

City of Oakland – AC Transit Interagency Liaison Committee

Meeting Notes: December 4, 2024

Opening

A. Roll Call/Welcome and Introductions

- a. Meeting chaired by Councilmember Rebecca Kaplan

B. Announcements/Public Comments

- a. Public speaker in person: Speed cushion evaluation keeps getting postponed. Each time, more people are at risk of death and injury. I hope the report will include the risk to human life. USDOT has a statistical value of life; how much are we losing by postponing the evaluation?

C. Notes from Previous ILC Meeting

- a. No comments.

New Discussion Items

A. Bus Shelter Maintenance (general shelter update + maintenance contract update)

Presenters: Michael Ford (OakDOT)

Michael Ford: Providing an update on the City's bus shelters. Previously presented on bus shelter program inherited from Clear Channel Outdoor, in place since ~2000, about 100 shelters remaining. Given conditions and maintenance, determined it would be necessary to remove the glass panels, but learned that would interfere with the integrity of the shelters and present safety risks. The first task with our new contractors will be the systematic removal of all shelters beginning in December and taking about a month. Benches are separate, so we can maintain the benches. For certain stops, garbage cans will also remain. A situation last week where a vehicle plowed into a stop so we had an emergency removal; experienced how removals will go. Bus stops will be cleaned by current vendor until the end of the year.

Committee Questions and Comments:

Councilmember Kaplan: What has been the communication between City staff and AC Transit staff about this effort?

Ford: I've had multiple meetings with ACT maintenance team, who have also proactively reached out. We are coordinating so that as shelters come down, stops will get pole mounted schedules. Making sure that equipment on the shelters, like real time monitors, will be returned to ACT.

Councilmember Jenkins: Do we have an estimate of the cost savings that we'll have from no longer providing maintenance to the sites?

Ford: There's no precise cost. The shelter maintenance was done through Clear Channel advertising agreements, not the true cost. Original specs that it would be over \$500,000/year to maintain the shelters, but we've only had \$250,000 to dedicate this year, using for removal and cleaning. These shelters designed for advertising, lots of glass, bad idea unless generating ad revenue. Shelters really not sustainable.

Public Comment:

Speaker: This is a surprise, not mentioned on the agenda. Disappointed that this was hidden, and I think this is an exceptionally bad decision, especially going into the rainy season. Request to delay the decision and OakDOT look into other solutions. Glass is not the only item that could maintain the integrity of the shelter. Requesting that OakDOT, maybe ACT, look into that.

Victoria Wake (Diamond Improvement Association): We noticed the shelters in terrible shape a few months ago. Seems like a bad time of year to remove shelters and believe that you could insert some sort of perforated metal to protect people and provide place for real time departure signs. Makes the difference for convenience and bus riding. Would still be worried about canopy type shelter in the future. I would suggest one-for-one removal and replacement.

AB: I ride the bus and BART regularly. The closest stops do not have shelters, except for one, which I really appreciate. I had no idea this decision was being made until a friend emailed. This decision has been very opaque, not transparent, disability issue, going into rainy system. Takeaway of ad companies is not no bus shelters, but not outsourcing to private companies. Please don't do this unless you have an immediate solution.

Abby: Transportation policy advocate for Transform based on Oakland, I take ACT and BART. Requesting no removal of bus shelters without replacement, this is not a good plan, leaving people vulnerable and at risk. I encourage the board to look at other options.

Bryan Culbertson: Oakland resident commenting that we shouldn't be removing shelters without a replacement plan. Talking to riders at MTC events, people want more shelters; it's a top issue. Certain riders, like seniors, have mentioned bus shelters over frequency. Bare minimum is delaying until after rainy season; should also look to replacement or other solutions to keep.

Emily Walker: Regular ACT bus rider. Always appreciative of stops with shelters, which is rare. Eliminating the shelters without replacement is unacceptable and we need to be working to improve the rider experience. I guarantee you that riders care more about protection from the environment than vandalism.

Carter Lavin: Oakland resident, rider along Grand Ave, and cofounder of Transbay Coalition. Bus shelters should never be removed without immediate replacement. They are an essential part of the bus system and by doing this, the City will be forcing people to wait in the rain. There is no reason to do this now. Comfort and health are more important than aesthetic concern. Proposal should be reworked, and removal should be coupled with replacement and upgrading.

Jackie Gross: Resident of West Oakland. Taking out shelters is an extremely bad idea that does not prioritize transit to make it accessible. Especially in places that barely have shelters and seats. We also need more opportunity for public comment. I only found out about this because I received communication from the Transbay Coalition. The city should know about this.

Eric, Redwood Heights: Removing bus shelters is a wrong way forward. This is an anti-transit decision in a time of increasingly chaotic weather, which seems cruel. Shelters are also a

reminder that the bus stop exists both for riders and drivers. Needed for visibility of transit modality. This will discourage ridership.

Randy O'Connor: Rockridge resident and frequent transit user who opposes removal of shelters and real time displays. I have encountered multiple elderly residents that don't know about changes at stops. We need a replacement plan; I would welcome new shelters.

Alex Contreras: Regular bus rider and member of statewide interagency equity advisory committee. Removing bus shelters during the rainy season is not a great idea. Removal should be postponed until after rainy season and until there is a replacement plan. Already inadequate.

Debbie: Live in East Oakland and there are not enough shelters as is. I want to add that all stops need bus shelters.; you feel very vulnerable when the stop is up against fast traffic and there is not protection. Also, the sun is a harsh element.

Mike Davie: I think this is a terrible idea, especially during the rainy season. Disappointed in the short-sighted plan to remove them during the rainy season and I encourage the council to come to a better decision.

Chance Peretsky: Here with East Bay Transit Riders Union. I concur with the previous speakers. This is a prime example of short termism. Seems fundamentally unnecessary and unconscionable. When they are removed with only a vague plan to replace them later, we know it won't happen. This was short notice and came as a surprise to many. Should never have been considered without alternatives analysis.

Robert Prince: Advocacy Director with Bike East Bay and with Walk Oakland Bike Oakland. Concur with other speakers. Decision is shocking in abruptness and disrespectful to transit users. AC Transit has not mentioned in check in meetings. Needs more significant communications process. Please encourage staff to postpone decision. Would gladly adopt a stop.

Laurel Paget-Seekins: Public Advocates Transit Department. I recognize that bus shelters are a patchwork of responsibility which makes it difficult to apply equity analysis. Encourage an equity analysis of transit amenities. Removing shelters is a bad idea. Need to make sure we're not disproportionately affecting black and brown communities.

Franz: Echoing all the comments before; highly disagree with decision. I will sometimes walk further to be at a bus stop with a shelter, which feels much safer.

Paul Bickmore: I rely on AC Transit, and I would like to ask that we wait to remove bus shelters until we have a replacement plan.

Alex Luckerman: Decision seems unexpected and short-sighted. This is the worst time; I don't think this should be done and at the least postponed. Riders care more about shelters than vandalism.

Follow Up Questions:

Councilmember Kaplan: How are the bus shelters handled in other cities?

Robert Del Rosario: The shelter program for AC Transit was an umbrella agreement with 9 jurisdictions, not including Oakland, which had a separate agreement. Both agreements were with Clear Channel, which has decided not to proceed with those contracts. Once Clear Channel notified us, AC Transit's Board decided to take on ownership of shelters and coordinate with local jurisdictions to contribute to some costs of ownership that AC Transit is taking on.

Councilmember Kaplan: That has taken place with other cities but not Oakland?

Del Rosario: Correct, Oakland has a separate contract with Clear Channel that was on a slightly separate timeline. Still working with other jurisdictions to figure out payment.

Kaplan: So, at that point AC Transit would be the one handling the maintenance?

Del Rosario: Yes, for those jurisdictions and separate contracts, AC Transit does own and maintain.

Kaplan: Recognizing the challenge for an agency like AC Transit, operating within jurisdictions, unlike BART who owns their stations and right of way. Collaboration between city and AC Transit is an ongoing tension. Seems like Oakland ends up carrying extra responsibility too often. How many shelters total are we talking about and how many have Real Time?

Michael Ford: OakDOT. About 100 remaining shelters and, in my inspections, I have yet to come across a Real Time monitor. Some shelters are equipped with a voice box, but I think it's minimal.

Kaplan: Does the 100 exclude the specialty International BRT project that all have Real Time information?

Ford: Correct. Going back to 2000, the original plan called for 250 shelters but only around 160 total were built. Over the last 6 years, a lot of those original shelters went away and were replaced by other programs, like International BRT. Those shelters will continue to function. Those are the responsibility of AC Transit and not under discussion here. Those integrated into BRT like Berkeley Way won't be touched either.

Kaplan: Specialty shelters on Thomas Berkeley Way. Are those also excluded?

Ford: Correct.

Kaplan: We've been hearing requests for better information. It would be important to identify which stops have Real Time, and delay those until it's determined what to do with those. Could you say more about having alternative side panel that is not glass?

Ford: As bus stops not equipped with shelters, ACT has a standard pole mounted schedule case. We're working on getting those posted at the removal locations. There shouldn't be disruption in terms of available information.

Kaplan: What are the options for keeping shelters that are not glass? Was that looked at?

Ford: In the past, talked about difference between Oakland shelters and other shelter, like some in Albany with corrugated metal. Unfortunately, all of ours are glass and it is very cost prohibitive. We have a limited budget, and we are trying to do what is in the best interest of the public by not subjecting them to the risks of damage.

Kaplan: What would it involve to change to the shelters with corrugated metal?

Ford: In our internal review, we explored that, but we couldn't do it in a way that respects the integrity of the ways the shelters are built. It was either cost prohibitive or could not be feasibility maintained without introducing more hazards.

Director Syed: When we met in September, you informed us about a Kaleidoscope bus stop pilot, which would be much lower maintenance. Have you considered expanding that pilot or any other alternatives to the removal?

Ford: We did report on the Kaleidoscope canopy for the 14th St complete streets program. As soon as the data comes in from those pilots, it would inform future projects to replace bus stops.

Syed: How many shelters do we have in the City of Berkeley? Less than 50?

Del Rosario: Don't have the number off the top of my head, but ballpark there.

Syed: Looking into what ACT is doing with other cities, an MOU is still being worked out, but an item was brought to their city council authorizing an agreement with ACT to provide \$110,000 over five years to fund shelter maintenance. Regarding the \$250k used to remove the shelters, have you considered using the \$250k to keep the shelters clean, washing, etc. until we can come up with an alternative plan to avoid removal.

Ford: The city and ACT have been working very closely to bring the programs together and implement the next generation shelter program. For reasons beyond our control, including economics of right of way advertising, there have been changes in developing the next generation shelter program. As the program manager now, I want to use the funds to make sure the public is safe and maintain our stops as clean and efficient as possible.

Syed: At our last meeting, you said the scope would be cleaning. Has the vendor contract gone to the city council or when is it?

Ford: We are using the city administration's \$250k one year authority to execute this, so there is no trip to the city council needed or planned.

Syed: Best interests of the public can be nebulous and unclear. I think using the \$250k to remove the shelters would perpetuate the idea of the failed City of Oakland, which is untrue. So, I hope we can find a path forward, because shelters will be junk once removed. Is there a process for decommissioning city assets?

Kaplan: I'm hearing that if we want to go to more durable shelters that don't break, but it's not feasible to retrofit existing shelters, so we would need new ones that aren't designed with glass to break. Is that correct?

Ford: Yes, that would be the canopy shelters that AC Transit will be piloting.

Kaplan: We're hearing that AC Transit has programs with other cities where the cities pay for AC Transit to maintain the shelters. Is that an option for Oakland? Would you want the current shelters or the change them out?

Del Rosario: We are not collecting nearly enough revenue from the cities to cover the maintenance costs. I don't think the revenue will cover our costs like the Clear Channel program.

Kaplan: Would AC Transit allow a program for the city to pay into like you have with Berkeley?

Del Rosario: We would have to get back to you. That's a discussion with the Board.

President Joel Young: We understand the City of Oakland's need to get rid of the shelters in light of the economic situation.

Syed: I'd be happy to agendize this item for the Board so that we can get more information. I think it's a fair question about how much it costs and what it looks like.

Kaplan: Berkeley is paying a certain amount per shelter so that AC Transit will maintain. I understand you can't answer this now, but I'm asking if you could offer Oakland that same deal. And then you could decide to replace or change shelters.

Young: Just keep in mind that we have a budget deficit just the same as you guys.

Ford: Additionally, AC Transit is making that offer to its JPA members, and Oakland is not one of those. So, it's not just a question about funding and costs, but there then needs to be a wholly different type of legal agreement. Since 2017 we've been pursuing a merger, but it hasn't come together.

Kaplan: As I'm understanding, neither side is making money from the ad contracts anymore. While it was handled separately, both have the same problems.

Syed: I would still like to hear about using the \$250k for stop gap maintenance.

Josh Rowan: OakDOT Director. This is a tricky situation because we as a department are not set up to maintain shelters for transit agencies. In most American cities, the city is not maintaining the shelters. Our preference is to get out of that business and be able to write AC Transit a check to maintain them. Then the shelters become an issue. They are a risk to the public. I would say that we can hit pause on the removal and get a pilot going for shelters that are easier to maintain. Reality is that we can't afford to maintain these, AC Transit cannot afford to maintain these, and they need to go because of the safety risk to the public.

Kaplan: I think there would be an option of 8-10 pilot to be brand new locations and replacing the current shelters in the worst shape.

Rowan: Yes, there are some that need to be gone immediately. I also heard the call for equity; that situation needs to be addressed. We can look both at how this can be done cost effectively and equitably. We don't want AC Transit to underwrite us, but we don't want to take a disproportionate amount on the city as well.

Kaplan: Staff will figure out which ones need to be removed immediately and as an opportunity to pilot better designs. AC Transit will confer internally to see what kind of deal they could provide similar to other cities and what other steps would be needed to join ACT JPA system.

Director Peeples: Just a datapoint. At the beginning of this program 25 years ago, City of Alameda decided not to do advertising, so they can be a good point of reference for success and costs of that program.

B. Speed Safety Camera Program/Bus Stop Camera Enforcement

Deferred to next meeting.

C. West Oakland Transit Improvements

Deferred to next meeting.

Update on Past Items

A. Update on Quick Build Program including MacArthur and International Blvd

Presenters: Will Buller (AC Transit) and Megan Weir (OakDOT)

Will Buller: Giving an update on the Quick Build project construction. We are wrapping up construction in January and planning on wrapping up the project in February. The MacArthur/Alma construction is mostly complete, and we expect to be done in the next couple of weeks. Along International, delineator locations requiring repairs which will be handled in the next couple of weeks as well. We will also be repairing numerous damaged signs. We are planning on installing additional delineators between 14th Ave and 107th Ave. Preparing for after data collection. And we're still scheduled to move forward with next improvements in the spring.

Megan Weir: We will be completing all the delineator gaps early next year. Also sharing an update on the speed cushion pilot. We are continuing to aim for installation by the end of the year, focusing on International between Fruitvale and 42nd. We will be focusing on Bus Only lane for now to address egregious speeding. We are working with ACT and the fire department. We are planning a field test before implementation. Pre and post data collection.

Committee Comments and Questions:

Kaplan: My understanding is that there are two initial locations agreed upon and then additional locations will be evaluated. But first we'll get this up and running.

Public Comments:

Bryan Culbertson: Sending appreciation that pilot is moving forward and that cushions will be in by the end of the year. Looking forward to seeing the results for safety on the entire corridor.

B. AC Transit Realign Update

Presenters: Michael Eshelman (AC Transit)

Michael Eshelman: Overview of public engagement for Phase 4, including website views, public comments, community meetings, and more. Adjustments made to Lines 19, 20, and 29 following public comments. Key public comment themes not addressed in the plan: frequency reductions on certain lines, coverage reduction to the Oakland Airport, and unserved markets. Phases of the

Realign service levels – Realign, Realign+, and the Unconstrained plan. Another ongoing effort is the Service Standards update.

Committee Comments and Questions:

Kaplan: In terms of the items that are desired but not included in the current plan, how much of that is due to a lack of operators vs. lack of money?

Eshelman: In the short term, the challenge is the number of bus operators, very challenging hiring environment.

Kaplan: Is there a plan and effort underway for operator recruitment?

Eshelman: Our HR department has done a great job improving hiring practice. Training and welcome week have improved retention, and we are working stage by stage to make improvements. Our operator count has been improving.

Syed: What is the status of plans to address headway deficiencies on minority routes? Would be great to make improvement there.

Eshelman: We are still doing some internal work on that.

Kaplan: One issue of city and AC Transit collaboration to bring up related to Realign. There are development projects contingent on shuttles or collaboration with transit service, so I'm flagging that for further follow up. City of Oakland can look at where projects have obligation that may be connected to AC Transit, and they could pay in.

Young: Keep in mind that operator shortage is an issue, but long term, funding is a big issue if we want to reach pre-pandemic levels.

Public Comments:

Kevin Dalley: Bicyclist and Pedestrian Advisory Commission. We're reviewing Oakland's general plan, which includes transportation issues which we want to bring up to developments. So we hope AC Transit wants to participate in that, thinking about transportation for developments.

Future Agenda Item

- A. Transit Corridor Speed Cushion Evaluation – OakDOT
- B. Broadway Shuttle Update and Downtown Oakland Fare Free Zone – OakDOT/AC Transit
- C. New Residential/Commercial Development Update – City of Oakland
- D. Slow Street Project Update – OakDOT
- E. Permit Process to use AC Transit buses in film – AC Transit
- F. Joint Overview of AC Transit and OakDOT Coordination – AC Transit/OakDOT
- G. Telegraph Rapid Corridors Project Update – AC Transit
- H. ILC Structure and Appointments – AC Transit

Committee Member Comments

- A. Items 2B and 2C will also be future agenda items.

Proposed Date and Time of Next Regular Meeting

- A.** March 5, 2025, at AC Transit 2nd Floor Board Room.

Adjournment

- A.** Adjourned.