



Service Development and Marketing Department
1600 Franklin Street, Oakland CA 94612

January 31, 2013

Matt Naclerio,
Public Works Department
950 West Mall Square
Alameda, CA 94501

Re: AC Transit Comments to the Transportation Commission on the City of Alameda Regional Transit Access Study

Dear Mr. Naclerio:

AC Transit appreciates the opportunity to review and comment on the City of Alameda Regional Transit Access Study. We are pleased that Alameda is actively evaluating its expected transit needs, and treating them as a municipal priority, while working with AC Transit.

The study represents a serious effort by the City of Alameda and its consultants, and we are responding accordingly. The study focuses on some of the most important corridors and connections for Alameda. Our comments are designed to advance the development of transit options in Alameda by clarifying the City's goals and understandings. These comments pertain to both Volumes I and II:

Overall Transit Concept: Alameda's proposed Rapid bus from 12th St. BART through Lincoln Ave. to Fruitvale BART would, as the study notes, follow the route of a portion of AC Transit line 51A. Line 51A, which continues past Downtown Oakland to Rockridge BART, is a trunk route for AC Transit, one of the busiest lines. It has good patronage in both Oakland and Alameda.

The relationship of line 51A to the Alameda Rapid needs to be developed. Would line 51A be the Rapid between 12th St. and Fruitvale? In that case, how would the need for local service on the corridor be met? The approximately ½ mile distance between stops proposed in the study is quite appropriate for a rapid, but too long for local service. A related question is the appropriate frequency for both rapid and local service.

There are a number of possible options. The 51A could operate as the Rapid, operating with a local line. Stop spacing could be narrowed to approximately 1/3 mile—the distance between stops on the International Blvd. Bus Rapid Transit line--possibly allowing the Rapid and local to be consolidated. The

51A could continue to operate as a local, though it would be peculiar to have the longer 51A route to Rockridge as a local with the shorter Alameda route as the Rapid.

This overarching issue will frame all service planning for the line, and needs to be carefully considered in order to move planning forward.

Service from Alameda Point to Fruitvale BART: This is another question that AC Transit does not have a specific recommendation about at this time. We simply wish to raise the issue.

The study recommends that new Alameda Point service operate to 12th St. (Oakland City Center) BART in Oakland. 12th St. is clearly the single most important regional connection point to BART and the bus network. The study argues that a strong connection to 12th St. will allow trips to Fruitvale BART as quickly as a direct bus, obviating the need for direct bus service. However, the travel time calculation for Fruitvale BART via 12th St. (p.77) fails to incorporate waiting time or transfer time. Nor does it consider the possibility of delays entering the Tube and navigating the streets of Downtown Oakland.

Perhaps more importantly, direct service from East Alameda (on the way from Fruitvale) to Alameda Point might attract new riders and raise Alameda residents' transit commute share. Table 2-8 (p.24) shows that 39% of jobs in Alameda are held by Alameda residents. This makes intra-Alameda commutes a key target of opportunity for increasing transit patronage in Alameda.

Santa Clara Ave. vs. Lincoln Ave. as a bus operating street: The study assumes that a new rapid will operate on Lincoln Ave., and that local bus service will be moved there from Santa Clara Ave. AC Transit agrees that rapid and local service should operate on the same street.

However, we do not understand the logic of the recommendation to move from Santa Clara to Lincoln. Santa Clara is and has long been an excellent street for bus operations. It is also more central to the island—north to south—than Lincoln. If the line moved north to Lincoln, many residents south of Encinal Ave. would be more than ½ mile from the route.

If a dedicated lane were being proposed, the wider right of way of Lincoln would be a better choice. But the study recommends against dedicated lanes in the North Alameda corridor. While Lincoln appears to be a viable transit operating street, Santa Clara, with its relative absence of traffic signals, is better. At this point, it does not appear to us that likely gains from moving the route justify the difficulties, although perhaps deeper analysis will show the value of the move.

Santa Clara Ave. Rapid Option: Another option is the possibility of combining the 51A and the new Rapid lines to create a line on Santa Clara Ave. with spacing of one third of a mile instead of a half mile, similar to the BRT on International Blvd. This allows for Rapid service but removes the need for an underlying local service. It would be useful to have this as a modeled time comparison in the report.

Travel Time Impact of Lincoln Options: Table 4-22 compares Option N-2, Lincoln with a median transitway with Option N-3, Lincoln with shared travel lanes. It indicates that either option would have the same travel time. The report argues (p.78) that the relatively uncongested conditions on Lincoln justify this conclusion. However, it seems that even under relatively uncongested conditions, dedicated

lanes would provide a travel time savings. In general, side-running service is slower and more affected by traffic congestion than center-running service.

Please note that we are not arguing that the dedicated lane option is superior, given all concerns (including cost effectiveness). We are simply questioning the idea that a rapid and a full BRT would have the same travel time characteristics.

Proposed Route in Oakland (p.63)—The proposed route to Oakland City Center seems somewhat long. In addition, because the proposed stops are not on a single street or couplet, they would be harder for passengers to understand and find. Alameda, Oakland, and AC Transit should work together to identify the most appropriate route in Downtown Oakland.

Effect of Revised Development Proposal for Alameda Point: The estimate of transit demand at Alameda Point (p. 28) appears to be based on an older proposal for the site. The project now entering environmental review proposes less housing and more jobs. Does this change substantially affect the estimates of transit demand?

West End Corridor: The existing AC Transit network provides a high level of peak service going to Downtown Oakland through the Webster tube. It would be interesting to see some analysis on the effect of adding the 2 Rapid lines on top of the current service, as perhaps this is not the most efficient way to provide the service.

One option for the West End would be a 2-way loop route; incorporating the Rapid alignment on Atlantic Ave and serving limited stops around the new Alameda Landing development:

Atlantic Ave., Main St., Mitchell Ave., Mariner Square Loop, Webster St.

This would require passengers to transfer from the West End to the new Rapid/51A on Webster & Atlantic in order to reach Downtown Oakland. However, if these 2 new Rapid routes are at high enough frequencies, the transfer penalty may not be such a deterrent. It would be interesting to model the route time and passenger impact of the proposed loop route and forced transfer.

Park and Ride near Webster St. (page 52)—If a park and ride in this area were sited so that passengers had easy access to Transbay bus stops, this could help support Transbay service as well as service to Oakland.

AC Transit Existing Service: Figure 2-2 (p.14) should be corrected. The local bus lines 20 and 21 have their destinations reversed. The Transbay line OX destination is Bay Farm Island, and line W terminates at Broadway and Blanding, not Fruitvale.

Basis for Calculations: Recognizing that AC Transit may have provided some of the initial data, we would appreciate detailed information outlining the basis for calculating capital costs, operating costs including net operating costs, ridership, and travel time throughout the document. AC Transit does offer a youth /senior discount fare on Transbay lines, contrary to the statement on p.21.

Passengers per Revenue Hour Target: The report (p. 17) suggests that AC Transit is using 40 passengers per revenue hour as a performance target. While that level of ridership would indicate a line with ridership above average for our system, we do not use that threshold.

Operator of a new Rapid: As planning proceeds for Rapids serving Alameda, the question of what agency should operate service there must be considered. In general, AC Transit seeks to be the line haul, inter-city bus transit operator in the inner East Bay. We currently operate all bus transit lines which serve two or more cities within our district. We would envision continuing to work with the city of Alameda to plan and implement service which meets the city's goals.

We are excited about collaborating with the City and planning for improved bus operations on the island. At this point, we think it would be beneficial to have a meeting to discuss the underlying AC Transit network in conjunction with the plan. AC Transit staff will be in touch to set up a meeting with your staff and consultant to start these discussions. If you have any questions about these comments, please contact Linda Morris at 510-891-4764.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robert del Rosario', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Robert del Rosario

Director of Service Development and Marketing

Cc: David Armijo

James Pachan

Linda Morris

Nathan Landau

Gail Payne

John Atkinson, Nelson Nygaard



Service Development and Marketing Department
1600 Franklin Street, Oakland CA 94612

September 13, 2013

Alameda Planning Board
Alameda Transportation Commission
c/o Gayle Payne
Public Works Department
2263 Santa Clara Ave.
Alameda, Ca. 94501

Re: AC Transit Comments to the Transportation Commission on City of Alameda Regional Transit Access Study

Dear Boardmembers, Commissioners:

Introduction

AC Transit appreciates the opportunity to submit comments about the Regional Transit Access Study. We submit these comments to assist both your review of the transit study itself, and of the integrally connected plans for Alameda Point. AC Transit is also reviewing other Alameda Point planning documents such as the Master Infrastructure Plan and the Town Center/Waterfront Plan, and may submit comments about those plans under separate cover.

This letter is based on, and incorporates elements of, our letter of January 31, 2013 to Matt Naclerio, then Public Works Director. Many of our concerns continue from that letter, which the City did not formally respond to.

As we noted at that time, AC Transit is pleased that Alameda is actively evaluating its expected transit needs, treating them as a municipal priority, and working with AC Transit. The study focuses on some of the most important corridors and connections for Alameda Point and Alameda generally.

However, we are concerned that some elements of the study are incomplete, while others are speculative. The Board and the Commission are being asked to approve the study as a key element in planning for Alameda Point. In our view, the Board and the Commission should delay action on the study until such time as you can thoroughly review it, and modify it as needed.

RTAS Routing Concept

Alameda's proposed Rapid bus from 12th St. BART through Lincoln Ave. to Fruitvale BART would, as the study notes, follow the route of a portion of AC Transit line 51A. (We will refer to the proposed line as a Rapid because, without a dedicated bus lane on most of the route, it is generally most similar to the Rapid lines that AC Transit operates.) Line 51A, which continues past Downtown Oakland to Rockridge BART, is a trunk route for AC Transit, one of AC Transit's busiest lines. Line 51A takes some 7,000 daily passengers to and from Alameda every weekday, equivalent to almost 10% of the city's population.

The study is silent on the relationship of line 51A to the Alameda Rapid. Would line 51A be the Rapid between 12th St. and Fruitvale? In that case, how would the need for local service on the corridor be met? The approximately ½ mile distance between stops proposed in the study is appropriate for a rapid, but too long for local service. It is also not clear the extent to which the corridor could support both a local and a rapid service.

There are a number of possible options. Line 51A could operate as the Rapid, operating with a local line. Stop spacing could be narrowed to approximately 1/3 mile—the distance between stops on the International Blvd. Bus Rapid Transit line--possibly allowing the Rapid and local to be consolidated. The 51A could continue to operate as a local, though it would be peculiar to have the longer 51A route to Rockridge as a local with the shorter Alameda route as the Rapid.

This issue is key for AC Transit in planning service in the Downtown Oakland-Alameda-Fruitvale corridor. We cannot develop service plans here without clarifying the basic structure of line 51A and other services..

Santa Clara Ave. vs. Lincoln Ave. as streets for bus operations: The study assumes that a new rapid will operate on Lincoln Ave., and that local bus service will also be moved there from Santa Clara Ave. AC Transit agrees that rapid and local service should operate on the same street. AC Transit does not support this change in route, and recommends that bus service remain on Santa Clara Ave.

We do not understand the rationale for the recommendation to move from Santa Clara to Lincoln. Santa Clara is and has long been an excellent street for bus operations. It is also more central to the island—north to south—than Lincoln. If the line moved north to Lincoln, many residents south of Encinal Ave. would be more than ½ mile from the route. Serving the residents south of Encinal within reasonable walking distance would then require an additional route.

If a dedicated bus lane were being proposed in this corridor, the wider right of way of Lincoln would be a better choice. But the study recommends against dedicated lanes in the North Alameda corridor. While Lincoln appears to be a viable transit operating street, Santa Clara, with its minimum of traffic signals and commercial traffic activity, is better.

It is also clear from the line 51 TPI project that making change to bus facilities, even moving a stop across a minor street, can be quite difficult. Moving entire lines to different streets, and quite possibly adding a new one, would be far more difficult, with little compensating benefit.

AC Transit recommends that existing and new bus service operate on Santa Clara Ave.

Proposed Route in Oakland --The proposed route to Oakland City Center seems somewhat long. In addition, because the proposed stops are not on a single street or couplet, they would be harder for passengers to understand and find. Staff has indicated that it deliberately avoided Broadway as a route in Downtown Oakland. Since Broadway is the transit spine for Downtown Oakland, allowing the easiest transfers to other bus routes and BART, this service should operate along Broadway to the greatest degree feasible.

Service from Alameda Point to Fruitvale BART: This is a question that AC Transit does not have a specific recommendation about. We simply wish to raise the issue.

The study recommends that new Alameda Point service operate to 12th St. (Oakland City Center) BART in Oakland. 12th St. is clearly the single most important regional connection point to BART and the bus network, and as an employment center. The study argues that a strong connection to 12th St. will allow trips to Fruitvale BART as quickly as a direct bus, obviating the need for direct bus service. However, the travel time calculation for Fruitvale BART via 12th St. (p.77) fails to incorporate waiting time or transfer time. Nor does it consider the possibility of delays entering the Tube and navigating the streets of Downtown Oakland.

Perhaps more importantly, direct service from Fruitvale and East Alameda to Alameda Point might attract new riders and raise Alameda residents' transit commute share. Table 2-8 (p.24) shows that 39% of jobs in Alameda are held by Alameda residents. This makes intra-Alameda commutes a key target of opportunity for increasing transit patronage in Alameda. Intra-Alameda commutes are critical to reducing both traffic volumes and parking demand at Alameda Point.

Phasing and Service Delivery: Regional Transit Access Study Chapter 6

AC Transit is quite concerned about the approach to phasing transit service laid out in this chapter. We believe that it would be at best difficult to implement. The approach is also based on speculative assumptions about costs and route structure.

Shuttles Turning Into Transit

This chapter proposes service delivery phasing wherein initial transit service would be operated as "shuttles", and AC Transit routes would be instituted later (see p. 125, Regional Transit Access Study). While the chapter acknowledges the possibility of AC Transit serving as initial operator, it focuses on the idea of beginning with shuttles.

We are not aware of any transit services that began as shuttles--point to point, free to the passenger service, and then made the transition to a regular transit route. Such a transition would not be the continuation of an existing service, but the creation of a new service with a new operator, new hours of operation, new schedules, and possibly new stops and new fares. The changeover would be confusing for passengers, and passenger complaints are likely. We do not see a strong rationale for this approach.

Transit Costs and Characteristics

The shuttle and transit cost discussion assumes an AC Transit cost of \$150 per hour, even as it acknowledges that AC Transit charges \$85 per hour to operate the Broadway Shuttle for the City of Oakland. The chapter repeatedly speculates on what AC Transit would charge to operate this service. This speculation is premature and not grounded in any actual cost estimate by AC Transit. If AC Transit were to operate the service, the charge would be determined in close consultation with the City of Alameda. This would be considered as a unique service. Numerous factors would be considered including the service plan, the relationship of service to other routes in Alameda, and any shared routings outside Alameda. The \$150 per hour figure is therefore misleading if used in analysis. At the same time, the \$48-55 per hour figure for shuttles is far below the costs of existing services.

Value of an Integrated Transit System

The shuttle proposal raises concerns beyond simply cost effectiveness or agency transition. Bus operations to Alameda Point by AC Transit will be integrated with other AC Transit service. There would be not only physical integration of service, but fare integration. If Alameda Point residents and workers receive an AC Transit pass, they can use it throughout the system. This integration would be helpful both to new Alameda Point passengers and to existing AC Transit passengers coming to Alameda Point.

A shuttle, by contrast, is definitionally a separate service. Since the shuttle would not be an AC Transit service, shuttle passengers would have to pay an additional fare to use other AC Transit lines. The shuttle's informational and wayfinding signage would be separate and different. Shuttles would also require separate administration, contributing to the proliferation of transit agencies in the Bay Area. Passengers would not be best served by this approach.

One Way Bus Lane along Atlantic/Ralph Appezatto

The Master Infrastructure Plan and other documents indicate that Alameda's long term plan for Atlantic/Ralph Appezatto Parkway would provide a bus lane in the eastbound direction only. This lane would initially be used as a bike trail, then converted when travel demand increased.

Needless to say, this conversion would be extremely difficult, and likely to encounter resistance. A one way bus lane is likely to unbalance AC Transit's service, and create potential confusion for auto drivers. Reports state that eastbound traffic along the street is more congested than westbound. Even if this is the case today, westbound congestion will increase as Alameda Point develops, particularly as an employment center. The plan should incorporate bus lanes in both directions.

We look forward to continued collaboration with Alameda in formulating plans for Alameda Point. If you have any questions about these comments, please contact Nathan Landau at 891-4792.

Yours Truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert del Rosario". The signature is stylized with large, overlapping loops and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Robert del Rosario
Director of Service Development and Marketing

Cc: Chris Peeples,
Joel Young,
Elsa Ortiz,
David Armijo,
Linda Nemeroff,
Dennis Butler,
Linda Morris,
Nathan Landau,
John Uργο