

2020



ALBANY TRANSIT DEVELOPMENT PLAN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Albany is the county seat of Dougherty County, Georgia and is renowned as a picturesque community with a strong industrial and commerce base. It is also home to significant historical resources associated primarily with the civil rights movement. The metropolitan population within the City of Albany is served by the Albany Transit System (ATS) providing fixed route service, as well as paratransit service for ADA eligible riders. ATS has operated as a department of the City of Albany for over 40 years offering safe and reliable service six days per week. The Albany Transit System operates 13 fixed routes, including 2 university routes and 2 express routes, carrying over half of million customers each year in the City of Albany. ATS also provides more than 19,000 trips annually to persons who are eligible for the paratransit service under the ADA regulations.

As a public transit provider and recipient of Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funding, Albany Transit is required to adopt and maintain a Transit Development Plan (TDP) that identifies transit service needs, prioritizes improvements, and determines the resources required for modifications of service or implementation of new service.

The TDP update process provides transit agencies with the opportunity to define public transportation needs, solicit input from stakeholders and the public, identify capital and operational deficiencies, and define courses of action to advance the mission and goals of the transit agency. The following Figure provides an overview of the TDP Planning Process.

Figure 1-1: Albany Transit Development Planning Process



The TDP document is organized to reflect the major elements of the planning process. The following description provides for quick reference for the TDP report elements:

- **Introduction** - TDP process overview
- **Existing Conditions and Analysis** - provides an overview of community characteristics including socioeconomic data, roadway and travel information, and key markets that impact public transit ridership opportunities.
- **Existing Transit Services and Performance Evaluation** - details the operational efficiency and effectiveness of Albany Transit's services and provides performance benchmarks and comparison with industry peers.
- **Albany Transit Mission, Goals, and Objectives** - defines the strategic vision for the transit system and details the supporting goals and objectives.
- **Performance Based Planning** - provides an overview of the new federal reporting requirements defined by the FAST Act and documents Albany Transit's compliance.
- **Service Alternatives** - details five (5) potential system and service alternatives and the associated pros and cons that support the identification of the preferred alternative.

- **TDP Recommendations** - provides detailed system and service recommendations for the preferred alternative including resources needed for implementation.
- **Associated Plans** - includes a detailed assessment of the ADA Paratransit demand response service provided to passengers with qualifying disabilities, and a Title VI assessment documenting the potential impacts to vulnerable and disadvantaged communities that reside within the study area. This section also evaluates the approach to prioritizing bus stop improvements throughout the study area and the associated criteria by which all stops will be evaluated.
- **Five Year Capital Financial Plan** - presents a capital and operating scenario that prioritizes funding needs from 2021 - 2025 as identified by the TDP recommendations and provides key strategies.

The results of these project elements formed the foundation for the Albany TDP Preferred Alternative and Recommendations.

The service alternative scenarios are a compilation of recommended changes to individual routes and segments that puts ATS on a path for operational and financial effectiveness and lays the groundwork for growth. The recommendations are based on meeting the ATS's service goals of safety, efficiency, innovation, and infrastructure.

The ridership numbers, transit propensity update, and survey responses provided essential data highlighting ridership patterns. These patterns include origins, destinations, and transfers, as well as productivity of routes and route segments, demographic data of the customer base, customer attitudes regarding the services provided, and unserved areas where service is desired.

The following five (5) TDP scenarios were developed and the Preferred Alternative identified as the Hybrid Scenario.

1. Fix Critical Problems: No new system investments, fixing schedules and on-time performance to increase efficiency within existing routes.
2. Geographical Service Expansions: No improvements in frequency.
3. Improve frequency: No geographical service expansion. Realignment within the existing service boundaries.
4. Hybrid: Fix critical problems, geographical service expansion, improve frequency.

5. BRT: High quality bus service that provides faster, more reliable, and more convenient service. The recommendations of the TDP support the Hybrid Scenario as the Preferred Alternative.

The following section summarizes the recommendations of the TDP.

1.1 Recommendations

1.1.1 Transit Fares Assessment and Policies

ATS should consider the development of a long-term fare policy. Utilizing industry best practices to price fare will provide the Albany Transit with a long-term revenue projection as well as better addressing demand of the existing customer base and future growth. However, before considering any new fare strategy, ATS should review the basic structure of the fare system in addition to how those fare revenues are being utilized. After correcting the structure and pricing fares properly, ATS can adjust other fares as needed.

1.1.2 General Operations:

- Invest in on-time performance software upgrades or changes. Service performance monitoring is used to ensure that all services are meeting expectations for the transit network.
- Performance Monitoring: Albany Transit's service performance should be reviewed on a regular ongoing basis and expanded to include additional key performance indicators per the National Transit Database key statistic indicators.
- Adopt consistent terminology for bus routes. ATS is currently using route name, number, and color interchangeable for each route, such as Route 9, Silver, Pointe N. Meredyth. Having a consistent use of the route name will eliminate confusion when communicating system information to passengers.
- Update information posted on agency's website to reflect system map updates for new route alignments and name transfer point changes when they occur, for example Five Point stops is now PicNSave.

- Develop and update individual route maps

1.1.3 Establish and Communicate Policies:

- On-time performance threshold for arrivals and departures communicated to operators and strictly enforced.
- Educating passengers on the proper and efficient boarding and alighting practices, including the use of the on-vehicle bike rack, can help to improve the on-time performance of the system.
- Intergovernmental Agreements: A number of the service options recommend linkages of current bus service to activity centers located outside the Albany municipal boundary. The Albany Transit system is owned and operated by the City of Albany and does not currently have agreements with adjacent municipalities to facilitate multi-jurisdictional service. Service expansion recommendations of the TDP are constrained to the municipal boundary, until such time that officials seek to extend the service area and reach agreement with adjacent municipalities. Public interest in a regional transit service, within the Urbanized Areas of adjacent counties, should continue to be monitored and updates provided to local government officials for consideration.

1.1.4 Performance Based Planning:

As part of this performance-based approach, recipients of federal funds are required to link investment priorities from their Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) and Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), develop Transit Asset Management plans (TAMS), and develop and maintain Public Transit Agency Safety Plans (PTASP). Albany Transit has worked closely with the DARTS MPO to ensure all requirements have been met and are included in the Metropolitan Transportation Plan and TIP. Resources should be made available to ensure ongoing compliance with the Final Rule and associated deadlines for all performance-based planning requirements.

Albany Transit administrators and planning staff should continue to monitor the Performance Based Planning Program by subscribing to email notifications offered by the FTA, in addition to attending training opportunities and information sharing forums such as at the Georgia Transit Association conference and GDOT Intermodal annual training forums.

1.1.5 Fixed Route Bus Service:

- Reroute Route 9 to increase productivity in time and distance providing a more direct service to the Albany Mall via Palmyra/Whispering Pine Road and not along Dawson Rd. on the inbound
- Increase frequencies from 60 to 30 minutes.
 - Adding one bus each to Routes 3 Orange, 4 Green and 7 Brown
- Extend service span by ending 1 hour later for high demand routes
- Increase operating efficiency through traffic signal priority for buses
- Recommendations for geographic service expansion include:
 - Route 11 Ledo Rd. via N. Slappey Blvd
 - Route 12 Eastside MillerCoors-Walmart Circulator
 - North Slappey Blvd - Newton Rd - with potential for service to airport

Route level recommendations are detailed below.

ROUTE 1 - RED LINE / ROBERT HARVEY

Based on the ridership numbers collected from the GFI data and current on time performance of 55.29%, no recommendations are made to restructure routing or service levels. It is recommended to adjust the time of the trips provided to improve connections with the express routes servicing East Albany and on-time performance issues.

Schedule Time	Weekdays	Saturdays
Existing	5:15	6:15
Proposed	5:00	6:00

ROUTE 2 - GOLD LINE / ALBANY STATE UNIVERSITY

Based on ridership numbers collected from the GFI data and current on time performance of 78.75%, no recommendations are made to restructure routing or service levels. It is recommended to adjust the time of the trips provided to further improve on-time performance issues.

Schedule Time	Weekdays	Saturdays
Existing	5:45	6:45
Proposed	5:40	6:40

ROUTE 3 - ORANGE LINE - ALBANY MALL

Since FY 2018, this route has experienced an 8% decrease in ridership. Based on ridership numbers collected from the GFI data and current on time performance of 43.37%, which is a decrease of 8% since 2018, it is recommended to adjust the time-of-day trips provided to improve on-time performance issues.

Schedule Time	Weekdays	Saturdays
Existing	5:15	6:15
Proposed	5:00	6:00

It is also recommended service levels be restructured on this route to reflect the current demand. Service should be restructured to operate every 30 minutes instead of 60 minutes during the weekdays, with frequency on Saturdays remaining the same.

Frequency	Weekdays	Saturdays
Existing	60	60
Proposed	30	60

ROUTE 4 - GREEN LINE / EAST ALBANY

Based ridership numbers collected from the GFI data and current on time performance of 78.37%, which is a 12.63% increase since 2018, it is recommended to adjust the time-of-day trips are provided to further improve on-time performance, as well as add a new bus to this route to address current capacity issues.

Schedule Time	Weekdays	Saturdays
Existing	5:15	6:15
Proposed	5:00	6:00

ROUTE 5 - BLUE LINE / ALBANY MALL

Based on ridership numbers collected from the GFI data and current on time performance of 48.71%, which is a 1.64% decrease since 2018, it is recommended to adjust the time-of-day trips are provided to improve on-time performance and maintain ridership.

Schedule Time	Weekdays	Saturdays
Existing	5:45	6:45
Proposed	5:40	6:40

It is also recommended service levels be restructured on this route to reflect the current demand. Service should operate every 30 minutes instead of 60 minutes during the weekdays, with Saturday frequency remaining the same.

Frequency	Weekdays	Saturdays
Existing	60	60
Proposed	30	60

ROUTE 6 - GREY LINE / GILLIONVILLE ROAD

Based on ridership numbers collected from the GFI data and current on time performance of 45.41%, which is a 2.7% increase since 2018, it is recommended to adjust the time-of-day trips are provided to improve on-time performance and increase rider confidence to boost ridership.

Schedule Time	Weekdays	Saturdays
Existing	5:45	6:45
Proposed	5:40	6:40

ROUTE 7 - BROWN LINE / NEWTON & OAKRIDGE

Based ridership numbers collected from the GFI data and current on time performance of 46.33%, which is an 8.9% increase since 2018, it is recommended to adjust the time-of-day trips are provided to further improve on-time performance and increase rider confidence to boost ridership.

Schedule Time	Weekdays	Saturdays
Existing	5:15	6:15
Proposed	5:00	6:00

It is also recommended service levels be restructured on this route to reflect the current demand and operate service every 30 minutes instead of 60 minutes during the weekdays, with frequency on Saturdays remaining the same.

Frequency	Weekdays	Saturdays
Existing	60	60
Proposed	30	60

ROUTE 8 - PURPLE LINE / MLK

Based on ridership numbers collected from the GFI data and current on time performance of 68.49%, which is a 5.91% increase since 2018, it is recommended to

adjust the time-of-day trips are provided to further improve on-time performance and increase rider confidence to boost ridership.

Schedule Time	Weekdays	Saturdays
Existing	5:15	6:15
Proposed	5:00	6:00

ROUTE 9 - SILVER LINE / POINTE N MEREDYTH

Based on ridership numbers collected from the GFI data, the running times and current on time performance of 24.62%, it is recommended that Route 9 be restructured through rerouting and simplifying its routing through Palmyra Avenue and Pointe North. This rerouting will decrease the travel time for customers riding through the neighborhood and increase the overall route productivity. The reroute eliminates inbound service along Dawson Road and provides more direct service to and from the Albany Mall for riders along Palmyra Road and Whispering Pines Road. It is also recommended that the current schedule be relaxed for this route to improve on-time performance and rider confidence. The proposed reroute changes are shown in the Appendix.

Schedule Time	Weekdays	Saturdays
Existing	5:20	6:20
Proposed	5:00	6:00

ROUTE 1X - RED LINE / TURNER

Based on ridership numbers collected from the GFI data and the current on time performance of 52.55%, which is an 11.17% decrease since 2018, it is recommended to adjust the time-of-day trips are provided to improve on-time performance and increase rider confidence to boost ridership.

Schedule Time	Weekdays	Saturdays
Existing	5:00	6:00
Proposed	5:20	6:20

ROUTE 4X - GREEN LINE / SYLVESTER RD.

Based on ridership numbers collected from the GFI data and the current on time performance of 54.84%, which is a 2.07% increase since 2018, it is recommended to adjust the time-of-day trips are provided on a 40, 60, 70 minutes cycle to further improve on-time performance and increase rider confidence to boost ridership.

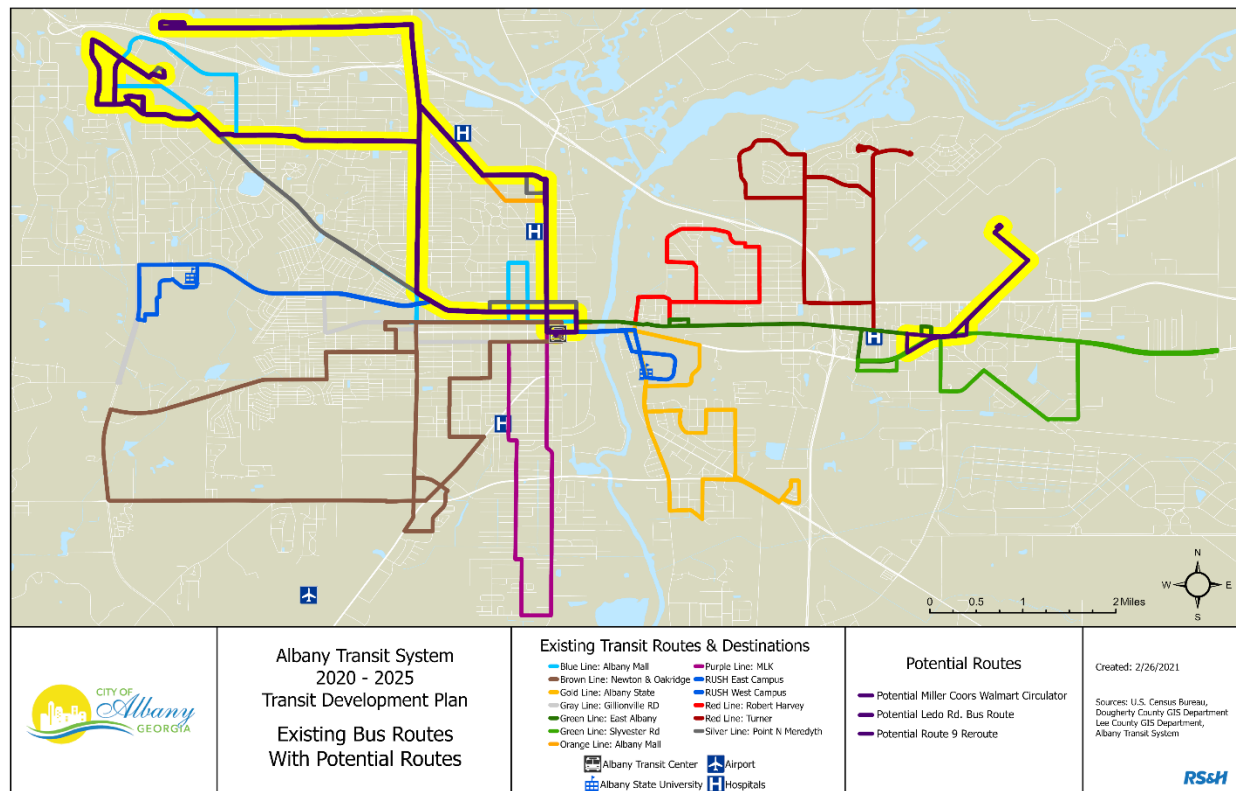
Schedule Time	Weekdays	Saturdays
Existing	5:30	6:30
Proposed	5:30	6:30

ROUTE 20 AND 30 - RAM RUSH EAST AND WEST CAMPUS

Based on ridership numbers collected from the GFI data and current on time performance of 58.06% and 47.50% respectively, which is a 15.48% and 11.46% decrease respectively since 2018, it is recommended to adjust the time-of-day trips are provided to further improve on-time performance and increase rider confidence to boost ridership.

Schedule Time	Weekdays	Saturdays
Existing	6:45	8:15
Proposed	6:40	8:20

Figure 1.2: Proposed Hybrid Scenario Service Modifications



1.1.6 ADA Paratransit Service Recommendations:

The following recommendations were formulated based on the evaluation and assessment of the current service and input from ATS staff.

- Partner with medical transport service providers to improve on-time performance by shifting non-emergency medical transportation passengers towards those medical transport service providers
- Remind passengers of their responsibility in ensuring service stays on time:
 - Cancel if the trip will not be taken as soon as possible
 - The pickup window lasts for a set amount of time, and the driver may arrive at any time during the window
 - Passengers should be ready to leave during the defined pickup window
 - Paratransit is a shared-ride experience and the vehicle may not take a direct route to the destination
- Create a separate customer service position that is distinct from paratransit dispatcher to guarantee that passengers can schedule trips in a timely fashion and have issues addressed promptly
- Establish a transit log with explanations for trips that are 20+ minutes late. This log will help dispatchers and supervisors understand when and why trip drop-offs and pickups are late and can address those issues in the future
- Avoid fulfilling requests for unscheduled trips, especially in the morning and during peak operating hours
- Expand paratransit service to accommodate growing ridership numbers
- Introduce fare savings programs to incentivize ADA paratransit riders to transition back to fixed route bus service
- Identify areas with limited ADA accessible sidewalk infrastructure and seek partnerships and funding to make needed first and last mile improvements to facilitate transit accessibility for Category 2 paratransit riders
- Perform cost benefit analysis for new trip dispatching software and evaluate additional training opportunities.

1.1.7 Bus Rapid Transit Recommendations

This study focused on the planning-level identification of corridors within Albany that have the potential for BRT improvements. The following recommendations provide Albany with a path for evaluating and, if desired, implementing a BRT or similar system. The recommendations have been stratified into short term (0-5years), mid-term (5-10 years), and long term (10 or more years) strategies.

Short Term Recommendations (0-5 years)

- Development of a Transportation Development Committee comprised of local government agencies, transportation officials, community development organizations and members of the public.
 - This Committee should identify specific goals and formalize the regional need for BRT
- Identify potential funding sources
 - The Federal 5307 funding is not anticipated to increase resulting in the need for increased local match and/or discretionary State and Federal funding.
- Conduct a BRT feasibility study in coordination with the Committee
 - Using the potential routes identified in this effort as a baseline, a more detailed study should be conducted to determine the feasibility of a BRT or BRT Light system.

Mid Term Recommendations (5-10 years)

- Modify local planning and development policies to be more conducive for BRT development
 - Identify priority zones for higher densities based on TOD principles
 - Develop BRT positive screening processes which help prioritize TOD principles
- Development of Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) between partner agencies and organizations pending the future development of a BRT system
 - The BRT system may cross city and county lines, indicating a need for formalized agreements
 - These MOUs may also contain funding agreements for the agencies that will be supporting or benefiting from BRT
- Potential development of a Pilot BRT Light transit system with upgraded stations and branding
 - This pilot program serves as a proof of concept and act as the first stages of BRT service in the region

Long Term Recommendations (10 or more years)

- Potential improvement of BRT service

- Inclusion of additional amenities to existing service
- Expand or modify routes

1.1.8 Bus Stop Improvement Program

Bus stops are a key link in the journey of a bus rider and serve as the first point of contact between the customer and the service. Many of Albany Transit's bus stops have safety, security, or right-of-way deficiencies since they are located on roads lacking pedestrian accommodations. Problems include lack of sidewalk facilities and connections, lack passenger standing areas or pads, poor lighting, and unsafe crossings to get to the bus stop. This Bus Stop Improvement Program identifies these deficiencies at the stop level and includes recommended improvements to addresses significant bus stop safety issues and eliminate barriers to transit service.

The top ten priority bus stops were identified and are listed in the following table.

Table 1-1: Priority Bus Stop Improvement Locations

Stop ID	Stop Name
ATS008	Albany Mall
ATS381	W Broad Avenue @ Chamber of Commerce
ATS343	Sylvester Highway / Harvey's Grocery Store
ATS185	N Jefferson Street / W Broad Avenue
ATS213	N Slappey Boulevard @ Red Lobster
ATS426	N Jefferson Street and W Tift Avenue - Outbound
ATS129	Highland Avenue / Westbrooke Street
ATS190	N Jefferson Street / Pine Ave
ATS230	Oakgrove Center
ATS050	Dawson Road / Slappey Boulevard

Implementation of these bus stop improvements will be dictated by the availability of capital and maintenance funding. Potential sources for BSIP implementation include:

- U.S.C 5307 Federal Transit Formula Funds
- 49 U.S.C. 5339 Grants for Buses and Bus Facilities Program
- Transportation Alternative Program (TAP) Funding

- Transportation Special Purpose Local Option Sales Taxes (TSPLOST)
- Special Purpose Local Option Sales Taxes
- Local Government "General Funds"
- Public Private Partnerships (PPP)

Public-private partnerships can change which bus stops receive infrastructure and amenity improvements. If private organizations or businesses put funding towards a bus stop improvement project, that bus stop is taken off the list for improvements because SPLOST and other federal, state, and local funding sources will not be used for those enhancements. Examples of partnerships include shopping plazas or malls, hospitals, or residential complexes. Branding opportunities exist for bus stops located in the vicinity of city destinations and trip generators.

1.1.9 Financial Plan

Annual capital and operating funding for the Albany Transit System is derived from four sources including the City of Albany General Fund revenues, Federal Transit Administration funding, Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) Intermodal Division funding, and farebox revenues.

As a department of the City of Albany, the capital and operating budget for the system is established concurrently with the City's annual budget.

The DARTS approved 2018 - 2021 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) includes current and projected funding amounts for the Albany Transit system. These figures were used to establish baseline and projected capital and operational funding levels for the five-year implementation plan. This constrained financial plan was developed based on the identified recommendations and the anticipated revenues and costs. The following table shows the anticipated operating and capital revenues and projected expenditures over the planning period.

Table 1-2: Albany Transit Existing Financial Conditions and Projections

Year	Estimated Ridership		Administrative Costs	Operating Costs*	Capital Cost**	Total Cost	Fare Revenue	Federal Share	State Share	Total Subsidy	Local Share
	Daily	Annual***									
2019	2,566	754,471	\$ 639,757	\$ 2,880,264	\$ 516,511	\$ 4,036,532	\$ 423,196	\$ 380,182	\$ 136,329	\$ 516,511	\$ 3,096,825
2020	2,099	617,039	\$ 718,904	\$ 2,555,116	\$ 7,473,869	\$ 10,747,889	\$ 411,349	\$ 7,256,653	\$ 747,387	\$ 8,004,040	\$ 2,332,500
2021	2,036	598,528	\$ 733,282	\$ 2,606,218	\$ 7,623,346	\$ 10,962,846	\$ 419,576	\$ 7,401,786	\$ 762,335	\$ 8,164,121	\$ 2,379,150
2022	2,342	688,585	\$ 678,915	\$ 3,056,559	\$ 548,126	\$ 4,283,600	\$ 439,265	\$ 1,966,780	\$ 54,813	\$ 2,021,593	\$ 1,822,742
2023	2,272	667,928	\$ 762,907	\$ 2,711,509	\$ 559,088	\$ 4,033,504	\$ 444,756	\$ 1,803,025	\$ 55,909	\$ 1,858,934	\$ 1,729,814
2024	2,204	647,890	\$ 778,165	\$ 2,765,739	\$ 570,270	\$ 4,114,174	\$ 450,315	\$ 1,839,086	\$ 57,027	\$ 1,896,113	\$ 1,767,746
2025	2,138	628,453	\$ 793,728	\$ 2,821,054	\$ 581,675	\$ 4,196,458	\$ 455,944	\$ 1,875,867	\$ 58,168	\$ 1,934,035	\$ 1,806,478

*INCLUDES: VEHICLE OPERATIONS, VEHICLE MAINTENANCE, AND FACILITY MAINTENANCE SOURCED FROM ALBANY NTD 2020 INFO

**INCLUDES: PASSENGER STATIONS, ADMIN BUILDINGS, MAINTENANCE, REVENUE VEH, COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS, AND OTHER CAPITAL EXPENSES

***Estimated based on projections of 2019 Ridership

Note: Due to the COVID-19 pandemic data points reflecting 2020 were used to forecast projections for 2021 only. All other years followed 2019 base values for estimation.

The preferred alternative identified for the 2020 Transit Development Plan includes a number of route improvements, system and service expansions, and capital improvements. The following table details the capital and operational improvements included in the proposed operating and capital projections.

Table 1-3: Albany Transit System - Preferred Alternative Cost Assessment

Year	Estimated Ridership		Administrative Costs	Operating Costs*	Capital Cost**	Total Cost	Fare Revenue	Federal Share	State Share	Total Subsidy	Local Share
	Daily	Annual									
2020	350	102,900	\$ 4,079	\$ 347,334	\$ 1,746,600	\$ 2,098,013	\$ 68,598.28	\$ 1,570,947	\$ 174,660.00	\$ 1,745,607	\$ 283,807.89
2021	354	104,186	\$ 4,161	\$ 354,280	\$ 1,781,532	\$ 2,139,973	\$ 69,455.76	\$ 1,590,584	\$ 176,843.25	\$ 1,767,427	\$ 303,090.59
2022	359	105,489	\$ 4,244	\$ 361,366	\$ 1,817,163	\$ 2,182,773	\$ 70,323.95	\$ 1,610,466	\$ 179,053.79	\$ 1,789,520	\$ 322,929.02
2023	363	106,807	\$ 4,329	\$ 368,593	\$ 1,853,506	\$ 2,226,428	\$ 71,203.00	\$ 1,630,597	\$ 181,291.96	\$ 1,811,889	\$ 343,336.43
2024	368	108,142	\$ 4,416	\$ 375,965	\$ 1,890,576	\$ 2,270,957	\$ 72,093.04	\$ 1,650,979	\$ 183,558.11	\$ 1,834,537	\$ 364,326.35
2025	372	109,494	\$ 4,504	\$ 383,485	\$ 1,928,388	\$ 2,316,376	\$ 72,994.20	\$ 1,671,617	\$ 185,852.59	\$ 1,857,469	\$ 385,912.60

