City of Gonzales

# Gonzales Passenger Rail Station Master Plan

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# Contents

# 1 Introduction

The City of Gonzales is a mature community of 10,832 residents (U.S. Census 2016) in Ascension Parish, Louisiana. The City currently represents a financial, commercial, industrial, social, and political center of the eastern portion of Ascension Parish. Known as the "Jambalaya Capital of the World," Gonzales has been home to the famous Jambalaya Festival for more than forty years. With its rich history and charming variety of boutique and national shopping and dining offerings, the City is truly a special destination. Located along the I-10 corridor just 25 miles southeast of Baton Rouge and 57 miles northwest of New Orleans, Gonzales provides the best of both worlds for its residents – a sublime, small town setting with proximity to two of the State's largest cities and employment centers.

Numerous stakeholders in Louisiana and throughout the Gulf Coast Region have made progress in recent years with feasibility studies of the reestablishment of passenger rail service on the Gulf Coast Rail Corridor, one of the nation's eleven federally-designated high-speed rail corridors stretching from Houston to New Orleans to Atlanta with another route servicing Mobile, totaling 1,025 miles. The Baton Rogue to New Orleans (BR-NO) corridor represents a portion of this corridor and has been identified as a first step in the creation of this larger regional network. This BR-NO corridor would provide intercity passenger rail service linking Louisiana's two largest urban cities to the surrounding, growing parishes along the congested I-10 corridor. This 80-mile trip would create a high-quality, intercity service network connecting the state capital to a world-famous tourist destination in New Orleans, creating a southeast Louisiana Super Region.

Recent studies of passenger service within the BR-NO corridor have identified Gonzales as a potential stop along the corridor [16]. Local leaders of Gonzales are committed to the reestablishment of passenger rail service between Baton Rouge and New Orleans. The City of Gonzales completed a Gonzales Comprehensive Plan in 2015 which captured a vision of the community for long-term developments which included a passenger rail station as part of a revitalized downtown area [10]. Goals of a passenger station are to provide a safe and reliable transportation option, create a foundation for economic competitiveness, create livable, interconnected communities, and provide an additional means of evacuation for weather emergencies in a vulnerable coastal area.

By commissioning this Passenger Rail Station Master Plan, the City has affirmed its commitment to connecting its residents to employment and recreational centers, improving the quality of the public realm, and communicating the desire to stimulate creative development by providing transit access to downtown Gonzales and encouraging private investment in the surrounding area.

A rail station would not only serve the City's residents, but act as an attractive gateway to the City, welcoming visitors and providing a strongly positive first

impression to the Gonzales community. A passenger station in downtown Gonzales could promote higher-density development to link the City's historic downtown with the Airline Highway corridor, taking advantage of local assets and linking to regional employment centers, creating a focal point to encourage local growth patterns.

The history of the City's purchase of the property for the proposed station is included in Chapter 3. The property is located on North Bullion Ave between East Railroad St and East Ascension St and in the past, served as a rail depot. The redevelopment of this site into a dynamic passenger rail station will not only provide regional connectivity but serve as a catalyst for investment in the Gonzales downtown area and Airline Highway corridor, developing towards a lively, mixed-use urban community [10]. This Passenger Station Master Plan document seeks to further expound elements of the criteria established in the Gonzales Comprehensive Plan, including proximity to diverse land uses, access to amenities, improved connectivity with existing street networks, connections to existing greenways, land development potential, and opportunities for placemaking and community building [10].

This Master Plan document format intends to convey the Master Planning effort underway for a passenger rail station in Gonzales, Louisiana.

- Chapter 1 provides the introduction and background on the preliminary feasibility studies pertaining to the reestablishment of passenger rail service, as well as comprehensive planning efforts which examined improvements to Gonzales and the benefits a passenger rail station could provide.
- Chapter 2 summarizes findings from previous studies which describe proposed intercity rail service for the BR-NO alignment, ridership estimates, potential rolling stock, and station category designation which provides a basis to right-size the potential rail station layout, features, and amenities.
- Chapter 3 explores the development opportunities, circulation system, connections, and linkages that will drive the success of the new station and station area development. In this section, the surrounding areas and neighborhoods of the selected station site are evaluated to identify access streets, local amenities, current zoning districts, opportunities, and suggestions for creative diversity of use.
- Chapter 4 is the heart of the Master Planning Study. This section presents details on the station opportunity itself and the station building characteristics, attributes, and functions.
- Chapter 5 summarizes proposed improvements and provides a phased implementation strategy, and designates responsible parties to identify short-term actions and longer-term goals.

# 2 Rail Service

The proposed initial service for the BR-NO line would include seven station stops: downtown Baton Rouge, suburban Baton Rouge, Gonzales, LaPlace, Kenner (Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport), Jefferson Parish, and New Orleans. Proposed initial service suggests two daily peak hour round trips that would travel at speeds up to 79 mph [16].


Figure 1 - Proposed Passenger Rail Corridor and Station Locations [16]

The proposed rail service would provide a safe transportation alternative to a region of more than 1.4 million people [16]. Benefits of intercity rail service include enhanced economic competitiveness for the region, bolstered tourism, access to the region's economic centers, access to jobs, greater economic development opportunities to station areas which serve regional and local commerce, and increased quality of life for residents and visitors. Passenger rail service will connect a wider labor pool to employers and give local residents better access to jobs and affordable housing. With the region's susceptibility to major weather events, rail could play a critical role in public safety during hurricanes or other disasters.

Intercity services operate over trackage that is part of the general railroad system of transportation. The BR-NO Passenger Rail Service is a proposed new passenger rail service corridor utilizing an existing freight corridor owned and operated by the Kansas City Southern Railway (KCS), the Canadian National Railway (CN), and the New Orleans Building Corporation (NOBC) [17]. The 80-mile corridor utilizes 67.5 miles of KCS-owned track, 8.5 miles of CN-owned, and 3.7 miles of NOBC-owned track [17]. This service would offer a regional alternative to the crowded I-10 corridor for passengers making work trips as well as trips for business and pleasure.

Table 1 - Sample Schedule for Initial Passenger Service [16]

| Southbound | Trip #1 (101) | Trip #2 (103) | Northbound | Trip #1 (102) | Trip #2 (104) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| LV Baton Rouge | 7:00 AM | 5:00 PM | LV New Orleans | 7:00 AM | 5:00 PM |
| Baton Rouge Suburban | 7:09 AM | 5:09 PM | Jefferson Parish | 7:15 AM | 5:15 PM |
| Gonzales | 7:25 AM | 5:25 PM | Kenner/NO International Airport | 7:25 AM | 5:25 PM |
| LaPlace | 7:45 AM | 5:45 PM | LaPlace | 7:40 AM | 5:40 PM |
| Kenner/NO International Airport | 8:00 AM | 6:00 PM | Gonzales | 8:00 AM | 6:00 PM |
| Jefferson Parish | 8:15 AM | 6:15 PM | Baton Rouge Suburban | 8:18 AM | 6:18 PM |
| AR New Orleans | 8:35 AM | 6:35 PM | AR Baton Rouge | 8:35 AM | 6:35 PM |

Previous studies examined alternate schedules including four, six, and eight daily round trips through expanded service following proposed rail infrastructure improvements allowing for incremental, higher speeds [5]. Initial intercity service was proposed at 79 mph. Infrastructure improvements could allow for service with recommended maximum speeds of 90 and 110 mph to accommodate service of six and eight round trips, respectively [5]. As service develops in the coming decades, the BR-NO corridor could see a mix of both high-speed service to major cities and intercity trains providing service to intermediate stops [17]. Corridor infrastructure improvements to accommodate passenger service could enhance freight trip times and provide a foundation for economic competitiveness and a healthy economy.

Vehicle congestion along the I-10 corridor is a significant driver for rail service which would provide an alternative transportation mode for passengers traveling this corridor. A 2015 Texas A&M Transportation Institute report rates the Baton Rouge area third highest in congestion among medium urban areas in the United States [20]. The same report addresses congestion as an imbalance of travel demand and the supply of transportation capacity. Providing more capacity through rail service will provide opportunity for increased throughput for an improving economy seeking to add jobs and residents to a growing, vibrant, cultural region. Rail capacity is easier to increase through additional trips versus added lanes of highway infrastructure. Rail passenger service and its added transportation capacity could be part of a balanced and diversified approach to ease congestion in the region.

Focused Transit Oriented Development (TOD) and intercity rail service would provide an energy efficient and environmentally-friendly mode of transportation which would encourage denser, interconnected, livable communities, and development, while reducing parking demands.

The service area is susceptible to major natural disasters as demonstrated by Hurricane Katrina and other recent major storms. Direct rail access to New Orleans and the ability to divert would-be automobile travelers out of the

congested I-10 corridor would provide benefits in moving large amounts of people over rail in an emergency scenario. Stations in the Baton Rouge area could provide direct access to area hospitals, aiding in emergency response [16].

Reestablishment of BR-NO passenger service would provide a critical step to continued economic growth to this "Super Region" of Louisiana's most populous cities including more than 2.2 million people and nearly 1 million jobs [16].

Initial rail service would provide vital connections for intercity rail passengers to employment centers and major metropolitan areas. However, as reliable service increases and the station area matures as a dense, mixed-use neighborhood, rail service would bring visitors to Gonzales. With rail access, Gonzales could capitalize on its affordable living, high-ranking schools, public safety, and its small-town, friendly character to create a bedroom community with connections to Baton Rouge and New Orleans.

The Southern Rail Commission, along with other stakeholders, continue to advance planning studies for improved, restored, and additional rail passenger service in the Super Region and greater Gulf Coast states. Together with the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), Amtrak, Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (LaDOTD), Transportation4America, Center for Planning Excellence, State leaders and other stakeholders, capital and study projects focused on the Gulf Coast High Speed Rail Corridor (which includes this BR-NO route) continue to be the primary focus for the Commission. This Master Planning effort represents a continuation of these efforts, with grant funding being provided by both the FRA and the City of Gonzales.

## 2.1 Ridership

Prior studies provided annual ridership forecasts for initial service and incrementally enhanced service scenarios. Initial service is expected to provide two round trips per day, with one train in each direction in the morning, and reverse service each afternoon. A sample schedule is provided in Table 1. Estimated annual ridership is summarized in Table 2. Annual ridership was broken down to daily ridership for this planning effort. Estimated annual ridership indicates that with two round trips per day, 210,240 annual passengers would utilize the route for business and recreational trips [16]. Previous studies indicate that 18 percent of trips originate from Gonzales and LaPlace stops [5]. A ratio comparing 2010 US Census population data for Gonzales (9,781) and LaPlace (29,872) indicates approximately 25 percent of these combined annual boardings would originate from Gonzales. In this way, ridership specifically originating from Gonzales will account for 9,461 boardings annually. The term "boardings" is defined as one-way, unlinked person-trips per day. This information is reflected in Table 3. The 2014 report suggested that daily ridership would be based on service where one locomotive and three passenger bi-level coaches would provide each trip with capacity of approximately 240 seats. Ridership was then calculated based on 240 seats/train, a 60% Load Factor, times

number of trips/day, and 365 days service [16]. This load factor and seating capacity was used in the development of ridership estimates from the 2014 report indicated Table 2.

Table 2 Line-wide Estimated Annual Ridership Summary

| | Estimated Annual Ridership | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Round Trips Per day** | **HNTB (2014 report) [16]** | **Amtrak (2010 Report) [5]** | **BKI/HDR (2010 Report) [5]** |
| **2 (4 trips)** | 210,240* | - | - |
| **4 (8 trips)** | 315,360* | 330,600 | 461,000 |
| **6 (12 trips)** | 420,480* | 569,000 | 644,200 |
| **8 (16 trips)** | 840,960* | 686,000 | 886,400 |

*Note: Values extrapolated assuming 240 seats/train, a 60% Load Factor, times number of trips/day, and 365 days service.

Table 3 Estimated Gonzales Annual Ridership

| | Estimated Gonzales Annual Riders | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Round Trips Per day** | **HNTB (2014 report) [16]** | **Amtrak (2010 Report) [5]** | **BKI/HDR (2010 Report) [5]** |
| **2 (4 trips)** | 9,461* | - | - |
| **4 (8 trips)** | 14,191* | 14,877 | 20,745 |
| **6 (12 trips)** | 18,922* | 25,605 | 28,989 |
| **8 (16 trips)** | 37,843* | 30,870 | 39,888 |

*Note: Values extrapolated assuming 240 seats/train, a 60% Load Factor, times number of trips/day, and 365 days service.

Daily ridership is calculated using Amtrak's suggested approach [3]. This formula provides a higher number than typical daily ridership to account for peak conditions on busy travel days or variations in weekday/weekend and seasonal travel which is expected in the corridor given regional special event programming.

Daily Ridership = Annual Ridership (On/Off) / 270 [3]

The derived daily ridership numbers provided in the 2010 [5] and 2014 [16] reports are summarized below in Table 4. These ridership projections indicate scaled daily ridership over time in relation to increased daily train trips as reliable service is established, infrastructure improvements to the rail line increase speeds to reduce travel times, automobile congestion on I-10 increases, and the population within the service corridor increases.

Table 4 Gonzales Daily Ridership Estimates

| | Gonzales Daily Riders | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Round Trips Per day** | **HNTB (2014 report)** [16] | **Amtrak (2010 Report)** [5] | **BKI/HDR (2010 Report)** [5] |
| **2 (4 trips)** | 35 | - | - |
| **4 (8 trips)** | 52 | 55 | 76 |
| **6 (12 trips)** | 70 | 94 | 106 |
| **8 (16 trips)** | 140 | 113 | 146 |

It is recommended that the BR-NO corridor be reassessed for potential annual ridership forecasts and that the Gonzales station be reassessed following the results of further studies.

Given the cultural destinations of the region and non-work trips such as shopping, health care, airport access, festivals, sporting events, and special activities, intercity service between Baton Rouge and New Orleans could attract a wide range of passengers.

Intercity travel is normally characterized by travel distances exceeding 100 miles by passengers who journey less frequently than once a week and usually required services like checked baggage, on-board food, and potential reserved sleeping accommodations. Based on American Railway Engineering and Maintenance-of-Way Association (AREMA) passenger service characteristics, intercity service passengers exhibit the following characteristics [1].

- Frequently a stranger;
- Occasionally is not accustomed to travel;
- Sometimes elderly or infirm and often accompanied by children;
- Generally carrying baggage;
- Occupies more space on platforms and for longer average time; and
- Requires waiting room, toilets, ticket sellers, concession, and vending services.

With the proposed corridor length of 80 miles, the proposed intercity rail service may attract more of a commuter-type service passenger. Based on AREMA passenger service characteristics, commuter service passengers exhibit the following characteristics [1].

- Generally familiar with the station after the first trip;
- Is self-reliant;
- Definitive and brisk in movement;
- Active and mature;
- No luggage other than small briefcase;

- Moves promptly from train to exit;
- Requires minimal wayfinding assistance; and
- Requires minimal assistance in purchasing tickets or monthly passes.

Catering station design elements to these attributes will contribute to pleasant, convenient, and attractive service.

## 2.2 Passenger Equipment

Passenger equipment assumptions are based on previous reports which indicate the following points, though rolling stock selection and procurement have not been finalized.

- Each train consists of a locomotive and three passenger coaches utilizing a Cab Car to operate the train in each direction [5].
- Amtrak would likely initiate service using bi-level coaches like other existing intercity services [5].

A recommended platform length of 300 linear feet would accommodate three passenger coaches with ample stopping distance. Both preferred platform arrangements (Option A or Option B presented in Section 4.4) allow for future expansion to longer platforms without reconfiguration of the building or platform. Longer platforms could be necessary to accommodate increased service through lengthened trainsets, or to accommodate additional rail vehicles for different service types.

## 2.3 Station Category

The Master Plan design team recognizes that the BR-NO corridor service could grow steadily and a station in Gonzales should be flexible to accommodate growing demand for reliable passenger rail service. Amtrak Program and Planning Guidelines provide criteria for categorizing stations based primarily on passenger volume. Based on the criteria within the Amtrak Station Programing and Planning Guide, the Gonzales passenger station may begin service as a "Category 4" station. This category of station is defined as an unstaffed station providing only a shelter or platform canopy to protect passengers from the weather, serving low density, suburban/rural communities without baggage services, often arranged as side platforms [2].

With increased service or ridership, the station may "graduate" from a lower ridership Category 4 to a higher ridership Category 3 station. Features of a Category 3 station include an interior waiting facility, restrooms, and additional services provided by railway caretaker staffing for ticketing or maintenance services. These stations are often maintained by part-time custodians or community stakeholders responsible for opening the station an hour before train

arrival and keeping the station open until after each train departures. Category 3 stations on existing Amtrak lines often serve annual ridership below 20,000 passengers [2]. The City of Gonzales indicated preference to include select features of a Category 3 station amenities to provide a feature rich, modern station gateway for intercity passengers and visitors.

These recommendations will need to be reviewed and confirmed with the identified stakeholders, however, given plans for expanded ridership with incremental infrastructure improvements, and the potential for high-speed regional service, enhancements to the current proposed station are worth consideration.

# 3 Surrounding Site Assessment

The City's recent Gonzales Comprehensive Plan incorporates a Small Area Plan for the downtown which outlines a number of aspirations and opportunities for community development in the vicinity of the proposed rail station. The principles articulated are consistent with national trends influencing certain urban developments, particularly TOD. Previous studies have indicated that with local support, when the right mix of site, zoning, access, adjacency to public and civic uses, and financial support are available, developers can expect significant premiums above projects even a mile from a station [5]. As described in the Gonzales Comprehensive Plan, this may yield new developments of varied land uses and higher densities than currently exist in the station vicinity. These mixed-use developments would capitalize on the increased activity generated by the station and its connectivity to the broader region. These collective needs deserve consideration with any initial improvements within the area. The City of Gonzales could explore a mixed-use building with a portion dedicated to station functions, which could provide utility outside of train service hours.

The City of Gonzales purchased the proposed station site as a step toward redeveloping downtown. The site included an unused building, a parking lot, and an open field adjacent to the operating Kansas City Southern freight rail line at the north end of Downtown Gonzales. The site once was home to a train depot. Prior feasibility studies identified that a Gonzales station should be in close proximity to the downtown area. The Gonzales Comprehensive Plan provided more details for a potential rail station at the selected site. A press conference was held in support of the proposed passenger rail service at the selected Gonzales station site in the fall of 2015. The news conference included municipal and parish leaders who support the rail route and urged the next Louisiana governor to back the project.

The site currently serves as a parking lot for the adjacent, City-owned Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) facility and other surrounding businesses. The site adjacent to the rail line has been identified as a potential site for a station and platform. This area would require elimination of the existing KCS siding track. Use of the KCS siding area for station site planning needs to be negotiated and agreed to with KCS. Felix Ave currently links with East Ascension St to provide access across the train tracks to a small block-long thoroughfare serving a few buildings to the east. The site also appears to have some ad hoc functionality as overflow off-street parking for Ascension St traffic, which the surrounding neighborhood businesses are benefitting from during peak hours of operation.

Primary access to the proposed station site from the west is via North Burnside Ave, which acts as a main street and commercial corridor, bringing traffic from both the north and south, and provides access to the station site by either East New River St or East Ascension St. Both East River and East Ascension streets have signalized traffic intersections at North Burnside Ave. North Burnside Ave has recently been updated with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant sidewalks for accessibility. A pedestrian/bike trail exists along the New River following West Main St to the west. This trail could eventually link via East Railroad St to the station site.

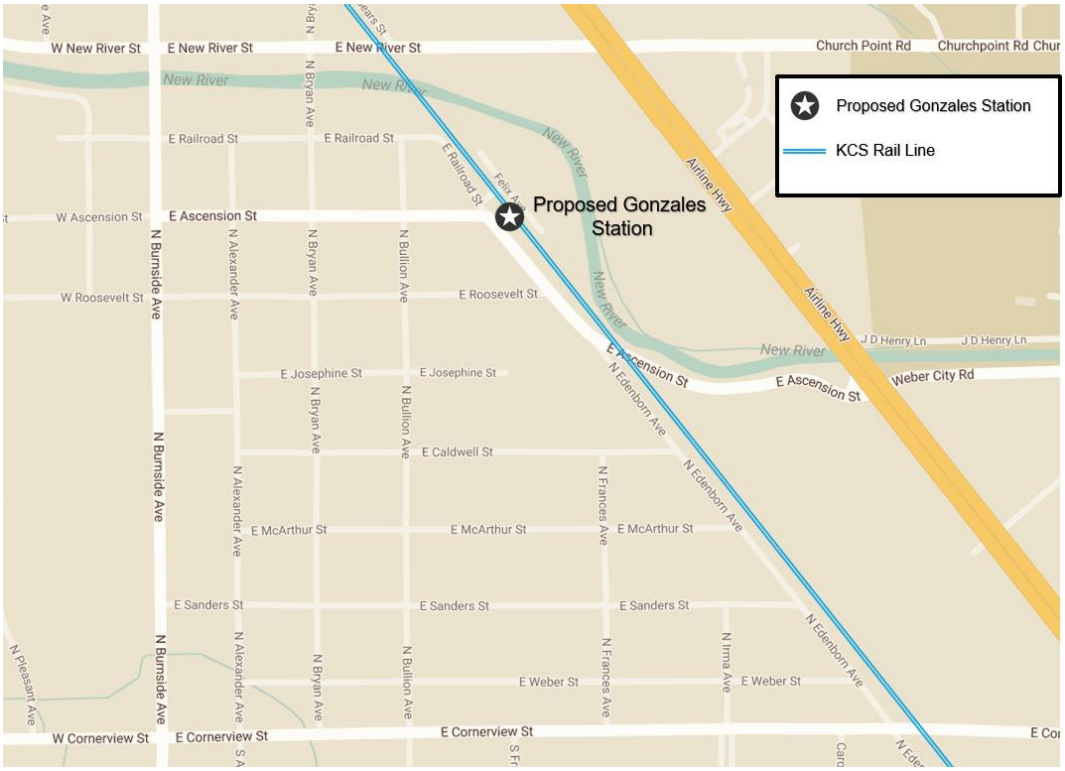



Figure 2 Station Site and Existing Access

Access from the east via Airline Highway (LA-44) which provides a major commercial corridor and divided highway route from New Orleans to Baton Rouge. A signalized traffic intersection at East Ascension St provides access from Airline Highway to the station site from the southeast. Ascension St crosses the existing Kansas City Southern (KCS) rail line south of the station site with a signalized, gated rail grade crossing providing warning flashers, gates, and bells.

Airline Highway is also accessible north of the station site via East New River St, which runs north of the New River, adjacent to the station site. The intersection of East New River St and North Bryan Ave has no active traffic control. This intersection is not signaled, with only stop signs providing passive traffic control.

Access from the south to the station site is via residential avenues running north and south from East Cornerview St. These include North Edenborne Ave, North Bullion Ave, North Bryan Ave, and North Alexander Ave.

## 3.1 Proposed Access Improvements

The Gonzales Comprehensive Plan establishes a Master Street Plan which identifies long-term projects for further study with functional classifications. The Master Street Plan is provided for reference in Figure 3.

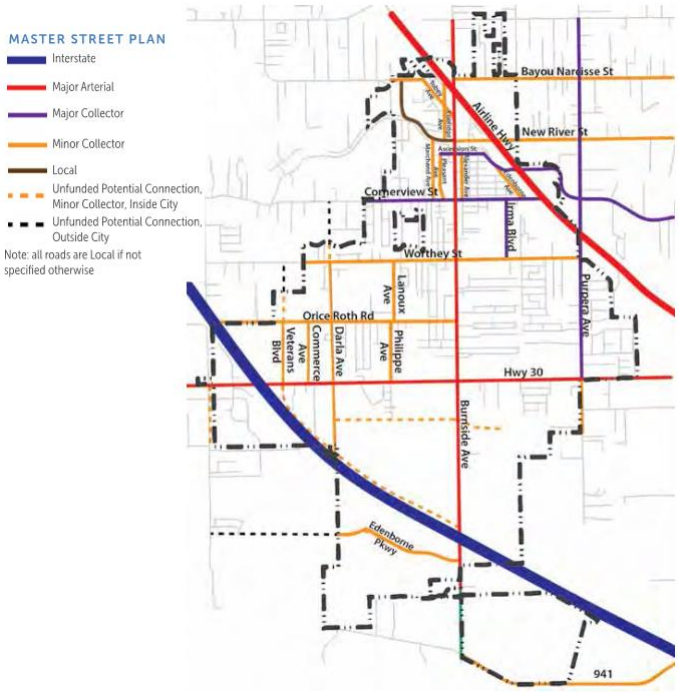



Figure 3 Master Street Plan Long-Term Projects [10]

The Gonzales Comprehensive Plan provides a Complete Streets Map which identifies potential infrastructure improvements relating to increased access and improved pedestrian experience to the proposed station site [10]. The Complete Streets Map is provided for reference in Figure 4. The City's Complete Street principles as incorporated into the City's Municipal Code of Ordinances provides guidance for infrastructure design to incorporate multi-modal accommodations for automobiles, transit, bike, and pedestrian systems as well as related amenities [15]. The goal of these improvements is to create user-friendly infrastructure that adds value to the City by serving multiple objectives. Interpretations of these policies are included in cost estimates within Chapter 5 and Appendix A.

Both plans were considered in the recommendations provided within this plan.

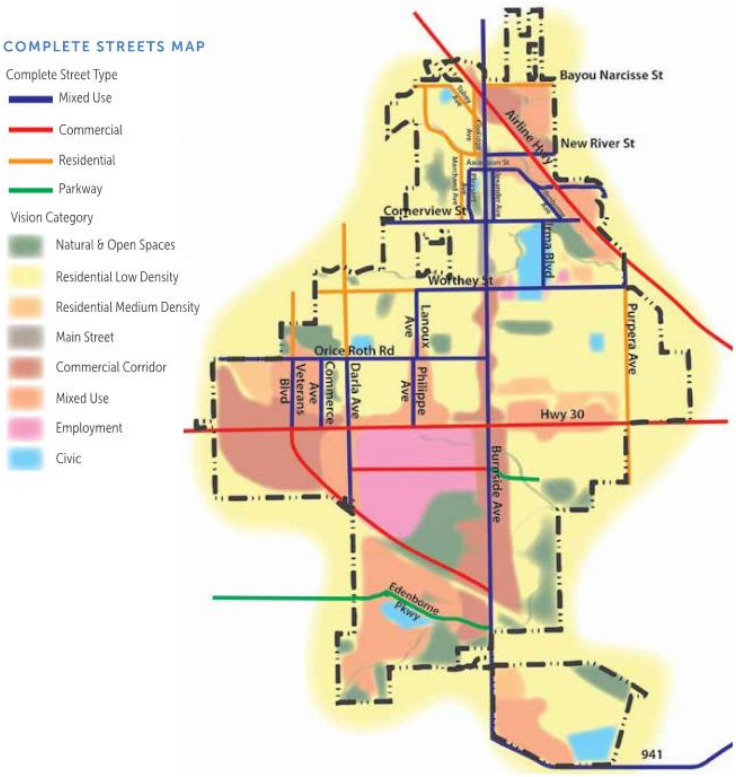



Figure 4 Complete Streets Map [10]

Considerations were made to incorporate suggestions from the City of Gonzales Connections Plan Proposal from the National Park Service Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program to explore safe connections for bike paths, pedestrians, and trails [19]. The Gonzales Outdoor Recreational Enhancements Comprehensive Map from the National Park Service is referenced in Figure 5.

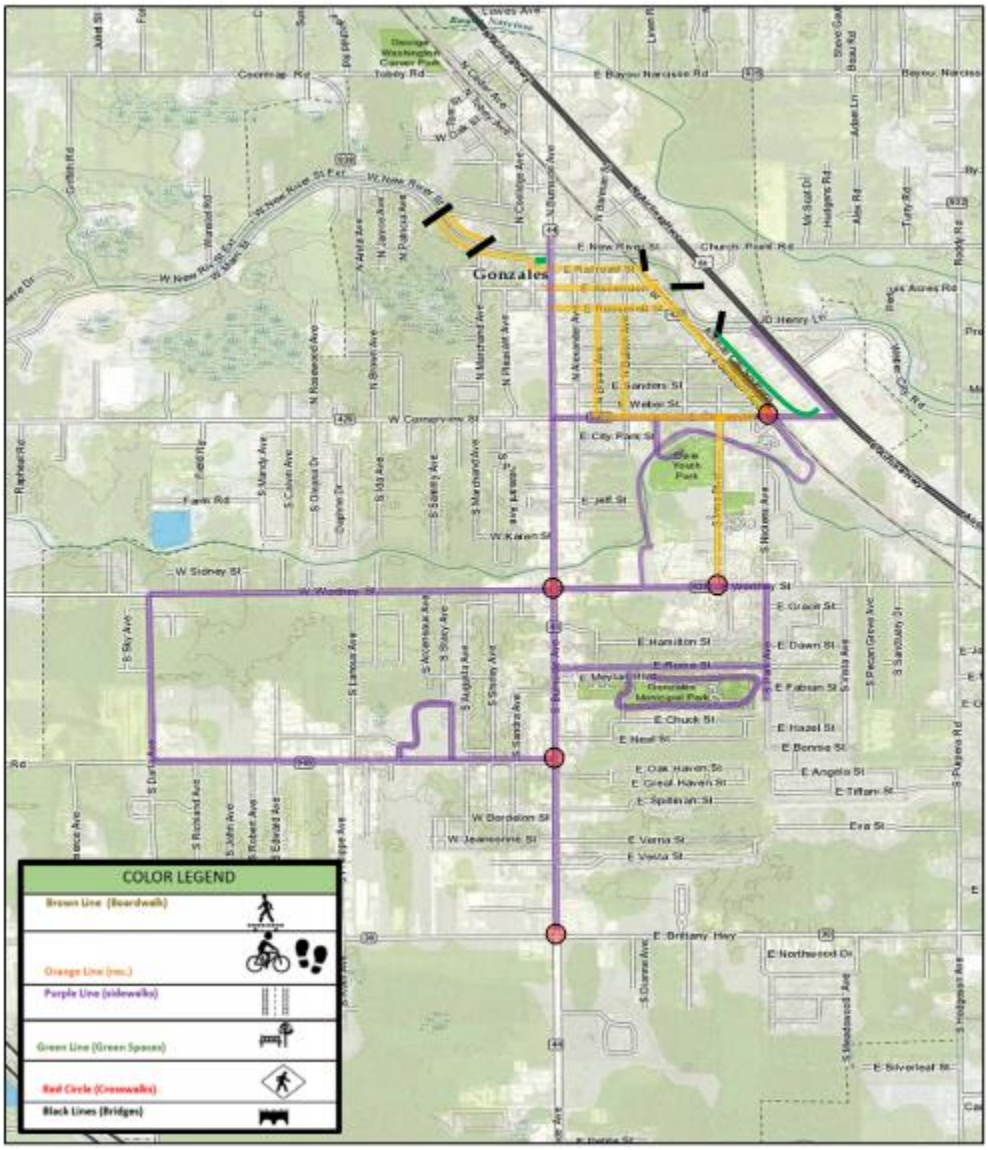



Figure 5 Gonzales Outdoor Recreation Enhancements Comprehensive Plan

Beyond the station facility and its related site improvements, the increased access needs of the proposed rail station warrant infrastructure improvements creating improved linkages to nearby corridors and the broader surrounding community. Prior studies prioritize connectivity to North Burnside Ave and US-61 Airline Highway with secondary priority to East New River St and East Cornerview St. While these improvements enhance access to and use of the station, they can also enhance other City objectives that contribute to the station as a desirable hub of civic activity. Roadway and sidewalk improvements should prioritize the pedestrian and cycling experience, making connections to other blocks visible, intuitive, and accessible. Increased pedestrian and cycling activity surrounding the site will add life and vitality to the area.

## 3.2 Proposed Gonzales Complete Streets

The City's Complete Street requirements address connectivity, access management, and green infrastructure improvements for enhancement of existing Gonzales thoroughfares. The City of Gonzales Code of Ordinances, Chapter 22.5, identifies the location and type of roadway facilities needed to meet projected growth and enhance mobility and access for the public [15]. Special care was taken to incorporate input from the Gonzales Comprehensive Plan, National Park Service Connections Plan, and proposed uses for the area surrounding the station site. These cross sections suggest a more pedestrian and biking friendly layout which maximizes available right-of-way for future complete street uses.

The proposed roadway improvements consider potential designs alternatives, taking into account the planned growth from a rail station and the proposed scenarios for surrounding development.

The proposed cross sections are based on provided GIS data and publicly available aerial maps. Roadway details are preliminary and not for construction. The City of Gonzales should verify existing conditions, right-of-way limits, and further study proposed alternatives. A six-inch offset at each proposed right-of-way is indicated on each cross section to indicate an offset of proposed facilities. This distance is not included in the total cross section widths.

*Pedestrian Zones* are areas of sufficient width to allow pedestrians to walk safely and comfortably.

*Planting Zones* are areas between the sidewalk and curb which could include grass, landscaping, pedestrian scale lighting, street trees, bioswales, rain gardens, or hardscape amenities zones.

*Travel Zones* are the primary travel way for vehicles. This represents a shared vehicle zone for mixed traffic including cars, trucks, buses, and bicycles. This area may include Curb & Gutter areas. For roadways designated as local roads, the travel zones are represented as curb to curb widths and consider optional on-street parking may not include lane striping to match existing streets.

*Bike Zone* areas include space for bike zones outside of vehicular travel areas. In some cases, this space may also include area for on-street parking depending on final use after further study. These zones vary in width and locations depending on road designation and adjacent land uses. Curbs and gutter areas indicated in proposed cross sections are optional, similar to existing roads which have a near zero vertical grade. In these cases, the planting zones could be used as catch basins or potential bio-swales.

*Parking Zones* are areas outside of travel zones and are reserved for on-street, parallel parking. Some parking areas are illustrated within the roadway cross sections with dashed lines which indicate the opportunity for further study of curb extensions. These curb extensions could be placed at intersections as gateways to

mark transitions when entering residential streets. Another use for curb extensions is placing them mid-block as a pinch point to promote traffic calming. Curb extensions aid in decreasing the overall width of the roadway serving as a visual cue to drivers that they are entering a pedestrian-centric area or neighborhood. These extensions aid in pedestrian visibility and if used as planters, can add visual and natural aesthetics. These curb extensions are recommended where there is on-street parking. Curb extensions could be designed with gaps at the curb to maintain adequate drainage or as rain gardens, vegetative curb extensions, or bioswales to help to absorb runoff from streets. Several options for further study are indicated in Figure 6, Figure 7, Figure 8, and Figure 9.

Figure 6 Curb Extension Option 1 [18]

Figure 7 Curb Extension Option 2 [18]

Figure 8 Curb Extension Option 3 [20]

Figure 9 Curb Extension Option 4 [23]

Figure 10 Curb Extension Option 5

When roadway improvements are made, crosswalks could be upgraded to ADA-compliant special pavers acting as a visual cue to pedestrians and motorists. An example is provided in Figure 11. Pedestrian zones and planting zones of designated mixed-use streets could be combined for a continuous sidewalk with special brick paving and steel grates covering the bases of street trees. This pedestrian-centric streetscape would promote pedestrian activity while providing additional space for landscaping, planters, benches, bicycle racks, improved lighting, and potential café spaces. Special paver examples are illustrated in Figure 12 and Figure 13.

Figure 11 Paved Crosswalk Example

Figure 12 Paved Walkway, Street Trees

Figure 13 Paved Curb, Tree Grilles

Amenities such as pedestrian level lighting, which are lower and spaced closer together than standard street lighting, are indicated within the proposed sections, and are recommended depending on adjacent land uses. Pedestrian level lighting will provide a cohesive neighborhood feel to the station area while improving pedestrian comfort, walkability, security, and safety.

Figure 14 Decorative Pedestrian Scale Lighting Example 1


Figure 15 Decorative Pedestrian Scale Lighting Example 2

## 3.3 Complete Street Roadway Cross Sections

### East Ascension St

East Ascension St is designated as the primary station access street because it links North Burnside Ave to Airline Highway and collects residential traffic from the south. The Gonzales Comprehensive Plan designates East Ascension St as a mixed use, major collector [10].

Available GIS data and aerial maps indicate East Ascension St provides 60 feet of available right-of-way for complete street roadway improvements, all of which is used for the proposed cross section. The proposed cross section provides five-foot pedestrian zones and a designated five-foot-six-inch planting zone outside of paved areas that include areas for landscaping, hardscaping, pedestrian lighting, and street trees. Pedestrian Zones and planting zones could be combined to create a larger pedestrian area to serve adjacent mixed-use land uses with special pavers and turf parkway enhancements. A 20-foot travel zone is flanked by a nine-foot bike zone and curb and gutter area which can be utilized as either parallel parking or as dedicated bike lanes. As with all cross sections, curbs are optional.

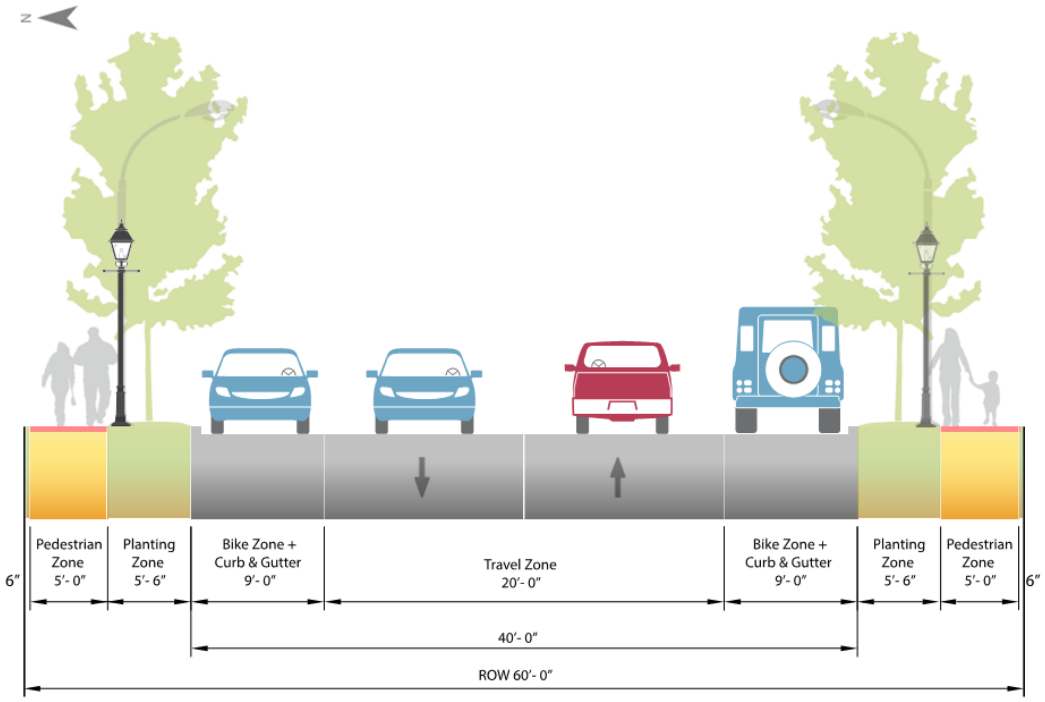



Figure 16 - Proposed East Ascension St Complete Street Cross Section

## East Railroad St

While East Railroad St is designated by the Gonzales Comprehensive Plan as a local street, for purposes of this report, it is considered a mixed use, minor collector. This recommended designation is based on the considerations from the National Park Service for a shared use path [18], as well as proposed mixed-use development potential on the south side of the street in the blocks from North Burnside Ave to the proposed rail station site. A 20-foot travel zone is flanked by parking zones to the north and south. These parking areas could utilize curb extensions to provide traffic calming and visual enhancements.

The proposed cross section makes use of the entire available 60-foot right-of-way to provide a dedicated five-foot pedestrian zone and five-foot planting zone to the south. Depending on adjacent land uses to the south, sidewalk and planting zones

could be combined for a more urban hardscape. This pedestrian zone to the south would provide pedestrian access to future mixed-use facilities whereas the shared use path to the north could enhance use of future proposed water-front parkways or other amenities. The shared use path would connect the rail station to proposed shared use paths west of North Burnside Ave as per the National Park Service Gonzales Connections Plan [18]. This proposed shared use path, with a dedicated area for pedestrians and bicyclists, could be separated by flexible bollards, planters, curb, or markers to provide a delineation from roadway and parking zones. Widths of parking and the shared use path, which could be adjusted to explore delineation options for a separated, shared use path are shown in Figure 17, Figure 18, Figure 19, and Figure 20. Further study is needed to balance the needs for this roadway and surrounding land uses.

Figure 17 Shared Path Separation Option

Figure 18 Shared Path Planter Separation Option [24]

Figure 19 Cyclelane Delineator [18]

Figure 20 Standing Ballasts [18]

The proposed Railroad St cross section applies from North Burnside Ave to the intersection at Felix Ave.

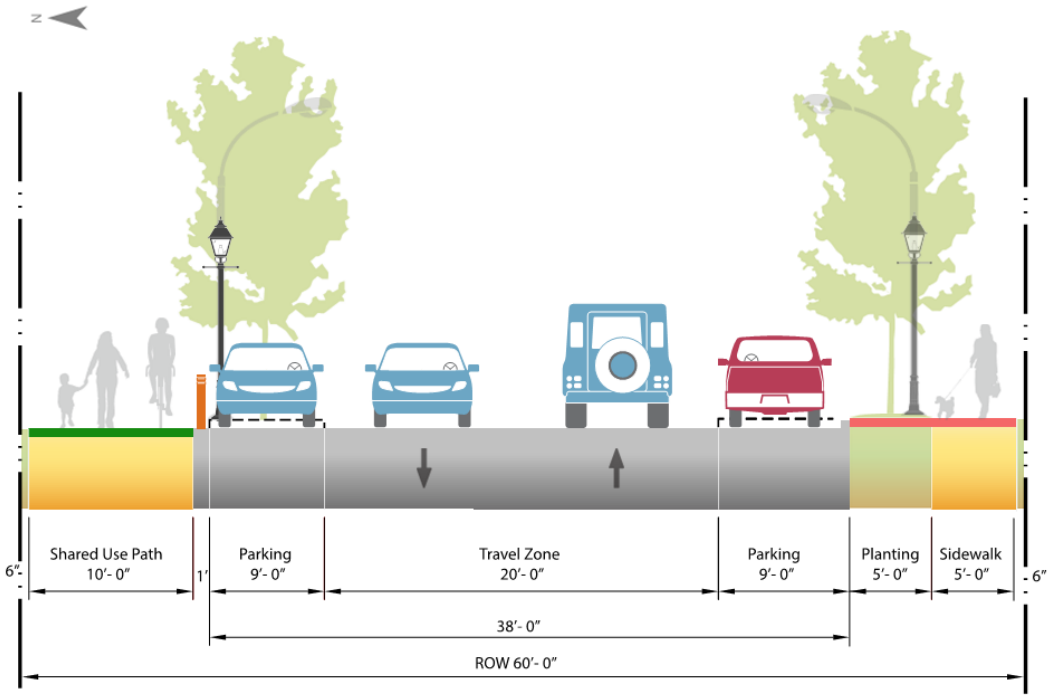



Figure 21 - Proposed East Railroad St Complete Street Cross Section

## North Alexander St (North of Ascension St)

North Alexander St is designated by the Gonzales Comprehensive Plan as being a mixed use, minor collector to encourage future development to the blocks to the west. North Alexander St, north of Ascension St, currently includes angled parking for southbound traffic on the west side of the street. The proposed cross section merges the City's Code of Ordinances mixed use, angled minor collector and mixed use, parallel parking sections to accommodate the available 50-foot right-of-way and maintain current uses. This results in five-foot pedestrian zones to the east and west, a 20-foot-six-inch travel zone and curb and gutter area, and 18-foot-6-inch angled parking zones on the west curb area. Proposed improvements should be validated with adjacent land owners and available right-of-way widths.

A North Alexander St cross section (north of Ascension St) with angled parking on the west curb is shown in Figure 22. An alternative cross section is provided in Figure 23 which considers removing the angled parking and adding parallel parking.

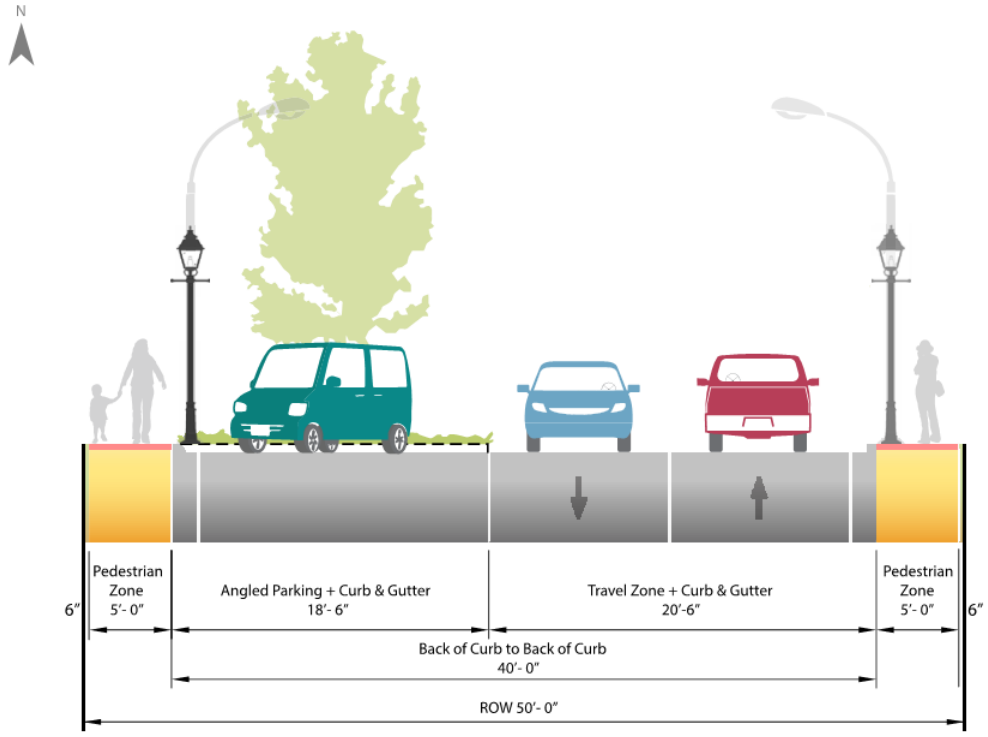



Figure 22 - Proposed North Alexander St Complete Streets Cross Section with Angled Parking (North of Ascension St)

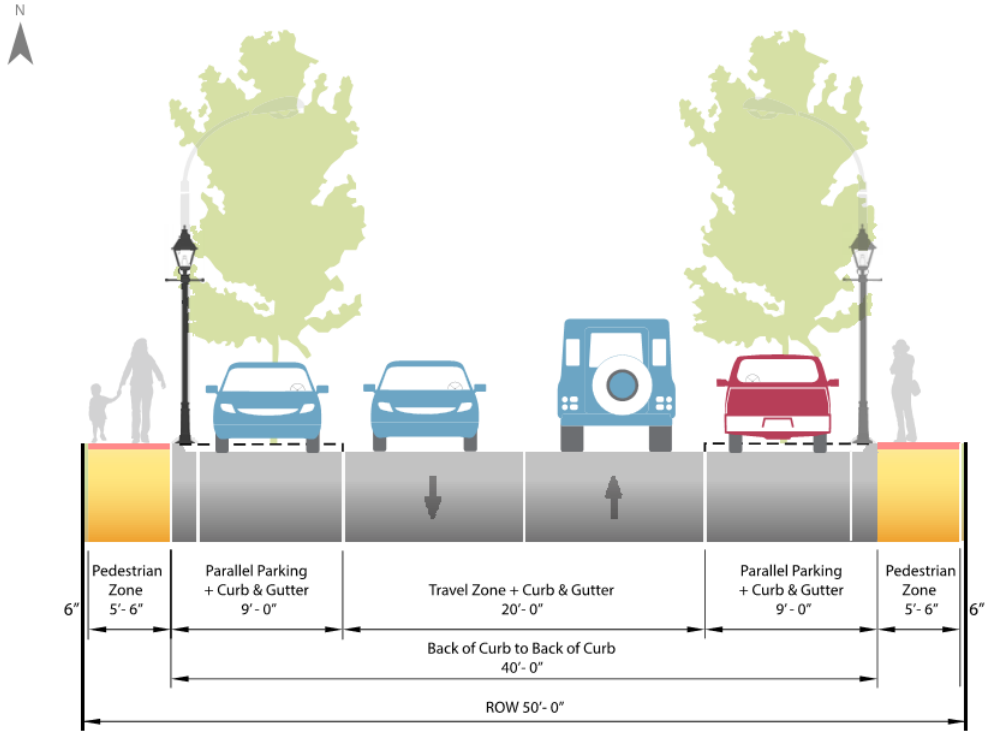



Figure 23 Proposed Alternate North Alexander St Complete Streets Cross Section with Parallel Parking (North of East Ascension Street)

## North Alexander St (South of East Ascension St)

North Alexander St is designated by the Gonzales Comprehensive Plan as being a mixed use, minor collector to encourage future development to the blocks to the west. North Alexander St, south of Ascension St, has a narrower right-of-way than other streets in the neighborhood. Available right-of-way widths should be verified; however, the proposed cross section maintains a narrower 45-foot cross section and creates a hybrid of mixed-used, minor collector sections. The proposed cross section improvements provide a pedestrian zone and planting zone on the west curb to appeal to future uses for commercial or mixed-use developments. Depending on future adjacent land developments, these zones could be combined into an enhanced pedestrian zone, with special paved hardscape areas and street trees in dedicated tree grilles. The eastern curb should maintain the sensitivity to the residential sections of North Alexander St, and accommodate the existing businesses which have paved curbs and large parking lots to the south of North Alexander St. Per the Gonzales Municipal Code, bike zones are suggested near each curb lane [15]. While the western bike zone could remain a dedicated lane for bikes, the eastern bike zone and curb and gutter area is wide enough to accommodate parallel parking to cater to residents within the neighborhood should future use necessitate.

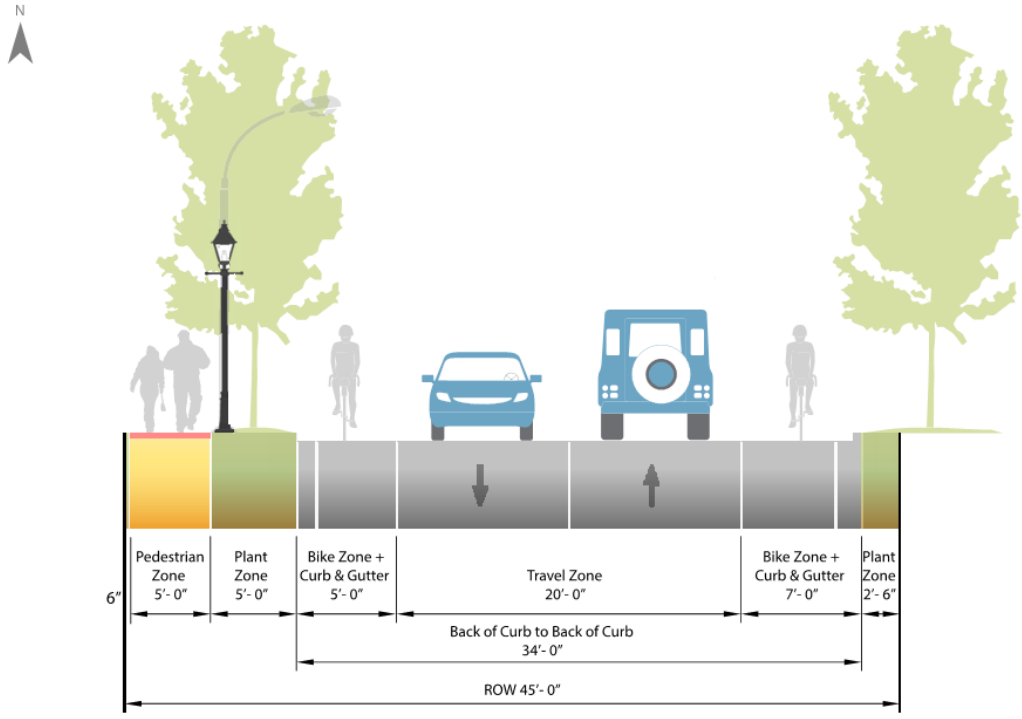



Figure 24 Proposed North Alexander St Complete Streets Cross Section (South of East Ascension St)

## Local Complete Streets

North Bryan Ave and North Bullion Ave are both designated in the Gonzales Comprehensive Plan as local streets. GIS information indicates a right-of-way widths of roughly 50-feet. Minimum pedestrian zones of five-feet and minimum planting zones of five-feet are suggested for both curb areas. Proposed back of curb to back of curb distances are 26-feet which allows sufficient space for travel areas while maintaining on-street parking for residents. This configuration matches the current local street arrangements which provide limited travel area when vehicles are parked on both curb lanes.

East Roosevelt St was designated by the Gonzales Comprehensive Plan as a local street. This remains a local, residential roadway with free on-street, parallel parking in each curb lane. Available GIS data indicated available right-of-way of 60 feet. However, the proposed complete street improvements maintain only a 47-foot right-of-way to maintain a local complete street designation. Actual future roadway widths should be verified and further studied. The proposed cross section maintains two-way traffic and available parallel parking for residents and visitors. Five-foot pedestrian and five-foot planning zones are proposed for both curbs.

The National Park Service Gonzales Connections Plan indicated that these local streets are suggested for further study for conversion to one-way streets [19]. The planning team has included an alternative local street configuration which provides a one-way alternative and maintains roughly the same dimensions as the local complete street cross sections for North Bryan, North Bullion, and East Roosevelt streets. This one-way cross section could be studied further once determination is made about which direction is best suited for the one-way suggestions included in the National Park Service plan. This one-way alternative is illustrated in Figure 28.

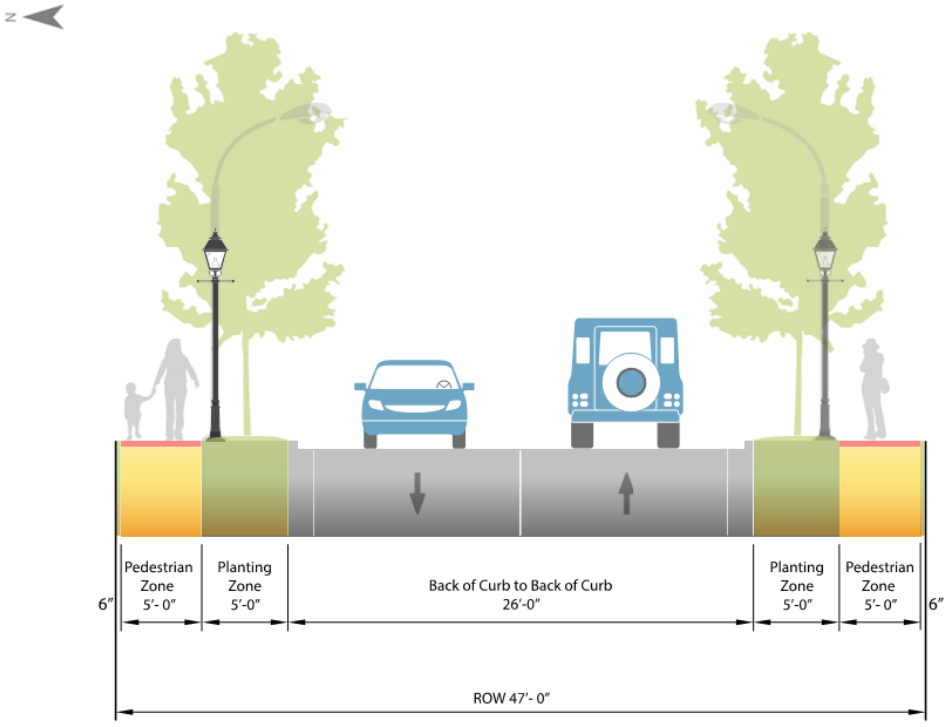



Figure 25 Proposed North Bryan Ave Complete Streets Cross Section

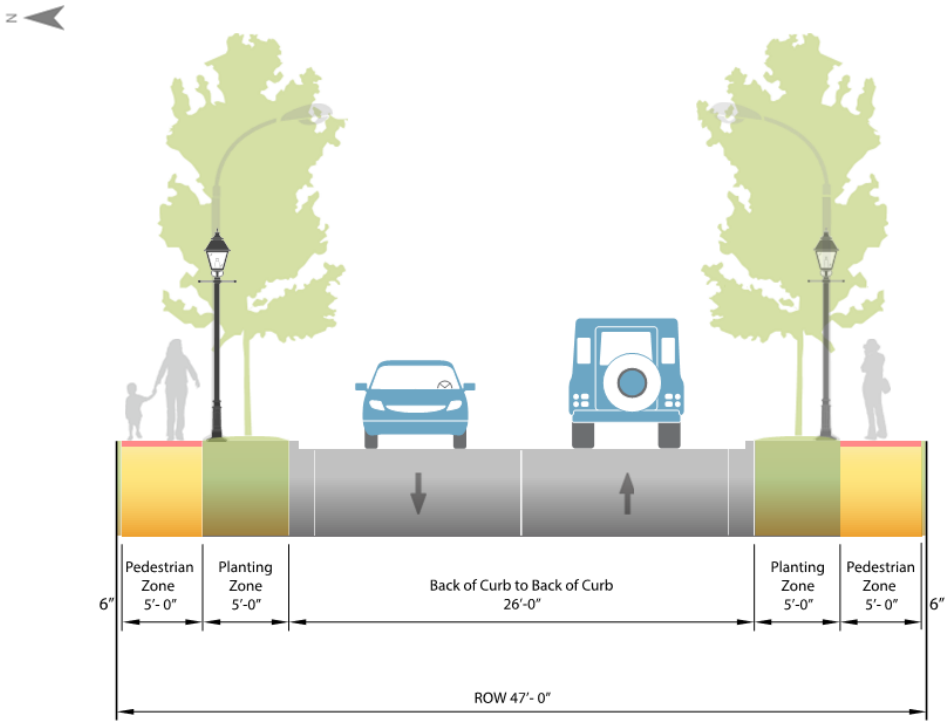



Figure 26 Proposed North Bullion Ave Complete Streets Cross Section

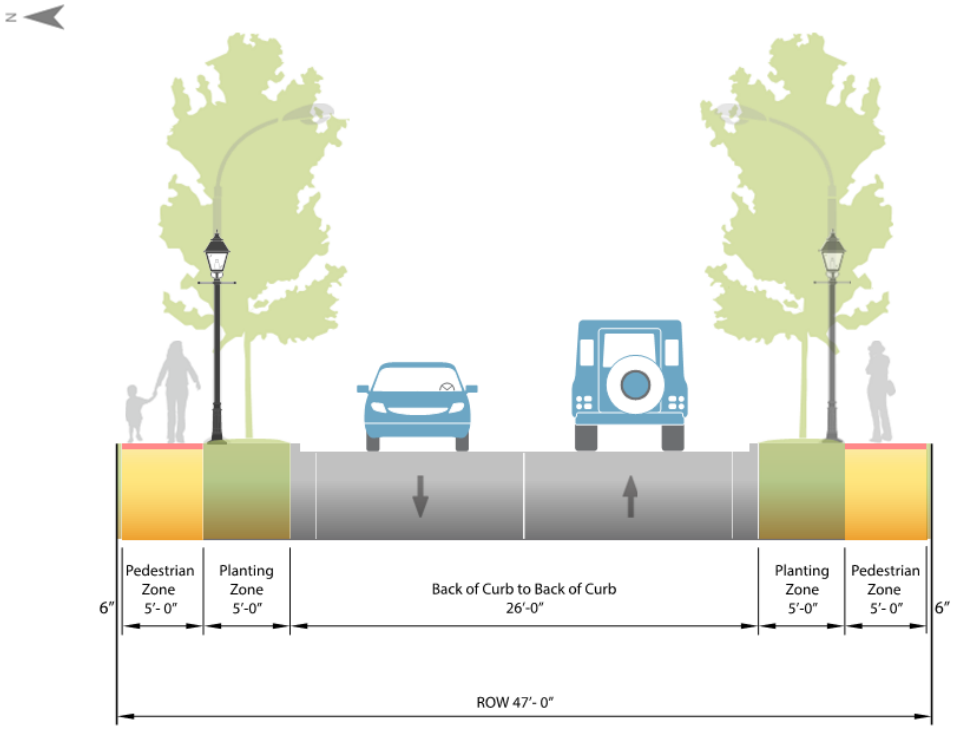



Figure 27 - Proposed East Roosevelt St Complete Street Cross Section

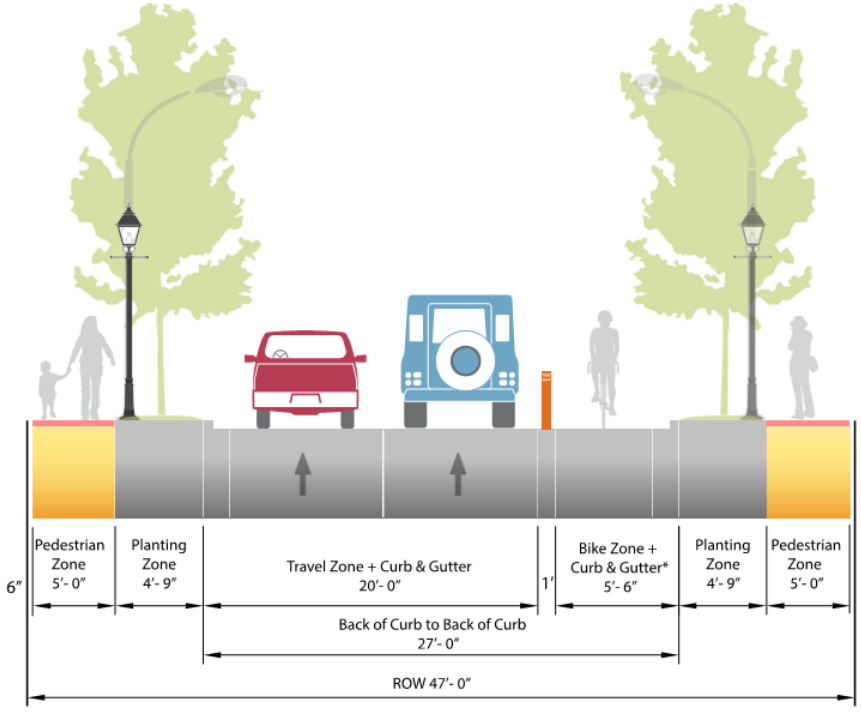



Figure 28 Proposed Local Street One-Way Alternative Complete Streets Cross Section

After implementation of the recommended Complete Streets sections, site access to the station could follow the suggested routing illustrated in Figure 29. These connections are consistent with the Gonzales Comprehensive Plan and National Park Service Gonzales Connections Plan. Arrows do not indicate direction of traffic. Reference Figure 31 and Figure 32 for recommended Complete Streets roadway improvements in plan view in the context of future development scenarios.

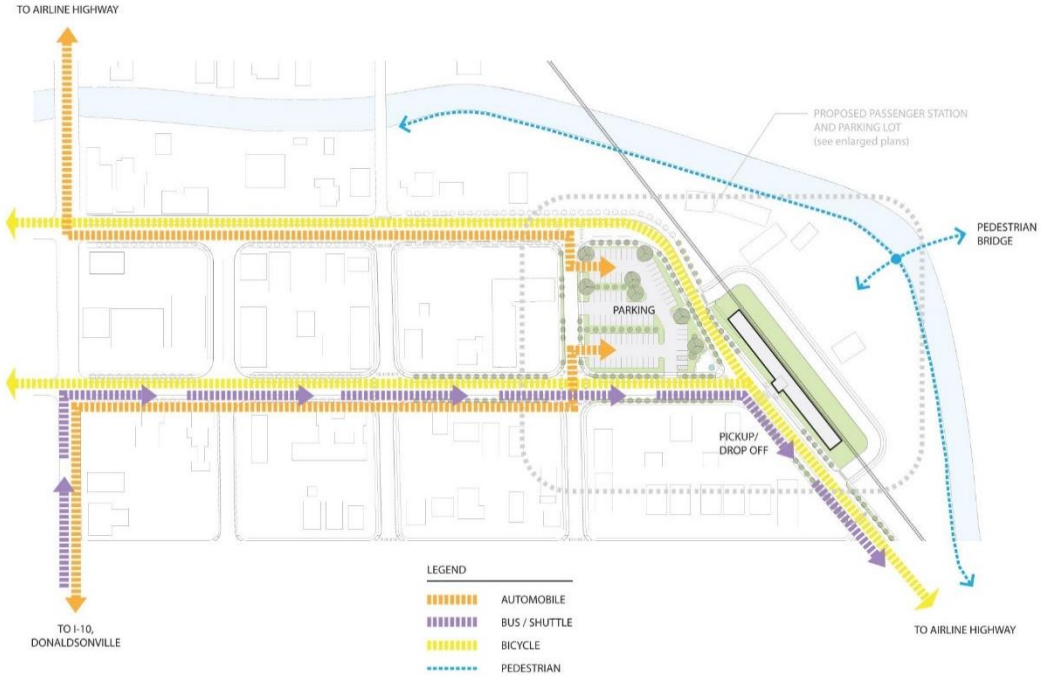



Figure 29 Urban Site Improvements Access Plan

## 3.4 Onsite Opportunities

The Gonzales Comprehensive Plan identified a list of opportunity areas adjacent to the selected station site which could maximize the potential impact of a rail station by creating functional linkages to existing commercial corridors, and stimulating economic revitalization. The following areas of opportunity are covered in more detail within Appendix A.

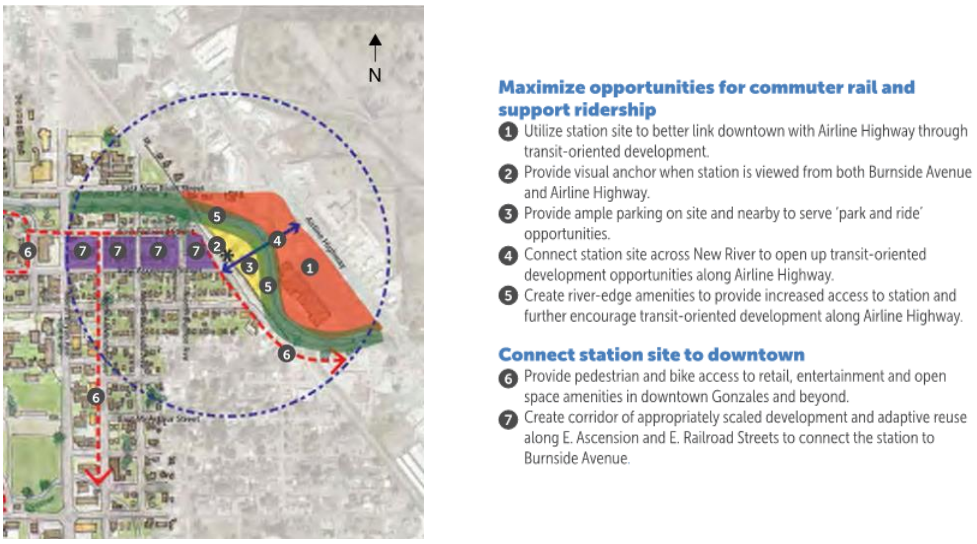



Figure 30 Gonzales Comprehensive Plan Opportunities [10]

The North Bullion Ave site contains a parking lot serving surrounding businesses including the DMV Office, French Garden Antiques, and Dubois Winery on East Ascension St to the west and south. The Gonzales Comprehensive Plan identified an area west of the selected station site for appropriate scaled development and adaptive reuse. This area comprises three city blocks spanning from the selected station site to North Burnside Ave which includes current use as mixed commercial space and single-family residential lots. These blocks are indicated in purple in Figure 31 and represent approximately 190,000 square feet (SF) of total property. These districts may require rezoning or special permitting to encourage adaptive reuse.

North of the planned station site are several residential and limited commercial properties with property edges along the New River. These sites could be examined for future use as river edge amenities and an extension of the existing pedestrian and bicycle trail paths. These would further link the station site to alternative modes of transportation and encourage car-free trips. Alternatively, these lots could capitalize on experiential business uses, such as breweries, bistros, and other hospitality developments, making use of river access. These areas represent an additional 140,000 SF of river edge property.

The eastern edge of the selected site is defined by North Railroad St which flanks the existing KCS rail line running parallel to Airline Highway. This location comprises a river crescent area east of the existing KCS rail line and west of the New River, and has been nicknamed the 'Island" by the planning team. The Island is an ideal location to redevelop into a park space that utilizes the riverfront access, contains a bioswale area, or is developed to include a walking bridge to the areas further east towards Airline Highway, thereby linking the future mixed-use areas to the proposed station and river edge amenities. If both shorelines of the New River were converted to a planned, greenway park with pedestrian

bridges, walkways, and seating areas, it would act as further incentive as part of the City's strategy for TOD. Figure 32 and Figure 33 provide potential island redevelopment scenarios linking adjacent properties and maximizing the use of the river edge.

The Area Concept Plan in Figure 32 provides a potential distribution of improvements within the district west of the KCS railroad tracks. Indicated improvements are very preliminary in nature and subject to change with further development of the project designs and strategies. One concept that is illustrated explores the potential for the land "island" bounded by the KCS railway line and the New River. Improved access to this property can be accomplished via right-of-way improvements to Felix Ave. The balance of this property is illustrated with the potential conversion to public use as a central amenity to the surrounding area. Amenities of this nature contribute to attracting patrons to the area and the desirability of the district as a place for citizens to work, live, and play within close proximity.

By illustrating this on the roughly three (3) acre site, the intention is to demonstrate a range of potential costs associated with value capture achieved through potential land use transitions. This is one of many techniques of varying scale that could be employed to illustrate improvement approaches that complement the value and redevelopment of properties within the project district. Additional common area improvements may serve similar objectives as could well conceived incentives toward similar private property improvements that benefit public use and neighborhood values.

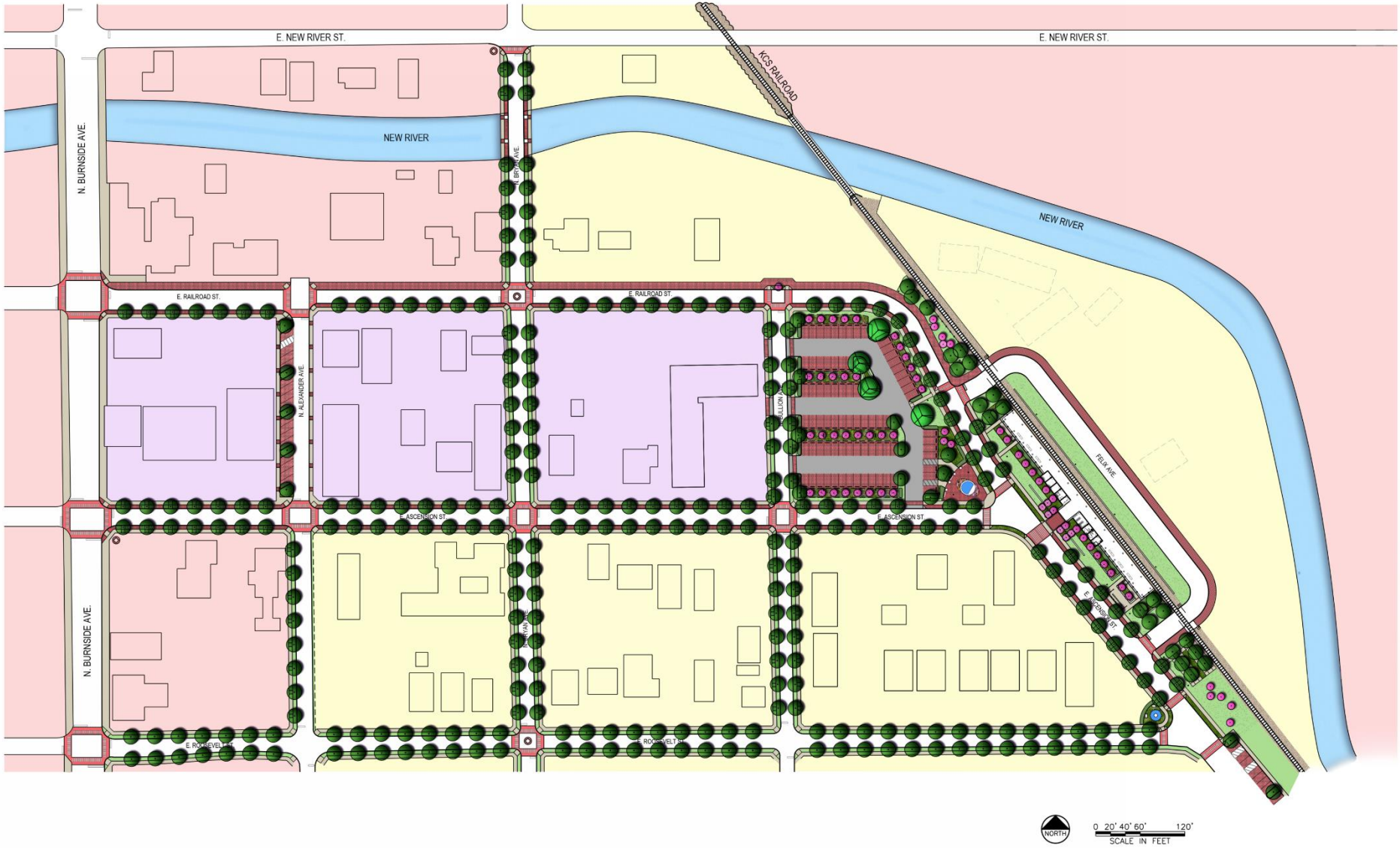



Figure 31 Site Opportunities Rendered Plan

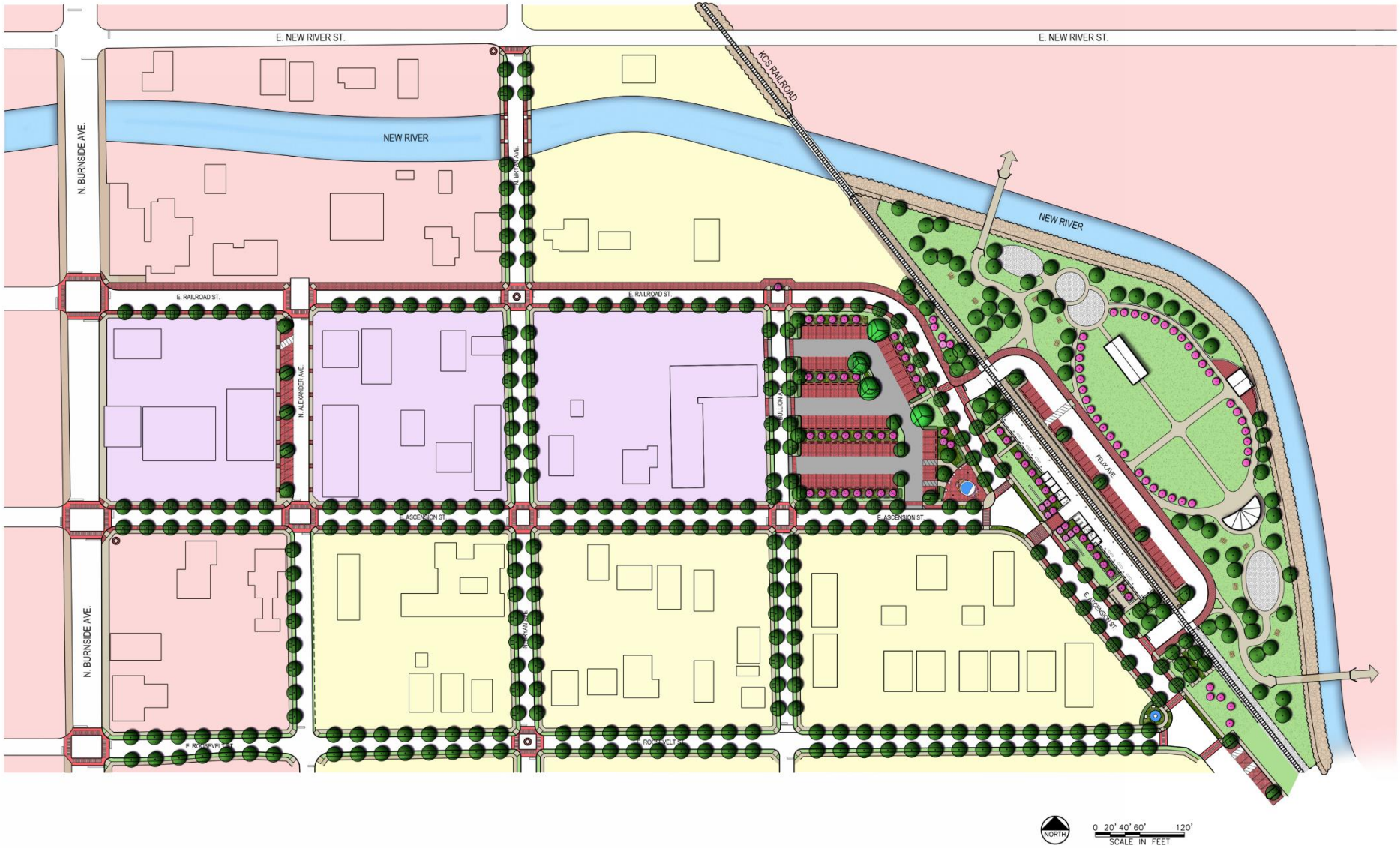



Figure 32 Future Site Redevelopment Scenario Rendered Plan


Figure 33 Potential Island Redevelopment Scenario

To the south of the selected station site and along East Ascension St are more retail and commercial spaces including a barber shop, a health food store, and several restaurants. These businesses have onsite parking but often generate overflow vehicles which utilize the graveled, KCS right-of-way on the east side of East Ascension St. Following East Ascension St further east, across the signalized KCS rail crossing, is the Airline Highway Corridor, a major commercial corridor of mainly general retail uses.

Many of the sites immediately adjacent to the New River and station site provide an exciting opportunity for revitalization into walkable, multi-use developments that generate synergies between the usefulness of transit access to the intercity rail line and the appealing nature of recreational river edges. The area highlighted in Figure 34 is a prime location for TOD at a higher scale. The total land area of these properties equals nearly 600,000 SF of commercial and retail space with highway access and functional adjacency to downtown Gonzales and the New River.

An urban village concept with three to five stories accommodating retail and incentivized river edge amenities linking to intercity transit could provide a civic center supplying recreational, commercial, and residential offerings, meeting many of the objectives of the Gonzales Comprehensive Plan. The incorporation of office/commercial spaces in a development like this would encourage live/work residents and entice ridership on the intercity line to make Gonzales not only an origin, but a destination.


Figure 34 Commercial Property Along Airline Highway

It is anticipated that implementation of an improvements program will benefit from public-private and multi-agency partnerships. These partnerships occur in many forms, whether financial, consulting, planning/design/construction collaboration, advocacy, or other means. Aside from State and Federal funding

programs assistance, local funding entities such as special tax districts afford great opportunities to contribute toward implementation of planned improvements. These may take the form of Economic Development Districts, Tax Increment Financing Districts (TIF), Public Improvement Districts (PID), or other similar terms. State and local legislation largely determine how these entities are empowered to operate and what they are able to fund. Both aspects offer significant enough contribution opportunities that many other municipalities, agencies, and development entities have pursued and supported their establishment. Funding most often is channeled toward infrastructure improvements such as roads, utilities, public open spaces and placemaking enhancements. This is a broad topic of opportunity that deserves further investigations and confirmations beyond the scope of this study. It is encouraged that establishment of these forms of partnership be pursued to enhance not only the funding of improvements but also the longer-term buy-in support and contribution to the ongoing evolution of funding, operations, and maintenance needs. Even the establishment of staff positions dedicated to promotion, oversight and management of localized improvement initiatives might be feasible as an added benefit through these approaches.

It is encouraged that opportunities for private development contribution to funding and maintenance programs be evaluated. Other municipalities and agencies have carefully crafted participation guidelines toward infrastructure and enhancement improvements. Doing so usually warrants the development of policies, design standards, enforcement mechanisms and funding requirements for codification by local authorities. Caution should be exercised that this approach not become a burdensome disincentive to participation or the achievement of quality development. These matters are not insurmountable but warrant careful consideration in balance with a range of other funding mechanisms.

## 3.5 Offsite Opportunities

Tanger Outlets in Gonzales is located approximately four miles southwest of the potential station site. The outlets are located at the intersection of I-10 and West Highway 30, and feature a variety of brand-name and designer outlet stores. This area includes 165,000 SF of specialty outdoor recreation retailing, which combined, acts as a major destination for visitors.

This area also includes a hotel corridor offering lodging for visitors. Long-term developments are planned in this corridor to make further use of available amenities and ease of access.

The Parish includes a large chemical district located near the Mississippi River which serves as an employment center for the greater Super Region. The prospect of passenger rail could provide valuable access to this employment center if partnerships are explored for further or subsidized public transit access.

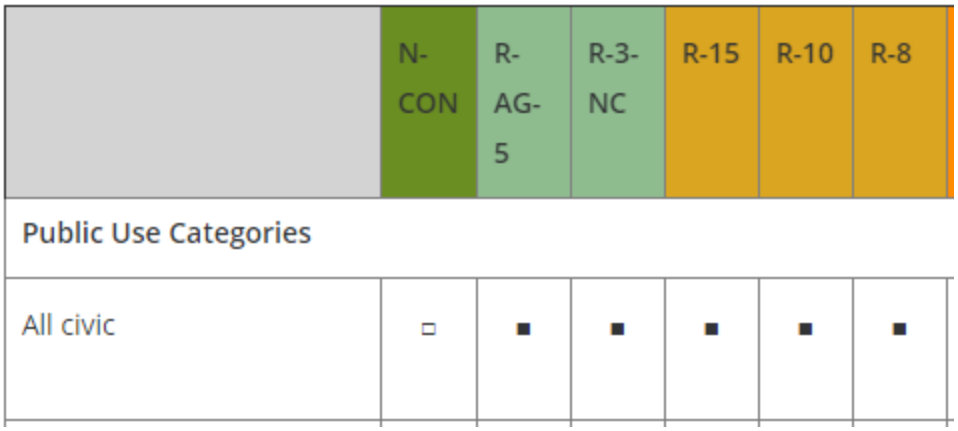
These activity centers often define a visitor's primary impression of the City. Long-term attention should be made to link the selected rail station site with these areas via a dedicated vanpool or shuttle service to encourage additional opportunities for access and development. Placemaking enhancements and potential developments as part of the adaptive reuse strategy to areas surrounding the station site could easily create a destination for commercial, retail, parks, recreation, and public markets. Linking other activity centers like the chemical district or the I-10/Hwy 30 retail centers to the selected station site through public transportation networks would encourage efficient transportation options and further enhance the City's appeal to visitors.

## 3.6 Zoning

The zoning designations of the proposed station and parking area are shown in the Gonzales zoning map below. R-8 zonings are permitted to have civic public use category structures. C-1 Zonings are permitted to have passenger terminal use category structures by special use permit. The platform is in a C-1 zoning and as such it appears there will need to be a conditional use type approval process with the City.

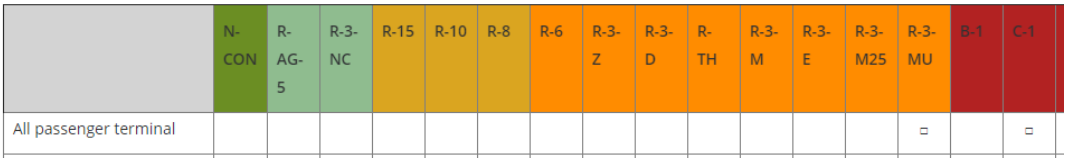

Figure 35 Gonzales Station Site Current Zoning

Table 5 Public Use Categories, Gonzales Code of Ordinances (Sec. 22-3)(a)(3) [15]



| | N-CON | R-AG-5 | R-3-NC | R-15 | R-10 | R-8 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Public Use Categories** | | | | | | |
| All civic | ▫ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ |

Table 6 Public Use Categories, Gonzales Code of Ordinances (Sec. 22-3)(a)(3) [15]



| | N-CON | R-AG-5 | R-3-NC | R-15 | R-10 | R-8 | R-6 | R-3-Z | R-3-D | R-TH | R-3-M | R-3-E | R-3-M25 | R-3-MU | B-1 | C-1 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| All passenger terminal | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ▫ | | ▫ |

For additional Zoning information, see also Chapter 22 of Gonzales Code of Ordinances [15].

# 4 Building Program

## 4.1 Site/Location

The station site location was identified to make use of the ballasted area east of the intersection of Ascension St and Railroad St, immediately adjacent to the existing KCS mainline rail. This would allow for the station platform edge to be placed directly next to the existing KCS alignment. The locator map in Figure 36 shows a possible location for the station, with a main entrance and pedestrian crossing at the intersection of East Ascension St and East Railroad St. Parking locations most favorable to the station would make use of the area at the intersection of North Bullion Ave and East Ascension St, which is currently a parking lot for the City-owned DMV building.

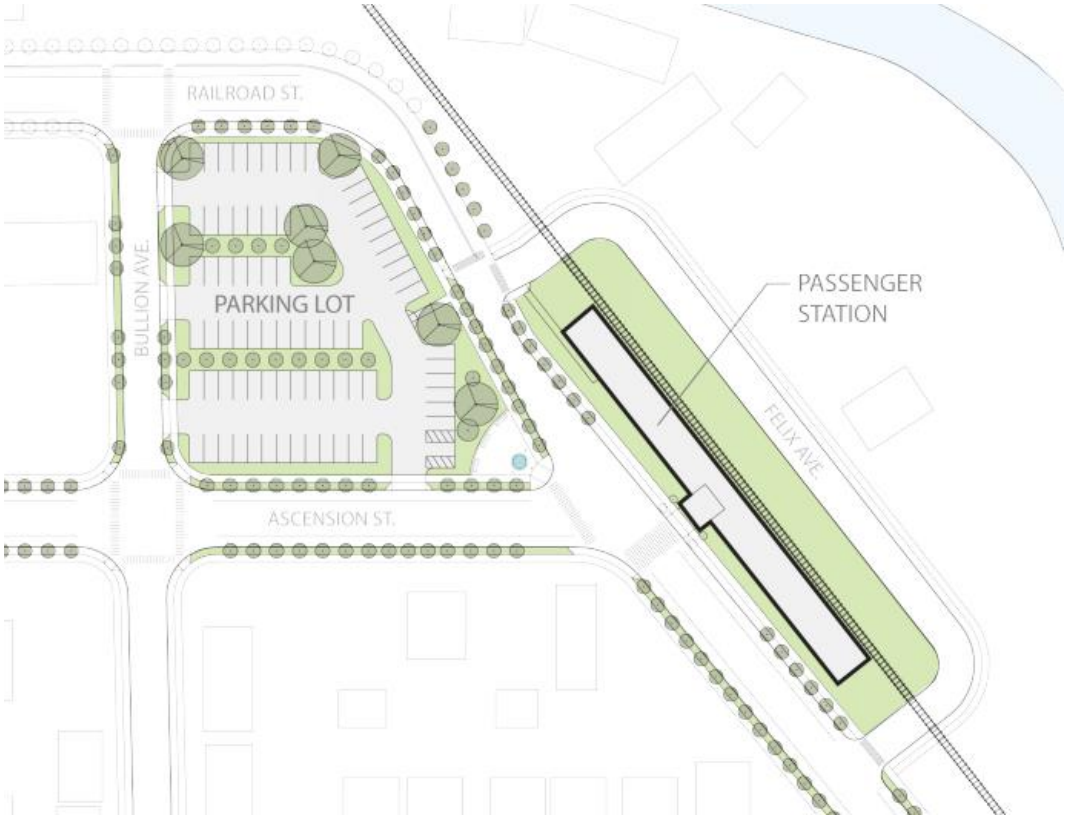



Figure 36 Proposed Station Site Layout

## 4.2 Parking

The most favorable site for maximum parking options is the block bounded by East Ascension, Bullion, and East Railroad streets. There is currently a shared parking lot which serves the DMV and other nearby shops and buildings. Improvements to the existing lot could expand the capacity to 78 stalls including handicap stalls. This would provide ample parking for the initial ridership and would accommodate flexible/shared parking purposes to serve other surrounding amenities.

As Figure 37 suggests, where practicable, existing tress could be saved and relocated within the proposed parking lot layout while additional street trees are proposed. The proposed layout provides areas for additional rain garden and bioswales to capture storm runoff from the parking and roadway pavements.

The geometry of the East Ascension and East Railroad facilitates the placement of a plaza at the corner opposite of the station. This plaza area could include a water feature, benches, flagpoles, and other amenities to further enhance the public landscape and amenities of the surrounding neighborhood.

Sustainability and resiliency options for site design include features that would address sustainable storm water management practices, such as the incorporation of pervious paving zones, adding rain gardens and bioswales, and otherwise maximizing the amount of pervious softscape on the site.

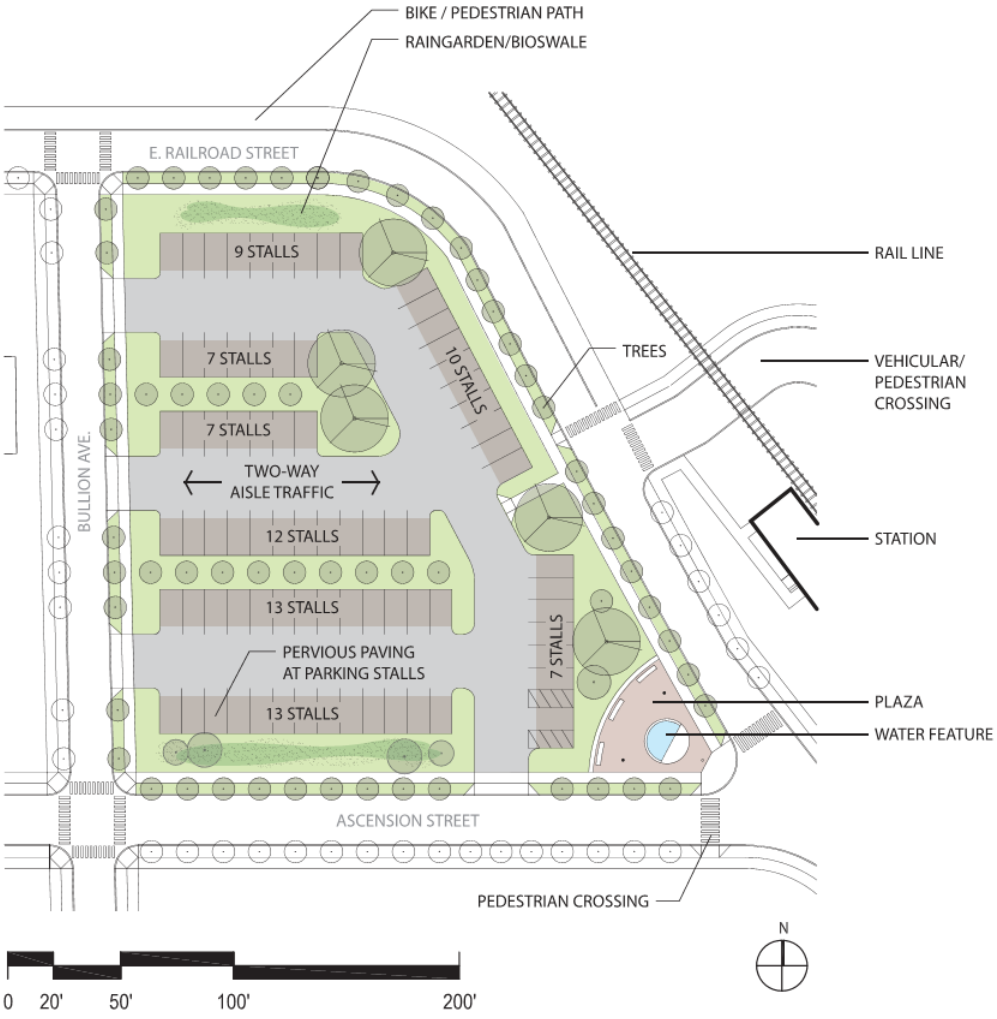



Figure 37 Station Site Parking Layout

## 4.3 Building / Platform Program

The planned station facility includes an open-air station platform with enclosed areas for ticketing, passenger waiting areas, staff breakroom, restroom facilities, mechanical, electrical, and janitorial uses. The metal roof is supported by multiple columns from the platform area. The main entryway and architectural feature at the station façade opens to a wide curb to the east of East Ascension Ave. This entryway provides a visual anchor when viewed from East Ascension Ave or East Railroad Ave to indicate to visitors that they have arrived at the landmark of the improved neighborhood.

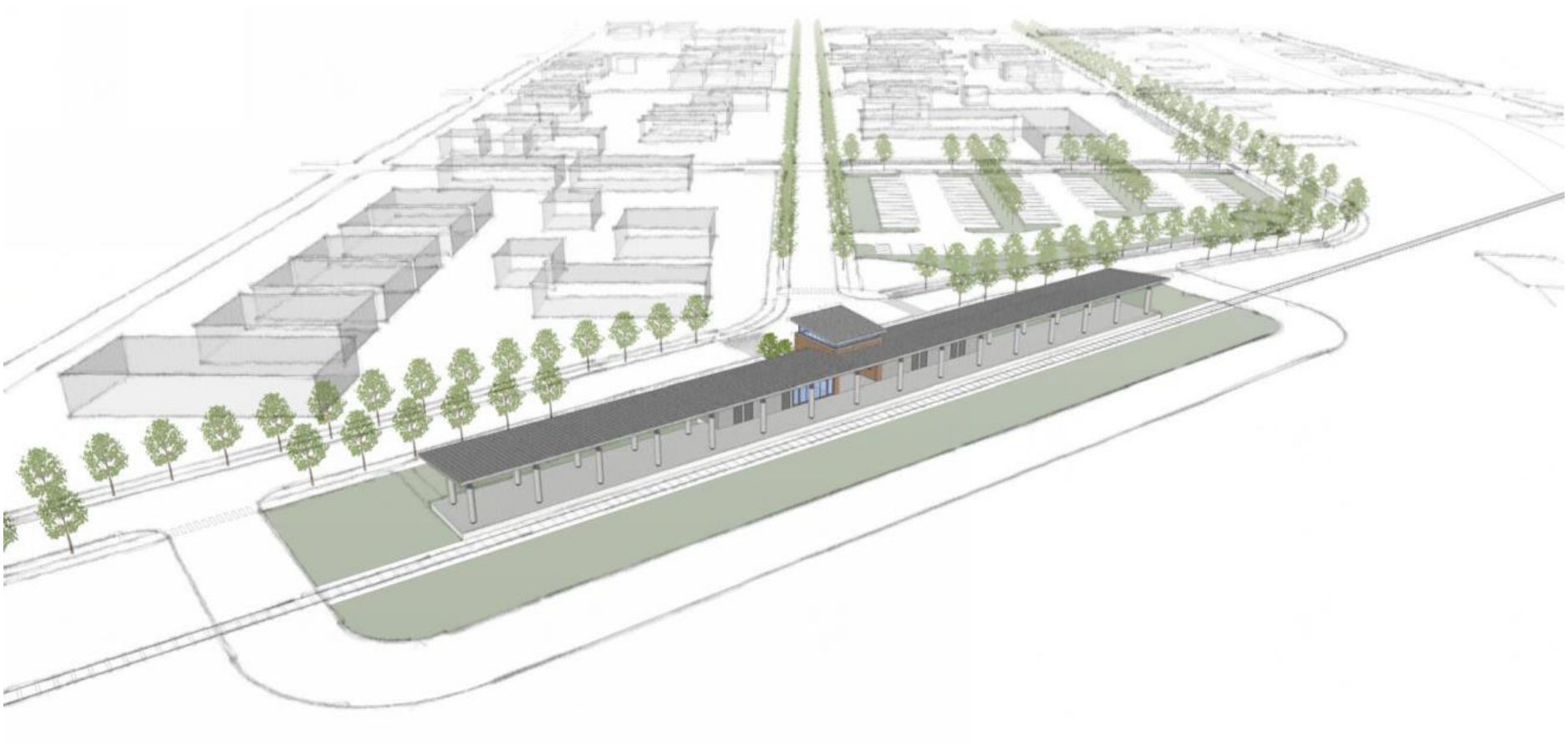


Figure 38 Proposed Gonzales Station Aerial View


Figure 39 Proposed Gonzales Station Entryway View

Figure 40 Proposed Gonzales Station Platform Area

Figure 41 Proposed Gonzales Station Platform and Waiting Areas

Based on guidelines from AREMA, Amtrak and other similar studies, preliminary, fundamental, and enhanced rooms and spaces were identified for the proposed station. The desired list of station spaces has been further clarified through a series of interactive discussions with the City of Gonzales regarding needs, wants, and plans for the future. Bringing this together, Table 7 presents the preliminary station space program for both the station building and the platforms.

Table 7 Station Program Spaces

| Program Space | Size (square feet) |
|---|---|
| Entry Breezeway/Vestibule | 400 SF |
| Ticketing | 100 SF |
| Waiting | 250 SF |
| Breakroom | 100 SF |
| Toilet Room (Male) | 100 SF |
| Toilet Room (Female) | 100 SF |
| Toilet Room (Family/Unisex) | 100 SF |
| Mechanical | 100 SF |
| Electrical/IT | 100 SF |
| Janitorial/Storage | 100 SF |
| Enclosed Area Subtotal | (1,500 SF) |
| Covered Platform Area | 6,200 SF |
| **Total Station Footprint** | **7,700 SF** |

As Table 7 shows, the total enclosed area of the station is 1,500 gross square feet (GSF), while the total covered exterior platform area is approximately 6,200 GSF. The combined total for gross building footprint is 7,700 GSF, not including any exterior site improvements that might take place adjacent to the building.

## 4.4 Floor Plan / Organizational Layout

Based on site analysis and preliminary planning studies, two main conceptual floor plan options emerged as strong possibilities for further consideration and development. In both options, the overall platform length is 300 linear feet and the main entry to the station would be located nearest to the intersection of Ascension and Railroad streets. Seating would be provided in an enclosed waiting area, and throughout the platform area as needed while passengers await the train's arrival. Site lighting would be provided throughout the platform area to maintain proper illumination levels at all hours.

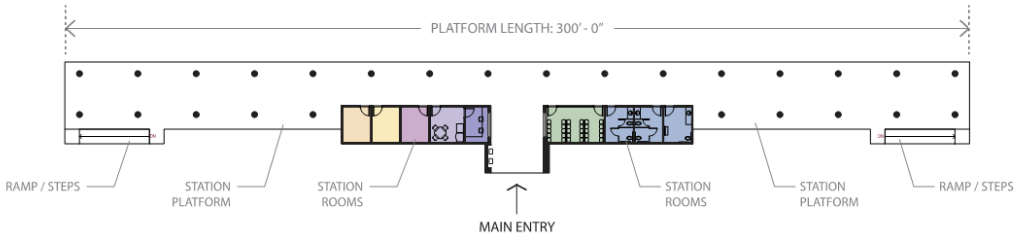



Figure 42 Station Floor Plan - Option A

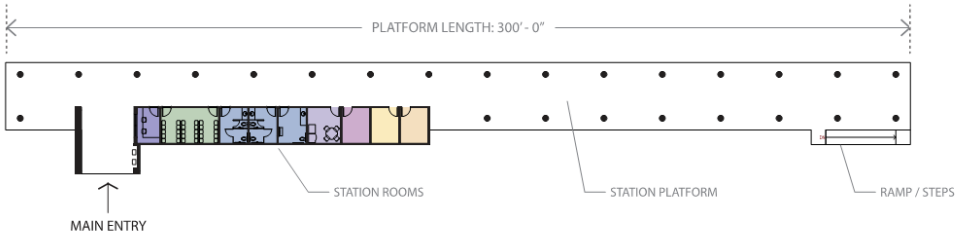



Figure 43 Station Layout - Option B

In Option A, shown in Figure 42, the main entrance is centered on the overall station floor plan, with secondary ramps/steps on both ends of the platform. This option would provide equal and shorter travel distances from the main entry to either end and would also allow for three means of egress as opposed to two in Option B.

Option B, shown in Figure 43, locates the main entry on one end nearest the existing Felix Ave crossing, with the station located south of the existing Felix Ave. A secondary ramp and steps would be located at the other end of the platform.

A closer look at the layout of the station spaces is shown in Figure 44 and Figure 45.

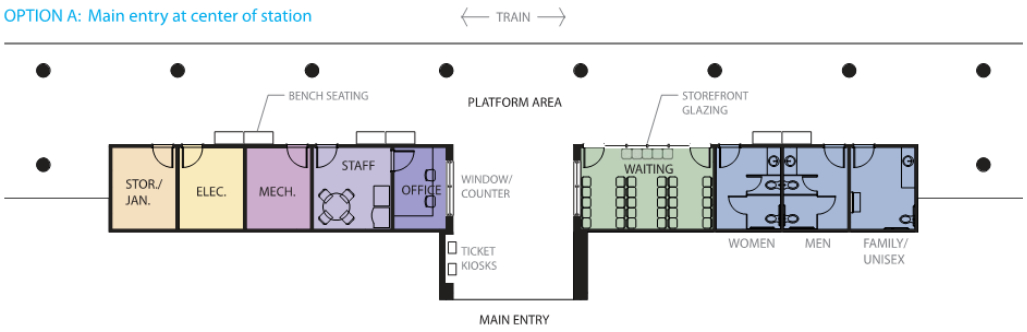



Figure 44 Functional Spaces - Option A

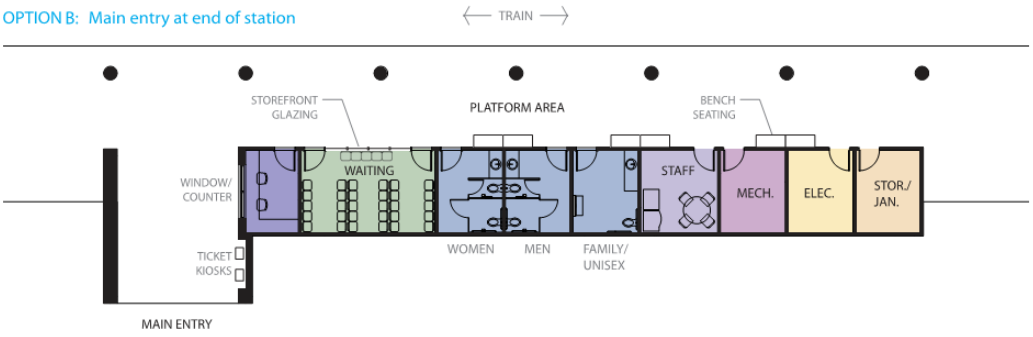



Figure 45 Functional Spaces - Option B

In Option A, because of the centralized location of the main entry space, the programmed areas are divided on either side. In this scenario, a ticketing window is proposed on the left with staff and "back of house" functions also on the left, while waiting and restroom areas are on the right when entering from the west.

In Option B, the configuration of enclosed spaces is grouped together in a single cluster to the right of the main entry.

Other than differences in the internal configuration of programmatic adjacencies, the main difference in terms of siting and overall massing for the building is that in Option A, the main entrance is centered on the station building, which shifts the location to the north and is illustrated in Figure 46.

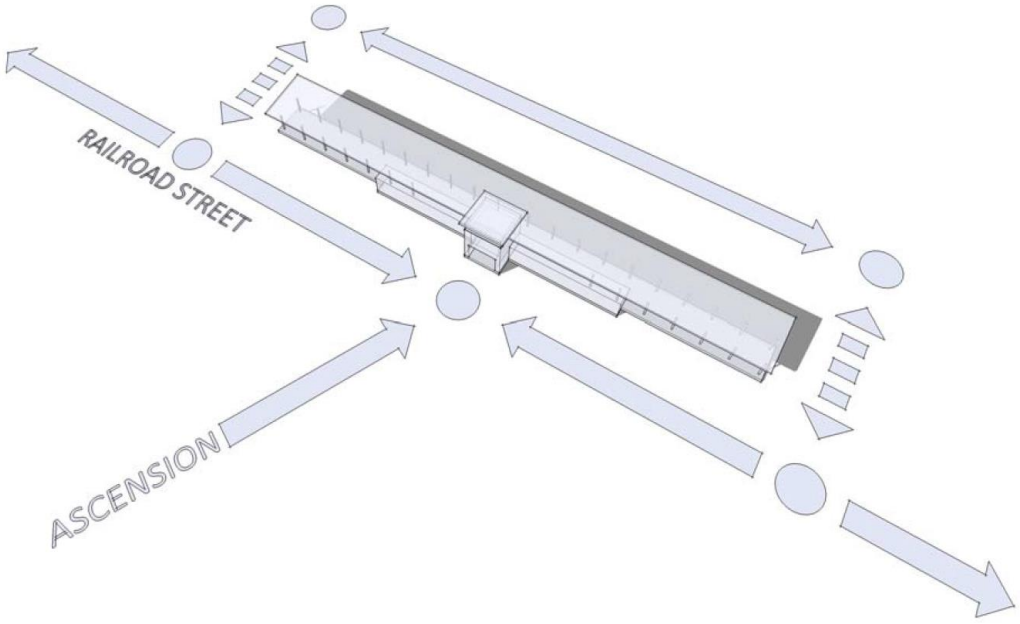



Figure 46 Station Access, Option A

The result of this shift in building placement is that the existing Felix Ave crossing would be relocated, and a potential second pedestrian or vehicular crossing could be added for continuous circulation on the "island" side of the station, depending on final use.

Pedestrian and vehicle access at each of the proposed crossings would include an ADA-compliant grade crossing that provides a flat surface and visibility for passengers and pedestrians to cross the tracks. The need for active warning devices should be studied further. Examples of the envisioned grade crossing are provided in Figure 47 and Figure 48.

Figure 47 Example Grade Crossing

Figure 48 Example Grade Crossing

The proposed station designated waiting area could accommodate up to 35 passengers and is intended to be used as an enclosed waiting area, especially during inclement weather conditions such as extreme heat, rain, or wind. This waiting area includes clear glass walls which allow for viewing of the station platform from the waiting area, and visibility from the ticketing office for added security. It is expected that most passengers will time their arrival in close proximity to train departure times. This waiting area could be locked when the station is not in-service or the station is not staffed.

Both suggested station layouts include a ticketing area. This area would accommodate a desk, ticket counter, and storage area. This area would have the ability to be locked when a station agent is not present. Option A provides a staff area where staff can handle administrative duties in a secured area. This area would include storage space for spare forms, a safe for money and ticket stock, an area for communications equipment, teleprinters, and computer reservations equipment.

A ticket vending machine area is also suggested, providing supplemental ticketing for peak hours or when the ticketing area remains unstaffed. Future passengers may be more reliant on smartphone technology for ticketing. It is expected that for an intercity station like Gonzales, and with increased adoption of smartphone technology, that ticket vending machines or e-ticketing will be more broadly used and could replace staffed ticket agent desks.

There are three restrooms being proposed in the program: one male, one female, and one designated as “family/unisex.” For male and female, there would be one ADA stall and one non-ADA stall or urinal, and one lavatory for handwashing. The family/unisex would also be ADA-compliant, and would have one toilet, one lavatory, and a baby changing station.

The main waiting area is the station platform itself, which is also where loading and unloading occurs. The platform is an open, covered area with space for seating, signage, vending machines, and trash receptacles. It would be amply lit during night time and low-light conditions, and would also have security lighting when not in use.

It is recommended for planning purposes that the platform be a low level platform for maximum flexibility in rolling stock selection, and to minimize clearance issues with existing freight operations. Stakeholders should make considerations for clearances, door locations, edge gaps, and car floor dimensions for the various proposed passenger rolling stock including intercity, freight and high-speed trains.

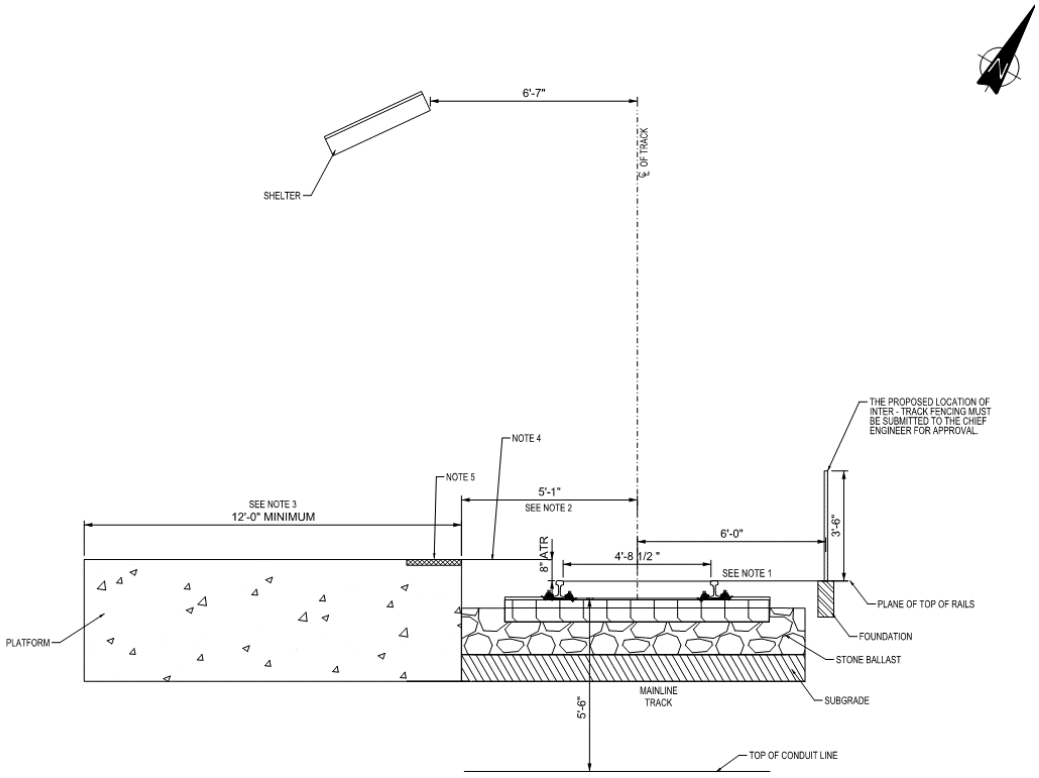



Figure 49 Low Side Platform Station Clearances

For preliminary planning, platform edge offset is recommended at 5'-1" from centerline of track, which represents Amtrak's standard offset for low level platforms and AREMA Volume 4, Chapter 28 Part 1, Figure 28-1-1 recommended platform offset for low level platforms [1]. This offset will allow for selection of multiple current Amtrak intercity and high-speed rolling stock car types and manufacturers. If a higher platform is selected, coordination with the operating railroads and verification of a larger offset may be required. Clearance rules of the operating railroad shall govern.

An eight inch above-top-of-rail (ATR) platform height is suggested and represents the least restrictive platform height to accommodate a variety of Amtrak passenger cars with either bi-level, low-level entry, or single-level designs while also providing the greatest clearance for freight equipment [1][3].

Intercity rail passenger service stations must be readily accessible to and useable by persons with disabilities. This includes a two-foot-wide tactile strip located along the edge of platform aiding those with limited sight to locate the platform edge. It is recommended that the minimum station platform width be greater than 12 feet [1][3]. Any new passenger stations and platforms are to comply with the various ADA requirements issued under 49 CFR Section 37 and 38 including their appendices. Depending on the specific type of railroad passenger cars to be used by Amtrak, space may be required on or adjacent to the platform to store a ramp or lift to provide those with disabilities access to the passenger train cars. All

public access points to the proposed station and its facilities from the public right-of-way must be ADA compliant.

Generally, platform lengths are based on car length, number of cars, and a margin for braking, per AREMA Volume 3 Chapter 6 Part 8.7.2 [1]. For planning purposes, 300 linear feet is recommended and will provide clearance for previously studied rolling stocks. Both proposed station designs allow for platform length extension without modifications to the existing designs. Longer platform lengths would accommodate continued growth of the service with longer train consists and additional cars, or alternative vehicle manufacturer train length makeups.

## 4.5 Signage

One of the more important elements of a safe, effective, intuitive, and enjoyable passenger experience is consistent information systems to provide prompts and assistance at each step of the journey. Final signage design is dependent upon stakeholder agreements, funding, and brand management practices. For the efforts of this Master Plan, example signage using Amtrak signage standards are provided. If the State decides to work with Amtrak to operate the service then it can take advantage of Amtrak's statutory access to operate passenger rail service on any freight railroad so long as it doesn't unreasonably impair freight rail operations and compensates the railroad for the incremental cost of that service. This partnership would provide a basis for a uniform information conveyance system per Amtrak standards to be used throughout the service route, including Gonzales Station. These signs would include Trailblazing signage on local highways or roadways, external signage including station identification and parking prompts, and internal signage that provides a cohesive design aesthetic for each step of the passengers' experience. This signage system would provide wayfinding public accommodations and public facilities that are accessible to people with disabilities.

The following images are provided as examples and do not represent final or suggested signage. Please reference Amtrak Graphic Signage Standards Manual for more information.

### 4.5.1 Exterior Signage

Exterior signage would provide identification of a clear path to the Station site, reassuring new passengers that they have arrived at the right location.


Figure 50 Amtrak A1a Sign Type, Side A Example [2]


Figure 51 Exterior Signage Example, Freestanding Site Identification Sign, C7 Sign Type[2]


Figure 52 Exterior Signage Example, Vehicular Directional, C6a Sign Type [2]


Figure 53 Exterior Signage Example, Trailblazer Signage, C19 Sign Type [2]

### 4.5.2 Interior Signage

Interior signage includes platform signage indicating the current station stop, and directional information including exits, ticketing, restricted areas, and restrooms, among others. Uniform signage would provide passengers with an impression of a united, understandable sequence of information.


Figure 54 Platform Signage Example, A1 Sign Type [2]


Figure 55 Platform Signage Example, A2 Sign Type [2]


Figure 56 Interior Signage Example, Overhead Directional, B2 Sign Type [2]


Figure 57 Interior Signage Example, Restroom Identifier, B17 Sign Type [2]


Figure 58 Interior Signage Example, Permanent Room Identifier, B21 Sign Type [2]

## 4.6 Views

The following figures present rendering that show eye level views of the proposed station design. A view from the Island is provided in Figure 59 which includes the platform waiting area and view of the glass façade for the seated waiting area. A view from south of the station from the East Ascension St sidewalk is provided in Figure 60. The front breezeway and entryway is illustrated in Figure 61. An aerial view of the station and surrounding context is presented in Figure 62.

Figure 59 Platform Waiting Area

Figure 60 View from E. Ascension St


Figure 61 Station Entryway

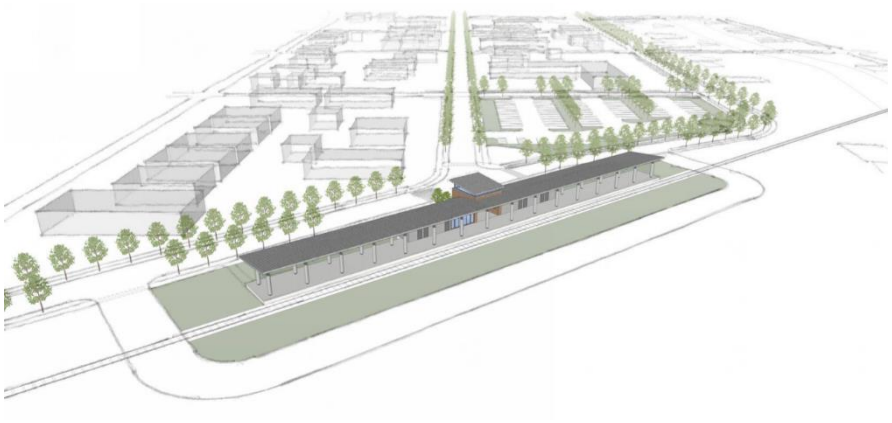


Figure 62 Aerial Station View with Surrounding Context

# 5 Implementation

The motivation for this work is the implementation of a new Gonzales passenger rail station. The estimated costs of this is presented in Appendix A. Of greater importance are the opportunities that arise for the City of Gonzales from this new station. A passenger rail station and a connected, civic hub in downtown Gonzales creates a great opportunity for quality of life improvements for the citizens of Gonzales, links to regional employment centers, higher-density growth and revitalization in downtown Gonzales, and ultimately a neighborhood that can serve as a point of pride in their community.

A phased implementation strategy has been developed that identifies potential site and area improvements and could benefit the station master planning. The intent of this list is to provide a "menu" for discussions between the project stakeholders. A phased implementation strategy will allow the City to clearly articulate a well-defined vision, with clear short-term and long-term objectives aimed at achieving specific, tangible goals.

A phased implementation strategy will allow the City to clearly and specifically define short-term actions, while keeping long-term goals accessible. The format of the implementation action items aims to identify early tangible goals, and establish a clear framework for achieving longer term goals in a coordinated structure with the recommended changes from the Gonzales Comprehensive Plan. Items are suggested as immediate, mid-term, and long-term targets, though project stakeholders may reorganize as priorities shift from further planning.

## 5.1 Implementation Action Items and Responsible Parties

Engineer's Opinion of Probable Construction Cost Estimates for infrastructure improvements are summarized in Table 8, which are supplemented with further details included in Appendix A. These descriptions and costs act as incremental steps towards the ultimate goal of a vibrant, walkable, connected neighborhood which serves as a transit entry point to Gonzales and as a focal point for community and public programming. These potential improvements can act as a basis for a phased implementation strategy which benefits station planning by determining potential uses, identifying partners, establishing budgetary targets, and identifying opportunities for further study. They support access to and from the proposed station as well as the goals of establishing a complimentary transit-oriented development zone surrounding the station. They offer the opportunity to further enhance ridership and community engagement. Given the early stage of this study, it is recognized that additional detail will emerge with further planning and design definition beyond the scope of this study. Arup recommends that the City should consider adopting the suggested land uses for areas surrounding the selected station site to formally support this plan.

The potential infrastructure improvements outlined herein encourage walkable environments complimentary to compact, urban development projected for this district. Streetscape enhancements are common to these types of environments to promote a user-friendly environment conducive to redevelopment. Allowances are therefore included in the estimates though they do not prescribe specific designs. Several plan sketches reflect the types of improvements that might occur based on cross sectional conditions and budget allowances. These sketches indicate a range of improvement levels that might vary through the district to lend context appropriate differentiation for certain streets and sub-areas. While this study does not mandate this approach, it should be recognized that this flexibility is reflected in the pricing.

The implementation pricing also reflects the opportunity to incorporate sustainable design features into the projects. A key area of opportunity is the use of permeable paving in concert with other recognized practices. This approach retains functionality while offering complimentary storm water management. State and Federal funding programs fluctuate but often incentivize initiatives such as Sustainability, Walkability and Multi-Modal Transportation (such as Trails and Complete Streets). These concepts are integrated in the improvements planning as a potential source for funding assistance. An allowance for stormwater collection is included with the station site and related parking lot site summaries. Similarly, provisions are included on a contingency basis for a similar approach to the infrastructure within roadway rights of ways. Collection could occur in the form of retention/detention basins, pending space availability, or structured storage tanks with associated pumps and filtration. These are formative concepts that warrant further development in subsequent design phases.

Land acquisitions are excluded from pricing estimates included in this section.

Table 8 Implantation Action Plans and Total Cost Estimates

| Item Number | Description | Potential Partners | Timeline | Estimated Total Cost |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | New River trails, paths, and parkways. Across the tracks from the station is a looming opportunity ripe with extraordinary potential: the possible scenario of re-programming the "island" as a park with green space, trails, pavilions, amphitheaters, playgrounds, and other amenities that would relate not only to the station, but to the riverfront trails and pedestrian-focused amenity of the riverfront potential itself. Limits are from Bryan Ave to Airline Hwy. | Louisiana Office of Parks (rec. trails grant), National Park Service, "island" businesses, Downtown Businesses | Near term | $13,626,000 |
| 2 | Improvements to the retail strip malls to engage the river. Currently, the strip of developments along New River faces Airline Highway, but with a bit of re-programming and renovation, these same buildings could engage traffic and active spaces along the river as well. This might invite new potential business uses, such as breweries and bistros, other hospitality developments, and more. Streets not included in this item, only parkway. | Ascension Economic Development, Chamber of Commerce, St. Theresa Church Camp | Long term | $4,416,000 |
| 3 | Mixed-use real estate development. Spin-off mixed-use developments that might strengthen or stimulate a link between Burnside, the rail, the river, and Airline Highway; this economic ripple effect sparked by the station could emulate what is happening in downtown New Orleans with the South Market District, albeit on a slightly smaller scale taking advantage of the tranquil and charming qualities of Gonzales. | Ascension Economic Development, Chamber of Commerce | Mid term | $15,223,000 |
| 4 | Road enhancements. Bike lanes, roundabouts, pedestrian thoroughfares, and even potentially removing the last portion of Railroad St to create a "mega-space" at the station for pedestrian activity are all potential modifications and improvements worth considering for the vehicular and pedestrian infrastructure near the station. | LaDOTD, Recreational Trails Program, Delta Regional Authority, Local Road Safety Program | Mid term | $67,364,000 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **5** | Road enhancements: Examine realignment of East Ascension St from corner of North Edenborne Ave to Airline Highway. Attempt to align Ascension to a more perpendicular crossing of KCS tracks. Considerations are to upgrade East Ascension St to a primary access route to the station from Airline Highway. | LaDOTD, Recreational Trails Program, Delta Regional Authority, Local Road Safety Program | Mid term | $8,946,000 |
| **6** | Bury overhead utilities on primarily west side of East Ascension and block facing East Railroad streets to provide unobstructed site lines to Gonzales Station | Ascension Utility Committee, EATEL, Cox Communications, Entergy | When other work is planned | $5,944,000 |
| **7** | Roadway improvements on East Ascension St from station site to North Burnside Ave to meet Gonzales Complete Streets. Includes intersection improvements, pedestrian crossings. This would encourage pedestrian streetscape access to retail, entertainment, and open space amenities to downtown Gonzales. | LaDOTD, Recreational Trails Program, Delta Regional Authority, Local Road Safety Program, Safe Routes to Public Places | Immediate | $6,893,000 |
| **8** | Roadway improvements to East Railroad St from Station site to North Felix Ave that consist of pedestrian thoroughfares with bike lanes both with direct access to the site. | LaDOTD, Recreational Trails Program, Delta Regional Authority, Local Road Safety Program, Safe Routes to Public Places | Immediate | $8,915,000 |
| **9** | Intersections improvements Burnside Ave & Railroad St that consist of paving, sidewalk, traffic poles, lighting, drainage, brick crosswalks and ADA pedestrian ramps. | St. Theresa Church, Dutch's Cleaners, Barber Shop, LaDOTD, Safe Routes to Public Places, Recreational Trails Program | Immediate | $1,470,000 |
| **10** | Intersections improvements Burnside Ave & Ascension St that consist of paving, sidewalk, traffic poles, lighting, drainage, brick crosswalks and ADA pedestrian ramps. | LaDOTD, Safe Routes to Public Places, Recreational Trails Program | Immediate | $1,641,000 |
| **11** | Intersections improvements Burnside Ave & Roosevelt St that consist of paving, sidewalk, traffic poles, lighting, drainage, brick crosswalks and ADA pedestrian ramps. | LaDOTD, Safe Routes to Public | Immediate | $1,484,000 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Places, Recreational Trails Program | | |
| **12** | Roadway improvements to East Roosevelt St from Station site/North Ascension St to North Burnside Ave that would provide pedestrian streetscape access directly to the site. | LaDOTD, Recreational Trails Program, Delta Regional Authority, Local Road Safety Program, Safe Routes to Public Places, Ascension Parish School Board | Immediate | $8,351,000 |
| **13** | Roadway improvements to Felix Ave that consist of realignment, KCS rail grade crossings, quiet zone / pavement marking enhancements, sidewalk and shared use path. Includes two rail roadway crossings. Make possible Quiet Zone enhancement (flashing lights and gates, four-quadrant gates, photo enforcement, constant warning time devices, signing, and ADA upgrades to sidewalks). For best results, this crossing should be clearly marked, and located adjacent to entrance/exit locations of the station building. | Kansas City Southern, Local Road Safety Program, LaDOTD Rail Coordinator | Mid term | $10,869,000 |
| **14** | Grade crossing and sidewalk improvements to East Ascension St and Edenborne Ave at KCS rail line crossing. Make possible Quiet Zone enhancement (flashing lights and gates, four-quadrant gates, photo enforcement, constant warning time devices, signing, and ADA upgrades to sidewalks). Would encourage pedestrian and bike access to retail, entertainment, and open space amenities near Airline Highway. | Kansas City Southern, Local Road Safety Program, LaDOTD Rail Coordinator | Mid term | $5,333,000 |
| **15** | Phased redevelopment of "island" area between KCS railway and New River at current site of Ratcliff's Florist and Ascension Insulation into dedicated park or specialty (experiential) retail/restaurant area utilizing river edge amenities to further encourage TOD to surrounding site and Airline Highway. | Businesses located on the island, Chamber of Commerce, Ascension Economic Development | Long term | $10,029,000 |
| **16** | Building redevelopment on west blocks from Bullion Ave to Burnside Ave. Utilizing Railroad St and Ascension St on same boundary to encourage TOD scaled development and adaptive reuse of blocks west of station to provide primary access to site. | Existing Downtown Businesses, Chamber of Commerce, Ascension Economic Development | Long term | $30,681,000 |
| **17** | Redevelop area between station site and North Bullion Ave into parking lot and "kiss and ride" area to serve station parking and surrounding businesses. (Figure 37) | Existing Downtown Businesses, City of Gonzales | Mid term | See Station Pricing |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **18** | Roadway, pedestrian thoroughfare, and parking improvements for Ascension St from Roosevelt St to 160 feet past KCS rail crossing and surrounding development. Includes grade crossing and sidewalk improvements to East Ascension St and Edenborne Ave at KCS rail line crossing. Make possible Quiet Zone enhancement (flashing lights and gates, four-quadrant gates, photo enforcement, constant warning time devices, signing, and ADA upgrades to sidewalks). | Existing Downtown Businesses, Kansas City Southern, City of Gonzales, Recreational Trails Program | Mid term | $10,507,000 |
| **19** | Dedicated fencing or screen wall on east side of existing KCS line near "Island.". This would prevent unnecessary pedestrian crossings at rail station by forcing access to dedicated crossing areas. | Safe Routes to Public Places, Local Road Safety Program | Mid term | $5,781,000 |
| **20** | New River "greenway" improvements for favorable edge for four commercial development sites that boarder the New River behind rail station and open space in vicinity to encourage connectivity and TOD. | Safe Routes to Public Places, Local Road Safety Program, Recreational Trails Program | Long term | $6,026,000 |
| **21** | New River "greenway" improvements for favorable edge for fifteen commercial development sites that boarder the New River between KCS rail and North Burnside Ave, and open space in vicinity to encourage connectivity and TOD. . | Recreational Trails Program, Downtown Businesses, St. Theresa Church | Long term | $6,838,000 |
| **22** | Park improvements to "Island" area behind proposed rail station, Signature Community Park Estimate | Safe Routes to Public Places, Local Road Safety Program, Recreational Trails Program | Long term | $10,349,000 |
| **23** | Park improvements to "Island" area behind proposed rail station, Trail Extension Estimate. Trails could be constructed without full redevelopment of the retail tract. | Safe Routes to Public Places, Local Road Safety Program, Recreational Trails Program | Long term | $4,806,000 |

A high-level implementation timeline is provided for reference in Figure 63 which establishes a baseline schedule and sequence for potential improvements. It is recognized that many options exist in Table 8 and that long-term improvements have many interdependencies. The City should prioritize infrastructure investments as part of a program which can be conveyed to stakeholders, engineers, financers, and constructors for further development. This is discussed further in the next section.

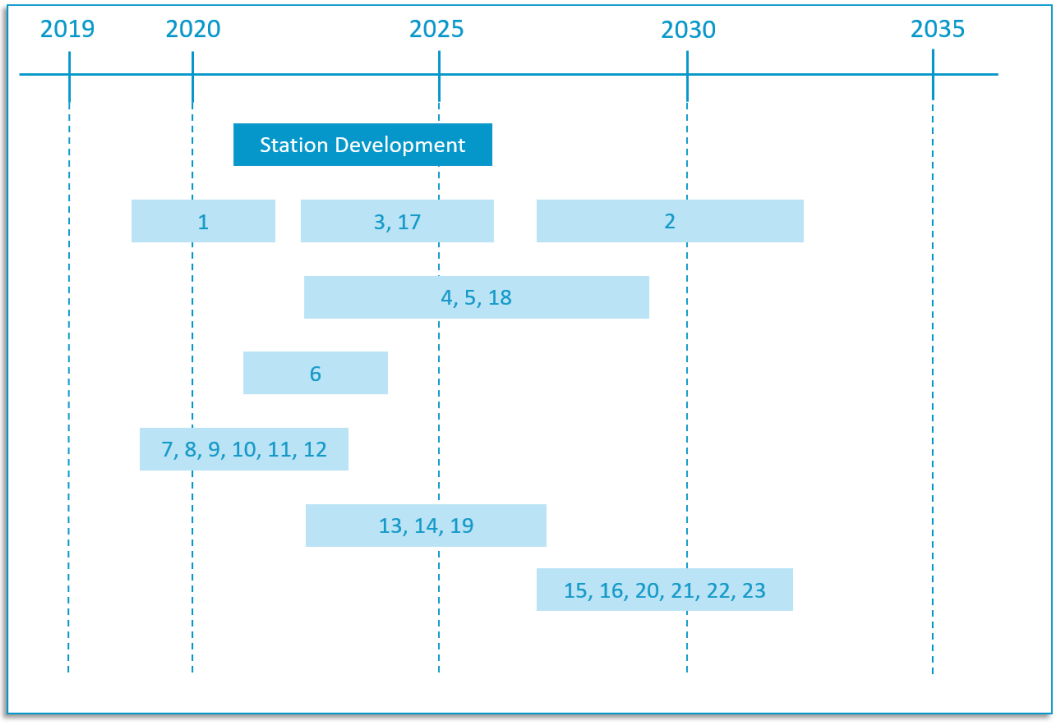



Figure 63 Gonzales Infrastructure Improvements Potential Timeline

## 5.2 Enabling Next Steps

The City of Gonzales is fortunate to have proactive City leadership that seeks continuous improvement and sustainable development for their citizens. This section describes some enabling next steps for consideration to strengthen the foundation upon which this Master Plan can be converted into a long-term program of works for the City.

Nearly all passenger rail projects are funded with either dedicated or combined funding at the Federal, State, or Local level. As a railway project, the Gonzales Station and associated track facilities will fall under governmental regulatory requirements and guidelines. These requirements mean the ultimate designer of record, the constructor, and owner must be aware of safety, hiring, Buy America requirements, local wage requirements, environmental regulations, accessibility, and many other requirements, laws, ordinances, and/or regulations.

Depending on the facility impacted, the station area and other improvements recommended in the implementation plan will require either self-funding by the City, or some form of match with Federal, State, or Parish funds. In some cases, there may be opportunities for Public Private Partnerships, provided the legislation allows such for those specific investments, thus allowing the City to leverage their investments.

### 5.2.1 Regulatory Process

Before federal funds can be used for construction of the BR-NO corridor, the recommended National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process must be completed. The City of Gonzales will also need to consider the NEPA process to apply for and utilize federal funds for construction of associated projects.

NEPA establishes the policies and framework to conduct environmental reviews to consider the potential impacts on the environment by the proposed actions. The output of this work will be either an Environmental Assessment (EA) or an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), both of which are based on a Purpose and Need for the project. The EA is the least intensive work product of the two and results in a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) being issued by the Lead Agency. The EIS is a more intensive work product, and results in a Record of Decision (ROD) being issued by the Lead Agency. In this project, the Lead Agency for the NEPA process will likely be the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), and there is the possibility that the Surface Transportation Board (STB) could also be involved given that the existing track and corridor is part of the national system of freight railroad interchange.

In the spirit of completeness, some explanation of the NEPA process is provided. The purpose of an EA is to provide a primary document to communicate to the Lead Agency and the public the potential environmental consequences of proposed alternatives, document the analysis, and make this information available

to the public for comment prior to implementation. An EA will facilitate the review of a proposed project by federal, state, and local agencies and the general public.

NEPA requires Federal agencies to prepare environmental impact statements (EIS) for major Federal actions that significantly affect the quality of the human environment. An EIS is a full disclosure document that details the process through which a transportation project was developed, includes consideration of a range of reasonable alternatives, analyzes the potential impacts resulting from the alternatives, and demonstrates compliance with other applicable environmental laws and executive orders.

Once the basic route is selected as a preferred alternative, there will be a need for further detailed analysis of the rail corridor (track infrastructure, signaling, bridges, etc.) to determine what improvements, alterations need to be made to support the proposed intercity passenger rail service operating on the existing freight line. Once this analysis is completed, the FRA can authorize the expenditure of funds for construction activities along the route.

Impacts to wetlands and waterways will involve the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), and because of proximity to the New River, it is likely that a 404 Permit Application will be required. The types of 404 Permit are beyond the scope of this document, but vary depending on intensity of potential impact. Also, if any facilities under the jurisdiction of the USACE are impacted, a 408 permit will be required.

From the perspective of the City of Gonzales, it is anticipated that work will need to be done to determine which options (or projects) of the implementation plan would be directly connected to the Purpose and Need of the BR-NO Corridor Project NEPA process, versus those projects which would not apply. For example, the new Gonzales Station would most likely be a part of the BR-NO Corridor Project EIS or EA because it is specific to the project's Purpose and Need. However, roadway reconfigurations that are implemented by the City of Gonzales and are not a direct result of the BR-NO project impacts would likely not fall into that project's NEPA process.

Two aspects of this need to be considered, with the first being to identify what falls within the BR-NO project NEPA domain. Once that is known, it would be necessary to determine if any of the other works required following the NEPA process, and if so, determining whether a full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or an Environmental Assessment is required (EA), or neither. For the smaller scopes, it is likely that an EA would be sufficient. Similarly, for projects outside the BR-NO scope, but with impacts to wetlands and waterways, coordination by the City of Gonzales with the USACE will likely be required.

A very useful activity for the City of Gonzales to plan for as they move forward with the overall program of works is to develop a permits and approvals roadmap. This will help them identify all regulatory hurdles they will need to overcome to

implement the program. For example, there might be endangered species which require multi-year assessments. It is important that these be timed correctly to coordinate with the design development, NEPA/USACE processes, and funding/financing of the program.

### 5.2.2 Stakeholder Outreach

The major program of works arising from the BR-NO project, and the optional additional projects identified in the implementation plan will involve many stakeholders. It is to everyone's benefit to have as many stakeholders on-board with the program as possible, and sharing in its positive outcomes.

The City of Gonzalez will likely want to implement a formalized stakeholder outreach program to clearly articulate the program of work, the impacts, the benefits, a clearly defined vision of the tangible outcomes, and the goals and objectives that will be achieved.

While not exhaustive, the following is a list of stakeholders anticipated to be a part of the overall program of works. Additional stakeholders would likely arise during the program development.

- Federal Railroad Administration (FRA)
- Surface Transportation Board (STB)
- United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)
- Kansas City Southern
- State of Louisiana
- Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (LaDOTD)
- Ascension Parish
- Ascension Economic Development
- Gonzales Chamber of Commerce (and Local Businesses)
- Delta Regional Authority
- Recreational Trails Program
- Local Road Safety Program
- Ascension Utility Committee
- EATEL
- Cox Communications
- Entergy
- Safe Routes to Public Places
- St. Theresa Church Camp

- Long-Term Development Program

### 5.2.3 Creating a Program

A number of potential implementation options are presented in this Master Plan. Each of these could be a project in and of itself. The City will want to study each of these, and prioritize them, considering what projects are most complimentary. Further work will be needed to define and develop each of the projects selected, and combine these projects into a coherent program of works that can be presented to the stakeholders, and ultimately, the engineering, finance, and construction community for procurement and delivery.

Because of the wide variety of options, the program will likely need to be phased into multiple projects, with the different projects being procured with different delivery methods to make individual options successful.

Historically, successful programs of work have these things in common:

- Commitment
- Public Engagement
- Clear Initial Strategic Decisions
- Well Understood Objectives and Risk
- Financial Objectives
- Leadership

In the early stages of the process, the City of Gonzales should assess its institutional capacity to act as a partner. The level of commitment from the City will play a major role in the success of the program, and specifically, in attracting private investment should that be desired or necessary.

The City needs to create a Public Vision. The vision for the program should be the result of a consensus-building process that identifies the opportunities, objectives, and ultimate goals for the community. The City leadership should consider and establish its long-range public interest goals and resolve any conflicts that it might have for the specific parts of the overall program of works. It is essential that the overall development strategy is described both verbally and graphically to ensure that the public, generally, and those stakeholders directly impacted understand the program.

The ultimate success of a project or program can usually be traced back to the client's initial strategic decisions. The scale and timing of the project, the budget, the procurement strategy, and the arrangements for financing are among the key issues that set the framework for success.

Some of the options presented in the implementation plan may require private investment. It is no secret that the private sector does not like unclear objectives

or unbalanced risk ownership. For this reason, the City should understand and clearly articulate their key objectives and priorities. These will form the basis of the business case to attract private sector investment. In fact, one could argue that this is a worthwhile discipline regardless of private sector involvement, and will facility all stakeholder buy-in.

The objectives of the City, and its ability to successfully deliver the drafting, negotiation, and control of contracts in a way that the private sector will find acceptable, particularly in relation to the risk profile on offers will be important. The financial objectives must also be clear from the outset. Often in municipal projects they are a lower priority over other politically driven imperatives. The private sector will become involved when the risk management of the project allows a reasonable return on investment from the private market investments, and the return on investment is commensurate with the level of risk.

The City will need to take a clear leadership role in the program. Having an appointed champion can be very affective to push the project all the way until it is granted and reaches funding. They should be trusted by the City's senior leadership, respected by the community, and be sufficiently empowered to make tactical decisions in a timely manner.

The champion should work closely with the stakeholders to create a broad base of support. They should be responsible for providing clear and concise communications to the City's senior leadership and the stakeholders. By doing this they can help to ensure that the program approvals are obtained early in the process, and reduce the risk of process derailment late in the game when parties have incurred significant costs.

Most successful economic development projects arise from partnerships that are the result of a refined selection process that includes verification of the technical and financial capability of the private partner. A private partner can do much more than bring money to the table. They can bring innovation, cost control, efficiency gains and better operational knowledge and flexibility.

When the private sector is involved, in addition to private capital, the project will receive a sharp business focus and new expertise. This should be welcomed and given today's economic constraints may be the best way for the City to accomplish the wider implementation program presented in this Master Plan.

The Gonzales Station Master Plan provides an exciting idea of what can be. The entire program would be transformational for the City of Gonzales, and become a key part of a broader, regional initiatives to improve mobility, accessibility, and economic development in the City and along the BR-NO corridor. Exciting times are ahead for the City of Gonzales, and Ascension Parish.

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