

## MEMORANDUM

Date: December 12, 2009  
To: Bruce Williams, City of Oakland  
From: Rob Rees, Fehr & Peers  
**Subject: East Bay Bus Rapid Transit Project – Historic Context**

WC09-2645

AC Transit completed the draft environmental document for the East Bay Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Project in May 2007.<sup>1</sup> The cities of San Leandro, Oakland, and Berkeley are now evaluating the proposed alignment options and developing their own locally preferred alignment alternatives. The draft environmental document represents the combined planning efforts related to this project dating back to the early 1990s including:

- **Alternative Modes Analysis (1993):** This study analyzed the most heavily traveled corridors in the AC Transit service area and selected San Pablo Avenue, International Boulevard/East 14<sup>th</sup> Street, Telegraph Avenue and Foothill Boulevard/Bancroft Avenue for further study.
- **Major Investment Study (MIS) (1999-2002):** Building on the Alternative Modes Analysis conclusions, the MIS defined service objectives and evaluated transit technologies and alignments against those objectives. Ultimately, the cities of Berkeley, Oakland, and San Leandro and the AC Transit Board of Directors decided to implement near-term transit improvements and to select Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) as the Locally Preferred Alternative for the Berkeley-Oakland-San Leandro corridor. They also selected Telegraph Avenue – International Boulevard – East 14<sup>th</sup> Street as the preferred alignment.
- **Committee and Staff Meetings (2002-2006):** The Policy Steering Committee (made up of elected officials) and the Technical Advisory Committee (made up of agency and jurisdiction staff) formed during the MIS continued to meet to further define the set of options to be studied in the BRT Project and begin the environmental analysis.
- **Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (DEIS/R) (May 2007):** The DEIS/R was released by AC Transit, and public and agency comments were collected through July 2007.

### ALTERNATIVE MODES ANALYSIS

The origins of the East Bay BRT Project date back to the early 1990s, when AC Transit completed a systematic study of its busiest bus routes. The Alternative Modes Analysis, was completed in 1993 and it identified priority corridors and candidate technologies for major transit investments that would serve existing and new transit riders cost-effectively. The study identified the Berkeley – Oakland – San Leandro corridor as the single best corridor for further evaluation.

### MAJOR INVESTMENT STUDY

Over three years, 1999 to 2002, AC Transit prepared a Major Investment Study (MIS) of the San Leandro – Oakland - Berkeley corridor to examine alternatives for improved transit service. The

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<sup>1</sup> AC Transit East Bay BRT Project Draft Environmental Impact Statement / Environmental Impact Report (May 2007)

purpose was to: a) understand transit needs and market opportunities for improved corridor service; b) identify and evaluate potential transit improvements that addressed these needs and opportunities; and c) build public, community, and agency support for a recommended alternative with the eventual goal of implementing a major upgrade to transit service in the corridor.

### ***Study Process and Approach***

The MIS was a public-driven process including public outreach in Berkeley, Oakland and San Leandro. Three advisory committees were established to provide policy and technical guidance.

- **Policy Steering Committee** – This committee included elected officials from the affected jurisdictions in the corridor as well as members from AC Transit’s Board of Directors.
- **Technical Advisory Committee** – This committee included agency staff from the affected cities and county as well as AC Transit staff.
- **Community Advisory Committee** – This committee included the leaders of community-based organizations that provide services in the corridor.

The MIS took a systematic approach to determine the technology and alignment for investment:

- Defined service objectives
- Conducted a market analysis to determine a) where people were traveling to and from in the corridor and b) what their transportation needs and wants were
- Identified alignments and vehicle operations technologies that would best meet the needs and wants of people traveling in the corridor
- Analyzed alignment and vehicle options using engineering, environmental, ridership, and financial data and evaluated how well each option met the service objectives
- Recommended a transit alternative based on the outcomes of the evaluation

### ***Service Objectives***

- Improve access to major employment and educational centers and enhance connections to other AC Transit services, BART, ferry services, and other transit providers
- Improve transit service reliability
- Provide frequent transit service
- Ensure security, cleanliness and comfort waiting for and riding on transit
- Support transit-oriented residential and commercial development
- Increase the percentage of trips in the corridor made by transit and reduce the percentage by automobile
- Identify a set of transit improvements that has a high probability of being funded
- Improve entry / exit ease on vehicles for transit riders, including persons with disabilities
- Provide an environmentally friendly transit service that contributes to improving air quality

### ***Alignments Considered in Oakland***

Three alignments between downtown Oakland and Berkeley were considered in the MIS: Shattuck Avenue, Telegraph Avenue, and Broadway/College Avenue. The MIS determined that the Shattuck Avenue alignment did a relatively poor job of meeting service objectives because it closely paralleled BART and connected places already well-served by transit. The Broadway /College Avenue alignment provided the best service to major employment and educational

centers, but providing fast, reliable transit service on the corridor was likely to create major environmental impacts due to the relatively narrow width of the street. Telegraph Avenue also met the service objectives, but with fewer negative environmental and neighborhood impacts.

South of downtown, the International Boulevard/East 14<sup>th</sup> Street corridor performed better than either the Foothill Boulevard/Bancroft Avenue or the San Leandro Boulevard corridors. The higher density of retail and commercial development along the International Boulevard corridor is more supportive of transit service than either the residential development along the Foothill Boulevard corridor or the industrial development along the San Leandro Boulevard corridor.

### ***Operating Technologies Considered***

- **Light Rail Transit (LRT)** – Low-floor light rail vehicles would travel between stations with traffic signal priority and coordination along the entire alignment. A special lane reserved for transit vehicles, separating other traffic from the tracks, would be provided along most of the alignment. Stations would be significant structures with a boarding platform, shelter, proof-of-payment ticket validation, ticket vending machines, security features, and real-time vehicle arrival information.
- **Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)** – This option is similar to the LRT option except it would use low-floor, low- or zero-emission, self-propelled buses instead of light-rail vehicles. BRT has substantially lower construction costs compared to LRT and it also offers greater operating flexibility because vehicles are not restricted to operating in a fixed guideway.
- **Enhanced (or Rapid) Bus** – This option was implemented with the new 1 Rapid service now operating in the Telegraph Avenue – International Boulevard – East 14<sup>th</sup> Street corridor. System features include greater station spacing and more frequent service.

LRT did slightly outperformed BRT with respect to the service objectives, but BRT's the capital and operating costs were significantly less. Overall, BRT had the best performance in terms of meeting the service objectives and needs of the travel market in the corridor.

### ***Recommendation***

The MIS recommended the Telegraph Avenue – International Boulevard – East 14<sup>th</sup> Street corridor as the preferred alignment and BRT as the preferred operational technology with the understanding that LRT be considered as a long-term goal. The Policy Steering Committee approved the recommendation in July 2001 and AC Transit Board adopted it in August 2001.

## **DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT/ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT**

The East Bay BRT Project is now in the conceptual engineering and environmental analysis phase. Between 2002 and 2005, the Policy Steering Committee and the Technical Advisory Committee formed during the MIS process continued to meet to further define the options to be studied, particularly as part of the environmental analysis. Additionally, AC Transit staff and consultants met with city staff numerous times to develop the alternatives analyzed in the environmental document.

The *AC Transit East Bay BRT Project Draft Environmental Impact Statement / Environmental Impact Report (DEIS/R)* was released in May 2007, a public hearing was held in Oakland in June, and the comment period closed July 2007. AC Transit has now asked San Leandro, Oakland, and Berkeley to select a locally preferred alternative for study in the final environmental document.