

# ALAMEDA-CONTRA COSTA TRANSIT DISTRICT



## STAFF REPORT

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**MEETING DATE:** 11/9/2022

**Staff Report No.** 22-567

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**TO:** AC Transit Board of Directors  
**FROM:** Michael A. Hursh, General Manager/Chief Executive Officer  
**SUBJECT:** Quarterly Report on District Involvement in External Planning Processes

### BRIEFING ITEM

**AGENDA PLANNING REQUEST:**

**RECOMMENDED ACTION(S):**

Consider receiving the Quarterly Report on the District's involvement in external planning processes.

Staff Contact:  
Ramakrishna Pochiraju, Executive Director of Planning & Engineering

**STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE:**

Goal - Strong Public and Policymaker Support  
Initiative - Service Quality

External planning activities develop public and policymaker support by facilitating dialogue and consensus between cities, AC Transit, and other stakeholders about their proposals affecting transit. The District's participation in these activities is generally designed to improve or maintain service quality. Proposals by cities and other entities can improve operating conditions for AC Transit service or degrade them if not monitored closely.

**BUDGETARY/FISCAL IMPACT:**

There is no direct budgetary/fiscal impact associated with this report.

**BACKGROUND/RATIONALE:**

AC Transit's operations and service are affected not just by our own planning, but also by the planning of governmental agencies at multiple levels-state, regional, county, and city. Our district includes 13 cities and portions of 2 counties. Actions of these agencies can affect AC Transit positively or negatively in funding, policymaking, roadway design, transit performance and land use. Therefore, the District seeks to monitor and affect other agencies' plan-making on an ongoing basis. Resources permitting, the District seeks to take an active role in these planning processes. Activities include participating on Technical Advisory Committees, submitting comments on plans, designs and other documents, and speaking before staff and governing bodies.

This report summarizes transportation and land-use planning processes led by these other agencies, which affect AC Transit. It focuses primarily on long-range planning activities rather than project-level

implementation. A list and summary of these planning processes is included as Attachment 1. The report covers planning activities from July through mid-October 2022.

Planning activities in mid-2022 continued to be conducted primarily on-line, although some agencies are starting to hold in-person and hybrid meetings. Large scale regional and sub- regional planning processes and plans did not reach milestones during this period.

### **Housing Elements**

This quarter's focus is on Housing Elements of **General Plans**. Housing Elements cover many topics. They are primarily of interest to AC Transit because they indicate where cities expect and support new housing development. Given this information, the District can then gauge the extent to which cities expect future development to be transit oriented and transit supportive.

The District may wish to comment on the level of transit supportiveness of Elements.

Housing Elements must credibly show how a city's zoning will allow it to reach its target level of housing development in eight years, by 2031. This may require making zoning more permissive ("upzoning") in various parts of a city. The cities do not actually have to develop the housing, only to make it possible through their zoning. Cities can count housing development in the approval or construction pipeline towards their targets. The target is set through the Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) process conducted by the Association of Bay Governments (ABAG).

Housing Elements are a particular focus of statewide interest this year. The RHNA targets for each city have been increased, often substantially, reflecting the state housing shortage. In addition, the state Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) is being much more proactive than previously in its review of Housing Elements. For most cities under review, HCD has not approved initial drafts and has identified portions of the Element which must be improved.

Public participation was required for preparation of the Element and is again required when HCD returns the Elements to cities. This gives the District the opportunity to comment on Housing Elements if it so wishes. To date, only one Element in the AC Transit district-the city of Alameda's-has been approved by HCD.

Staff has conducted a review of the draft Housing Elements for the five largest cities in the AC Transit district-Berkeley, Fremont, Hayward, Oakland, Richmond. The Elements are major documents, ranging from 532-800 pages, with appendices. Staff's review focused on the proposed locations for future housing development. In general, their Elements support transit-oriented development as an important contributor to future housing growth. However, they differ in their degree of clarity about this topic.

Staff also notes that additional elements of cities' **General Plans** such as Transportation, Environmental Justice and Land Use may also be of interest to AC Transit.

Housing Elements by City:

**Berkeley**-Berkeley is required, under RHNA, to assure its zoning and pipeline development will allow the addition of 8,934 units over the next 8 years. The Element calculates that Berkeley's zoning allows 12,179 units of additional development. It also notes that it is undertaking studies of the Telegraph and San Pablo Avenue corridors which may create more permissive zoning. Berkeley does not quantify the amount of housing which

is close to BART stations and other major transit stops. However, potential sites identified on the Element's potential development map show that they are focused on Downtown Berkeley, in the Southside of Campus, and on frequent transit corridors such as Shattuck, Telegraph, San Pablo, and University Avenues.

**Fremont**-Under RHNA, Fremont is required to assure that its zoning allows for 12,897 additional units. The city calculates that it can provide for 17,748 units, which is a relatively small buffer of 14% capacity over RHNA requirements. The Element notes that it has over 700 planned districts with special zoning, some of which could be up zoned. Fremont notes that much of its housing development in recent years has been around the new Warm Springs BART station and in other transit-oriented developments. They expect that this trend will continue, but do not quantify the amount or percentage of development they expect in these areas.

**Hayward**-Hayward's Housing Element provides a clear projection of the transit orientation of future housing development. Hayward is mandated to provide zoned capacity for an additional 4,624 units. However, the Element identifies potential for 5,913 units. The majority of these units-59%--are anticipated to be built in three transit accessible areas. These three areas constitute only a small proportion of the city's overall area. They are Downtown Hayward, the Mission Boulevard corridor, and the former Route 238 corridor (much of which is close to Mission Boulevard). The Element states that the city has adequate current zoned capacity to meet its RHNA goal. However, the Element also proposes to conduct a review of zoning districts to determine the feasibility of additional development in lower density areas.

**Oakland**-Oakland is mandated to provide zoned capacity for 26,251 additional housing units, which it states can be achieved with current zoning. The city does plan to develop standards that facilitate "missing middle" housing such as 2-4 unit buildings and townhomes. The Element projects that in the next eight years, most housing development will occur in four of nine community planning areas. These are Downtown Oakland, West Oakland, Eastlake/Fruitvale, and North Oakland/Adams Point. Almost all of Downtown Oakland is served by BART and/or frequent bus lines, as is much of Eastlake/ Fruitvale and North Oakland. However, the city has not provided numerical estimates of likely development by area, or by access to transit.

Oakland is the only city so far among these four to receive its review letter from HCD. Among various other comments, HCD noted that participants in the process (Such as SPUR) questioned the lack of development identified in North Oakland, particularly at and near Rockridge BART.

**Richmond**-Richmond anticipates publishing its draft Housing Element in November and submitting it for HCD review in January 2023.

### **ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES:**

External planning processes provide AC Transit with opportunities to influence decisions by cities, counties, and other agencies that affect roadway design, transit and land use. In addition, our participation ensures transit service plans can anticipate and adjust to meet the needs of the community.

The disadvantage is that participation in external planning processes can be time-consuming with no guarantee of positive results for the District.

### **ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS:**

Because this report does not recommend an action, there is no alternatives analysis.

**PRIOR RELEVANT BOARD ACTION/POLICIES:**

Staff Report 22-379, External Planning

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. External Planning Tracker

**Prepared by:**

Nathan Landau, Senior Transportation Planner, Long Range Planning

**Approved/Reviewed by:**

Ramakrishna Pochiraju, Executive Director of Planning & Engineering

Robert del Rosario, Director of Service Development and Planning

Claudia Burgos, Director of Legislative Affairs & Community Relations

Beverly Greene, Executive Director of External Affairs, Marketing & Communications