveway to access the Dee Events Center parking lot.
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# Map of Basic Corridor Alternatives



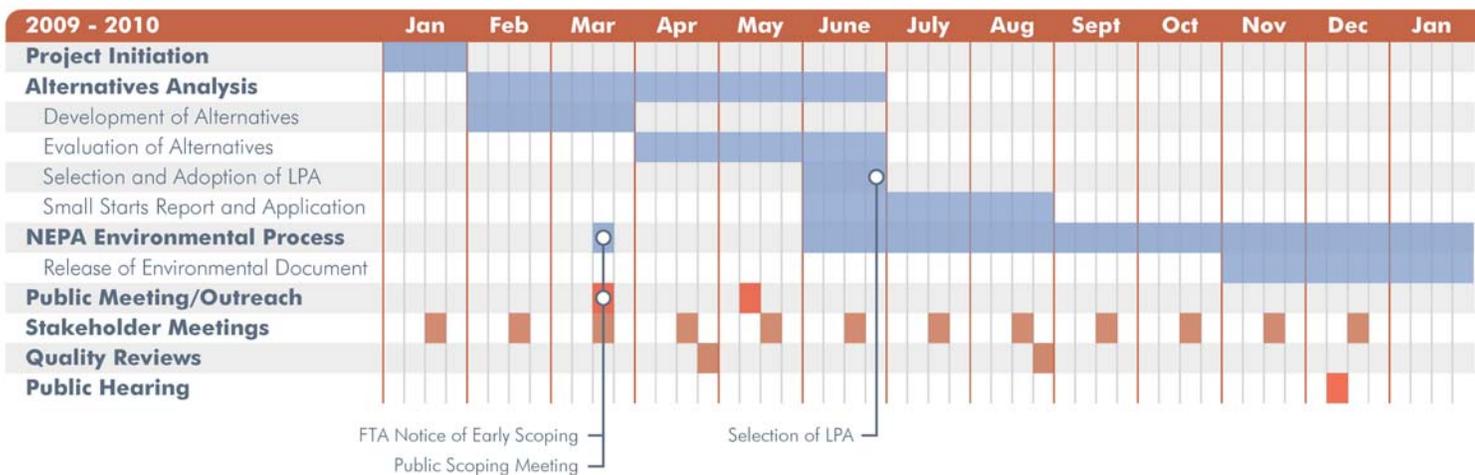
# Map of Conceptual Alignment Options



# The Project Schedule and Next Steps

The chart below shows the major steps we will be taking to develop the project and complete the environmental review.

## Timeline



**Alternatives Analysis (now through June 2009).** To select a Preferred Alternative, we will refine and evaluate alternatives based on their ability to best meet the purpose and need, measuring factors like:

- Ridership
- Rider benefits such as travel time and service quality
- Land use and economic development benefits
- Traffic impacts
- Environmental impacts and benefits for people and the natural environment
- Public and stakeholder support
- Cost effectiveness

**Project Design and Environmental Review (June 2009 to late 2009/early 2010).** After we have a Preferred Alternative, we will conduct further design and develop an environmental document for public, agency, and federal review. The environmental document will be released for public review and comment, and UTA and FTA will hold public hearings.

