

2009 DEC -3 PM 5: 03

TO: Office of the City Administrator
ATTN: Dan Lindheim
FROM: Community and Economic Development Agency
DATE: December 15, 2009

RE: Informational Report on Current Status of AC Transit's Bus Rapid Transit Project

SUMMARY

AC Transit (AC) is currently preparing a Final Environmental Impact Study/Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIS/FEIR) on the proposed Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project that is planned to travel between Berkeley, Oakland and San Leandro. In order to complete the FEIS/FEIR, and apply for federal funds to support project construction, AC has requested that the City of Oakland provide its Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) for the route and stations as it travels through the City, primarily on Telegraph Avenue and International Boulevard. City staff has been working with AC staff for the past several months to investigate and address issues related to the BRT project, and is preparing to gather comment on a draft Locally Preferred Alternative from the community in a series of public meetings in January. Following these meetings, the LPA will be refined and presented to the Planning Commission and then to the Council for adoption in the spring of 2010.

The purpose of selecting an LPA is so that AC can study a specific project in greater detail in order to finalize their environmental impact report. Adoption of an LPA by the City does not constitute agreement with, or approval of the BRT project or concept. The BRT project, should it be approved, would need to be address impacts identified in the FEIS/FEIR, as well as require operating and maintenance agreements with each of the cities affected.

FISCAL IMPACT

This is an informational report; therefore, no fiscal impacts have been included.

BACKGROUND

AC proposes a 17 mile BRT Project, largely along Telegraph Avenue and International Boulevard, starting in downtown Berkeley and ending at the San Leandro BART station. This proposal has been the subject of many years of study and planning by AC. As currently proposed, the BRT Project will replace the current Routes 1 and 1R with a BRT system operating largely in exclusive lanes and with stops every 1/3 of a mile. In order to provide the BRT with exclusive (bus-only) lanes, a vehicle lane in each direction would be eliminated, resulting in a single travel lane remaining available for all non-bus traffic.

Item: _____
Public Works Committee
December 15, 2009

The project will include bus stations with bus ticket vending machines and slightly raised platforms for level boarding. The BRT system will provide significantly faster service in the corridor and largely for that reason is forecast to attract more riders than the current local and rapid buses.

In May, 2007, AC released a Draft Environmental Impact Report on the proposed project. In addition to the benefits to bus riders, the study also identified many impacts that the project will have on streets through the City of Oakland, including parking loss, changes in roadway access, and increased auto congestion along the corridor. The City submitted official comments to AC Transit on areas of concern and the transit agency received additional comments from the public.

AC is currently in the midst of completing an FEIS/EIR for the project, and, pending completion of the environmental document, is preparing to submit an application through the Federal Transit Administration "Small Starts" program for \$75 million. The FEIS/EIR process requires that the City of Oakland identify its Locally Preferred Alternative for the analysis. To that end, the City and AC have been working together for the last several months to refine the proposed project.

AC's current schedule assumes completion of an FEIS/EIR in 2010, followed by preliminary and final engineering, with construction beginning in 2012 and completion by 2015.

KEY ISSUES AND IMPACTS

Draft Locally Preferred Alternative Selection

An LPA assumes a project (in this case, BRT) will be approved and seeks to represent the best case scenario to allow the project to be built while addressing local concerns to the extent feasible. City of Oakland staff from various departments (e.g. planning, redevelopment, parking division) has worked with AC staff and consultants to design a draft Locally Preferred Alternative for the BRT Project for further analysis in the FEIS/FEIR. Designing a BRT project within the limited roadway geometry available requires difficult choices between areas reserved for buses, cars, bicycles, and parking. For most of the proposed BRT corridor, a vehicle lane in each direction would be eliminated, resulting in a single travel lane remaining available for all non-bus traffic. Staff has sought to present a project that will provide AC Transit with the majority of the exclusive guideway BRT system they seek, while mitigating some of the impacts on neighborhoods and other modes of transportation. This draft LPA presents the following information:

- BRT Stop locations
- BRT lane configuration, including areas in which the BRT is in exclusive lanes and areas which it travels in mixed-flow (non-exclusive lanes, shared by all vehicles including buses)
- Auto-lane configuration, including areas reserved for turning movements, and areas where turns are newly prohibited

- Parking impacts
- Circulation impacts
- Bike lane configuration

Oakland Selection of a Locally Preferred Alternative – Timing and Review

In order to meet AC's desire to complete the FEIS/EIR, and apply for federal funding in May of 2010, AC has requested that the City of Oakland select a Locally Preferred Alternative by early April 2010. Staff is therefore proposing a schedule of community outreach meetings in January of 2010, followed by review by the Planning Commission in February, the Public Works Committee in March, and finally, to the City Council in April. Adhering to this schedule will permit AC Transit to complete the environmental documentation in time to be included in the 2012 President's Budget to Congress for access to federal funding.

Environmental Impacts

The Final Environmental Impact Study has not been completed, and the full extent of impacts is not known at this time. The purpose of selecting an LPA is so that AC can study a specific project in greater detail, and identify impacts more precisely than the 2007 draft EIR. The draft EIR circulated in 2007 identified impacts to traffic, circulation and parking, to name just a few. The BRT project, should it be approved for construction, will need to be modified to mitigate significant impacts identified in the FEIS/FEIR. These mitigations could include changes to the extent of dedicated lanes or station locations. Further, before implementation, the BRT project will require agreements with each of the cities to consider roadway modifications, maintenance, landscaping, operational and other details, including costs and responsibilities.

Project Funding

The full project is estimated to cost \$234 million (in 2009 dollars), with \$141 million estimated for the Oakland portion. Until recently, the project had full funding commitments that would enable AC Transit to build the entire project, assuming receipt of a \$75 million FTA "Small Starts" grant. However, the current recession has forced AC Transit to consider transferring a portion of dedicated BRT funds to close a projected operating deficit next year. The AC Transit Board of Directors has approved an investigation into the transfer of \$35 million in Congestion Management & Air Quality (CMAQ) funds from BRT to AC Transit operations. In addition, the Board has committed to convene a task force to investigate alternate sources of funding for the BRT project. It is possible that this current funding gap will lead AC to propose construction of less than the full BRT project.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Community Review of Draft LPA

Staff recognizes that while the current draft LPA represents an attempt to address project impacts, it still presents many difficult issues in balancing the advantages of a faster and more

Item: _____
Public Works Committee
December 15, 2009

reliable bus transit system against increased auto congestion, loss of parking and potential loss of opportunity to implement parts of the City's bicycle master plan along the BRT alignment. It is therefore important that the community have the opportunity to review and comment on the draft LPA before staff seeks final Council approval. To that end staff is proposing five public meetings in January (*Attachment A*). In four neighborhood workshop meetings, as well as one corridor-wide meeting in City Hall, staff intends to present a detailed description of the proposed BRT project, and will collect comments and questions from concerned members of the public.

In addition to the scheduled public meetings, information about the project will be posted on the City of Oakland's website at:

www.oaklandnet.com/government/ceda/dcsd_ts_brt

Following completion of the community review process, staff will review whether changes should be made to the LPA before presentation to the Planning Commission and City Council for final adoption in the spring.

Adoption of a Locally Preferred Alternative

Selection of a Locally Preferred Alternative allows the BRT project to proceed through the final environmental process and apply for federal funding. Despite the title "Locally Preferred Alternative", selection does not commit the City of Oakland to this precise project, but simply selects the alternative the City would like to be advanced through the review process. Project details will be finalized during the environmental process and through the preliminary and final design processes.

SUSTAINABLE OPPORTUNITIES

Economic: This report is for information only; there are no direct economic opportunities.

Environmental: This report is for information only; there are no direct environmental opportunities.

Social Equity: This report is for information only; there are no direct social equity opportunities.

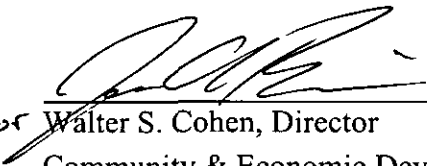
DISABILITY AND SENIOR CITIZEN ACCESS

This report has no specific impact on disability and senior citizen access.

ACTION REQUESTED OF THE CITY COUNCIL

Staff requests that the City Council accept this informational report.

Respectfully submitted,

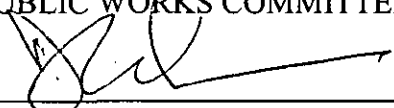

for Walter S. Cohen, Director
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APPROVED AND FORWARDED TO THE
PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE:


Office of the City Administrator

Item: _____
Public Works Committee
December 15, 2009

**Attachment A
Community Meetings
Bus Rapid Transit Project Review
Locally Preferred Alternative**

Fruitvale Neighborhood Meeting

6-8PM Monday, January 11, 2010
Fruitvale Senior Center
3301 East 12th St., Ste. 201
Oakland, CA 94601

Eastlake Neighborhood Meeting

6-8PM Tuesday, January 12, 2010
Eastside Arts Alliance
2277 International Boulevard
Oakland, CA 94606

East Oakland Neighborhood Meeting

6-8PM Thursday, January 21, 2010
East Oakland Youth Development Center
8200 International Blvd.
Oakland, CA 94621

Temescal Neighborhood Meeting

6-8PM Tuesday, January 26, 2010
Faith Presbyterian Church
430 49th St.
Oakland, CA 94609

Downtown Area and Oakland Citywide Meeting

Wednesday, January 27, 2010
11-1PM Hearing Room 2
5-7PM Hearing Room 4
Oakland City Hall
1 Frank Ogawa Plaza (Broadway and 14th St.)
Oakland, CA 94612