

ALAMEDA-CONTRA COSTA TRANSIT DISTRICT



STAFF REPORT

MEETING DATE: 4/10/2024

Staff Report No. 24-217

TO: AC Transit Board of Directors
FROM: Michael A. Hursh, General Manager/Chief Executive Officer
SUBJECT: AC Transit's Participation in MTC's Regional Transit Priority Efforts

BRIEFING ITEM

AGENDA PLANNING REQUEST:

RECOMMENDED ACTION(S):

Consider receiving an update on AC Transit's participation in the Metropolitan Transportation Commission's (MTC's) regional transit priority efforts.

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

STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE:

Goal - Convenient and Reliable Service
Initiative - Service Quality

Participating in MTC's regional transit priority efforts would help address the District's challenges related to transit speed and service reliability on key corridors where there is congestion and a need for transit priority elements.

BUDGETARY/FISCAL IMPACT:

Participation in the transit priority component of MTC's Transit Transformation Action Plan (TAP) will have a positive fiscal impact for AC Transit's transit priority capital needs. Policies developed to support regional transit priority will help set regional funding priorities that could be favorable to the District and the District's involvement in the process provides opportunities to align future funding with the District's needs.

Additionally, the Bus Accelerated Infrastructure Delivery (BusAID) program will fund a number of transit priority projects. In response to this program, AC Transit staff submitted two projects, Park Avenue Transit Signal Priority (TSP) and International Boulevard Transit Lane Delineation. If selected to move forward, AC Transit could receive up to \$8.09 million in new grant funds to implement transit priority treatments on these corridors. An award will most likely come with a local match requirement which would require commitment of District funds of up to \$2.0 million. The exact amount depends on the amount and source of the funding awarded.

BACKGROUND/RATIONALE:

In July 2021, MTC adopted the TAP that laid out strategies to help transit survive pandemic-related disruptions and thrive in the recovery phase. A crucial element of the TAP established in April 2023 was the Transit Priority Program (TPP). The TPP aims to advance transit priority in the region through the following initiatives: Bus Accelerated Infrastructure Delivery (BusAID) and the Regional Transit Priority Policy.

BusAID

BusAID aims to expedite the implementation of transit priority treatments to improve vehicle speed and reliability across the Bay Area region, with a focus on maximizing transit travel time savings and service reliability improvements for the most people as quickly as possible. During the November 2023 presentation to the AC Transit Board of Directors, the BusAID program managers provided an introductory overview of the initiative. Two key points that were covered in the presentation are:

- The program kicked off in Spring 2023, during which program managers conducted interviews with transit operators to identify transit priority hot spots throughout the region.
- AC Transit staff actively participated in these interviews and provided feedback to help identify locations where transit priority improvements could have a significant benefit to travel time speed and reliability yet are relatively easy and quick to implement.

MTC scored all the hot spot locations using a process that incorporated three (3) weighted criteria:

- **Transit Service:** determined by total ridership and delay reduction
- **Equity:** assessed based on rider demographics and presence of Equity Priority Communities (EPCs)
- **Priority Development Area:** evaluated by the presence of Priority Development Areas (PDAs)

The results of the scoring process resulted in two (2) District projects that were chosen for further consideration under the BusAID's feasibility and readiness assessment phase:

- **Park Street Transit Signal Priority (TSP) and Signal Timing Adjustments, Alameda** - To install GPS-tracking TSP technology and optimize signals along Park Street, between Alameda Avenue and Otis Drive. Since the City of Alameda has already implemented TSP technology and signal optimization along the rest of Park Street (from Blanding Avenue to Central Avenue), this project will complete the TSP network along the remainder of the corridor. This project is significant since the City implemented a road diet which slowed down traffic, including buses.
- **International Boulevard Transit Lane Delineation, Oakland** - To install road treatments within the city limits of Oakland to emphasize the transit-only lane and improve both motorist compliance and transit performance. This project continues the ongoing efforts to improve the corridor for all users.

Based on feasibility and time scheduling constraints, AC Transit staff decided to not immediately pursue a third project - a Fremont Boulevard Cloud-Based TSP system. AC Transit staff conducted feasibility and readiness assessments for the Park Street and International Boulevard projects. These assessments were submitted to MTC in February 2024, and we anticipate receiving feedback from MTC on the proposed hot spot treatments in April 2024. Depending on that feedback, MTC expects to propose awarding funds for implementation by fall 2024 and into 2025.

Regional Transit Priority Policy

The purpose of the Regional Transit Priority Policy is to accelerate implementation of transit priority treatments by addressing existing challenges, including inefficient project delivery processes, difficult coordination between transit operators and roadway owners, constrained roadway capacity, and limited

funding and staff availability. MTC sponsored a workshop in December 2023 to kick off the development of the policy with transit agencies, city/county and Caltrans staff, and transit advocates. MTC aims to finalize the policy adoption by late 2024. AC Transit staff currently participates in an ad-hoc working group dedicated to developing the policy. In addition, Mika Miyasato, a principal planner for the District, represents all of the transit operators in the region on developing this policy and co-managing MTC's transit priority program under the TAP.

ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES:

The advantages of participating in regional transit transformation efforts include influence over regional transit policies, enhanced collaboration and coordination among transit agencies, and access to funding opportunities. BusAID specifically offers AC Transit a valuable opportunity to collaborate with the region to identify high-value, low-cost investments and lay the groundwork for funding that fits our needs. The program would also provide immediate funding for transit priority projects that would improve transit travel time and reliability along International Boulevard and Park Street, two high-ridership corridors identified in the Major Corridors Study (2016).

One disadvantage of participating is amount of staff time required. Despite this, the alternative of not participating would lead to exclusion from BusAID funding opportunities and the chance to shape decisions affecting AC Transit operations and transit infrastructure. Thus staff felt it was prudent for AC Transit to engage in the program to maximize chances of securing funding and other resources for advancing transit priority improvements in the District. Additionally, the funding source for BusAID necessitates a local match, posing a potential financial disadvantage.

ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS:

Since this report does not recommend any action, there is no alternative analysis.

PRIOR RELEVANT BOARD ACTION/POLICIES:

Staff Report No. 23-455: MTC's Transit Priority Policy

ATTACHMENTS:

None

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