

# ***Improving Bicycle and Pedestrian Access across the Estuary***

## ***September 2016***

### **Better Crossing Needed**

The City of Alameda strongly supports developing improved multi-modal access between the west end of Alameda and Oakland, by taking a phased approach that balances the need for improvements in the near, mid and long term, within the context of all transportation staff and budget priorities. To realize the ideal solution of a bicycle and pedestrian bridge, a long-term goal, the major obstacle of the Coast Guard required navigational clearances must first be addressed.

While there are currently many options for people walking and bicycling to cross the estuary, including using the Posey Tubes, taking a bus or ferry, or using the City-initiated Estuary Crossing Shuttle, none of these are convenient, comfortable or inviting. Many more people would walk and bicycle between Alameda and Oakland, if an improved crossing existed. An additional crossing would serve commuters, recreational riders, and tourists and could also act as an emergency lifeline transportation corridor in the event of a disaster.

### **2009 Estuary Crossing Feasibility Study**

In 2009, the City developed a comprehensive [Estuary Crossing Feasibility Study Report](#) to analyze and evaluate all of the potential improvements. A top consulting firm, that specializes in bridge design and has designed bridges throughout the world, led the study. This planning effort was the first to directly analyze the feasibility of new or improved estuary crossings, with the goal of developing crossing designs that would appeal to users, adjacent communities, decision-makers, transit providers and funding authorities. It was a multi-jurisdictional effort, with the active involvement of Caltrans, the Coast Guard, Oakland and the Alameda County Transportation Commission. Near, mid, and long-term solutions were explored, including many bridge types, improvements to the Posey/Webster Tubes, and bus and water shuttle services.

The top feasible bridge option was determined to be a moveable Bicycle-Pedestrian Bridge that would cost \$75 million to construct and \$1.5 million to operate annually. It was recommended that this option only be moved forward if following issues could be addressed:

- The US Coast Guard allows the bridge to remain closed during peak times;
- The moveable span of the bridge, which is currently at 600 feet, is reduced to a more manageable horizontal clearance;
- The height of the bridge is reduced to a level that does not require significant closing and opening times; and
- The cost of construction could be justified for regional funding support.

The first three above constraints are based on the navigational clearances provided by the Coast Guard, which proved to make the bridge options essentially infeasible or impractical.

The Study recommended that the City “work with stakeholders to determine if vessel restrictions during commute hours could be possible, vertical and horizontal clearances could be reduced and funding could be obtained.”

In the short-term, the Study recommended making improvements to the Posey Tube (which Caltrans recently completed). In the mid-term, the recommendation was for a water shuttle/taxi to operate across the estuary. The next steps in this Study were to move forward with developing the water shuttle/taxi alternative.

## **Moving Forward**

The City and other regional agencies have been, and are, moving forward on many fronts with improving bicycling and walking access across the estuary. This is a phased approach that acknowledges that improvements are needed in the near term, and the ideal solution will take longer to accomplish.

### ***Since 2009:***

- Estuary Crossing Shuttle: The City developed and found funding to operate this shuttle between Oakland and Alameda, starting in 2011. It accommodates 10 bicycles, and operates Monday-Friday during commute hours.
- Posey Tube Walkway Improvements: As recommended in the Estuary Crossing Study, Caltrans upgraded the walkway guardrails and made other structural changes which widened the pathway slightly and improved its safety.

### ***Near-Term Actions:***

- Staff recommend working with the Coast Guard to directly address the issue of their required navigational clearances, and see if we can find a mutually acceptable solution. City staff do not recommend expending \$250,000 to develop a new feasibility study for a bridge, since the main impediment is these clearances.
- The City sent a letter to Senator Barbara Boxer's office, indicating that we would welcome her assistance in working with the Coast Guard on re-evaluating their clearances, since other stakeholders beyond Alameda are needed in discussions with this federal agency.
- In the event that something was missed in the 2009 Study, the City will engage a bridge engineer to do a peer review of the 2009 Study, to see if any approaches or ideas were missed or if there are critical areas that have changed since 2009 that would substantially change the study recommendations. Staff feel this is a more strategic and cost-effective approach than a new feasibility study.
- Staff are also exploring the option of improving the Posey Tube to double the space available for bicycling, and improve ventilation, and believe there may be funding available for this in the near future.
- The City is seeking funding to develop a feasibility study for a water shuttle, which was the top feasible recommendation in the Estuary Crossing Study.
- Caltrans submitted a Feasibility Study project to Alameda CTC for inclusion in the Countywide Transportation Plan (CWTP), and is considering submitting a funding application for this in the 2016 funding cycle. The City will encourage Caltrans to take the lead and submit this application.
- The City will develop an informational fact sheet describing in detail the current options for bicyclists and pedestrians to cross the estuary on the west end.
- The Transit and TDM Plan that is currently underway will include recommendations on improving bicycle and pedestrian access across the estuary on the west end.
- Advocate for Miller-Sweeney Bridge replacement, with bike/ped/transit access
- Continue to work with BART on possible new Alameda BART station on west end and encourage consideration of improved bicycle/pedestrian access.

***Mid-Term Actions:***

- Establish a water shuttle that links destinations on either side of the estuary, in partnership with developers in the Alameda and Oakland.

***Long-Term Actions:***

- Once all constraints are addressed, build a new bicycle and pedestrian bridge or complete new Tube with dedicated transit, bicycle and pedestrian access.
- Possible future BART station built on west end with dual access between Alameda and Oakland
- New Miller-Sweeney Bridge built that provides high quality bicycle and pedestrian access.