

January 26, 2010

TO: City of Oakland

FROM: ULTRA

RE: Bus Rapid Transit

Urbanists for a Livable Temescal Rockridge Area (ULTRA) is dedicated to creating a livable, authentic community in North Oakland by promoting urban growth that is environmentally sustainable and equitable.

ULTRA would like to propose a BRT alternative to study that would provide faster, more reliable service without removing parking and two lanes of traffic, namely:

Curbside BRT.

Description:

The Rapid Bus stops would be at bulb-outs at the far side of intersections. (See attached plan labeled "BRT-lite.") The bulb-outs mean a bus can save time because it does not need to maneuver to a curb and then get back into the flow of traffic. So, ipso facto, a bus priority lane is created and no parking is lost. To help prevent double parking, every block with some commercial development on it should have a limited time loading zone.

By also having local buses, the Rapid Bus stops can be spaced about a half-mile apart. The local only stops would remain at the curb so the Rapid can pass easily.

Try to locate Rapid stops where there is some existing activity, stores, coffee shops, etc., so people feel safe and can do something while waiting for the bus. Provide an attractive, comfortable shelter with posted schedules and map, a working real-time information display, and create place-making with trees and special paving.

Advantage of Curbside BRT over present proposal that removes parking and two traffic lanes (see attached plan "BRT w/ Dedicated Lanes" except it is worse than shown because the center platform is 10-ft rather than 7-ft as drawn):

Curbside BRT respects the concept of **Complete Streets**. It accommodates all modes— pedestrians, bikes, auto and truck vehicles, and buses.

The present proposal is not pedestrian friendly because it removes parallel parking along sidewalks. Such parking serves as a barrier between pedestrians and traffic and is considered an important element in the creation of safe pedestrian friendly streets by New Urbanists like Peter Calthorpe. In addition, having to cross a lane of traffic to catch a bus is a safety hazard. Without parked cars between them and traffic, pedestrians will feel they are walking along a highway, and in this case, a speeding highway because the dedicated lanes create a divided highway which encourages speeding.

The whole Public Realm must be considered. We need public spaces that encourage community interaction. The bulb-outs that create spacious nodes add to a lively streetscape.

Common characteristics between the two proposals:

Level boarding.

Select buses that decrease dwell time and make the riding experience a pleasure. That means replacing the low-aisle Van Hools with true low-floor American buses that do not have entry bottlenecks and treacherous seating.

Procure buses that are energy efficient, and will cut down on air pollution and greenhouse gases such as diesel/electric hybrid buses. Better still, trunk routes are perfect for electric trolley buses, zero emission buses with proven technology.

Provide signal priority and stops that are on the far side of a cross street.

Proof-of-payment (POP) is not advisable. It is used successfully on some rail lines because they have fewer stops. But cheating is too easy on buses so it is used on very few, if any, BRTs in the USA. But use of flash passes and Translink should be encouraged through financial incentives. One city has encouraged the use of Smart Cards by offering free transfers. Within a few weeks most riders were using them.

Further issues:

Split up the 1R route. It is asymmetrical. The East Oakland portion of the route has heavy ridership and probably requires 60-ft buses but only 40-ft buses are needed on Telegraph between downtown Oakland and downtown Berkeley. So the route from East Oakland should follow the old 82 line and end at the West Oakland BART station and the one from downtown Berkeley could have the Oakland Amtrak station in Jack London as its terminus.

The **Curbside BRT** would be more cost effective because AC Transit would not have to fund the paving and maintenance of a 17 mile two lane roadway!

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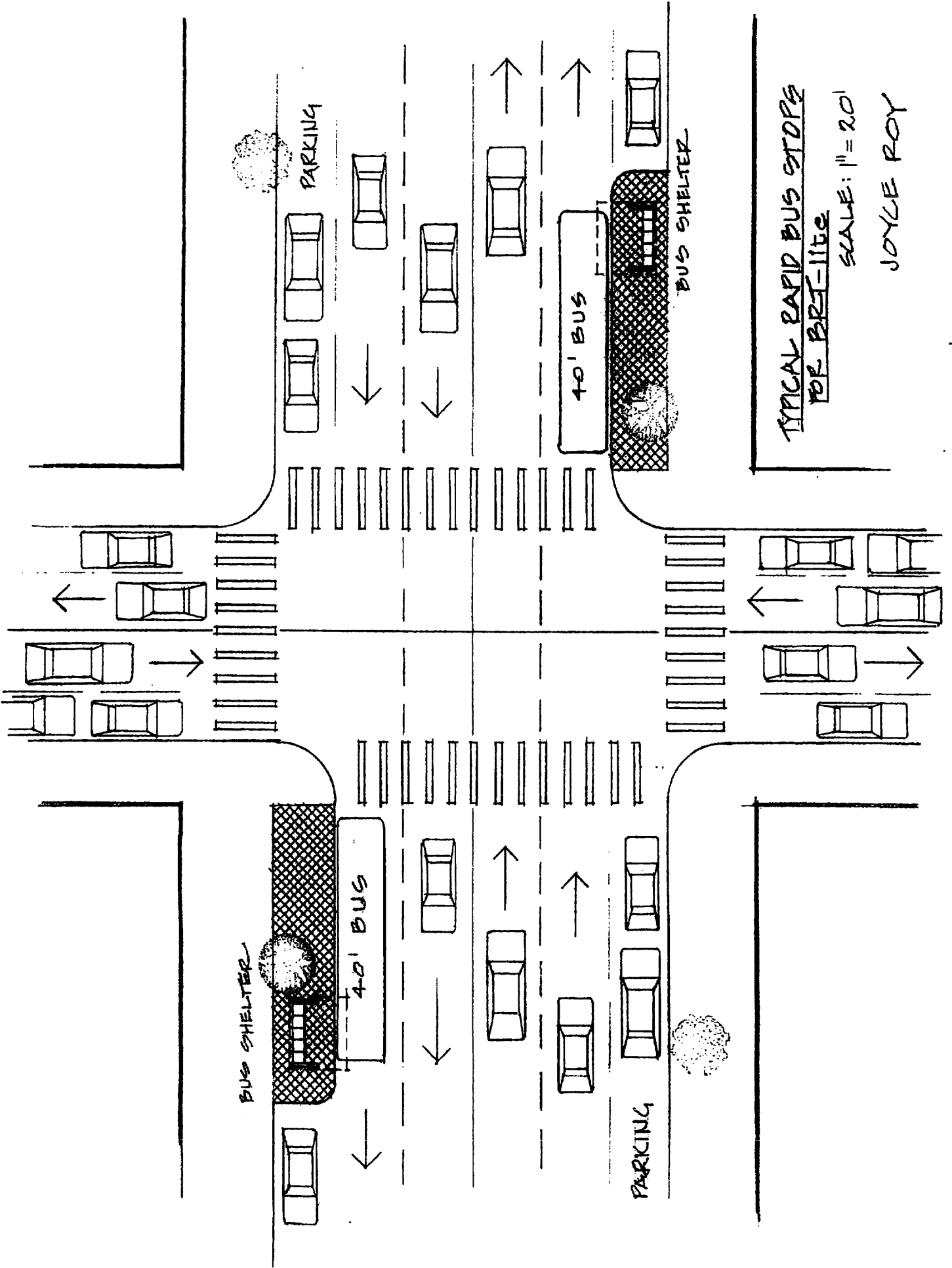
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TYPICAL RAPID BUS STOP
FOR BRT-116

SCALE: 1" = 20'

JOYCE ROY

TYPICAL RAPID BUS STOPS FOR
BRT W/ DEDICATED LANES
SCALE: 1" = 20'
JOYCE ROY

