

ALAMEDA-CONTRA COSTA TRANSIT DISTRICT



STAFF REPORT

MEETING DATE: 1/23/2019

Staff Report No. 19-034

TO: AC Transit Board of Directors
FROM: Michael A. Hursh, General Manager
SUBJECT: AC Transit Bus Parklet Design Manual

ACTION ITEM

RECOMMENDED ACTION(S):

Consider adopting the AC Transit *Bus Parklet Design Manual*.

BUDGETARY/FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no budgetary or fiscal impact associated with this action item. Consultant services to complete the guidelines cost the District \$69,994 in grant funds from the Regional Measure 2 "Safe Routes to Transit" program administered through Transform. Another \$30,000 was used to support the construction of a demonstration parklet on Solano Avenue at Cornell in Albany at a stop serving Lines 18 and G.

BACKGROUND/RATIONALE:

Parklets are a form of tactical urbanism that seeks to repurpose parking spaces into an extension of the sidewalk and usually include seating and public communal gather space for patrons of nearby businesses and other activities intended to add uses to the sidewalk. They are typically sponsored, funded, and constructed by local businesses and implemented with a permit from the local jurisdiction. However, they are open and available to the public. There are dozens around the Bay Area, including many in our service area. They do not typically create operational issues with our buses unless the sponsoring business would like to convert an existing AC Transit stop into a parklet for their customers and the general public. This typically results in the request to relocate the AC Transit bus stop away from the parklet location until staff devised a strategy to integrate the two into a common, functional, public space.

In 2014, AC Transit was awarded \$100,000 of "Safe Routes to Transit" funds to develop guidance on how to incorporate bus stops into a proposed parklet. The District awarded a contract to Community Design & Architecture to assist staff with research, peer review, and production of the design manual and associated materials. The scope of work included the following:

- A compelling narrative describing the elements of a bus stop parklet and the benefits of public-private partnerships associated with implementing bus stop parklets ("stoplets").
- Clear, attractive illustrations of requirements for a variety of scenarios with minimum and preferred dimensions called out;
- Rough cost estimates for each treatment to help city staff include transit facilities into cost estimates and grant applications;

- A peer-review of parklets and policies related to those parklets at other transit agencies and cities; and
- Recommendations for responsibilities between the transit agency, cities, and stoplet sponsors.

The demonstration project was completed in early 2018 and has been extremely popular with local residents and AC Transit customers as it is much more inviting than a typical bus stop. This stoplet was born out of collaboration between the owners of As You Wish Frozen Yogurt (the project sponsor), the City of Albany, and AC Transit. It is the **first stoplet in the nation** and has proven to be a clear example of the outcomes that can be achieved when multiple stakeholders work together towards a common goal. The design manual itself serves as a blueprint for how to implement these types of projects at other stops in the service area.

Design Manual Content

The design manual is broken into six key sections:

- 1) Overview of stoplets and associated guidelines,
- 2) Siting Considerations,
- 3) Design Recommendations,
- 4) Design Elements,
- 5) Site Design Prototypes, and
- 6) Maintenance.

These sections serve two primary purposes: the first is to clearly delineate responsibilities for specific elements of implementing a stoplet; and the second is to serve as a blueprint for how to implement parklets and the proper conditions for doing so.

In terms of responsibilities, the design manual makes clear that AC Transit is not responsible for designing, funding, building, or maintaining the stoplet but rather for reviewing possible sites and designs to ensure they do not impede bus operations, meet ADA requirements, and adhere to relevant AC Transit policies.

Identifying an appropriate candidate for a stoplet depends on many factors including but not limited to: the roadway configuration, posted/actual vehicle speeds, parking configuration, and many other factors. Tailoring design elements for each potential stoplet will depend on site constraints, context, and local jurisdictional preference.

The guide concludes with a discussion of maintenance considerations. Stoplets are on the edge of the roadway corridor and located in densely populated environments, which accumulate debris during all seasons. Providing and implementing an effective maintenance program ensures functionality and a pleasant environment for all users.

Given the first-ever stoplet was only installed in Albany in 2018, much of the design manual was developed through discussions with other transit agencies and cities about how their non-bus-stop parklets are handled, and merging that with the District's own bus stop requirements.

Staff will post the completed document on the District's website and distribute it to all stakeholders. Ultimately, staff hopes to see many more stoplets in the AC Transit service area and will provide this document to any interested sponsors and local jurisdictions. Staff will also incorporate the guidelines in the design manual into an upcoming revision to the District's Bus Stop Policy.

The Bus Parklet Design Manual was reviewed by various key internal and external stakeholders, including the District's operations and maintenance departments, local jurisdictions and the Accessible Advisory Committee.

ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES:

The Design Manual has many advantages for the District:

- It defines an additional design feature to better integrate bus stops into urban landscapes
- It aims to build strong partnerships with local jurisdictions and businesses who may have opposed the presence of bus stops in the past.
- It demonstrates a form of tactical urbanism for transit that is relatively low cost compared to other transit capital improvements

Staff could not identify any disadvantages associated with this item.

ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS:

Staff considered not bringing the design manual forward for Board approval but this project was funded using Regional Measure 2 grant funds and represents an exciting new treatment for bus stops and having the Board adopt the manual will raise the profile of the guidance contained therein and help ensure any future stoplets meet District bus stop requirements

PRIOR RELEVANT BOARD ACTION/POLICIES:

13-262a - Apply for Regional Measure 2 Funds for Safe Routes to Transit Projects

17-100 - Pass-through Funding Agreement with City of Albany

ATTACHMENTS:

1. AC Transit *Bus Parklet Design Manual*

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