



Airport Corridor Rapid Transit

Rapid transit to Pittsburgh International Airport (and the job centers at and on the way to it) are important for our region not only due to the need for a fast, efficient, and high-quality transit link between the Airport and Downtown, but for the municipalities west of Pittsburgh that are thriving and growing in population and new jobs. An Airport Corridor Rapid Transit link could offer quick, direct links from Downtown Pittsburgh to the western communities and the shopping, business, and other destinations that already exist. While connectivity in some of these areas is not as dense as desired for the most robust forms of transit-oriented development, connectivity can be provided through connections with smaller circulator services or other first-last mile solutions that can be part of future station area planning in places like Robinson Township.

The alignment for the transit corridor is partly in place today. Port Authority's West Busway connects riders Downtown to the Borough of Carnegie in only 24 minutes and is a more reliable trip than driving this corridor due to its mostly exclusive right-of-way. Completing a rapid transit connection from Downtown to the Airport will involve extending this dedicated right of way in two places. The first connection that should be built is from the center of Downtown to the current start of the West Busway in Esplan, whether through a fully grade-separated facility or dedicated bus lanes (or some combination of those). The longer addition entails exploring alternatives for dedicated transit space on the Parkway West from the current Port Authority ramp near Bell Station westward to at least Robinson Town Center, which is where most of the reliability (traffic) issues occur within the corridor. Along the highway itself, alternatives could include shoulder-running Bus Rapid Transit or a center-running transitway separated from general traffic. The latter option, while potentially involving a greater level of investment, would allow for better station areas and first/last mile connections.

The Airport Rapid Transit corridor would be a high-capacity line that adds additional service to the West Busway and enables faster service times to the airport. Open space and trail connections and transit hubs at key locations along the route further facilitate multimodal connectivity, easier transfers, and greater transit network coverage in the west that encourages greater transit usage.

The I-376 corridor is one of the most congested freeway corridors in the United States, and efforts to reduce the traffic congestion and minimize the resulting pollution will contribute to the overall resilience of the region. The concept of connecting rapid transit to the Airport has been studied previously, and most recently included in SPC's 2020-21 SmartMoves Connections regional transit vision—a practical study evaluating alternatives centered on the activity nodes along the Parkway West will provide the greatest level of connectivity.

