

City Hall not Permitting and Development Center

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Appropriate meeting place?

City Hall

- Symbol of democracy and political discussion
- Landmark building
- Downtown (centrally located)
- Conveys gravitas
- Designed for public engagement
- Free speech zone
- Land use & other commissions have met here since City Hall opened
- Comfortable
- Easy for public to see commissioners and for commissioners to see public
- Keep tab of meetings from lobby

Permitting and Development Center

- Where developers get permits
- Is developer-focused
- Result of city's goal of "one-stop permitting" push
- Class A office building
- Multi-purpose room with movable tables and stacking chairs
- For the convenience of applicants and not the commissioners or the public

City Hall is designed for public engagement



Reflecting Austin's natural beauty, [Austin City Hall](#) is a unique landmark gateway to Austin City government. The building and plaza serve as a gathering place for public discourse and community collaboration with informality, friendliness, environmental sensitivity and innovative technology.

Built of Texas limestone and sitting on the site of a once-raucous 19th Century bordello district, Austin's copper-clad City Hall is as unique as the community it serves.

The following key concepts were integrated into the design:

- Reflects Austin's culture
- Accessibility
- Unique to Downtown
- Playful and unconventional
- Environmental focus
- Technology focus
- Iconic, like the Capitol
- Government transparency

Permitting and Development Center is designed for the benefit of Development customers

From June 29, 2021 memo to the City Council:

The PDC brings together resources and expertise from multiple City departments which provide permitting and development services for our community. The new facility is designed to provide a seamless development process, all in one place, for residential and commercial customers and special events. All pertinent department representatives will be co-located at the PDC.

- *“Seamless development process”*
- *States explicitly that PDC is for the development customer*
- *Did not mention that land use commissions would move to the PDC*

Safety and Security at City Hall

- Metal detectors and security outside chambers at all times
- Secure parking
- Outdoor lighting
- Bus stops are busiest in city
- Downtown full of pedestrians
- Many businesses open late
- Can get a late dinner within walking distance

View from front and back entrances to the PDC



The entrance *with* the signs

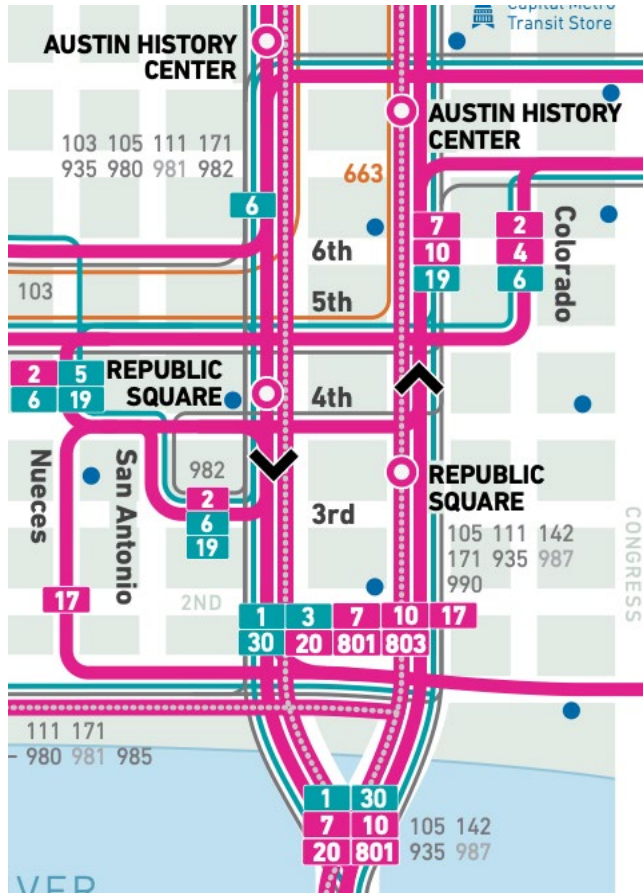


No lighting
No sidewalks
No cars
No people

Moving meetings further away from south Austin

- More difficult for residents, applicants and volunteer commissioners
- Less bus service
- Force south Austinites to travel with rush hour traffic when and after reach downtown
- Until reach City Hall generally travelling against traffic
- I-35 is not a viable route at 6 pm
- Not as many direct roads from south
- South Austinites must already contend with crossing one of five downtown bridges to reach City Hall; travelling northward would make the commute worse
- A question of equity

City Hall is at the center of transit



Republic Square SB stop .2 miles away

Lavaca NB stop .2 miles away

1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 17, 19, 20, 30, 801, 803

Eight high-frequency bus routes

Busiest bus stops in the city

Downtown is well lit and active even late at night

Highland Mall is *not* a transit center



Bus stops on Airport & Highland Mall Blvd, **.6 miles & .5 miles away**; Red Line **.6 mile** walk

7, 324, 337, 350

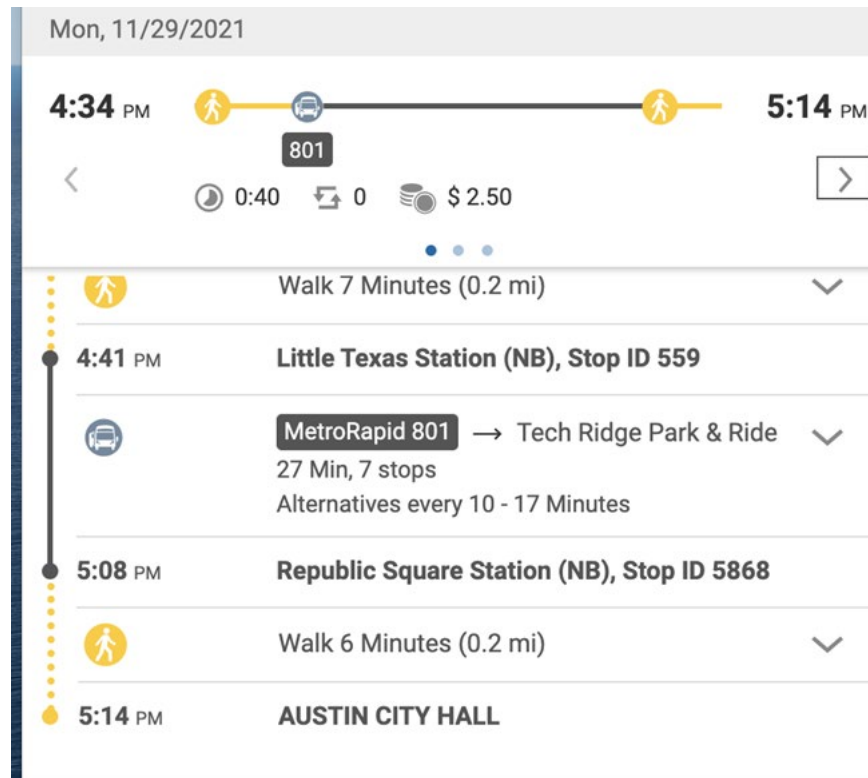
Two high-frequency bus routes



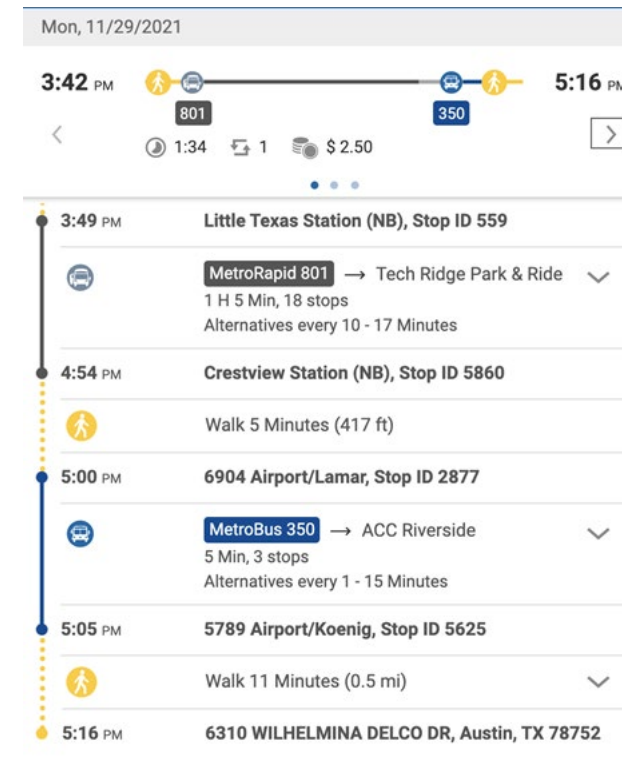
Bus stops are dark and deserted

Example D2 bus ride

City Hall – 40 minutes, no transfer



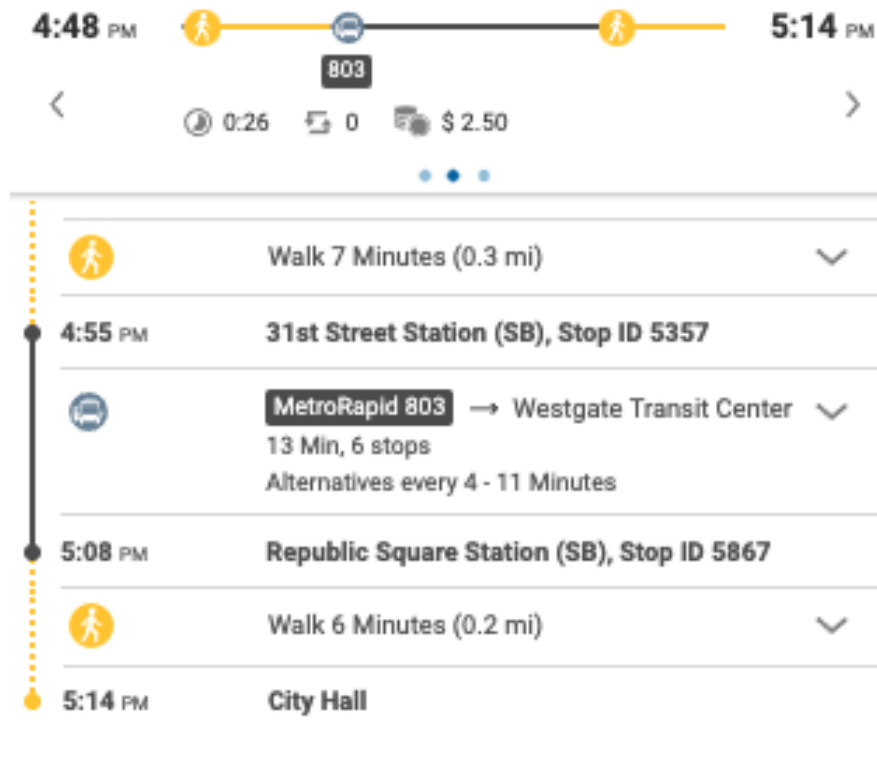
PDC – 94 minutes, one transfer*



* Must walk 5 mins. from one bus stop to another, including crossing Lamar

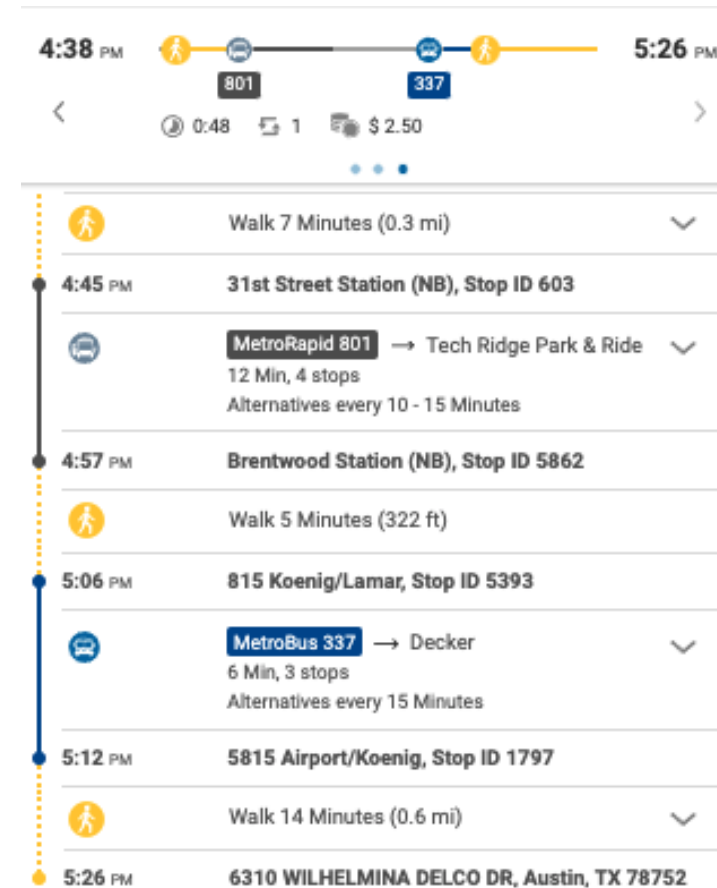
My bus ride

City Hall – 26 minutes, no transfer



I can take the 801, 803, 1, 3, or 19 to Republic Square. All are one seat rides and there is usually only a brief wait in either direction.

PDC – 48 minutes, one transfer*



* Must walk 5 mins. from one bus stop to another, including crossing Koenig

Personal safety at risk



Parking lot lit by adjacent
Holiday Inn

Bus riders must walk past this dimly lit construction site and vacant parking lots with no sidewalks, no lighting, and no other pedestrians



City rationale for move to PDC

(October 19, 2021)

- Staff at PDC – although this is NOT true.
Staff for ZAP meetings is at 11th Street and One Texas Center locations
- **Lots of parking!**

room for 351-person occi
969-parking space garage
or to February 2022 Rather

- (Yet parking is not as accessible because in an adjacent building)
- Does not acknowledge inconvenience to public, applicants, or commissioners
- Uses Zucker Report even though the
Zucker report did not suggest moving commission meetings

PDC multi-purpose room

Not designed for public hearings



No dais, awkward layout, movable tables and stackable chairs.

Computers are not available to commissioners to look at case materials

Used as a polling place for the last election

Does the city really expect the public, staff, applicants and commissioners to sit for hours on these stackable chairs?



Moving meetings to PDC sends the wrong message about who should participate

- Location is for the benefit of applicants without consideration of the public or volunteer commissioners
- Transit dependent will have a much harder time participating
- Residents south of the river will have a harder time participating
- Forces people to rely on cars
- Voters just approved transit improvements, yet city wants to move commission meetings to less transit-accessible location with lots of parking

Says Austin not serious about equity or fighting climate change

Land Use Commissions

- Serve the public & council members
- Forum for community input
- Independent body
- Unpaid volunteers
- *Public hearings are what we do*



Permitting & Development Center

- Serves the development customer
- “One-stop shop”
- Paid city staff
- *Permitting is what PDC does*

**Schedule an
Appointment**



From PDC webpage

Recommendation

Change bylaws of the Land Use Commissions to direct City Clerk to schedule Land Use Commissions to meet at City Hall

Use City Hall for boards and commissions with high public participation

Give priority to sovereign boards

Use alternative transit-friendly locations as needed

Eventually, as Highland Mall develops and transit improves, this site may become a more desirable location

Thank you!