

**BERKELEY-OAKLAND-SAN LEANDRO
BUS RAPID TRANSIT
POLICY STEERING COMMITTEE (PSC)**

**AC TRANSIT
1600 FRANKLIN STREET
OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA**

MEETING SUMMARY

June 19, 2009, 3:00 PM

ROLL CALL: At 3:09 PM, Executive Administrative Assistant Kim Vazquez called the roll.

PSC MEMBERS PRESENT: AC Transit Director Elsa Ortiz; AC Transit Director Greg Harper; AC Transit Board President Rocky Fernandez (Committee Chair); Berkeley Councilperson Kriss Worthington; Berkeley Mayor and MTC Commissioner Tom Bates; Oakland Councilmember Rebecca Kaplan (arrived at 3:12); San Leandro Councilmember Michael Gregory.

PSC MEMBERS ABSENT: Alameda County Supervisor Nate Miley; Oakland Councilmember Larry Reid; San Leandro Councilmember Joyce Starosciak; Caltrans District 4 Director (Caltrans Ex Officio) Bijan Sartipi.

AC TRANSIT STAFF: Deputy General Manager Jim Gleich; Deputy General Manager for Service Development Nancy Skowbo; BRT Project Manager Jim Cunradi; Long-Range Planning Manager Tina Spencer; Service and Operations Planning Manager Cory LaVigne; Director of Facilities Gene Johnson; Executive Administrative Assistant Kim Vazquez; Recording Secretary Milton Hare.

ITEM 1: GREETINGS AND INTRODUCTIONS

ITEM 2: PUBLIC COMMENT

Len Conly, Co-Chair Friends of Bus Rapid Transit expressed support for the combined operating plan for BRT because it produces the greatest ridership and greatest reduction in CO₂ emissions. He understands that although changing stops may inconvenience some riders, it is important to consider the benefit to the entire community of reduced auto use and concomitant reduction in green house gas emissions. He compared the N Judah line in San Francisco to BRT, as it has no local service and suggested people ride that line to get a feel for what BRT will be like.

Mary Oram, and Joyce Roy both had comments on Agenda Item 7. Chairman Fernandez requested those comments be heard under the agenda item.

ITEM 3: ADOPTION OF MINUTES FOR THE May 15, 2009 MEETING

Motion to accept the May 15 Meeting Minutes, moved by Ortiz, seconded by Gregory; passed unanimously (Miley, Reid, Kaplan, Sartipi and Starosciak not present).

ITEM 4: CHAIR'S REPORT

Chair Rocky Fernandez said the focus of the meeting would be to decide which of the to operating plans, Combined/"All in One" or BRT with Local Service, the committee will recommend to the AC Transit Board. Staff will present background information on both alternatives as well as answer any of the committee's questions prior to the committee taking action under Agenda Item 7. In addition, staff will review the proposed method of conducting the Locally Preferred Alternatives process in parallel with the Final Environmental work as part of the discussion of Agenda Item 7 on the Operating Plan.

He also wants the committee to know that the AC Transit Planning Committee is going to be considering an Agenda item on June 24th regarding the make up of the PSC, as Mayor Bates suggested at the May 15 meeting. The Planning Committee will be considering the addition of a third representative from the City of Oakland as well as an alternate, and changing the Alameda County Supervisor position to an ex-officio status.

Chair Fernandez suggested the committee talk about changing the meeting place for the PSC meeting, maybe to the City of Oakland. Finally, he mentioned that he plans to do a presentation at the next PSC meeting, which will include BRT information from his trip to the APTA Conference in Seattle, as well as his more recent trip to Houston where he was able to ride the new Houston Quickline.

Councilmember Kaplan asked whether the FTA timeline (and how it affects the timeline of the Locally Preferred Alternative) would be addressed as part of the discussion of Agenda Item 7 on the Operating Plan. Chairman Fernandez said it would be addressed.

ITEM 5: Request for Information

BRT Project Manager Jim Cunradi said that Requests for Information will become a standing item on the Agenda to answer questions from the committee and provide backup information. For this meeting, staff was asked to address questions about the comparison of the two operating plans from the May 15 meeting. Most of those questions are addressed in the materials distributed to the committee. If there are any questions about that information, staff and consultants are available to answer them.

For this meeting, staff will address specifically how green house gasses were calculated. Issues presented were:

1. Green House Gasses (GHG) in the Context of Transportation
2. Federal View of Green House Gasses
3. Statewide Legislation that Affects Green House Gasses
4. How Staff Calculated Green House Gasses
5. How BRT Affects Green House Gasses
6. How to Make BRT Perform Better for Green House Gasses

Councilmember Worthington asked, with regard to the number of passengers indicated in Slide #5 “Background: What is the Role of AC Transit?”, if 40 passengers is an industry standard. He also asked if we have any relative comparison of different kinds of buses or a range of different buses, or is 40 passengers an average number? Some of AC Transit’s buses carry more than 40 passengers, is there a calculation for those buses?

BRT Project Manager Jim Cunradi replied that the 40 passenger number is not a bus capacity reference. The chart in Slide #5 reflects US DOT statistics that show that as the number of passengers increase on a vehicle, GHG emissions per passenger mile decrease. Fuel economy on the buses themselves is based on fuel type, environment they operate in, i.e. urban vs. suburban. AC Transit’s BRT passenger load profile is greater than 40 passengers.

Councilmember Kaplan said that it appeared that the “All in One” option is projected to be better from a GHG perspective because of reduced auto use. She asked how staff calculates how many people would forego using their car in favor of BRT, in general and why staff believes those people would do so more for the “All in One” option vs. the Separate BRT plus Local Service option?

BRT Project Manager Jim Cunradi replied that the Separate BRT plus Local option has a fast BRT Component because the stations are spaced ½ mile apart. The local bus is a lot slower. The “All in One” has all buses taking advantage of the dedicated lane, and the average speed of all the buses goes up. The riders’ experience is improved by increased bus frequency and shorter wait times, and average time on the bus is shorter. Based on the Transportation Demand Models, these things are what attract people to the system.

Councilmember Worthington remarked about the Slide 8, “Auto Travel Reduction, Year 2025”, that the reduction in daily auto trips of 5,300 and the reduction in daily auto vehicle miles traveled of 11,800, indicate that cars are only travelling about 2 miles each.

BRT Project Manager Jim Cunradi affirmed that auto trips are generally short, and said that the numbers reflect all types of trips; everything that is included in the US Census Transportation Survey. He continued to Slide 10 “Opportunities: Further GHG Reductions”. He mentioned that eco passes may decrease barriers to ride the bus and may be one incentive to increase BRT use that results in fewer GHG emissions.

Councilmember Gregory commented that a perfect example of removing barriers to bus use is when transit is made free to riders on Spare the Air Day, and ridership is significantly increased.

Councilmember Kaplan asked if all of the models assume all door boarding and next bus information at the stops. If we're thinking about having alternating frequencies, the stops will have to have real time arrival information.

BRT Project Manager Jim Cunradi said yes, in the BRT plus Local Service there would be all door boarding for the BRT buses, but regular boarding for the local. In the All in One scenario, all buses would have all door boarding, level boarding and real time arrival displays since all the stops would be BRT stops.

Councilmember Worthington thanked staff for providing the background information.

Mayor Bates expressed concern that currently Next Bus information isn't accurate.

BRT Project Manager Jim Cunradi explained that the system is not without its problems.

Councilmember Kaplan commented that when it was decided to implement Next Bus a couple of years ago it was apparent that the system would need staff to regularly troubleshoot problems. She feels it would be important to include the cost for staff to maintain any real time information system, should it be included in the BRT plan.

ITEM 6: Ridership Information on the 1/1R
--

Capital Projects Manager Jon Twichell - Prior to starting his presentation Jon addressed the comments made about Next Bus. He said that AVL or GPS systems are meant to be replaced every 10-12 years, and the "next generation" of these systems not only tracks buses, but has integrated passenger counters and announcements. Staff is working on creating that sort of system, rather than having it provided by a third party vendor as the District has for the last several years. What we are using now is a system that uses an historical algorithm, i.e. at 3:30 on Friday for the last five weeks if the bus is at this corner, then it is likely to get to the next corner at the same time. The advanced AVL systems (or next generation systems) use schedule deviation, i.e. predictions are based on the difference between the schedule time and the bus' actual location. Such systems have the potential to be more accurate because they are based on schedule deviation rather than historical information. Portland has this system already, which they developed on their own. AC Transit is hoping to have an updated system, hopefully developed in house, in time for the "go live" date of the BRT.

He continued with his presentation on the ridership of the 1/1R by showing slides which contained statistics on the 1R, gathered from a series of passenger counts, surveys and schedule adherence, done by Nelson/Nygaard.

Councilman Worthington asked if we knew the completion date for the 1R implementation, because there are still multiple stops where he notes that there is no Next Bus, shelter, etc. When everything is in place, it would be good to get new ridership counts.

Capital Projects Manager Jon Twichell explained that the transfer of responsibility for the shelters from Lamar to Clear Channel has caused a delay. In addition, getting power to the shelters so that Next Bus signs can be installed has been a challenge as there is not always electricity where the shelters are located. In some cases, the District has worked with businesses near the shelters to provide power. Staff has essentially completed all the shelters in Berkeley and San Leandro. The last shelter will go in at Alcatraz and Telegraph. At Webster and Telegraph, there is a shelter and the Next Bus signs are in the process of going in now that it has power. He said if there is a Rapid shelter and available power, there will be a Next Bus sign and that it should all be completed within the next month. The shelter at 40th and Telegraph in Oakland has been a challenge because there are overhead wires where the shelter needs to go. He said the City is opposed to putting one there because there have been incidents of wires falling and coming into contact with the shelter.

Councilmember Kaplan asked if we had considered a Next Bus display even without a shelter.

Capital Projects Manager Jon Twichell answered that traditionally we have only done them where there are shelters and kiosks, although there have been some exceptions. The long term plan is to encourage people to use cell phones and PDAs to get the information rather than relying on the signs, since the cost of the sign and the power is so high. It is much less expensive and easier if people use their own devices.

Councilmember Kaplan suggested they discuss this topic further, off-line.

Director Harper said that staff should “push back” on the City of Oakland about their reasoning for not wanting to put a shelter underneath power lines.

Councilmember Kaplan said she believes the City of Oakland’s concern is about people climbing on top of the shelters and being injured, more so than having wires fall and come in contact with the shelters. She offered to work with Jon and the City to see what they could work out, because the stop is very highly used.

Mayor Bates asked why we can’t set up a system to provide bus information via cell phones.

Capital Projects Manager Jon Twichell replied that MTC is in charge of the 511 program that is supposed to do just that for the entire Bay Area. However it is a large, complex undertaking and affected by bureaucracy so it is taking some time to complete.

Councilmember Kaplan suggested increasing marketing for nextbus.com to encourage those individuals who have Internet access on their cell phones and PDA to use that for real time data until the 511 program is completed.

Chair Fernandez suggested that perhaps the AC Transit Board could step in to help speed up the completion of the 511 program.

Councilmember Kaplan stated that she will work with staff and the City of Oakland on the shelter at 40th and Telegraph.

Councilmember Kaplan stated that she will work with staff to “hash out” options to provide Next Bus signs where there isn’t a shelter.

ITEM 7: Operating Plan

BRT Project Manager Cunradi provided a brief recap of the information provided at the May 15 meeting in order to facilitate a vote on whether the committee wants to accept staff’s recommendation to go with the All in One Operating Plan or go with the Separate BRT and Local option. The specifics of each are:

1. Separate BRT and Local
 - a. Two separate services
 - b. BRT in its own lane and Local bus service in the traffic lane
 - c. Modeled on 1/1R
 - d. Six block spacing on BRT stops – about ½ mile
 - e. Keeps 105 local stops – about two blocks apart
2. Combined/All in One
 - a. 1 bus service
 - b. All buses run in a dedicated bus lane
 - c. 49 stations – 4 blocks apart or 1/3 mile

When compared, the All in One performed better than the Separate BRT and Local alternative in almost every measure. The All in One had better average transit time, higher ridership, reduced auto travel, greater green house gas reduction lower operating cost, better bicycle environment, and fewer traffic impacts. However, it has a higher capital cost, and a somewhat inferior walk access.

Councilmember Worthington said he thought any decision on the operating plan should only include whether the committee recommends the All in One option or the Separate option. The decision to recommend bus only lanes has significant financial and operational impacts. The resolution as written implies that a recommendation to go with the All in One option includes a recommendation to go with dedicated bus lanes.

BRT Project Manager Cunradi said there are two different tracks for decision making. One is decisions that affect the whole corridor like the station/stop spacing, and the second, which includes whether or not there will be dedicated bus lanes, is what is being worked on with the cities. The cities need to provide the permission to do that, and the decision will include the public. A decision by the committee to go with the All in One option today simply says that the recommendation is to go with 1/3 mile station spacing along the corridor, not where dedicated lanes will be, if any, along the corridor.

It was agreed that maybe the resolution could be modified to say, “all buses in one lane” or “all buses in potential bus only lane”, or maybe an additional bullet that specifies that the extent of dedicated lanes will be decided by the local jurisdictions and AC Transit.

Mayor Bates said it seems there is a consensus that the committee wants to vote to recommend the All in One solution, however there is no consensus whether or not there will be bus only lanes, or where along the corridor they might be.

Councilmember Gregory asked Jim to clarify what makes up the difference in capital costs between the All in One and the Separate options.

BRT Project Manager Cunradi said the key difference between the two options is in the number of stations. The number of stations increases from 35 in the Separate option to 49 in the All in One. Each station pair costs about \$1M.

ITEM 7: Operating Plan – Public Comment

Comments of the public contained in the minutes are the opinion of the speakers, and there is no guarantee of their accuracy.

Berkeley Resident Mary Oram:

1. Feels the All in One option is really an “eliminate local” plan.
2. It seems that the people who ride the 1 are going to be inconvenienced more because under this option they will have less than half the stops they have now, and those who ride the 1R will have additional stops. This means more than half of the 1 riders are going to be inconvenienced and not that 80% will not be inconvenienced as the staff report indicates.
3. With regard to green house gasses, she believes there will be more traffic in car lanes used by people who can’t ride the bus, because of “empty” buses coming by every 8 minutes. She feels we need to look not just at the impact of buses on green house gasses, but the affect of all traffic on green house gasses.
4. On the 1 and 1R lines, she sees a lot of half empty articulated buses going by. These buses are getting reduced passenger miles to the gallon.
5. She is concerned when staff says that the BRT will be an incentive for development along the corridor because the Telegraph Avenue corridor is already developed with private business and residential neighborhoods and she doesn’t feel they need more density.
6. She is concerned because she doesn’t feel that public comments get summarized in the minutes, and believes they should.

Oakland Resident Joyce Roy:

1. Feels it would be easier to see and hear the PSC if they were sitting at the main dais in the Board Room rather than around the tables on the main floor.

2. Believes if the committee votes to recommend the All in One option that they will be voting to decrease bus service which will decrease transit ridership and increase auto travel, particularly for seniors and people with mobility issues who won't be able to walk the extra blocks to the bus stop. This should be accounted for when calculating green house gasses.
3. The focus of BRT is to make bus ridership so easy, pleasant, reliable and fast that it encourages people to ride the bus rather than drive cars. She doesn't believe that this is going to happen.

City of Oakland Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committee Chair Jonathan Bair:

1. Recently began buying prepaid bus passes and riding the bus more.
2. Strongly urges the committee to adopt the All in One plan because it is more convenient, and provides a faster and more reliable trip for the bus riders. He doesn't feel it is reasonable to say that an increase of one block of walking will have a significant impact on accessibility of the bus.
3. The key goal of BRT is to increase ridership, and a faster, more reliable and more convenient All in One service will do that as the data indicates.
4. The All in One service, especially if dedicated bus lanes are implemented, and eliminating buses in the mixed flow lanes, will have a congestion benefit for the drivers and bicyclists.
5. Opponents of the All in One are opposed to BRT in general and this is not the place to debate the merits of BRT.
6. The All in One option is a win-win for drivers and transit riders.

Oakland Resident David Vartanoff:

1. Is opposed to the All in One Option
2. Local buses were not ever assumed to have transit signal priority (TSP) boxes put on them. This is ridiculous because you get better throughput running the buses as locals with the TSPs installed if they really work to give you extended green lights.
3. With the upcoming 15 percent decrease in general service, he doesn't feel AC Transit has the budget now, nor does he feel the District will have the budget in 2015 to run a bus every 5 minutes as proposed in the All in One option. He's concerned that service will not be as it is being promised by the All in One option.
4. It doesn't make sense to him to increase the number of stops to 49, which decreases speed, when you are trying to provide faster service.

Berkeley Resident Merrilie Mitchell:

1. Ecopass for all is the way to get people riding the buses. At the City of Berkeley, workers get the \$60 per year Ecopass paid for by the citizens who don't have an Ecopass, but the seniors, youth and disabled that the District is always talking about helping, pay more. The seniors pay \$240 per year for the Ecopass (Seniors pay \$240 per year for a senior discount sticker, not the actual Ecopass). If the Ecopass were made available to all, it would bring the price down.
2. She feels that the plans for BRT are like "cookie cutter" plans which don't serve the needs of our diverse communities. It's like we have colonies of people being run by a few, like the New World Order.

3. AC Transit is “screwing up” the line 51. It needs to be fixed around the campus.
4. The Rapid ridership is increased around Telegraph and University because the District is forcing riders like her to get on it at Telegraph and Ashby and Ride down to Shattuck and then walk home because you’ve made seven stations and you’ve taken the Rapid and put it in the middle where the regular bus stop was, where we had service every 5 minutes, that people could use. What you’re doing is everything you can to make it look good but the truth is, if you were to ride these buses you’d see you’re screwing the people. Whatever the District’s big plans are, it’s about money.

Oakland Resident Jane Kramer:

1. Doesn’t feel AC Transit knows what it is doing because the District doesn’t have applicable, valid or reliable data.
2. The District surveys the same people every time who ride the same bus and staff does the surveys or holds the workshops when there is a hot point crisis.
3. What needs to be done is to find out who would ride the buses, when, where and for what reason. You don’t need aggregates, you need household information. There are people out there who do that for a living. Please contact them.

Transform Consultant Joel Ramos:

1. Has been working with AC Transit on outreach for BRT to ensure as much community input as possible.
2. Most of the community groups Transform spoke to early in the process preferred the All in One alternative because it attracts and increases more riders.
3. Transform’s opinion is that it increases ridership because it increases the number of stations located closer to Rapid transit service. If a rider lives closer to a transit service that has service every five minutes, they are more likely to take that transit versus if you live next to a bus stop with 15 twenty minute service. That is why BART Is trying to get more housing developed near its stations. It is basically that you are more likely to take transit, and 49 stations is a lot more stations than 35.
4. Transform is concerned about where stations are located so that they serve all segments of the population, and they urge staff and elected officials to make sure the station locations are placed where seniors and people with disabilities will be able to take the most advantage of the service.
5. Councilmember Starosciak might be interested to know that with the Geary BRT Line in San Francisco, a lot of people are in favor of combining the service because it does open up more curb space for parking.

Mayor Bates said that the PSCs capacity is as an advisory committee to the AC Transit Board of Directors. As such, he moved that the PSC advise the AC Transit Board that the committee favors the All in One option as it relates to the number and spacing of

stops, and the committee reserves the right to leave the decision about the dedicated lanes up to the cities and AC Transit. Seconded by Councilmember Kaplan. 7 in Favor, 1 Opposed, Councilmember Worthington. No abstentions.

It was agreed that although Mayor Bates' motion is not what is included in the resolution before the committee, it did clarify that the committee is not voting on a decision about the dedicated lanes.

It was agreed the next two meetings will take place on Friday, July 17 (subsequently cancelled) and Friday, August 21 at 3:00pm. It was agreed that the meetings would continue to be held at AC Transit's General Offices.

Items Not On the Agenda

Operating Plan – Next Steps in the Process

BRT Project Manager Cunradi said selecting the operating plan is a key step in developing the overall project definition. AC Transit and the FTA have held some discussions, including city staffs and funding agencies to hear their concerns and interest in getting the BRT Project into the President's budget to congress. We are looking at ways to speed up the project such as combining work, or working in parallel. Staff is working with the cities to get them the information they need in a timely manner. This may affect the scheduling of the project, or the way consensus building and environmental processes are being conducted. We don't have many answers at this point, but we will be working on revising the schedule to speed up the process to secure the project in the President's Budget to Congress.

Councilmember Kaplan asked if we need to get the FEIR done sooner than we might have otherwise.

BRT Project Manager Cunradi said it might mean speeding up the process. The question is how to meld the quicker process with the process we've already committed to with the cities. Staff is working on that, and thinks there might be some advantages to the cities, although Jim doesn't want to speak for them. It may allow staff to get more information to cities that they've asked for a bit quicker.

Councilmember Kaplan asked if we need LPA from all locations prior to the FEIR.

BRT Project Manager Cunradi said not necessarily, as long as the cities include variations on the BRT that the cities are considering in the document. Cities could say they are considering more than one option for the LPA and that they would like to see all of the options in the FEIR. This is one potential strategy. In response to a follow up question from Councilmember Kaplan, Jim stated there is no problem with International by the Lake because we've incorporated the Measure DD project into the design and we've already got agreement with Oakland on how that works. We don't know yet how quickly this has to happen, but staff is talking about it.

Councilmember Gregory asked if the cities' requests for compensation for staff time have been worked out.

BRT Project Manager Cunradi said each of the cities have slightly different requests for reimbursement for staff time and consultant help. The letter of agreement for San Leandro should be in their hands shortly. The other cities have finalized their consultant contracts and work schedules as well.

Agenda Items for the next meeting(s)

Councilmember Worthington – Either next meeting or August, he would like to see the GHG analysis of different bus types or models as it could be a major factor in what the ultimate impact is of GHG on the whole corridor. Constituents say things like, if the buses were greener, I wouldn't mind having BRT.

Councilmember Kaplan – Now that we are talking about a system with a frequency of every five minutes, we may need to reopen the question of what size of vehicle we might need. When we were talking about a frequency of 10 minutes we were talking about using articulated buses.

Director Harper commented that he was pleased to see AC Transit taking more of the lead in the meeting today, rather than consultants.

The meeting adjourned at 4:40 PM.

KV/mh