

Executive Summary: A Vision for Mobility

Introduction

AC Transit has a long-standing commitment to preserving and improving the quality and quantity of transit service for our East Bay passengers. This is matched by our financial responsibility to our tax payers and employees. As the largest bus-only transit provider in California, AC Transit carries over 230,000 riders a day – about 70 million trips annually in FY 2000/01! Our goal is to serve the greatest number of passengers at a reasonable cost and fare.

AC Transit's goal is to become the East Bay's world-class transit system, with attractive equipment, fast and reliable running times, flexible routings and high frequency service.

have set the stage for providing more and better transit services to our riders.

But AC Transit has a broader vision that goes beyond just the current baseline improvements. Our goal is

to become the mobility manager of the East Bay. That means operating a world-class transit system with attractive equipment, fast and reliable running times, flexible routings and high frequency service.

This goal is not just a "pipe dream". AC Transit has developed a visionary plan that lays out strategies that can be phased in as resources become available. The "Optimal Plan" includes service improvements and supportive policies that will allow AC Transit to truly become the mode of choice for East Bay riders.

The goals of the Optimal Plan are achievable with reasonable costs—however, additional funds are needed to operate and build the Optimal Plan system. Total operating and capital costs for the proposal, when calculated for total riders or for new riders, are significantly lower than for many transit investments that are currently being funded in the region. The Plan emphasizes existing technology that can be implemented at low cost. Signal improvements will help speed buses through congested intersections; new improved vehicles will allow for



faster passenger boardings and rider comfort; and fare policy changes will improve passenger convenience. Working together, AC Transit and its partners can improve mobility for every resident and employee in the East Bay.

AC Transit Listens

Our Optimal Plan is based on extensive input from our riders and from local officials and groups in the areas we served. In our outreach efforts we clearly heard:

- Travel time is a consideration in choosing whether to use transit.
- The existing system, even with the improvements that can be made with existing resources, is insufficient to attract large numbers of new riders out of their cars, largely because of travel time. Many existing riders stated that they would not use the current service if they had a faster alternative.
- Transfers are acceptable as part of a fast transit trip.
- Improving total travel time requires two key strategies:
 - Increasing frequencies, to reduce wait time.
 - Reducing delays along the routes, for a faster and more consistent operation.
- BART and AC Transit must work together as one system,

especially in the area of fare integration.

Potential riders indicated that where tradeoffs need to be made, the goal of reducing total travel time must be paramount. For example, faster service with fewer stops is preferable to slower service with stops closer together, even if this means a longer walk to reach the service.

Total costs for the Optimal Plan are significantly lower than many other transit investments currently funded in the region on a cost per new rider basis.

The Optimal Plan

Speed, Comfort and Reliability

AC Transit's Optimal Plan emphasizes speed, comfort and reliability to attract new transit riders. Under this plan, ridership would be expected to increase from a current ridership of about 70 million riders to about 85

AC Transit's vision is to become a World-Class transit system with:

- Attractive vehicles.
- Fast and reliable running times.
- Easy to use, integrated fare structure
- Flexible routings where appropriate.
- High-frequency services on major arterials.
- Adequate service around the clock.
- A restructured network that matches travel patterns and helps meet demand in the high density urban core
- Gradual transition to "Bus Rapid Transit" in the highest ridership corridors with buses operating in exclusive lanes; offering a level of service usually associated with Light Rail.
- Improvements at busy bus stops, including real-time displays about when the next bus will arrive.

million by 2005-6, rising to over 100 million by 2010.

To accomplish our goals, the Optimal Plan includes both innovative approaches to service delivery, such as "flexible service" in areas with low demand for transit service, and more traditional elements such as improving frequencies during the midday, owl or evening.

However, the plan would also implement two key concepts: Enhanced Bus and Bus Rapid Transit on the major corridors.

Enhanced Bus provides street level improvements to reduce travel times, improve passenger comfort and increase operational efficiency. Enhanced bus may be the ultimate improvement in a corridor, or may be an initial step towards Bus Rapid Transit.

Bus Rapid Transit involves even more improvements, including bus only travel lanes, more sophisticated station stops, and a coordinated effort to maximize travel time savings, allow for increased

reliability and frequency, and maximize passenger comfort and convenience.

Improvements will be concentrated on the ten most heavily used routes, focusing on areas with the highest density and best opportunity for increasing transit ridership. Table ES-1 summarizes the improvements expected on the busiest corridors in the District. These key corridors are illustrated on Figure ES-1. While service enhancements will be focused on the most heavily used corridors, mobility can be improved, even in those corridors that will not be served with enhanced bus or bus rapid transit.

In addition to service improvements on the trunk corridors, as well as crosstown and feeder routes, AC Transit has identified supportive policies that will further increase ridership, when implemented in combination with the service improvements. Implemented together, these service changes and supportive policies will maximize mobility within the East Bay.



AC Transit's plan uses low cost, proven technologies such as:

- New low-floor buses,
- real-time information displays,
- signal pre-emption tools for faster operation,
- exclusive lanes – where warranted – to move transit around auto congestion
- Building on the success of existing high-ridership corridors, where the densities indicate that better service would generate even more ridership.
- Implementing supportive policies including fare policies and improved coordination with local jurisdictions to further enhance ridership.
- Phasing in improvements gradually, so that each step builds on the enthusiasm generated by the previous step.

operating resources, supported by coordinated policies both at the District level, and in partnership with the jurisdictions served by the District.

These benefits are possible only through a combination of investment and policies implemented in partnership with the jurisdictions we serve.

Results for the Region

Table ES-2 shows the projected benefits of each phase of plan implementation. This plan will ultimately take AC Transit from about 70 million annual system riders to over 100 million in less than 10 years, and to over 130 million once the full Optimal Plan is implemented.

This level of ridership growth is possible only through significant investment in both capital and

Table ES-1 Key Enhancements on AC Transit's Busiest Corridors

	Serving	Estimated Ridership Growth	Total Capital Cost	Annual Incremental Operating Cost	Cost per New Rider	Comments	Implementation Time
ENHANCED BUS SERVICE							
San Pablo Avenue	Oakland Emeryville Berkeley Albany El Cerrito Richmond San Pablo	15%	\$10,000,000	\$2,000,000	\$2.92	Increased frequency and enhanced bus improvements will give urban core passengers a much better ride along this 16-mile corridor.	One and a half years to completion
Telegraph – Int'l Blvd (East 14th)	Berkeley Oakland San Leandro	32%	\$175,000,000	\$2,700,000	\$2.64	Enhanced bus service offered in short term, with an ultimate Bus Rapid Transit improvement.	Two years
Foothill – MacArthur	Oakland E. Oakland San Leandro	40%	\$41,00,000	\$4,800,000	\$3.80	Important to addressing Environmental Justice issues in the East Bay.	Two years to first significant improvement; four to six years to all improvements.
MacArthur-OAK Airport	E. Oakland OAK Airport	38%	\$38,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$2.19	Includes provision of real-time bus arrival information, especially important to time-sensitive airport market.	Two years to first significant improvement; four to six years to all improvements.
Shattuck-Alameda	Albany Berkeley Oakland Alameda	33%	\$30,000,000	\$1,100,000	\$2.03	Combines current Line 43 north of Oakland combined with a corridor running across Alameda from downtown.	Two years to first significant improvement; four to six years to all improvements.
College Ave – University	Berkeley Oakland	18%	\$20,000,000	\$400,000	\$2.11	Initial service frequency improvements ultimately in an Enhanced Bus corridor.	Two years to first significant improvement; four to six years to all improvements.



	Serving	Estimated Ridership Growth	Total Capital Cost	Annual Incremental Operating Cost	Cost per New Rider	Comments	Implementation Time
Hesperian	Hayward San Leandro	50%	\$20,000,000	\$300,000	\$2.24	Builds on existing approved project increasing frequencies.	Two to four years for full implementation of enhanced bus service.
6 th St./Hollis	Berkeley Oakland Emeryville	115%	\$17,000,000	\$3,200,000	\$2.51	New service in a developing corridor will attract substantial new ridership	Two to four years for full implementation of enhanced bus service.
Sacramento/Market	Berkeley Oakland	72%	\$23,000,000	\$1,400,000	\$2.78		Two to four years for full implementation of enhanced bus service.
Mission/ Outer East 14 th	Oakland San Leandro Hayward	159%	\$33,000,000	\$1,200,000	\$4.64		Two to four years for full implementation of enhanced bus service.
Bus Rapid Transit Corridors <i>Improvements Shown are Incremental Over Initial Enhanced Bus Improvements</i>							
Telegraph/E 14 th	Berkeley Oakland San Leandro	62%	\$175,000,000	\$4,100,000	\$9.61	Separate bus lanes and other enhancements will further increase ridership.	Two years after enhanced bus implementation
Foothill – MacArthur	Oakland E. Oakland San Leandro	13%	\$234,000,000	\$3,900,000	\$15.35	Separate bus lanes and other enhancements will further increase ridership.	Four to six years for full implementation.
Shattuck/Alameda	Albany Berkeley Oakland Alameda	12%	\$126,000,000	\$2,800,000	\$13.55	Separate bus lanes and other enhancements will further increase ridership.	Four to six years for full implementation.
MacArthur/ Airport	E. Oakland OAK Airport	13%	\$198,000,000	\$2,100,000	\$17.45	Total implementation of enhanced bus concepts.	Four to six years for full implementation.

Figure ES-1 Optimal Service Plan Map

To be inserted

Figure ES-2 Benefits by Phase

Scenario/Phase	Estimated New Riders	Total Annual System Riders	Incremental increase in ridership
Financially Constrained	4.45 million	73.9 Million	6%
Optimal Plan – Phase 1	13.44 million	83.4 Million	17%
Optimal Plan – Phase 2	2.91 million	90.35 M	3%
Cumulative – All Strategies	20.81 million	90.35 Million	29%

A Phased Approach

AC Transit's Strategic Vision recognizes that not all improvements can be implemented at the same time. Our phased approach allows for improvements to be implemented as soon as resources become available. Each of the implementation phases are based on consistent service deployment goals:

- Service increases should be concentrated on the most heavily used routes that operate in the most densely populated areas of the District to: 1) maximize the number of people using the system 2) generate more fare revenue and 3) help contribute to regional air quality and congestion goals.
- Trunk routes should have the highest frequency service in the system that connects with a clear crosstown network at multiple transfer locations.
- Crosstown routes may have less frequent service than trunk routes,

with service allocated depending on the density and productivity of the route.

- Strategies to provide mobility options to serve passengers when traditional fixed route service is not effective (such as Flexible Service) should be developed.

Initial improvements using existing and projected resources are already being implemented and are described in detail in the Short Range Transit Plan¹ (SRTP). Frequencies described in the SRTP will increase to every 10 minutes on the busier routes that travel on arterials and major roads, known as "Trunk Routes". Frequencies on less heavily used routes, both "crosstown" and "feeder" routes

¹ The SRTP Planned Network increases frequencies on: San Pablo Ave., Telegraph, International Blvd. (E 14th), Shattuck, Broadway, College Ave., University Ave., Santa Clara Ave. (Alameda), Sacramento, Market, MacArthur, Bancroft, 73rd Avenue, Hegenberger, Mission (San Leandro-Hayward-Union City), Hesperian (Bay Fair-western Hayward-Union City). Service hours are lengthened on many of these same streets.

would be between 15 and 30 minutes. Frequencies will improve along with other types of service enhancements as future phases are implemented.

Phase 1: Comprehensive Enhancement Throughout the System

In Phase 1, the key strategies include:

- Capital and operating improvements to implement Enhanced Bus service in the busiest corridors, as shown in Figure ES-1, including:
 - New, more attractive vehicles.
 - Shorter wait times between buses (7.5 minutes all day on busiest routes and 15 minute service on others).
 - Bus stop relocation and consolidation.
 - Traffic signal preemption.
 - Real-time passenger information displays at major stops, showing when the next bus will arrive.
 - Enhanced passenger amenities, such as shelters, benches, etc.
 - Increased midday frequencies throughout the system, with minimum 15 minute midday service systemwide.
- Improved owl service (service between 1:00 AM and 5:00 AM)
- Flexible-routing concepts to more efficiently serve low-density, low-ridership areas.
- Fare strategies such as eliminating transfer charges and allowing reciprocity between BART and AC Transit for pass holders

In Phase 1, all routes within the urban core would operate at least every 15 minutes. Higher volume truck routes, such as service on Telegraph, E. 14th, University, College and MacArthur would operate very frequently – every 7.5 minutes – along with the addition of limited stop service on several of these routes. In addition, this phase includes service increases in the midday and owl period above and beyond what can currently be funded. Flexible service and other innovative concepts are expected to be implemented in this phase to better serve the lower density areas of the district that may not be appropriate for traditional fixed-route bus service.

Phase 2: Bus Rapid Transit

Whereas Phase 1 improvements are distributed throughout the system, Phase 2 concentrates on the FOUR corridors that have the greatest ridership potential. These improvements are intended to achieve the speed, frequency, and reliability usually associated with

light rail. The focus in Phase 2 is on longer term capital improvements that will convert existing travel or parking lanes to bus only lanes in the busiest corridors served by AC Transit. These are:

- Telegraph/International/E.14th Street. (Berkeley-Oakland-San Leandro)
- Foothill (Oakland-San Leandro)
- Shattuck/Alameda (Berkeley-Oakland-Alameda)
- MacArthur

BRT uses a dedicated, transit-only right-of-way and highly developed stations. In addition to providing a high quality bus riding experience, BRT also focuses on supporting transit oriented development around stations, and on maximizing the comfort and safety of passengers.



In Phase 2, frequencies on these key routes would improve to every five minutes in the peak periods, allowing riders to travel without thinking about the bus schedule or worrying about “wait time”. Bus

stops would be converted into “transit stations” providing the highest level of comfort and convenience to passengers.

Supportive Policies

AC Transit's Strategic Vision recognizes that service enhancements alone will not result in the ridership increases or mobility options that the region requires. The Optimal Plan includes a number of supportive strategies, including fare policy enhancements—along with strategic partnerships with Cities and other agencies served by AC Transit--to maximize the impact of service changes.

Fare Policy Strategies

Fares have many impacts on AC Transit operations. Higher fares can reduce ridership, and the time required for fare collection is a major source of delay on buses. On the other hand, fares provide about 30% of the revenue needed to support AC Transit's operations. The following strategies are proposed to enhance the service changes included in the Strategic Vision Optimal Plan. However, these fare strategies must be considered as part of an overall plan to enhance the system, not as strategies that by themselves will

Fare strategies are seen as enhancing AC's vision for service improvements, maximizing potential ridership gains.

result in significant ridership increases. All of the fare strategies will require significant additional financial resources to implement.

- **Keep Fares at 2002 Levels.** The Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) expects the region's transit agencies to periodically adjust their fares to keep pace with inflation. However, AC Transit's riders are very concerned about further increases in fares, given their cost today. For this reason, a primary strategy is to avoid raising fares in the foreseeable future.
- **Eliminate the Transfer Charge.** Only about 20% of the nation's transit agencies charge an additional fare for transfers. Since the design of the system encourages transferring, the transfer charge can be a significant impediment to increasing ridership. The transfer charge also adds needless complexity to the process of paying fares, slowing down operations.
- **Establish a Proof-of-Payment System on Trunk Routes.** On the busiest routes, service can operate much faster if passengers can use all doors to get on and off the bus. This is made possible by a 'proof-of-payment' fare system. In this system, passengers who already have a pass or transfer could board at any door, reducing the delay at stops. Everyone

paying a cash fare or ticket would receive a free transfer as proof of payment while on board. Roving inspectors would randomly board buses and issue citations to those who do have a pass or a transfer. This system is used on most light rail systems throughout North America and Europe. On routes that operate with heavy ridership and widely-spaced stops, there is no reason it could not be extended to bus services. The San Pablo corridor has been selected as the first demonstration corridor for the proof-of-payment system, with other high ridership corridors being added in later years

- **Annual Student Pass.** The proposed annual student pass would be available for sale to all high school and middle school students in the service area. However, for those who qualify for free school lunches, the annual pass would be distributed free of charge. The annual student pass would replace the existing mixture of tickets, cash fares, and youth passes, speeding boarding at schools. To increase the mobility of the neediest riders, AC Transit is currently developing a pilot program, allowing students who qualify for the free school lunch program to receive a student pass at no cost.

CONTINGENT FARE POLICIES



A few additional policies would require corresponding service increases, and a new means to subsidize them. These are presented as Contingent Fare Policies.

Implementing supportive "transit first" policies throughout the district will help AC Transit achieve its goals.

- **Reducing Fares.** Lower fares mean higher ridership, but the increase in fare-paying riders doesn't make up for the lower fare, so additional subsidy would be needed.

- **AC/BART Reciprocal Pass.** BART has long accepted Muni passes for travel within San Francisco, making BART and Muni part of a seamless system--at least as far as fare payment is concerned. A similar arrangement in the East Bay would allow customers to buy a pass for rides on AC Transit and BART within the AC Transit service area. This improvement could generate significant new ridership if implemented with the service improvements in the Optimal Plan. Because additional service would be needed to complement the fare strategy, this is presented as a contingent item, despite its obvious benefits in helping East Bay residents to perceive and use

AC Transit and BART as part of one seamless system.

Other Supportive Policies

Full implementation of AC Transit's vision requires a partnership with the communities we serve. Implementation of these strategies is largely outside of the control of the District, but is a necessary part of encouraging transit ridership to enhance mobility and reduce congestion throughout the region.

A few potential policies would require additional incremental service increases, and a new means to subsidize them.

- Local Cities and other jurisdictions served by AC Transit must adopt "transit first" policies on AC's trunk lines. These policies include adjustments to signal timing to give preference to transit, allowing for signal preemption, queue jump lanes and other improvements that will speed transit travel times.
- Employers in the region should be encouraged to consider "parking cash out" programs offering their employees the choice of subsidized parking or an equivalent value in subsidy for travel by other modes. Where this policy has been implemented, employee vehicle trips have been reduced by up to 6%.
- Transit oriented development should be encouraged around key

transit stops and stations, to increase the number of people who are able to access these high capacity services by walking and biking.

- Caltrans and other regional agencies must recognize the special value of a highly functional Transbay bus system, especially as congestion increases due to seismic work on the Bay Bridge. Special funding and planning may be needed to ensure that this system operates at peak efficiency during this difficult period.
- Other regional transit agencies, including the ferry system and BART must continue to plan in coordination with AC Transit to move towards a seamless regional transportation network.
- Lifeline services, designed to offer a 24-hour network of transit service throughout the Bay Area, must be planned in consultation with the transit operators, who should not be required to shoulder an undue burden for the provision of less efficient services.
- Public-private partnership opportunities should be explored wherever possible to help AC

The goals of the Strategic Vision are all achievable if they become a regional priority.

Transit meet the needs of expanding and emerging markets.

A Regional Priority

Implementation of our vision plan is already underway. Funding made available through the passage of Alameda County's Measure B – the ½ cent sales tax for transportation – makes it possible for the District to implement the service improvements planned in our Short Range Transit Plan. The Optimal Plan improvements, however, are unfunded.

While the benefits of the Optimal Plan to the entire region cannot be ignored, AC Transit can implement the plan only as fast as financial resources become available. How much, when, who will pay, all remain the impediments to strategies to improve the system. Yet, in order to build it, one must dream it, then understand it and work for it. We have made the first step; now it must become a regional priority to make it happen.

Figures in this document show the fiscal resources that will be necessary to make these plans a reality. Working together with local, regional, state and federal partners we can prioritize those elements of the Strategic Vision that can be funded or identified for advocacy. With the help of all of our partners,



the residents of the East Bay will be able to witness the genesis of a world-class transit system that keeps the East Bay livable and vital.

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