



## MEMO

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**TO:** NWARPC Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)  
**FROM:** NWARPC Staff  
**DATE:** February 12, 2026  
**RE:** Transit Alternatives Study (TAS) - Approval Process & Public Comments

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### BACKGROUND

The Transit Alternatives Study (TAS) was developed by the Northwest Arkansas Regional Planning Commission (NWARPC) and its planning partners to evaluate high-capacity transit options that improve north-south mobility and connectivity within the region's Urban Core. The study focuses on identifying a feasible, cost-effective rapid transit alternative that best meets the long-term needs of residents, employees, and visitors.

The TAS evaluates Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), Light Rail Transit (LRT), and Commuter Rail along a general north-south corridor serving Bentonville, Rogers, Lowell, Springdale, and Fayetteville. Benton and Washington Counties, the primary study area, have experienced sustained population and employment growth over the past decade, with continued growth anticipated. This growth has contributed to increasing congestion on regional roadways and highways.

A central objective of the TAS is to assess transit alternatives that expand mobility options and improve system performance by shifting a portion of trips from congested roadways to a high-frequency, high-capacity transit service. Each alternative is evaluated based on capital costs, operations and maintenance costs, forecasted ridership, environmental impacts, land use benefits, demographics and socioeconomic benefits.

The study also assesses how each alternative aligns with Federal Transit Administration (FTA) requirements and thresholds, particularly for discretionary funding programs such as Small Starts. The preferred alternative is intended to position the region competitively for USDOT funding by demonstrating strong cost-effectiveness, ridership potential, and integration with existing and planned transportation systems, including a robust regional fixed-route bus network.

Finally, the TAS considers the long-term implementation framework, including the identification of new, dedicated regional transportation funding sources. Establishing sustainable funding is critical to supporting phased implementation, coordinated regional delivery, and long-term operation of high-capacity transit investments.

The study can be found at: [www.nwarpc.org/transit/transportation-alternatives-analysis-study/](http://www.nwarpc.org/transit/transportation-alternatives-analysis-study/).

### ENGAGEMENT & NOTIFICATION SCHEDULE

The following public engagement and notification schedule was completed in compliance with the requirements of the NWARPC Public Participation Plan (PPP) for the draft TAS:

- Public open house events were held to solicit input on the TAS on April 9, 2025, at the Fayetteville Public Library and April 10, 2025, at the Bentonville Public Library. Spanish and Marshallese Interpreters were available at the April 9 Open House Event.

- A final public open house event was held to solicit feedback on the TAS on December 8, 2025, at the Jones Center in Springdale. Spanish and Marshallese interpreters were available.
- The Study was presented by NWARPC Staff and consultant, WSP to the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) for review at the Thursday, January 22, 2026, meeting. TAC voted to recommend the draft Study for public comment.
- Public notification pertaining to the public comment period were published in the *NWA Democrat Gazette* on Sunday, January 4, 2026, in the Spanish-language *La Prensa Libre* on Wednesday, January 7, 2026, in the *McDonald County Press* on Thursday, January 8, 2026, and online at [www.nwarpc.org/public-notifications/](http://www.nwarpc.org/public-notifications/) and [www.nwarpc.org/transit/transportation-alternatives-analysis-study/](http://www.nwarpc.org/transit/transportation-alternatives-analysis-study/).
- The public comment period was held from Friday, January 16, 2026, through Friday, January 30, 2026. Written comments were encouraged via email or through the comments tab online, [www.nwarpc.org/contact/](http://www.nwarpc.org/contact/).

## SUMMARY AND DISPOSITION OF PUBLIC COMMENTS

The TAC made one formal amendment to the study and one general comment. Both are summarized below. Additionally, the public comment period for the study concluded Friday, January 30, 2026. Public comments were received from three individuals and are also summarized below. Verbatim comments are available upon request.

*Note: Any technical suggestions, typos/scrivener errors, and comments on formatting recommendations that have been received are being reviewed for concurrence and implemented as applicable.*

<b>TAC AMENDMENT</b>	<b>RESPONSE/ACTION</b>
Need to modify the BRT alignment maps to show the studied alignments are conceptual rather than final.	NWARPC Staff updated the BRT alignment maps by adding a dashed lines around areas for future alignment refinement and a note stating “All alignments for the BRT locally preferred alternative are conceptual and may be refined in a future phase of detailed planning”
<b>TAC COMMENT</b>	<b>RESPONSE / ACTION</b>
The BRT should move forward as one phase, rather than the recommended two-phase approach. The two-phase approach would see a northern and southern segment built first and then, at a later date, the two ends would be connected by a middle segment.	NWARPC Staff and WSP clarified language in the TAS that the BRT may be implemented all at once provided sufficient funding can be secured. Doing so could potentially shorten the span of development and reduce the costs of professional services.
<b>PUBLIC COMMENT THEMES</b>	<b>RESPONSE/ACTION</b>
Need to show projected ridership table for Bus Rapid Transit, Light Rail, and Commuter Rail alternatives.	NWARPC inserted ridership table generated from the NWARPC travel demand model that shows projected ridership for each of the three modes on page 136.

	<p>NWARPC sent the commentor a copy of the ridership table.</p>
<p>Need to publish appendices, explain why the commuter rail score changed from Oct 2025 to Jan 2026, address concerns about language access and the length of the public comment period.</p>	<p>NWARPC has:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Published appendices.</li> <li>2. Sent a written explanation regarding the commuter rail scoring change. The score was changed due to increasing the capture area for that alternative so that it was fairly evaluated.</li> <li>3. Confirmed the NWARPC Limited English Proficiency (LEP) policy was followed.</li> <li>4. Confirmed the Public Participation Plan (PPP) was followed.</li> </ol>
<p>Need to pursue light rail even though it is cost prohibitive.</p>	<p>The TAS identifies cost-effectiveness as a key screening criterion for evaluating the three modes. This includes both initial capital costs to enable the services and the annual operating and maintenance costs to keep the service running.</p>