

# Mythbusters

Get the Facts about Albuquerque Rapid Transit (ART)

**Myth:** Parking spots on Central Avenue will be reduced or eliminated because of ART.

**Truth:** In total we are adding 50 parking spaces along Central because of ART.

Parking will be added as part of the ART Project along Central, including a Park and Ride at EXPO NM. In some of our major commercial areas the parking will be specifically increased.

- Between Monroe and Girard (Nob Hill) the amount of on street parking spaces will increase by 11.
- Between Girard and University the amount of on street parking spaces will increase by 9.
- In Huning Highland (Edo) the number of on street parking spaces will increase by 9.
- In Downtown there is no change to parking as part of this project but the City will be adding hundreds of spaces as a result of the downtown parking study.
- In Old Town all existing parking will remain the same

The only area that will see any reduction of on street parking is between 10th and San Pasquale where people currently park in the “road diet” striped areas created by that pilot project. Currently there is the potential for 132 temporary on street spaces – after ART there will be 52 permanent striped on street parking spaces.

To see specific segments of Central and the existing versus proposed parking, visit: [http://abqbrt.blob.core.windows.net/resources/ARTCorridorParking\\_20160615\\_Incl\\_totals.pdf](http://abqbrt.blob.core.windows.net/resources/ARTCorridorParking_20160615_Incl_totals.pdf)

**Myth:** We will cut down all the trees on Central Avenue because of ART.

**Truth:** The number of trees along Central Avenue will actually have a net increase of 30 trees because of the ART Project. Currently we have approximately 384 trees along the route. Healthy mature trees will be protected wherever possible, and some diseased and dying trees will be removed. In their place we will plant new trees to increase the total number to approximately 418 trees within the project area when we are complete. The trees that are being removed are mostly in the center of the roadway, and the new trees will be planted mostly along the sidewalk to provide shade for pedestrians. Some trees are also being added to the median at stations. The new trees will be draught tolerant and native species with upgraded irrigation systems to ensure water is provided consistently and efficiently. In addition, more than 4,000 native and drought tolerant plants and shrubs will be planted throughout the corridor because of ART.

[http://abqbrt.blob.core.windows.net/resources/Tree%20removals%20RE03%206\\_23\\_2016.pdf](http://abqbrt.blob.core.windows.net/resources/Tree%20removals%20RE03%206_23_2016.pdf)

**Myth:** The removal of left turns along the route will hurt businesses and create safety problems.

**Truth:** The attached [map](#) illustrates all the locations along Central that will continue to have left turn access and with ART these will all now be signalized and include a signalized U-turn phase. It is a common traffic design in cities across America and the world in thriving business corridors. Even in Albuquerque, this is similar traffic design to other arterial roadways in commercial areas such as Coors Boulevard. With ART,

Central will have dedicated signalized U-turns so drivers will be still be able to make designated signalized left turns every four hundred yards, on average. According to studies conducted by Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), signalized left turns / U-turns are also safer for vehicles and pedestrians than uncontrolled left turns in and out of driveways and neighborhood streets like those that we enjoy along Central Avenue. With the high pedestrian death rate in Albuquerque, especially along Central Avenue, we believe this new traffic design will significantly improve safety while still providing convenient and safe opportunities for customers to get to their favorite businesses.

For more information on managed access, visit FHWA’s Access Management Primer at: [http://www.ops.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/amprimer/access\\_mgmt\\_primer.htm](http://www.ops.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/amprimer/access_mgmt_primer.htm)

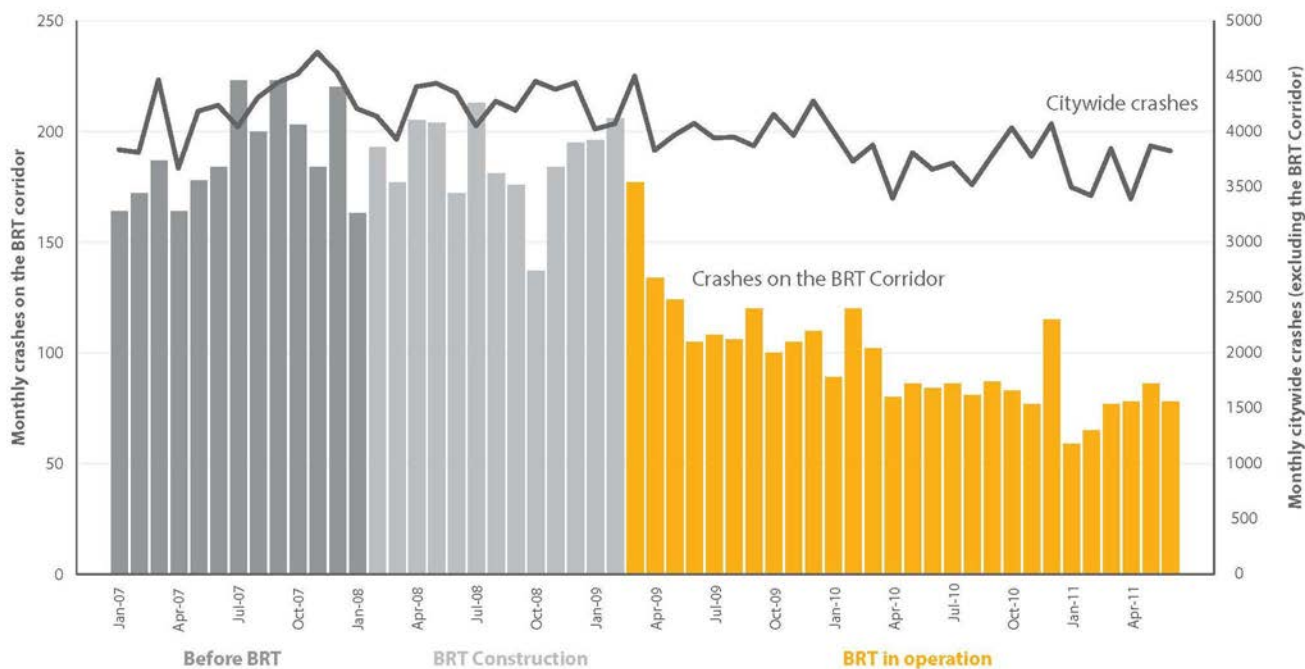
Also for reference: “UPS engineers found that left-hand turns were a major drag on efficiency. Turning against traffic resulted in long waits in left-hand turn lanes that wasted time and fuel, and it also led to a disproportionate number of accidents.” From the following article: <http://priceonomics.com/why-ups-trucks-dont-turn-left/>

From the following study: <http://www.wrirosscities.org/sites/default/files/Traffic-Safety-Bus-Priority-Corridors-BRT-EMBARQ-World-Resources-Institute.pdf>, the two illustrations below provide the most comprehensive before and after crash data for a dedicated center lane BRT.

**Figure 2** Changes to the street infrastructure to accommodate a typical Latin American BRT (here, Macrobus, Guadalajara) and their associated safety benefits



**Figure 3** Crashes on Calzada Independencia, Guadalajara, 2007–2011



Source: Computed from statistics provided by Secretaría de Vialidad y Transporte de Jalisco 2011

**Myth:** ART will make Central Avenue less pedestrian friendly.

**Truth:** ART will make Central Avenue more pedestrian friendly. When ART construction is complete, 97% of the sidewalks from Coors to Louisiana will be at least 6 feet wide, a significant improvement from current conditions. The ART Project will provide improved pedestrian lighting and more landscaping adjacent to pedestrian areas along the corridor as well. No existing sidewalk widths will be reduced and the removal of obstructions on sidewalks and ramp improvements will also improve wheelchair accessibility and provide for a better pedestrian experience.

For more information on sidewalk design,

visit: [http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/ped\\_bike/univcourse/pdf/swless13.pdf](http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/ped_bike/univcourse/pdf/swless13.pdf)

and [https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bicycle\\_pedestrian/publications/sidewalks/sidewalks.pdf](https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bicycle_pedestrian/publications/sidewalks/sidewalks.pdf)

**Myth:** ART will be less safe for passengers and pedestrians.

**Truth:** Pedestrian safety has improved in cities with center lane BRT. Why? Because of shorter pedestrian crossings and refuge islands / stations. The center stations allow passengers to exit the ART vehicle directly onto the station platforms, which are at least 12 feet wide and protected from traffic. Additionally, the new ART vehicles have doors on both sides, much like subways. Because most of stations will be in the center of the street, people will cross only one direction of traffic to get to sidewalks rather than crossing multiple lanes of two way traffic.

Crosswalks along the Central corridor will be made safer, as they will be wider, marked with high visibility markings, and signalized. There will be 12 additional signalized pedestrian crossings added along Central, including new mid-block crossings. In addition, phased signalized left-turns and U-turns for cars will increase pedestrian safety.

To learn more about sidewalk design,

visit: [https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bicycle\\_pedestrian/publications/sidewalks/sidewalks.pdf](https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bicycle_pedestrian/publications/sidewalks/sidewalks.pdf)

To see what a platform will look like,

visit: [http://abqbrt.blob.core.windows.net/resources/MediaKit/ProjectGraphics/3DS-2015%2011%2011-Central%20and%20Washington%20-%20Close\\_Terracotta%20Platform.jpg](http://abqbrt.blob.core.windows.net/resources/MediaKit/ProjectGraphics/3DS-2015%2011%2011-Central%20and%20Washington%20-%20Close_Terracotta%20Platform.jpg)

**Myth:** Traffic will be reduced to one lane throughout the entire project and traffic will be unbearable.

**Truth:** The following table shows the current number of general traffic lanes and the numbers of lanes proposed with the ART Project. As you can see only two segments will be reduced to one lane of traffic which currently has two. In both of those segments the City accommodated the requests of the adjacent business districts and maintained metered on street parking.

	<b>Current Number of Lanes for General Traffic</b>	<b>Proposed Number of Lanes for General Traffic with ART</b>
Coors Blvd. to Atrisco Drive	2	2
Atrisco Drive to Rio Grande Blvd.	3	2
San Pasquale to 10 <sup>th</sup>	1	1
10 <sup>th</sup> to 1 <sup>st</sup>	1	1
1 <sup>st</sup> to University	2	1
University to Girard	2	2
Girard to Monroe	2	1
Monroe to Louisiana	3	2

As part of the project grant submittal the City committed to not increasing the Level of Service for any intersection above a Level of Service D.

Traffic engineers measure traffic flow on major roads, like Central, Lomas or Atrisco for example, by the Level of Service (LOS) at individual intersections. The LOS is measured on a scale of A to F (A, B, C, D, E and F). When vehicles are stopped at an intersection with a LOS A they can expect to be there for less than 10 seconds. When vehicles are stopped at an intersection with a LOS F, they will be there 80 seconds or greater. As with most cities, our traffic standard is a LOS D for intersections. A vehicle stopped at an intersection with a LOS D can expect to be stopped between 36 and 55 seconds.

For the ART project this was accomplished by including intersection improvements such as new turn lanes, and signalized left turn lanes. In addition the entire length of Central will include the latest technology of traffic signals that are synchronized and connected to a centralized intelligent transportation system to maximize signal efficiency.

**Myth:** The project only has a 19-year shelf life.

**Truth:** The ART project is about the long-term future of Central Avenue. Planning for multiple modes of transportation and smart redevelopment that follows BRT projects is the only way to reduce the congestion forecasted in Mid Region Council of Governments 2040 Futures Metropolitan Transportation Plan. In Section 3.4.8, Strategies and Recommendations, it states "...the City of Albuquerque, with the support of Rio Metro and other AMPA member governments, should move forward on the Albuquerque Rapid Transit." Page (3-106)

For a full copy of the 2040 Futures Metropolitan Transportation Plan, visit:

[http://www.mrcog-nm.gov/images/stories/pdf/transportation/2040\\_MTP/2040-mpt-futures-2040-mtp-04-17-15-no-appendices.pdf](http://www.mrcog-nm.gov/images/stories/pdf/transportation/2040_MTP/2040-mpt-futures-2040-mtp-04-17-15-no-appendices.pdf)

**Myth:** Central will be shut down during construction.

**Truth:** Central Avenue will ALWAYS be open for business during construction. There will be at least one travel lane open both eastbound and westbound on Central Avenue for the duration of construction. Access will be maintained to all businesses, and parking will be free one block north and south of Central Avenue between Monroe to Broadway and 8<sup>th</sup> to San Pasquale during construction.



To see the construction schedule,

visit: [http://abqbrt.blob.core.windows.net/resources/ART\\_Construction\\_Schedule\\_06-02-16.pdf](http://abqbrt.blob.core.windows.net/resources/ART_Construction_Schedule_06-02-16.pdf)

**Myth:** This project is going to destroy historic districts and lose the historic ambience of the corridor.

**Truth:** Central Avenue has had some form of transit since the horse and buggy trolley in the 1800's. To ensure that the design and look of the project maintained the historic integrity of the corridor, the ART project team included Dekker/Perish/Sabatini Architects to design the landscaping and stations in way that represents our culture as we move into the future. DPS is an award winning local architecture firm that recently won the National Renovation design project of the year for the work on the Albuquerque Convention Center. All designs were reviewed and approved by the New Mexico State Historic Preservation. No buildings will be removed or altered as part of this project and the roadway will remain open to automobile traffic.

**Myth:** Businesses will close along Central Avenue.

**Truth:** In 2015 nearly 150 businesses closed along Central. Currently there are more than 100 store fronts available for lease or rent along Central. Central needs a revival and the City is committed to encouraging the community to shop the Central corridor before, during, and after construction. Throughout construction, the City will offer a number of promotional programs for local businesses including incentive programs, shopping events, pop-up performances, and a free "virtual storefronts" on the project's website and mobile application.

On-street parking will be free a block north and south of the corridor, and businesses are being provided informational packets to help communicate access and parking information to their customers and vendors.

Visit <http://www.brtabq.com/Business> to learn more about promotional programs.

The benefits of the ART system have been studied by two independent organizations. Based on two independent studies the net economic benefit to our City from this project is upwards of \$2.9 Billion.

To see the presentation from the National Association of Industry and Office Professions (NAIOP), visit: <http://abqbrt.blob.core.windows.net/resources/NAIOP%20Presentation%202014-1-20-WITH%20Youtube%20links.pdf>

To read the full study by the Center for Neighborhood Technologies (CNT), visit: <http://abqbrt.blob.core.windows.net/resources/CenterForNeighborhoodTechnologyBRTValueStudy.pdf>

**Myth:** It has been impossible for people to get information about this project.

**Truth:** The ART team completed a number of public outreach efforts including four rounds of large public meetings starting in 2012 (<http://www.brtabq.com/Meeting>). From November 2012 to October 2014 the community was invited to 19 different public meetings throughout the project area. Efforts to communicate with the public included 10,000 door hangers, flyers, social media, email, a project website, newsletters, and radio and print ads in both Spanish and English inviting people to public meetings and informing them of the project. In addition, our team personally canvassed all businesses in the corridor and there have been dozens of news stories discussing the project for the last four years.

Currently all project information can be obtained from the website [BRTABQ.com](http://www.brtabq.com). In addition project team members from the City Transit Department, City Economic Development Department, and Small Business Research Collaborative are continuing to meet one on one with the more than 800 small business owners along Central to discuss concerns about construction and available resources during the ART construction.

**Myth:** The city lied on its application for the categorical exclusion about there being no opposition to the project.

**Truth:** At the time of the application, the City provided all documents both for and against the project to the FTA. Under the National Environmental Policy Act, opposition to a project does not automatically mean the project is highly controversial. Throughout the study process, the City met with community members to discuss the project, made design revisions as appropriate in response to concerns, and has continued these efforts with the goal of collaboratively identifying mitigation measures to address concerns. Since the time that the Grant was included in the Federal Budget there has been additional support and opposition. All these documents have also been provided to the FTA. The FTA remains in strong support of the project.

**Myth:** The City was excused from completing an environmental study of this project.

**Truth:** The City consulted with FTA staff prior to beginning an environmental review to identify the footprint of the project and what type of environmental documentation would be appropriate. A categorical exclusion, which is what was prepared for the ART project, is not an exemption from environmental review. The categorical exclusion includes technical documentation to demonstrate that environmental and community impacts associated with the project have been considered and, with commitments to mitigation measures, no significant adverse impacts would result. Technical analyses completed as part of the environmental review included existing land use and zoning, traffic, business access, noise and vibration impacts, environmental justice, biological evaluation, historical review, and hazardous materials assessment.

For more information on the NEPA process, visit: <https://www.transit.dot.gov/regulations-and-guidance/environmental-programs/categorical-exclusion>

Technical analyses completed as part of the categorical exclusion are available at: <http://www.brtabq.com/resources/catex>

**Myth:** No other mass transit project has been granted a categorical exclusion from the FTA in recent years.

**Truth:** FTA Categorical Exclusions are not out of the ordinary. The FTA's website identifies active Capital Investment Grant projects, many of which have completed or are completing categorical exclusions as part of the environmental review.

Visit: <https://www.transit.dot.gov/funding/grant-programs/capital-investments/current-cig-projects>

**Myth:** This project is only being done to support specific contractors.

**Truth:** The Construction Manager At-Risk contract was awarded through a competitive Request for Proposal process in accordance with local, state and federal procurement codes. The proposals were evaluated and scored by a selection committee to select the Contractor.

The project is being done to improve the backbone of the City's Transit system and improve the potential for economic development of our community. For third party analyses on the value and regional benefits of this project, read:

- Institute of Transportation and Development Policy <http://abqbrt.blob.core.windows.net/resources/ITDP%20US%20letter%20to%20FTA%20on%20behalf%20of%20ABQRide.pdf>
- [Regional Accessibility Benefits Associated With Implementation of the Albuquerque Rapid Transit on Central Ave](#)

**Myth:** Every business along Central is against the project.

**Truth:** Currently we have more than 3040 individuals, 125 businesses, and community organizations representing more than 8500 people supporting ART. The following is a sample list of business organizations and small businesses that have provided their letter of support to ART.

Supportive Business Groups / Organizations / Community Partners:

- Albuquerque Chamber of Commerce
- Hispano Chamber of Commerce
- Visit ABQ
- Nob Hill Main Street
- Downtown Main Street
- Home Builders Association
- NAIOP
- Greater Albuquerque Innkeepers Association
- University of New Mexico
- Central University of New Mexico

Supportive Business Sampler:

- Presbyterian Hospital
- Molina Healthcare
- Hotel Andaluz
- O'Neil's
- Urban Fresh
- The Carlisle Condominium Complex
- Titan Development
- Whole Hog Café
- The Brew
- Geckos

**Myth:** The funding for this project could have been used for public safety.

**Truth:** Every source of funding on the ART project is specifically designated for transit, Central Avenue, or both. Below is a list of the funding sources:

FTA Small Start Grant	\$ 69.0 million
FTA / FHWA Grants (specifically for BRT, Transit Vehicles, and Central Avenue)	\$ 30.9 million
Local Funds	
Infrastructure Tax for Central Avenue	\$ 5.1 million
Central Broadband	\$ 1.0 million
<u>GRT Revenue Bonds (Appropriated by City Council per O-15-46)</u>	<u>\$ 13.0 million</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$119.0 million</b>

The reality is that the use of electric buses will reduce the City taxpayers between \$11 million and \$14 million of operating costs over the next 12 years, which could be used for many things such as increased transit operations or public safety.



**Myth:** The \$69 million in FTA funding for this project is not available.

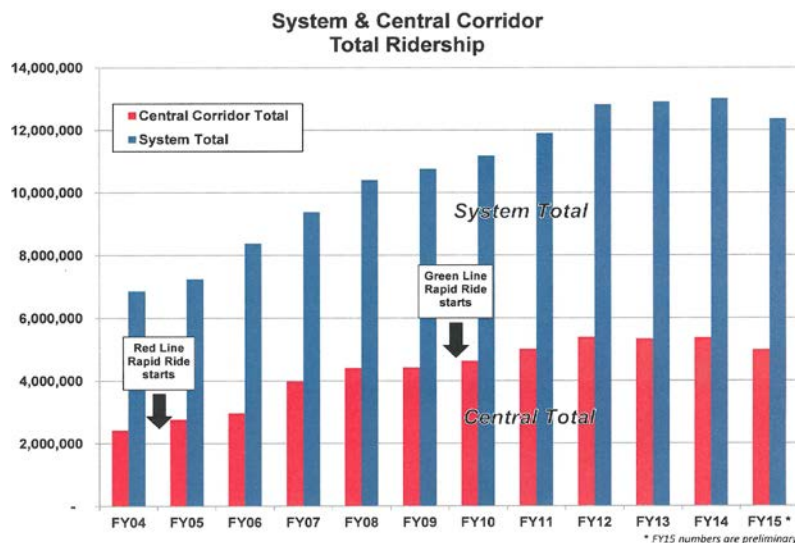
**Truth:** The FTA remains committed to providing the \$69 million Small Starts Grant for the ART project. Like many other projects, these funds sometimes are provided over multiple fiscal years. Per the American Public Transportation Association:

The City of Albuquerque’s ART completed a project milestone earlier this year when the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) included a \$69 million Small Starts FY 17 budget request to Congress. The House and Senate will make the final FY 17 funding level decision for ART later this year. FTA and Congress have a record of providing total funding for Small Starts projects included in the budget sometimes over more than one fiscal year depending on the cost of the project and amount of funding Congress can provide for a fiscal year.

**Myth:** People will not ride the ART when it is complete.

**Truth:** The same concern existed when the Rapid Ride system was implemented in 2004. Ridership on Central increased from a high of 2.4 million riders before 2004 to 4.4 million in 2008. It has reached a number more than 5 million recently. Based on the official FTA model, projections are that ART could once again double ridership on Central. The ridership model can be found at; [https://abqbrt.blob.core.windows.net/resources/FTASmallStarts/Travel%20Forecasting/ABQ\\_TechMemo\\_CentralAvenue%20June%2022-2015.pdf](https://abqbrt.blob.core.windows.net/resources/FTASmallStarts/Travel%20Forecasting/ABQ_TechMemo_CentralAvenue%20June%2022-2015.pdf)

The ridership forecast is based on more reliable service in a dedicated lane with more connectivity to other existing routes every 7 to 8 minutes. In addition there is projected development of the more than 60 acres of open property along the route.



For more information, visit [BRTABQ.com](http://BRTABQ.com); browse the [FAQ section](#) of the website, or [sign up for updates](#). For specific questions, call (505) 398-4ART.