

February 10th, 2019

Re: Proposed Transit System for the City of San Marcos 5-Year Transit Master Plan

To: Lee Hitchcock, Director of General Services and Pete Binion, Transit Manager, City of San Marcos
James Gamez and Hazel Scher, Nelson Nygaard, Transit Master Plan Consultant
Nancy Nusbaum, Associate Vice President of Planning, Steven Herrera, Director of Transportation Services, Texas State University

Cc: San Marcos City Council

[MoveSM](#), an informal group of community members committed to supporting and advocating for safe, sustainable forms of transportation, submits this letter as feedback on the proposed system design presented January 28/29, 2020 for an integrated city and university bus system.

We believe this effort can be a powerful, transformational opportunity for both the City and University, and we applaud some of the proposals, such as investigating discounted/free fares and the establishment of a downtown station. Unfortunately, overall, we were *alarmingly* disappointed by the proposal's avoidance of truly merging these disparate bus systems and by the proposed degradation of already poor frequencies to a level that undermines the most basic viability of transit for all non-University destinations.

Public transit is a lifeline service for many residents, which should continue to be a priority. But transit is also among the safest, most efficient, and sustainable forms of transportation for modern cities of all sizes, and mode-shift must also be a priority. For public transportation to be a viable option for more of the community, there must be lines delivering travel times within striking distance of other modes, demonstrating to the public that transit can be a preferred and convenient option in San Marcos.

In an effort to help steer this in a more positive direction for the San Marcos community, we respectfully offer the following formal comments and recommendations, as well as an attached example alternative "goal state" bus system map and operating schedule/budget that achieves what we believe would be a substantially better outcome for the city. We acknowledge that we lack the time, resources, and technical capacity to validate many assumptions, but we believe the conceptual system map provided to be directionally accurate and hope it can be illustratively helpful in visioning what a truly integrated transit system could look like five years from today.

1. Eliminate the divide that persists between University Lines and City Lines

- Coloring, notations, naming and general presentation should reflect the spirit of an integrated system -- even at this early conceptual stage -- to lay a strong foundation for the forthcoming branding effort
- The use of "university express" terminology and presentation of those lines in maroon perpetuates the divide, which is harmful to the spirit of this effort and improved outcomes for ridership
- In lieu of dedicated "express" lines bypassing other destinations, create simple, more legible common lines that have augmented resources to boost frequency during hours of peak demand to the University

2. Increased visibility of buses downtown will be positive for transit legibility and system promotion

- Utilizing a visible downtown transfer location, amongst others, will help increase awareness for bus availability
- Recommend that all lines that service the south side of the University campus have a stop at the downtown hub to reinforce the system as an integrated one (vs. the downtown hub being utilized only for "city" lines)
- Even in the near-term, we recommend creating at least one frequent (10-15 min max.) and highly visible line that serves central San Marcos and becomes a face for the system. This line could even receive unique branding to demonstrate its importance

3. Significant and inefficient overlap on University Lines and City Lines should be designed out

- Proposed Lines 2, 3, and 5 share considerable overlap with presently-termed University Express lines; University lines perpetuate “student shuttle service” versus integrating into a bus system for everyone
 - *This reinforces the problems presented today by separate systems - a fast, frequent front-door shuttle for students that just want to get to the University and a slow, infrequent subsistence bus system for those traveling anywhere other than the University*
 - *Front-door service for private student apartment complexes is unreasonable, inefficient, and likely a core issue preventing any efficiency improvements with this combined system in the proposed plan. It must be re-evaluated and instead lines provided within a reasonable 5 - 10 minute walk-shed*
- Lines should be better integrated to eliminate redundancy and improve service for all users

4. Investigate dividing and redesigning Line 5 to eliminate the redundant time spent looping I-35

- Time spent on I-35 and its access road is generally not productive time for intercity transit vehicles where there is frequently traffic, few stops, and safety concerns
- The portion of Line 5 that currently overlaps with the legacy university line could become one line servicing downtown, Hwy 123, and Wonder World Drive
- The southernmost portion of Line 5 servicing the outlet malls could be incorporated with the southernmost portion of Line 1 to create a separate line running off I-35 between Wonder World Dr. and Centerpoint, with augmented transfer stations to the northern/downtown-bound portions of Line 1 and Line 5

5. Overall, degraded frequency of service on city lines is unacceptable and must be addressed

- Moving to less-frequent 60-minute service on most city lines is antithetical to increasing ridership and disregards the community survey responses received that placed more frequent service as the top request
- Recommend incorporating all or at least some of these suggestions to achieve better frequency and legibility
 - *A core benefit of a combined system is increased ridership unlocking external funding not presently available to either the City or University. Clearly, this integration will make new funds available. However, the City must begin reallocating some of its internal funds scheduled for roadways into capital and operational improvements for public transportation in order to make this effort a success and align with the goals of the Transportation Master Plan and City Council's long-term Sustainability efforts*

We recognize that change can take time, but this is a strategic visioning exercise. *The City and University must first design the system it wants to achieve together* and then work from that point backward to identify necessary intermediate steps required to arrive at the desired condition - not vice versa. The process thus far appears at risk of being subverted by an unwillingness to consider a future beyond present conditions.

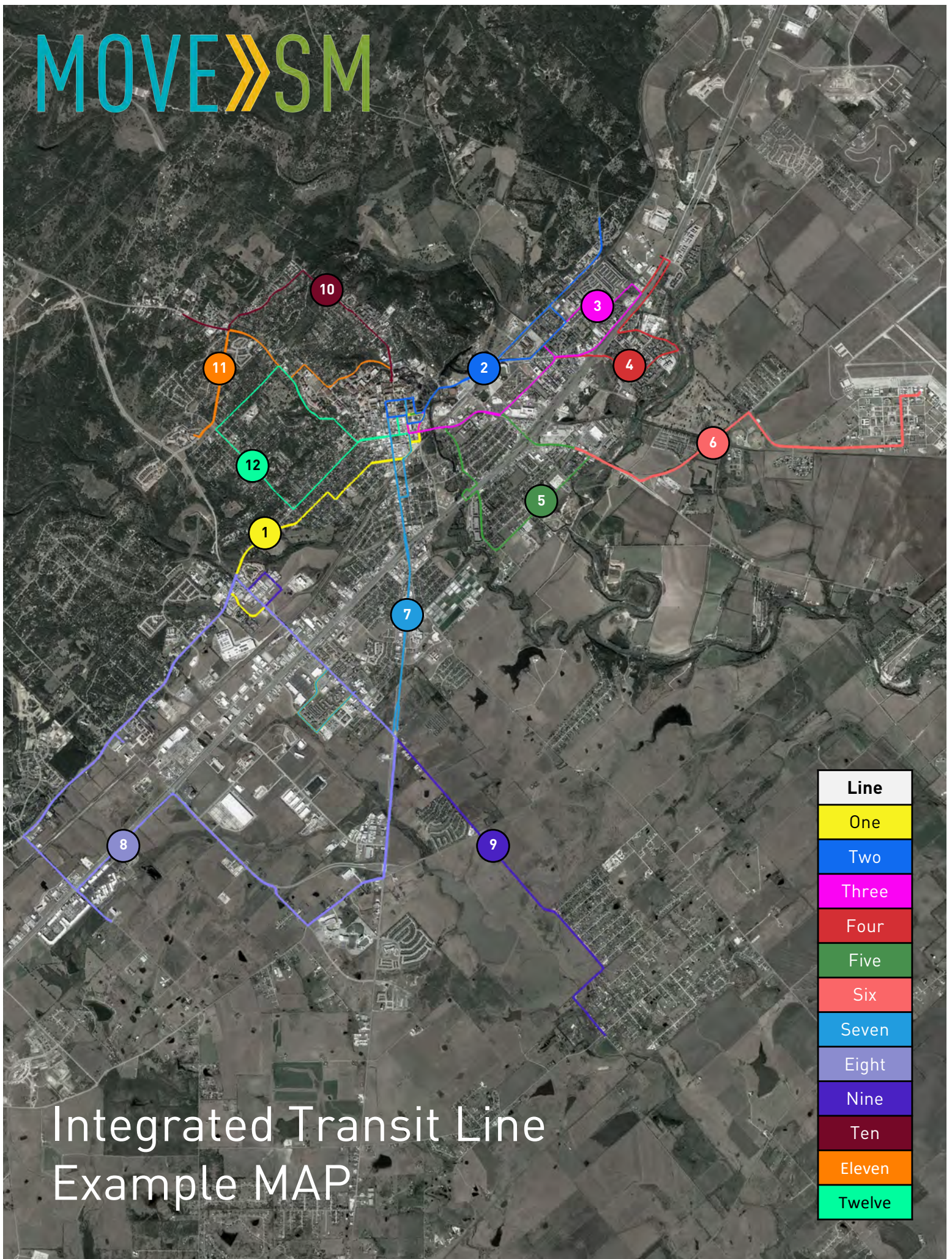
As the Transit Master Plan is of utmost importance to MoveSM, we appreciate your work on this critical effort as well as your review of this feedback. Our group would value the opportunity to discuss these concerns in further detail in person with your team, so please let us know if we could arrange for a meeting during the month of February. We look forward to your response and again thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
The Collective Members of MoveSM

Attached:

MoveSM Integrated Transit Line Example - MAP

MoveSM Integrated Transit Line Example - Goal State Operating Schedule / Budget





Integrated Transit Line Example - "Goal State" Operating Schedule / Budget

Base Service	MoveSM Line	Start	End	Most Similar in Draft	Round Trip (Miles)	Round Trip (Mins)	RT Time w/Stops	Buses	Frequency (min)	Start Time	End Time	Operating Hours / Day	Daily Cost	Days / Wk	Weekly Cost	Annual Cost
	One	DWTN	CTMC	1 - Hunter	9	33	50	3	17 min	7:00	22:00	15	3,825	5	19,125	994,500
	Two	TXST - S	Post Road	2 - Post	6	21	32	3	11 min	7:00	22:00	15	3,825	5	19,125	994,500
	Three	TXST - S	Mill St	TX ST Express	6	26	39	3	13 min	7:00	22:00	15	3,825	5	19,125	994,500
	Four	TXST - S	River Ridge	3 - Uhland	8	28	42	3	14 min	7:00	22:00	15	3,825	5	19,125	994,500
	Five	DWTN	River Road	4 - Hopkins	5	17	26	2	13 min	7:00	22:00	15	2,550	5	12,750	663,000
	Six	Walmart	Gary Job Corp	Not Served	4	9	14	0		0:00	0:00	-	-	5	-	-
	Seven	TXST - S	CTMC	5 - Guadalupe	8	26	39	3	13 min	7:00	22:00	15	3,825	5	19,125	994,500
	Eight	County	Outlets	1 & 5	11	24	36	2	18 min	7:00	22:00	15	2,550	5	12,750	663,000
	Nine	County	Redwood	6 - Redwood	11	25	38	0		0:00	0:00	-	-	5	-	-
	Ten	TXST - N	Old RR 12	TX ST Express	5	16	24	2	12 min	7:00	22:00	15	2,550	5	12,750	663,000
	Eleven	TXST - N	New RR 12	Not Served	6	17	26	2	13 min	7:00	22:00	15	2,550	5	12,750	663,000
	Twelve	DWTN	S Bishop	Not Served	5	15	23	2	12 min	7:00	22:00	15	2,550	5	12,750	663,000
Total/Avg								25	14 min				\$ 31,875		\$ 159,375	\$ 8,287,500

Key Assumptions	
Stop time add-factor	1.5
Operating Cost / Hour	\$85

Peak Service	MoveSM Line	Start	End	Peak Hours	Add'l Buses	Frequency	Daily Cost	Days / Wk	Weekly Cost	Annual Cost
	One	DWTN	CTMC				-	5	-	-
	Two	TXST - S	Post Road	6	2	7 min	1,020	5	5,100	265,200
	Three	TXST - S	Mill St	6	2	8 min	1,020	5	5,100	265,200
	Four	TXST - S	River Ridge	6	3	7 min	1,530	5	7,650	397,800
	Five	DWTN	River Road				-	5	-	-
	Six	Walmart	Gary Job Corp	8	2	7 min	1,360	5	6,800	353,600
	Seven	TXST - S	CTMC	6	2	8 min	1,020	5	5,100	265,200
	Eight	County	Outlets				-	5	-	-
	Nine	County	Redwood	8	2	19 min	1,360	5	6,800	353,600
	Ten	TXST - N	Old RR 12	6	2	6 min	1,020	5	5,100	265,200
	Eleven	TXST - N	New RR 12	6	2	7 min	1,020	5	5,100	265,200
	Twelve	DWTN	S Bishop				-	5	-	-
Total/Avg					17	9 min	\$ 9,350		\$ 46,750	\$ 2,431,000

Weekend Service	MoveSM Line	Start	End	Wkend Buses	Days	Frequency	Cost / Wkend	Annual Cost
	One	DWTN	CTMC	1	2	50 min	2,550	132,600
	Two	TXST - S	Post Road	1	2	32 min	2,550	132,600
	Three	TXST - S	Mill St	1	2	39 min	2,550	132,600
	Four	TXST - S	River Ridge	1	2	42 min	2,550	132,600
	Five	DWTN	River Road	1	2	26 min	2,550	132,600
	Six	Walmart	Gary Job Corp	1	2	14 min	1,360	70,720
	Seven	TXST - S	CTMC	1	2	39 min	2,550	132,600
	Eight	County	Outlets	1	2	36 min	2,550	132,600
	Nine	County	Redwood	1	2	38 min	1,360	70,720
	Ten	TXST - N	Old RR 12	1	2	24 min	2,550	132,600
	Eleven	TXST - N	New RR 12	1	2	26 min	2,550	132,600
	Twelve	DWTN	S Bishop	1	2	23 min	2,550	132,600
Total/Avg						32 min	28,220	\$ 1,467,440

Full System Cost \$ 12,185,940