



Legislation Text

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Staff Report for the Resolution Designating the City of San Leandro's Locally Preferred Alternative for the AC Transit East Bay Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Project

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As a result of the July 9, 2012 Council Work Session, staff will forward to Council for approval Option 2 (see Exhibit 2) as the City of San Leandro's Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) for the AC Transit East Bay Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Project, which will read as follows:

As introduced by AC Transit at the May 31, 2012 joint City - AC Transit meeting, a modified LPA that eliminates elements of the original LPA that will end the dedicated lanes just south of Broadmoor Boulevard and will relocate stations to shorten the walking distances to senior housing locations, as shown in the attached Exhibit 2. This LPA shall include the following conditions:

- In conjunction with the commencement of the BRT service, AC Transit shall offer a frequent and continuous service on East 14th Street that allows riders to travel between the northern and southern San Leandro borders without transferring buses.
- Prior to the commencement of the BRT Service, AC Transit shall explore and implement ideas that create a "Complete Transit Experience" for San Leandro citizens that include a more encompassing and frequent east-west service that allows transit users to reach locations such as BART, BRT, shopping, and work centers in a convenient and timely manner.
- AC Transit shall, as soon as possible, explore the means and feasibility of extending BRT along the length of East 14th Street to Bay Fair BART, insuring the flexibility of adding this segment in the future.
- AC Transit shall make accommodations for a southbound East 14th Street left turn to eastbound Broadmoor Boulevard.

BACKGROUND

The Alameda-Contra Costa Transit District (AC Transit) East Bay Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Project is proposed to provide high quality, fast, and frequent express bus service along a 14-mile long corridor between downtown Berkeley at the northern end, through downtown Oakland to San Leandro at the southern end. In San Leandro, the alignment runs along East 14th Street to Davis Street, then onto San Leandro Boulevard to the San Leandro BART Station. Five (5) of the 32 BRT stations are within San Leandro, with one of them located in the median and the remaining as curbside extensions or sidewalk plazas with level station boarding and ticket stations. Basic features of the proposed BRT system include transit priority at all signalized intersections, new passenger stations with ticket vending machines, substantial shelters, and a combination of mixed-flow and dedicated travel lanes

throughout the proposed alignment.

AC Transit has been planning this project since the completion of an Alternative Mode Analysis in 1993, which identified priority corridors and candidate technologies for major transit investments that would provide cost effective methods to serve the East Bay Corridor's ridership. From 1999 to 2002, AC Transit conducted a Major Investment Study (MIS) of the Berkeley/Oakland/San Leandro corridor to examine alternatives for improved transit service. AC Transit prepared the MIS with input and guidance from key stakeholder agencies, elected officials, community leaders, and the general public. The result of the MIS was that AC Transit identified BRT as the preferred alternative with the understanding that light-rail transit (LRT) should be considered as a long-term goal. BRT was selected because it provided high-capacity express operation along dedicated lanes on existing roadways, provided many of the same features of LRT, and would attract a large number of new riders at a much lower cost with fewer traffic, parking, and construction impacts than LRT. Bus Rapid Transit is a transportation system that operates like a LRT, but uses buses instead of rail vehicles.

In 2003, AC Transit initiated the CEQA process for BRT. In May 2007, a Draft EIS/EIR (DEIS/DEIR) was released for public review. The DEIS/DEIR evaluated four transit improvement alternatives for BRT. The City of San Leandro, along with more than 200 agencies, individuals, and organizations, provided review comments on the draft document, resulting in more than 1,000 individual comments. At that time, the City was asked to provide a Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) for the project. In the fall of 2009, a series of public meetings were held in San Leandro to determine public support and to receive comments on BRT. In May of 2010, the City of San Leandro, by Council Resolution No. 2010-054, forwarded its LPA to AC Transit. San Leandro identified an alternative that has BRT terminating at the Downtown San Leandro BART Station with dedicated bus lanes from the north city limit to Georgia Way, with local service provided by traditional or express bus service from the Downtown San Leandro BART Station to the Bay Fair BART Station. The City also requested that AC Transit evaluate extending BRT to the Bay Fair BART station in the Final EIS/EIR so that the impact would be known for the entire project.

The AC Transit Board of Directors considered the recommendations of each city and selected an LPA on June 23, 2010. It was at this time that the AC Transit Board indicated an additional alternative for study. Based upon funding, community acceptance, and BRT operational issues, a project that eliminates improvements in north Oakland and Berkeley, the Downtown Oakland-San Leandro Alternative (DOSL) was recommended for study. The DOSL follows the same alignment as the proposed project from downtown Oakland to San Leandro BART and has the same features as the proposed project. DOSL is a lower cost alternative that would have fewer environmental effects and lower capital costs, meeting the project's purpose and needs. AC Transit adopted the DOSL Alternative as its Locally Preferred Alternative. The FEIS/FEIR included the DOSL Alternative because it would result in less transportation related impacts than the original proposal.

From late 2010 through early 2011, AC Transit refined the project based upon input from the participating cities. One of the major changes AC Transit made was a commitment to procure dual-side door buses that would load and unload passengers on both sides of the vehicle. This allows for the use of a single center platform rather than two separate platforms at each median-located BRT stop, resulting in less displacement of curbside parking, which was evident at one such station in San Leandro.

AC Transit distributed the FEIS/FEIR on February 3, 2012 with the review period concluding on

March 5, 2012. On March 1, 2012, approximately 60 people attended an AC Transit public meeting hosted by the City of San Leandro in the South Office's Conference Room. Feedback from the community meeting was mixed; generally either extremely supportive of the project and its benefits or conversely strongly concerned about impacts to vehicle drivers, lost parking, and the restriction on turning movements. The City forwarded these comments on the FEIS/FEIR, pointing out the main concerns of turn restrictions and lower quality of service for the East 14th Street serving bus line. On April 25, 2012, the AC Transit Board of Directors approved the selection of the DOSL Alternative as the LPA.

On May 31, 2012, a subcommittee of the Facilities and Transportation Committee met with AC Transit elected officials in San Leandro to review the project and provide input. AC Transit forwarded alternative plans that eliminated several of the challenges that were identified earlier in the process and are the basis for the current LPA that will be reviewed in the following section of this staff report.

Analysis

Final Design of the East Bay Bus Rapid Transit Project is scheduled to start in Winter 2012. Construction is anticipated to start in 2014, with revenue operations beginning in 2016. The proposed DOSL alternative would operate with transit priority at all signalized intersections, new passenger bus stations, and in the combination of mainly mixed-flow and limited dedicated travel lanes within San Leandro. The project would also feature self-service proof of payment fare collection, real-time bus arrival information, and low-floor, dual-sided door buses. The project as proposed extends approximately 9.52 miles from Downtown Oakland to the Downtown San Leandro BART Station. In San Leandro, dedicated lanes are proposed on East 14th Street from the northern city border to approximately Georgia Way. BRT would subsequently operate in mixed-flow lanes. The route continues to Davis Street, then turns west on Davis Street and then south on San Leandro Boulevard, terminating at the San Leandro BART station.

The stations in San Leandro are proposed at the following locations:

- East 14th Street at Durant Avenue (Durant Station)
- East 14th Street at Georgia Way/Euclid Avenue (Georgia Way Station)
- East 14th Street at Haas/Lorraine (Begier Station)
- Davis Street at Hays Street (Downtown San Leandro Station)
- San Leandro BART (San Leandro BART Station)

AC Transit is requesting that the City review its previously forwarded LPA and either reaffirm it or provide an alternative LPA. The main restriction of this action is that the City may only forward an LPA that has been analyzed in the FEIS/FEIR. This essentially limits the City to: 1) a project that terminates at the San Leandro Downtown BART Station; or 2) a no-build project.

The City has basically three options from which to choose:

Option 1 - Reaffirm the original LPA that has dedicated lanes to approximately Georgia Way with minor modifications that were recently introduced to reduce parking impacts and shorten walking distances to stations from senior housing locations.

Option 2 - Request that AC Transit implement an LPA that modifies or eliminates elements of the

original LPA that was introduced by AC Transit at the May 31st joint meeting. The modifications include reducing the dedicated lanes so that they end at just south of Broadmoor Boulevard and the relocated stations. These changes would: 1) eliminate turn restrictions except at Broadmoor Blvd where southbound East 14th Street to eastbound Broadmoor Blvd and at Farrelly Drive where northbound East 14th Street to eastbound Farrelly Drive traffic would be restricted; 2) reduce station distances from senior housing; and 3) reduce parking impacts. See Exhibit 2.

Option 3 - Abandon the project in its entirety within the boundaries of San Leandro.

Benefits and Impacts of the Options

All Options - Issues:

The current project terminates the BRT line at the San Leandro BART Station. This terminus point precludes continuous bus travel from the north city limit to the south city limit along East 14th Street. AC Transit has indicated a willingness to study whether a coordinating bus line along East 14th Street will be able to provide continuous service along the entire length of the street. Staff believes that this condition should be included as a part of any LPA ultimately selected by the City Council as part of this process.

The FEIR/FEIS indicated a higher Net Annual Cost needed to operate BRT. A diversion of funds from local service to maintain BRT would be detrimental to service within San Leandro. In addition to the above study requirement, AC Transit should be required to commit to maintaining overall levels of service in the system to provide East Bay BRT service.

Option 1 - Issues:

This minimally modified original LPA provides the longest distance of dedicated bus lanes in San Leandro. The dedicated bus lanes would begin/end at Sunnyside Drive with transition lanes between Sunnyside Drive and Georgia Way. This provides for the best performing BRT project because the dedicated lanes provide for consistent travel times.

This option provides for new traffic signals at Belleview Drive and Sunnyside Drive, and a pedestrian signal at Farrelly Drive. These proposed signals would improve the safety of pedestrian crossings and allow for protected turn phases for vehicles to increase traffic safety. Option 1 has the most turn restrictions.

This option also prevents left turns onto East 14th Street from Garcia Avenue, Stoakes Avenue, and Cambridge Avenue. It further prevents left turns from East 14th Street onto eastbound Broadmoor Boulevard and Cambridge Avenue and westbound Farrelly Drive, Garcia Avenue, and Stoakes Avenue. The FEIS/FEIR estimated that at the most approximately one vehicle per minute will use alternate streets as a result of the turn restrictions. See Exhibit 1.

Option 2 - Issues:

This option balances BRT performance with motorist convenience. The dedicated bus lanes would begin/end north of Broadmoor Boulevard with transition lanes between West Broadmoor Boulevard and Garcia Avenue.

Only a new pedestrian signal at Farrelly Drive would be installed. The two signals included in Option 1 at Belleview Drive and Sunnyside Drive would not be installed. This reduces the opportunity

for safer pedestrian crossing locations on East 14th Street and protected left turns for traffic safety.

Turn restrictions would be reduced for this option. Left turns onto East 14th Street would continue at all currently allowed locations. Left turn restrictions from East 14th Street onto side streets would be reduced to eastbound Broadmoor Boulevard and westbound Farrelly Drive. These turn restrictions would be significantly reduced from the previous Option 1 and therefore would reduce diverted traffic onto the adjoining side streets to just the specific streets that would support eastbound Broadmoor Boulevard and westbound Farrelly Drive traffic. AC Transit indicated that it is possible that left turns from East 14th Street to eastbound Broadmoor Boulevard could be allowed; however, either BRT efficiency would be reduced or the affected intersections' levels of service would decline dependent upon on how it was accomplished. A condition of approval requiring accommodation for a southbound East 14th Street left turn to eastbound Broadmoor Boulevard could be included with this LPA option.

Resolution Options

Despite their shortcomings, Options 1 and 2 are both viable and are adequately covered by the environmental document, but Option 3 may not serve the long term interests of the City of San Leandro. Forwarding Option 3 as the LPA would essentially exclude San Leandro from participating in the BRT project in the short term and perhaps remove any flexibility for participation in the long term. If the City proceeded with Option 3, San Leandro would not benefit from the improvements at bus stations and the potential goodwill from being associated with such a groundbreaking project. Many cities around the world suggest that having a BRT may be an effective economic development tool to attract forward-looking businesses.

Staff recommends that either Option 1 or 2 be selected. These options maintain the City's participation in the BRT project and the intangible benefits of a project that is considered an important component for a Downtown Transit-Oriented Development. It installs a framework for future expansion of BRT, making the East 14th Street Priority Development Area viable with excellent transit options.

At the July 9, 2012 City Council Work Session, staff was directed to prepare a resolution that forwards Option 2 to AC Transit for the City's LPA. Additionally, the following conditions that were reviewed and modified during the July 9, 2012 City Council Work Session are to be included with the City's LPA:

- In conjunction with the commencement of the BRT service, AC Transit shall offer a frequent and continuous service on East 14th Street that allows riders to travel between the northern and southern San Leandro borders without transferring buses.
- Prior to the commencement of the BRT Service, AC Transit shall explore and implement ideas that create a "Complete Transit Experience" for San Leandro citizens that include a more encompassing and frequent east-west service that allows transit users to reach locations such as BART, BRT, shopping, and work centers more conveniently and timely.
- AC Transit shall, as soon as possible, explore the means and feasibility of extending BRT along the length of East 14th Street to Bay Fair BART, insuring the flexibility of adding this

segment in the future.

- AC Transit shall make accommodations for a southbound East 14th Street left turn to eastbound Broadmoor Boulevard.

These conditions are meant as requests to AC Transit to implement strategies to improve transit service in San Leandro and make transit use viable for more citizens.

Previous Actions

- On July 2, 2007, by Minute Order No. 2007-069, the City Council directed Staff to prepare a letter for the Mayor to reply to AC Transit indicating the City of San Leandro LPA is either Alternative 2 or Alternative 4.
- On May 17, 2010, by Resolution No. 2010-054, the City Council designated San Leandro's Locally Preferred Alternative to be included and analyzed in the Final Environmental Impact Statement/Report (FEIS/R)

Committee Review and Actions

- June 27, 2007 - Facilities and Transportation Committee: Recommendation for City Council to direct Staff to prepare a letter for the Mayor to reply to AC Transit indicating the City of San Leandro's LPA is either Alternative 2 or Alternative 4 as described in the DEIS/R
- June 9, 2008 - Work Session: Bus Tour Along East 14th Street and Bus Rapid Transit Workshop for information only
- January 13, 2009 - Facilities and Transportation Committee: Update of the BRT project for information only
- December 8, 2009 - Facilities and Transportation Committee: Update of the AC Transit Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) for information only
- February 9, 2010 - Facilities and Transportation Committee: Presentation regarding AC Transit Bus Rapid Transit providing review of Planning Commission material for information only
- March 8, 2010 - Work Session: Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Locally Preferred Alternative presentation for information only
- May 31, 2012 - Facilities and Transportation Subcommittee Meeting with AC Transit: Review of potential mitigations for BRT in San Leandro
- July 9, 2012 - Work Session: Bus Rapid Transit Locally Preferred Alternative review presentation for information only

Applicable General Plan Policies

- General Plan Goal 15 - Ensure that public transportation is safe, convenient, affordable, and provides a viable alternative to driving
- Policy 15.01 Coordination with service providers
- Policy 15.02 Integration of Schedules
- Policy 15.05 Passenger Amenities
- Policy 15.06 Barrier-Free Transit

Environmental Review

City staff reviewed the Final Environmental Impact Report and provided comments to AC Transit on March 19, 2012.

AC Transit Board approved the FEIS along with the Findings of Fact, the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan, and the Statement of Overriding Considerations on April 25, 2012.

Summary of Public Outreach Efforts

A Public Meeting was held on the East Bay Bus Rapid Transit project on March 1, 2012 at 6:00 p.m. in San Leandro at

the South Office's Conference Room. Approximately 60 people attended. Responses were evenly mixed toward the project.

ATTACHMENTS

- Exhibit 1 - AC Transit BRT Alternative Design - Option 1
- Exhibit 2 - AC Transit BRT Dedicated Lanes to Monument - Option 2

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