

Mobility and Capacity

Proponents of this City of Austin Light Rail Plan will tell you that spending \$6,220,000,000 (\$6.22 billion) of the proposed \$7.0 billion dollar project cost to build these two Light Rail lines (The Orange Line and The Blue Line) will improve Mobility.

What they don't tell you is that one existing traffic lane in each direction on North Lamar Blvd, Guadalupe Street, South Congress Avenue, Riverside Drive and the South First Street Bridge will need to be permanently removed to install Light Rail.

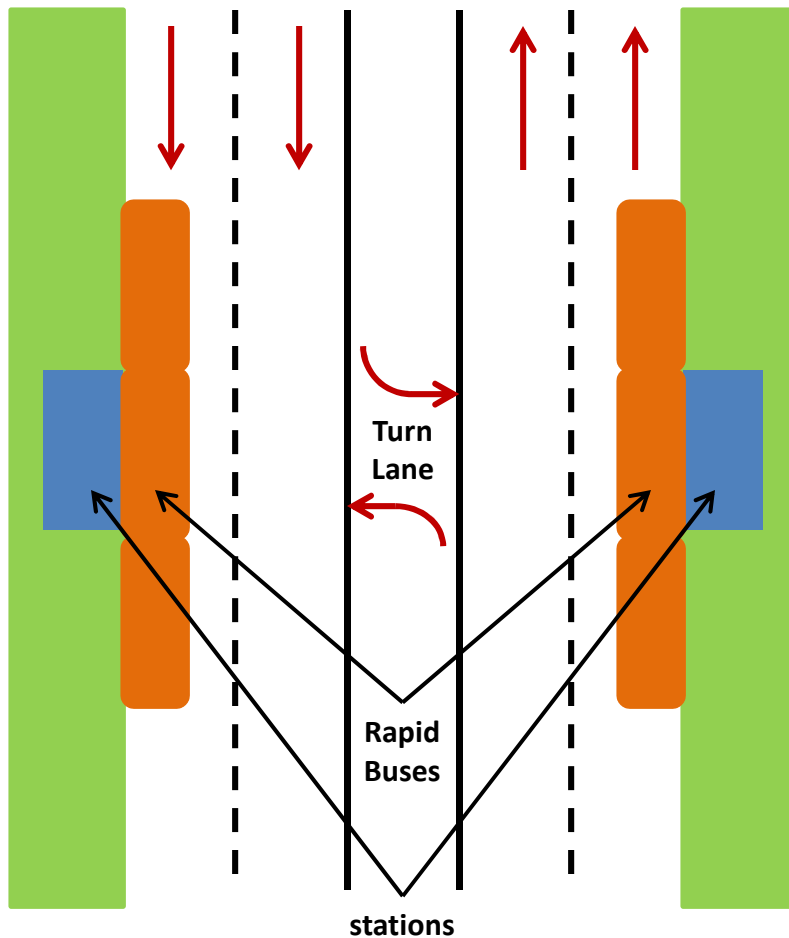
So as the population doubles from 2020 to 2040 and the traffic increases correspondingly on the above named roadways, traffic congestion will only get worse, not better, because each of those roadways will have lost a lane of traffic in each direction.

How does that improve Mobility???!!!

As you can see from the slides that follow, the City of Austin wants to separate the Light Rail vehicles from traffic and to do so they must close down an existing traffic lane in each direction to achieve that separation. Because Light Rail vehicles cannot change lanes if an accident occurs in the traffic lane in which Light Rail operates, Light Rail requires a traffic lane in each direction be dedicated to its operation. Buses, however, can simple drive around the accident. An inconvenient truth.

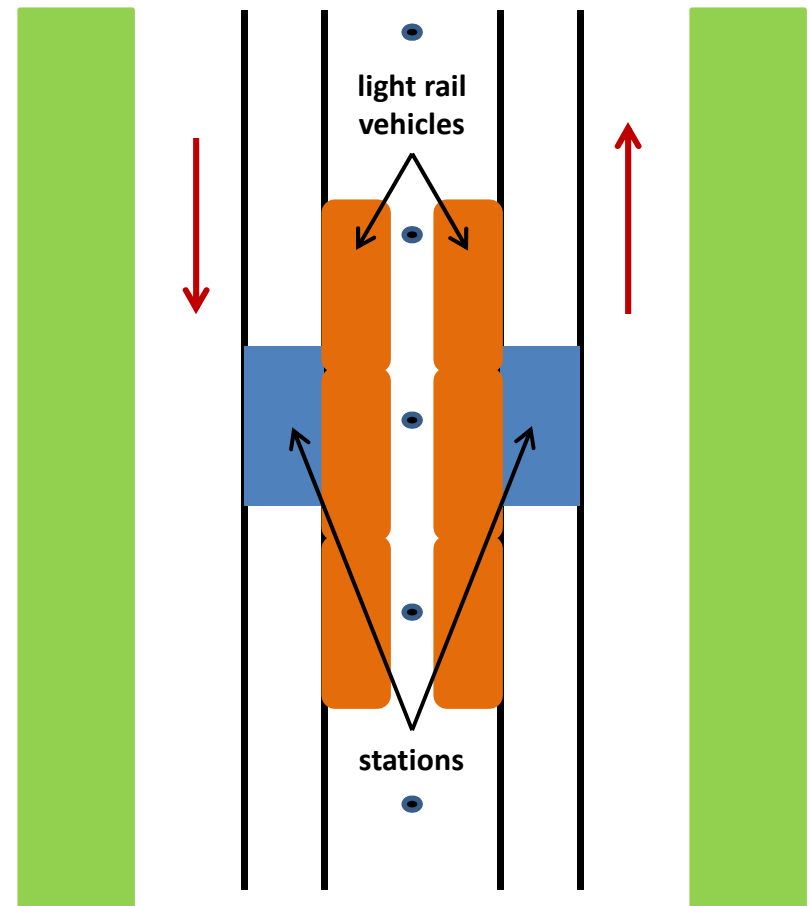
North Lamar Blvd, Guadalupe St & South Congress Ave

As It Is Today



2 Traffic Lanes in each direction
with a Center Turn Lane

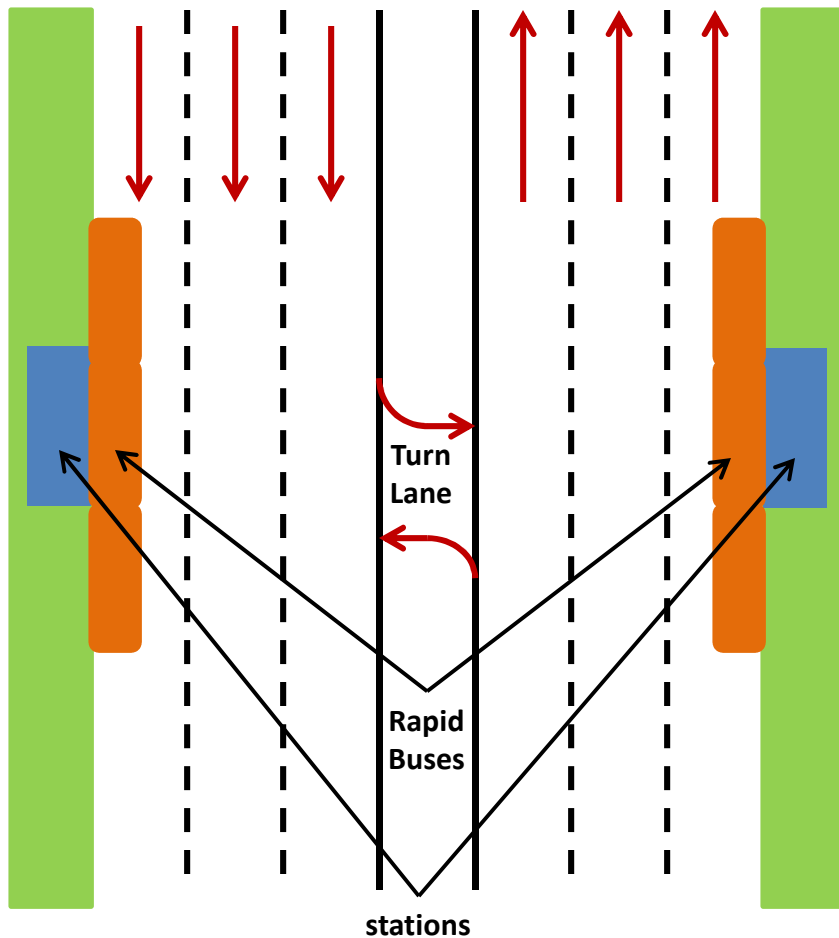
With Light Rail



1 Traffic Lane in each direction
with NO Center Turn Lane

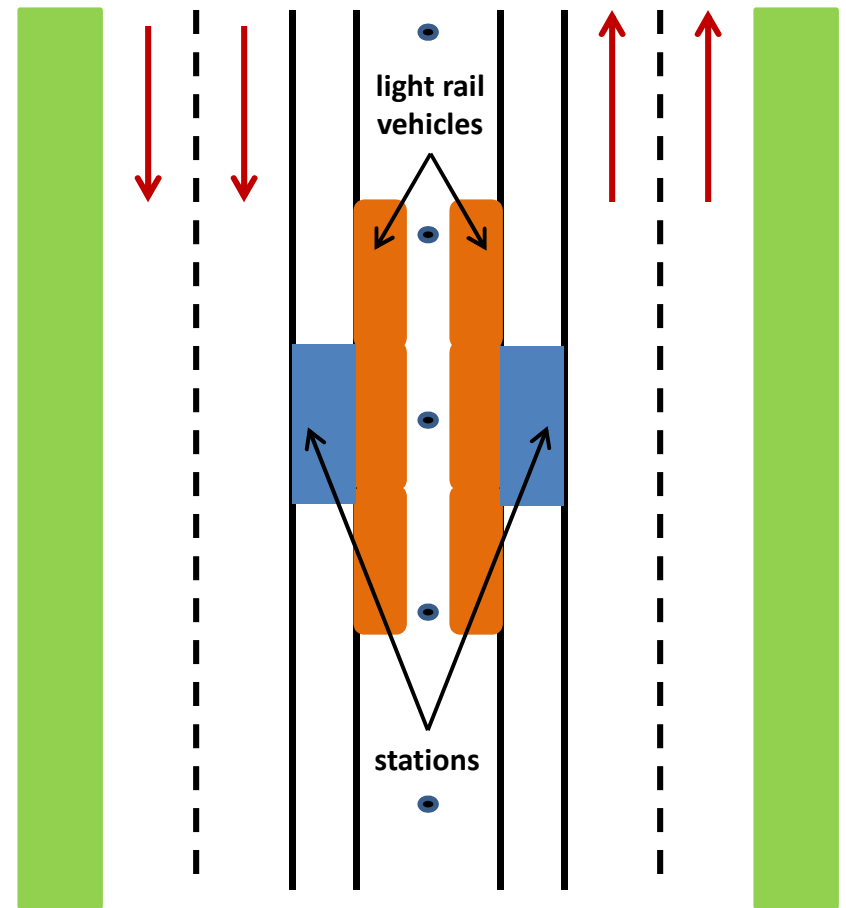
Guadalupe Street Downtown

As It Is Today



3 Traffic Lanes in each direction
with a **Center Turn Lane**

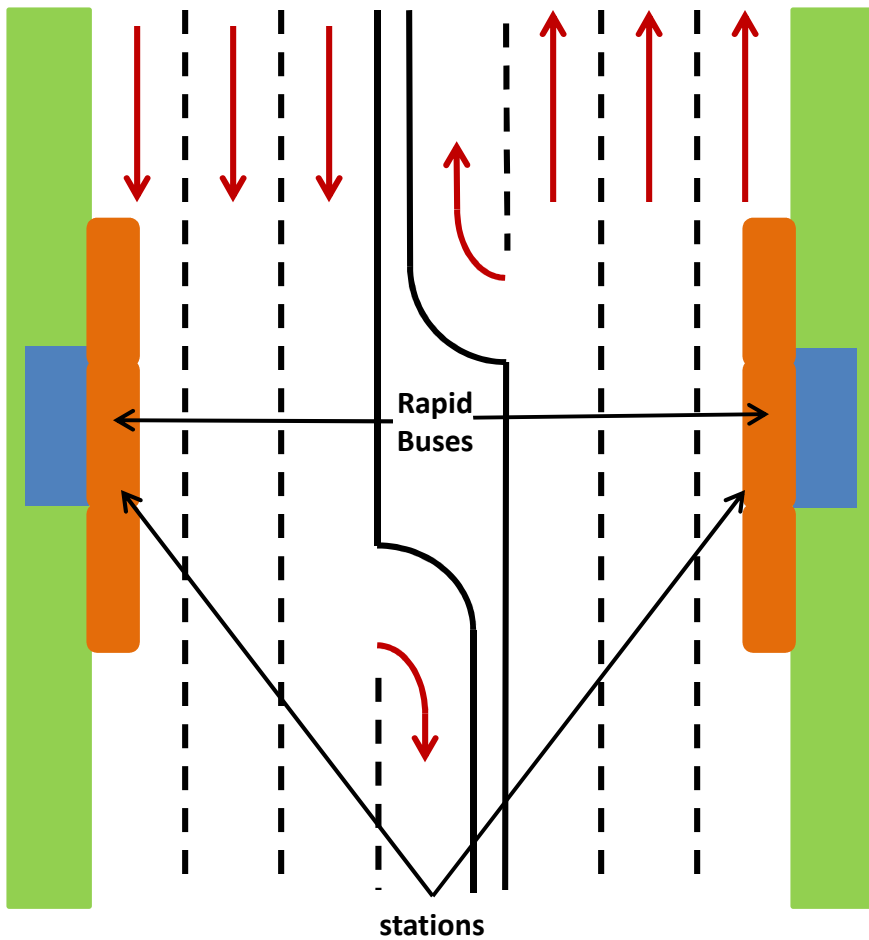
With Light Rail



2 Traffic Lanes in each direction
with **NO Center Turn Lane**

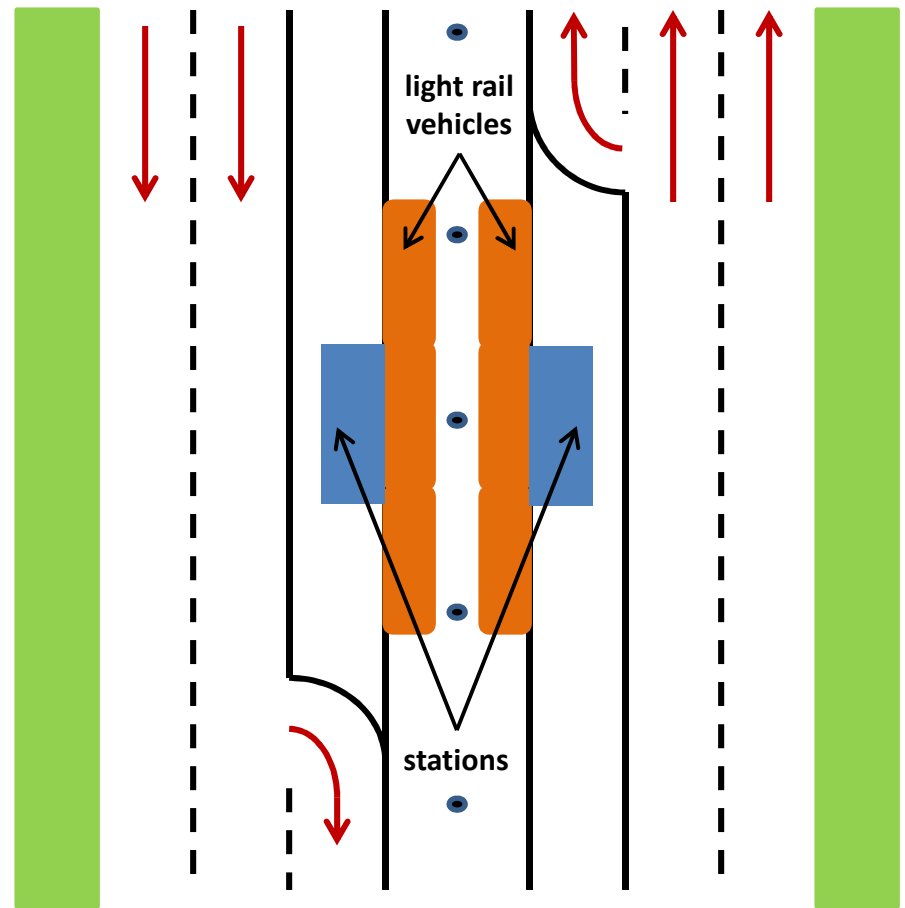
East Riverside Drive

As It Is Today



3 Traffic Lanes in each direction
with a **Left Turn Lane**

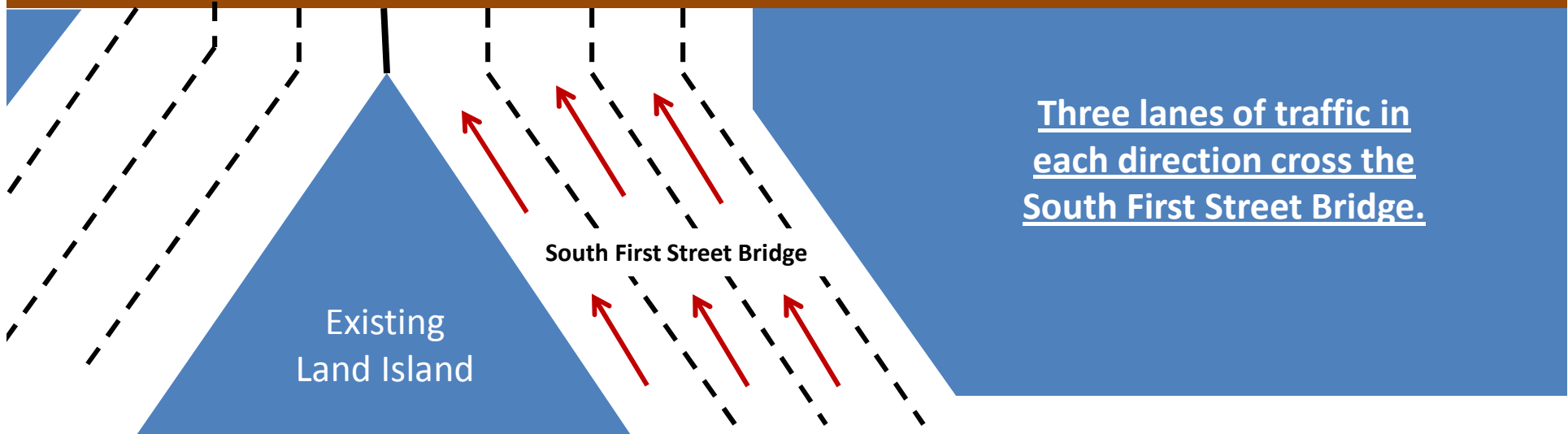
With Light Rail



2 Traffic Lanes in each direction
with a **Left Turn Lane**

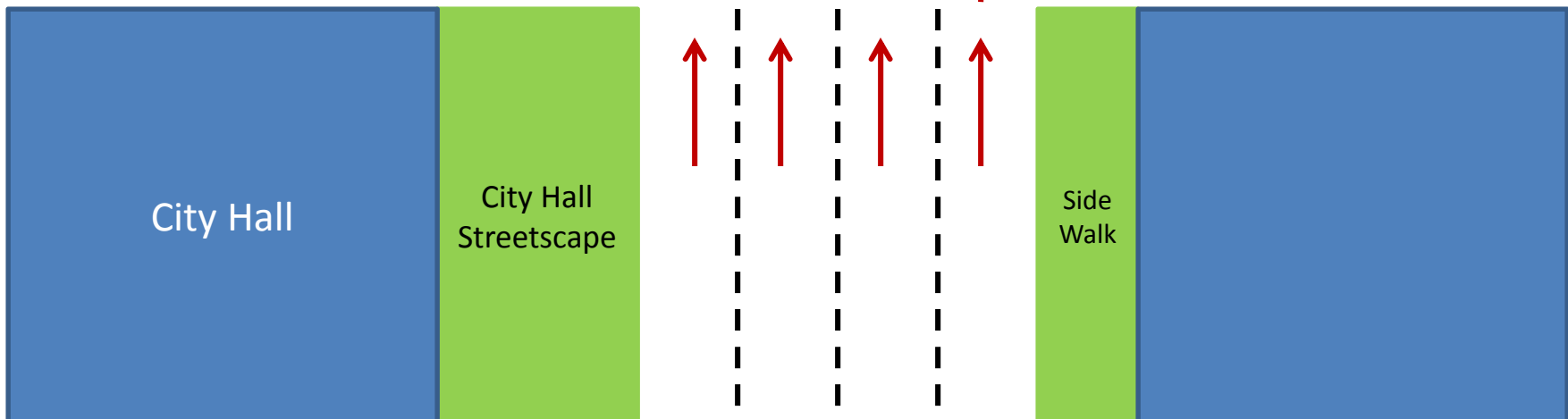
EXISTING CONFIGURATION

Guadalupe Street



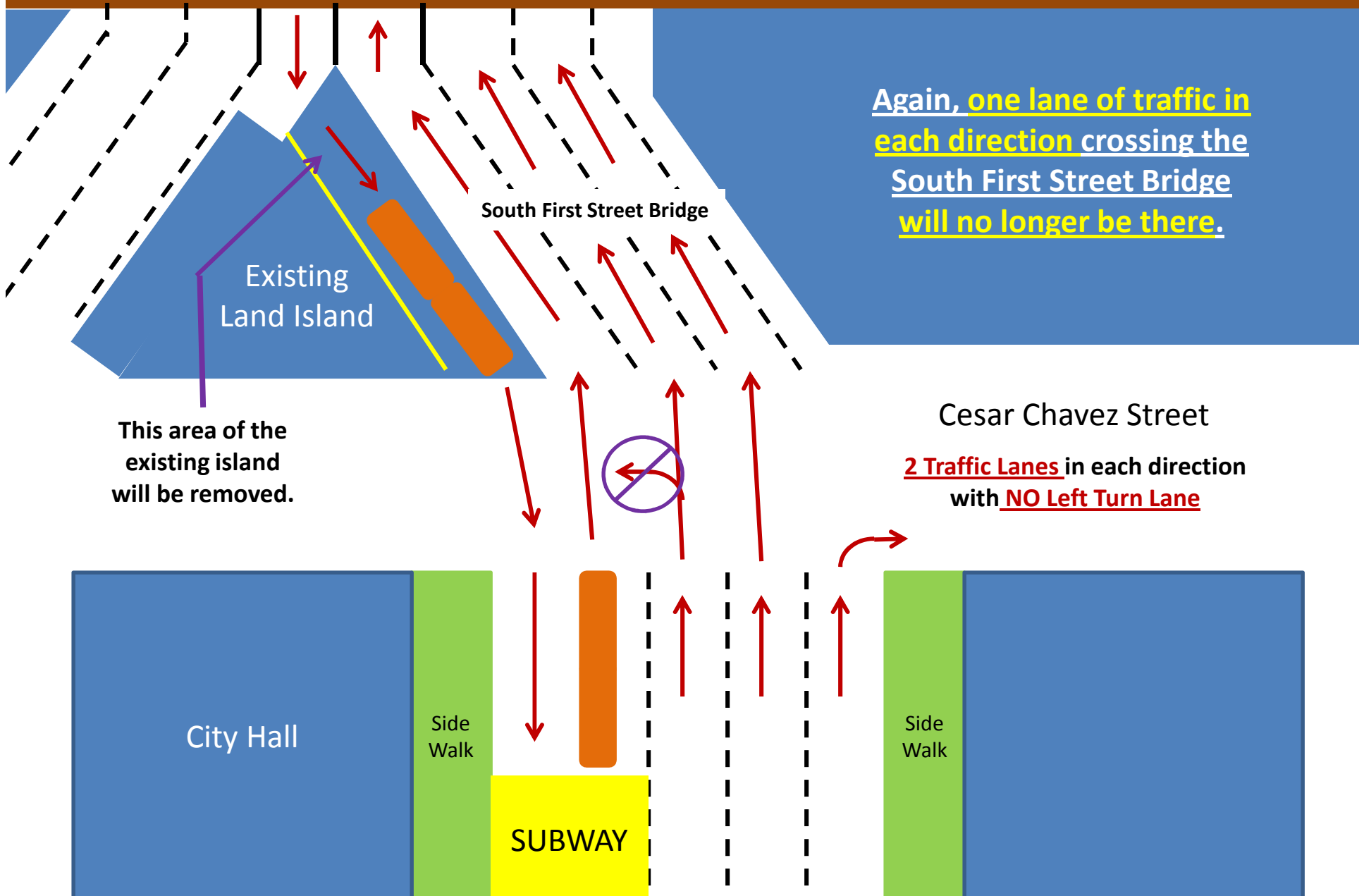
3 Traffic Lanes in each direction
with **a Left Turn Lane**

Cesar Chavez Street



LIGHT RAIL CONFIGURATION

Guadalupe Street



Again, one lane of traffic in each direction crossing the South First Street Bridge will no longer be there.

This area of the existing island will be removed.

Cesar Chavez Street

2 Traffic Lanes in each direction with NO Left Turn Lane

City Hall

Side Walk

SUBWAY

Side Walk

Mobility and Capacity

The biggest fallacy of the City of Austin Light Rail Plan is that it will “improve Mobility”. The voters should ask themselves this question: **“how does eliminating existing traffic lanes improve Mobility”?!!**

There is another issue with Mobility. The obvious traffic congestion crisis in Austin is not Downtown, nor in the streets and roadways. No, it’s in the highways!!!! Specifically, Mopac Blvd, U.S. Hwy 183, Ben White Blvd, IH-35, Hwy 360, etc.

So why is the City of Austin so focused on Downtown Austin? The answer can be found in the **“Winners and Losers”** section of this presentation. A good metaphor for what is being proposed is when Nero fiddled while Rome was burning. The suburbs need relief from the God awful traffic congestion they face each and every day....even on the weekend!!

An extra toll lane on Mopac Blvd doesn’t cut it!! Nor will two extra “managed lanes” on IH-35!! Do the Austin voters realize the Austin City Council wants to give TxDOT \$600 million dollars to lower IH-35 thru Downtown Austin when the construction will shut down all traffic on IH-35 for 7+ years between Airport Blvd and Ben White Blvd diverting traffic to MoPac Blvd and Ed Bluestein Hwy?? And when it’s finished, it still won’t relieve the traffic congestion!!!!

Just what are our “leaders” smoking????!!!! **The people of Austin need help.....
.....not \$5.76 billion dollars of waste and years of high taxes to pay for that waste.**

NEW

Mobility and Capacity

There are two primary reasons the City of Austin tells us that they need to replace the MetroRapid and MetroBus vehicles with Light Rail vehicles to serve Route 801 and the southern portion of Route 20. They are: **Mobility and Capacity**.

We just learned that using **Light Rail** instead of larger buses **will make Mobility worse....not better**. So what, then, about their argument for needing Capacity greater than larger buses can provide? Well, that argument is predicated on their ridership projections for the year 2040. A projection that says the growth rate in public transit ridership on Route 801 will be **570%** in that 20 year period when the population growth rate for the City of Austin will only be **100%**. **Obviously those two numbers do not reconcile**.

The City of Austin Demographer projects the population of Austin will grow at an annual rate of approx. 3.6% in order to double by 2040. Yet, somehow, magically, the ridership along the corridors of Route 801 will grow at an annual rate of approx. 10.2%.

Obviously the ridership projections are unrealistic and, as such, serve only to justify using Light Rail vehicles instead of larger buses to increase the capacity of the MetroRapid & MetroBus vehicles serving Route 801 and the southern portion of Route 20.

A realistic ridership projection for Route 801 tells us that larger buses will, in fact, achieve the same objective as Light Rail vehicles. Thus, larger buses in lieu of Light Rail vehicles would save \$5.76 billion dollars OR 82% of the \$7.0 Transit Proposal cost.

Mobility and Capacity

So the Light Rail portion of this Transit Proposal (approx. 82% of the total cost) hinges on the supposition that ridership on the Orange and Blue Lines will more than quadruple in the next 20 years. That demand for housing along those two transit corridors will not only triple but that the availability of housing along those two transit corridors will keep up with that demand and also triple. Add to that the lost traffic lanes on the roadways in those two corridors and, magic, the need for Light Rail is established.

Well, even if the ridership in those two corridors did more than triple, or even more than quadruple, larger RapidBuses would have the Capacity to handle the ridership during the busiest time of each day...."Rush Hour", when the daily ridership is at its peak.

So the only real difference between the two options, larger RapidBus vehicles or Light Rail vehicles, comes down to the rider's experience and the cost to the taxpayers. And in both categories, RapidBus is superior to Light Rail.

As you will see in the following slides, the rider's experience is the same for both RapidBus and Light Rail. One can walk on or, if in a wheelchair, roll on without steps or ramps because both provide "level boarding". As for cost, **the Light Rail option would cost Austin taxpayers \$5.76 billion dollars more than RapidBus.**

Mobility and Capacity



Light Rail Vehicle

On this page and the next two, you'll see the similarities between Light Rail vehicles and RapidBus vehicles. Yes Light Rail is sexier. But with an added cost of \$5.76 billion dollars, is Light Rail worth "putting all your eggs in one basket"?

The experience for the public transit user is exactly the same with RapidBus as it is with Light Rail. Level boarding, climate control, modern fare collection, comfort, wheelchair access, WiFi, bicycle racks, etc. And even though level boarding is not in place today on the RapidBus service of Routes 801 & 803, as the following slide will show, it's available and common for RapidBus applications.



Mobility and Capacity



Larger RapidBus Vehicle

Yes, the exterior of the larger RapidBus is different than Light Rail. But the interiors are the same and, thus, the experience is the same. As just mentioned, riders enter and exit the vehicles on the level platform of the station.

As for Capacity, larger 90 foot RapidBuses can handle the same Capacity as a Light Rail vehicle. The difference between the two is Light Rail vehicles require spending \$100 million dollars per mile to relocate utilities. An expense not required when choosing to use RapidBuses.



Mobility and Capacity

A “Bendy” RapidBus can provide the same public transit experience for the transit rider as does a Light Rail vehicle. It can provide “level boarding” just as the examples below reflects as well as the same comfort and utility in the interior of the vehicles such as bicycle racks,

wheelchair positions, wi-fi, comfortable seating, climate control, etc. The only difference is in the cost per ride (the “fare”). Paying for a much more expensive Light Rail option rather than a much lower larger RapidBus option will require higher fares and higher taxes to pay down the debt and cover maintenance.



Mobility and Capacity

Again, the focus of this presentation is on Light Rail because it represents approx. 82% of the City of Austin Transit Proposal and voters (i.e. taxpayers) need to fully understand both the financial and mobility ramifications of voting for Light Rail.

As it is, the \$5.76 billion dollars of this Transit Proposal will primarily serve the Urban Core. That means SE Austin, SW Austin, NE Austin, NW Austin, communities along Burnet Road, South Lamar Blvd and South First Street are not being served by this Light Rail Plan. Nor are Austinites living in the suburbs who deal with God awful highway traffic congestion each and every day.

Why is that important? Because **if larger RapidBuses were used instead of Light Rail vehicles**, the **savings of \$5.76 billion dollars** could be used to provide Commuter Rail to many of those suburban neighborhoods. In other words: “more bang for your buck”!!

The City of Austin will tell you that the Downtown Subway reduces congestion Downtown. Well, more Commuter Rail running Downtown would do an even better job as fewer suburban commuters would need to make the daily drive Downtown.

Remember that the growth of Austin’s suburbs is greater than the growth of the Urban Core because it’s getting too expensive to live in the Urban Core. The Suburbs need Commuter Rail; not Light Rail serving those privileged to live in the Urban Core!!!!