

ALAMEDA-CONTRA COSTA TRANSIT DISTRICT



STAFF REPORT

MEETING DATE: 3/12/2025

Staff Report No. 24-268a

TO: AC Transit Board of Directors
FROM: Kathleen Kelly, Interim General Manager/Chief Executive Officer
SUBJECT: Transit-Supportive Design Guidelines

ACTION ITEM

AGENDA PLANNING REQUEST:

RECOMMENDED ACTION(S):

Consider adopting AC Transit's Transit-Supportive Design Guidelines.

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

STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE:

Goal - Convenient and Reliable Service
Initiative - Service Quality

The Transit-Supportive Design Guidelines (TSDG) document is intended to provide guidance to AC Transit staff and external agency staff on developing street infrastructure projects that are supportive of fixed-route and paratransit services and improve the experience of bus passengers.

BUDGETARY/FISCAL IMPACT:

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

BACKGROUND/RATIONALE:

In October 2018, the Board adopted the Multimodal Corridor Guidelines document which provided design recommendations for bicycle facilities at bus stops. The Transit-Supportive Design Guidelines (TSDG) effort is an update to the 2018 Multimodal Corridor Guidelines, by expanding its scope and addressing designs that improve fixed-route bus operations, paratransit operations, and the rider experience.

The project kicked off in April 2023 with support from a consultant team (consisting of DKS, Toole Design, and STV). The consultant contract expired at the end of June 2024, so the TSDG effort has progressed using only District staff resources since July 2024.

This staff report includes the following:

- Status update on the TSDG document

- Summary of outreach conducted
- High-level analysis of bus speeds along two major transit corridors in the AC Transit service area, in response to the May 10, 2023, Board follow up request to report back with data on areas that indicate a linkage between complete streets and transit delays

Status Update

Staff has conducted additional public outreach based on direction from the Board since the first draft of the TSDG was brought to the Board on May 8, 2024. The final draft of the TSDG incorporating the feedback received from that outreach and from local jurisdiction partners is included in this staff report as Attachment 1.

Summary of Outreach Conducted

In developing the first draft of the TSDG, staff and the consultant team solicited feedback from internal District staff, city/jurisdiction staff, and community members at local jurisdiction meetings and advisory committee meetings. Staff convened a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) comprised of representatives from the jurisdictions and agencies (i.e., ACTC, Caltrans, CCTA, MTC, WCCTAC) in the District’s service area. The TAC met a total of three times - TAC Meeting #1 was held in November 2023 to introduce the Guidelines effort, TAC Meeting #2 was held in March 2024 to provide an overview of the document content and hear input on how we can make the Guidelines document most useful and easy to navigate, and TAC Meeting #3 was held in June 2024 to provide TAC members with a summary overview of the comments that were gathered on the draft document.

Initially, only District staff and TAC members (and others within their organizations) received a full copy of the draft TSDG for review and comment. Other meeting bodies only received presentation slides of varying detail depending on meeting context e.g., interagency liaison committees (ILCs) received a condensed, high-level presentation, whereas bicycle/pedestrian advisory committees and transportation commissions received more detailed presentations discussing the TSDG contents chapter by chapter). However, following directions from the Board members and requests from the public to provide the full draft document for public review, staff provided commission members and attendees of several meeting bodies (i.e., Berkeley Commission on Disability, Berkeley Transportation and Infrastructure Commission) with the full draft document for review and comment.

The following outreach was conducted as part of the TSDG effort:

Meeting Body	Date(s)
Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)	11/29/23, 3/5/24, 6/5/24
AC Transit Board	5/10/23, 5/8/24
Alameda ILC	10/25/23, 1/30/24, 4/18/24, 9/5/24, 1/30/25
Berkeley ILC	2/29/24, 5/30/24, 9/19/24, 12/5/24, 3/20/25
Emeryville ILC	6/22/23, 3/14/24, 5/22/24
Hayward ILC	12/8/23, 3/1/24, 5/31/24, 9/6/24, 12/13/24, 3/7/25

Oakland ILC	12/6/23
Richmond ILC	7/27/23, 4/25/24
BART ILC	5/8/24
General Manager's Access Committee	1/9/24
Unincorporated Alameda County BPAC	9/28/23, 12/14/23, 3/28/24
Emeryville BPAC	10/2/23
Oakland BPAC Infrastructure Committee	11/2/23, 5/2/24
Alameda Transportation Commission	2/28/24
Berkeley Transportation and Infrastructure Commission	11/21/24
Berkeley Commission on Disability	7/10/24
Fremont Mobility Commission	3/20/24
Oakland Mayor's Commission on Persons with Disabilities	3/18/24
Alameda Commission on Persons with Disabilities	4/24/24

Summary of Comments Heard During Outreach

The following is an overview of the types of comments/input received during TSDG outreach:

Cities/Jurisdictions

- Would appreciate as much specificity in the guidance as possible but would also appreciate flexibility.
- Some cities have chosen to implement parallel bikeways to avoid potential bus/bike conflicts.
- Need to have design solutions that also work well for cities' ongoing maintenance needs.
- Concerns about quick-build opportunities or project design/implementation when only interim funding is available.
- Important to consider emergency vehicle access.
- Be clear about the pros/cons of the various bus stop design typologies and be clear about what bus stop elements are mandatory, preferred, and optional.
- Want to see more information in the TSDG about East Bay Paratransit operations (operating policies and fleet information).
- Questions about other relevant AC Transit guidance documents (e.g., Bus Stop Furniture Guidelines, Board Policy 501).

Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Committees, Transportation Commissions, and Disability Commissions

- Overall majority concurrence that sidewalk-level bikeways at bus stops are the preferred design option.
- Concerns about potential conflicts between pedestrian and cyclists at bus stops. Provide guidance on treatments that cities can consider using to help people, particularly those with limited mobility, navigate through a bus stop area.
- Some bus stop/bikeway designs may inadvertently cause incidence of operator pass-ups, such as instances where the bus shelter is located behind the bus stop area thus potentially blocking the passenger from view of the operator.
- Some bus stop features may be visually appealing but can interfere with cyclists.
- Concerns about how road diets and traffic calming elements are discussed in the draft TSDG. Be clear about transit vehicle needs, passenger comfort and safety, and concerns with vertical deflection on

roadways.

- Safety should always be priority number one. Be clearer about the distinction between safety and transit reliability.
- Encourage cities to come up with policies to vacate driveways wherever possible.
- Should push for bike racks, shelters, and seating (in addition to lean bars, if appropriate) at every bus stop. Amenities are incredibly important for helping people with visual impairments distinguish if an island/bulb is a bus stop.
- There needs to be more audible guidance at bus stops and in buses - specifically, consistency in the placement and type of audio buttons at bus stops, and volume/clarity should be such that people sitting in the back of the bus can hear the audio guidance clearly.
- All shelters should have enough clear space under the canopy to accommodate multiple wheelchairs or mobility devices. There should be cleanliness and dignity at all bus stop areas.
- The AC Transit RealTime app can be difficult to read for those who are low vision. It would be helpful if there was a way to search routes and schedules more easily, especially for those using screen readers. Additionally, bus stop signage is occasionally posted too high for AI readers to read.
- Paratransit stops or loading zone areas should be considered and designed on a block-by-block basis.

Staff made the following edits to the draft document based on the comments received:

- Added the “Checklist for Reviewing Plans and Bus Stop Design” at the beginning of the document.
- Added more callout boxes throughout the document to highlight key information.
- Text edits throughout to clarify or provide more detail about topics discussed.
- Expanded on pedestrian access and safety throughout the document.
- Added to the list of related guidelines and standards in Chapter 2.
- Expanded on the discussion of “vertical deflection” in Chapter 3 to include mention of speed cushions.
- Added a list of benefits and challenges associated with each of the different bus stop design types discussed in Chapter 6.
- Incorporated a flow chart graphic in Chapter 7 to help readers navigate the bus stop typology and choose a bus stop design type given the context.
- Added a graphic and more detail about maintenance responsibilities in Chapter 8.

Complete Street - Bus Speed Analysis

Staff also conducted an analysis of bus vehicle speeds along segments of Telegraph Avenue (Oakland) and Park Street (Alameda) in response to the May 10, 2023, Board follow up request to report back with data on areas that indicate a linkage between complete streets and transit delays. Our analysis in Attachment 2 indicates these roadway projects have had an impact on transit speed. Please see Attachment 2 for more detail.

It is also important to note that the design guidance presented in the TSDG is not intended to get buses traveling at maximum speeds; rather, the guidance aims to enhance the transit rider experience and improve transit reliability (i.e., promoting bus service as a viable and attractive mode of transportation by addressing sources of delay and improving travel times).

In conclusion, staff recommends that the Board consider adopting the TSDG, which will provide the District and our partner cities/jurisdictions with a consistent design approach for developing projects that are supportive of fixed-route and paratransit services and riders.

ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES:

Having an updated guidelines document, informed by input from both internal and external stakeholders, allows the District to provide a comprehensive and consistent design approach that will promote safe and efficient fixed-route transit and paratransit operations and improve the rider experience. The adopted TSDG will also help streamline coordination efforts between District staff and city/jurisdiction staff during the review and development process for roadway projects.

There are no disadvantages directly associated with this item.

ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS:

As an alternative, the District may continue using the 2018 Multimodal Corridor Guidelines as the primary resource for AC Transit bus operations on multimodal corridor facilities. Staff does not recommend this approach because the 2018 Multimodal Corridor Guidelines does not include considerations for paratransit or address some design features that promote service reliability (e.g., bus layover space).

PRIOR RELEVANT BOARD ACTION/POLICIES:

SR 24-268 - Transit-Supportive Design Guidelines
SR 23-226 - Transit Supportive Design Guidelines
SR 19-063 - Complete Streets and Multimodal Design Guidelines
SR 18-216 - Multimodal Design Guidelines

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Draft Transit-Supportive Design Guidelines
2. Complete Street - Bus Speed Analysis
3. Presentation
4. TSDG Response to Board Comments

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