

*** DRAFT for City Council***

November 18, 2020

Ms. Lindsay Vivian, Chief
Office of Environmental Analysis
Caltrans District 4
111 Grand Avenue, MS-8B
Oakland, CA 94612

Trinity Nguyen, Director of Project Delivery
Alameda County Transportation Commission
1111 Broadway, Suite 800
Oakland, CA 94607
510.208.7400

Subject: Oakland Alameda Access Project and Environmental Impact Report

Dear Ms. Lindsay Vivian and Ms. Trinity Nguyen:

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the Oakland Alameda Access project and the Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment (DEIR/EA). Our comments on the DEIR/EA will be sent separately, before the November 30th comment deadline.

In May 2014, the Alameda County Transportation Commission (Alameda CTC) assured the City of Alameda that the Commission “remains committed to the delivery of improvement projects not only to resolve traffic and transportation issues in and around the Posey and Webster Tubes area in the vicinity of the Broadway-Jackson interchange, **but also to the delivery of multimodal and access circulation improvements for Alameda Point**, as well as Oakland Chinatown, Downtown Oakland, and Jack London Square.” (See Attachment 1: May 14, 2014 letter from Alameda CTC Chair Scott Haggerty and Vice Chair Rebecca Kaplan to Alameda Mayor Marie Gilmore.)

In November 2014, the voters of Alameda County voted to include \$75 million for “**multimodal transportation and circulation improvements for Alameda Point**, Oakland Chinatown, Downtown Oakland, and Jack London Square” when they approved the Transportation Expenditure Plan (TEP) for Measure BB.

After six years of design work, the cities of Alameda and Oakland must now decide whether the project has fulfilled its promises to the voters.

The City of Alameda believes the project does an excellent job of rectifying and reducing the ongoing impacts of the original freeway design on the Oakland Chinatown community, that the project will significantly improve pedestrian and bicycle safety in Oakland Chinatown, and that these improvements are long overdue.

The project will also benefit Alameda motorists by reducing travel time for motorists traveling to and from Interstate 880 by reducing the number of Oakland city blocks an Alameda motorist needs to travel to access the freeway.

However, the City of Alameda is concerned that the project does not improve bicycle, pedestrian or transit access across the estuary between Alameda and Oakland, and therefore will not reduce the total number of people driving through the Tubes, on Oakland streets, or onto the freeway. As shown in the DEIR/EA, the freeway traffic and associated on-ramps and off-ramps will continue to operate at level of service (LOS) of F, even with construction of the project. Ultimately, the goal for our cities, county and region must be to reduce automobile vehicle miles traveled and encourage and support non-single-occupant vehicle modes of travel.

The proposed project includes a plan to open up the existing maintenance walkway in the Webster Tube and widen it to 4-feet. This walkway may provide an emergency evacuation route for motorists whose automobiles break down in the Tube, but it will not provide an effective bicycle or pedestrian facility between Oakland and Alameda. This new walkway will be just as inadequate and uninviting for bicyclists and pedestrians as the existing 3-foot walkway in the Posey Tube. We must hold ourselves to a higher standard if we are to achieve our goals of providing for the needs and safety of all users, not just motorists, and reducing regional congestion and greenhouse gas emissions.

Despite these significant reservations and concerns, the City of Alameda will support the Oakland Alameda Access Project, subject to three conditions:

Condition #1. City of Oakland Support. If the City of Oakland wishes to proceed with the project, the City of Alameda will support the project. But if the City of Oakland chooses not to support the project, the City of Alameda will withdraw its support and request that Alameda CTC stand by their 2014 written commitment to the City of Alameda (see Attachment 1) that, if for any reason the project does not proceed, Alameda CTC will re-allocate the funds to *“to alternative transportation methods to and from Alameda Point without the need to amend the 2014 TEP, and the signatories to this letter will support such action.”*

Condition #2. Bicycle and Pedestrian Access Improvements. This project does not meet the commitment for multimodal improvements between Oakland and Alameda and Alameda Point made to voters who supported Measure BB in 2014. Therefore Alameda’s support for the project is conditioned upon a commitment by the Alameda CTC to lead the next steps in the regional effort to build a bicycle and pedestrian bridge between the two cities and to fund a Project Study Report (PSR) (estimated cost \$1.4 million) and Project Approval/Environmental Document phase (estimated cost \$4.4 million) for the Oakland to Alameda Bicycle and Pedestrian Bridge.

We now know, based upon work completed over the last year which was funded by Alameda CTC that it is feasible to build a world-class bicycle and pedestrian bridge between the two cities that meets Coast Guard and Port of Oakland stated navigational clearance requirements. We also know that approximately 5,000 to 6,000 bicyclists and pedestrians will use the bridge each week day, resulting in over 40,000 fewer auto trips across the estuary per week. This bicycle and pedestrian bridge is recommended in the City of Oakland’s Downtown Specific Plan and their Bicycle Plan, the Caltrans District 4 Bicycle Plan, and the City

of Alameda's Transportation Choices Plan, Climate Action and Resiliency Plan, draft General Plan 2040 and draft Active Transportation Plan.

Condition #3. Transit Access Improvements. The project does not include any improvements designed to facilitate and improve transit service between Oakland and Alameda. We request that the next phase of design work include enhancements to transit access to and from the Webster and Posey Tubes both in Oakland and Alameda, to further improve the project's promised multi-modal and circulation improvements.

With these commitments, the project will provide the "multimodal improvement" between Alameda and Oakland as promised to the voters in 2014. They will also reduce vehicle miles traveled, greenhouse gas emissions, and automobile traffic in Chinatown and surrounding areas, and will support Alameda County's and the Cities of Oakland and Alameda's commitment to building a better, more equitable, and more sustainable Bay Area.

Thank you for your consideration of our concerns and requests.

Sincerely,

Marilyn Ezzy Ashcraft, Mayor

Attachment:

1. May 2014 Letter from Alameda CTC to City of Alameda