

ALAMEDA-CONTRA COSTA TRANSIT DISTRICT



STAFF REPORT

MEETING DATE: 11/10/2021

Staff Report No. 21-470

TO: AC Transit Board of Directors
FROM: Michael A. Hursh, General Manager
SUBJECT: Rockridge BART Station Transfer Point

BRIEFING ITEM

RECOMMENDED ACTION(S):

Consider receiving a report on the Rockridge BART Station Transfer Point - Alternatives Analysis and Feasibility Study. [Requested by Director Peeples 11/11/2015, 10/23/2019 and Director Walsh 6/9/2021]

STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE:

Goal - Convenient and Reliable Service
Initiative - Service Quality

This study examines the feasibility of several possible approaches to improve the connection between lines 51A and 51B at the Rockridge BART Station. The current transfer between the two lines requires crossing a city street which can be challenging if the connection is tight, or the customer has visual or mobility impairments.

BUDGETARY/FISCAL IMPACT:

This report is informational only. The study has general cost estimates for the various alternatives, but no action is being taken with this report.

If the District ultimately pursues a capital project, there is \$9.9 million remaining allocated to AC Transit in the Alameda County Measure BB Expenditure Plan for capital improvements along the Line 51 corridor. The intent of these funds is to implement transit priority speed and reliability improvements, which could include transfer improvements. The District would need to determine how best to spend these funds since there is also interest in implementing improvements that were deferred from the original Line 51 improvement project. In addition, there is interest from stakeholders to use a portion of these funds toward the extension of red transit lanes along Broadway. After determining potential expenditures for the Measure BB allocation, the District would need to go through the Alameda County Transportation Commission process for allocation of funds, which includes inclusion into the County's Comprehensive Investment Plan (CIP) and a demonstration of project readiness and benefits, in addition to other criteria.

BACKGROUND/RATIONALE:

In 2006, staff began a comprehensive service evaluation for Line 51 - its highest ridership route at the time - to evaluate service levels and reliability. The study was conducted using extensive data analysis and observations

and included a series of recommendations to improve Line 51's performance.

The study ultimately led to AC Transit receiving \$10 million in funding through the Metropolitan Transportation Commission's Transit Performance Initiative (TPI) program. The TPI program funded less intensive capital projects aimed at improving operations and the transit customer experience. In addition, staff implemented a key recommendation in the study to divide Line 51 into two routes that would connect at the Rockridge BART Station, lines 51A and 51B.

That split has significantly improved reliability of service but has resulted in a problematic transfer for some riders. The District has been fielding complaints from bus riders about the inconvenience of transferring between lines 51A and 51B since the implementation of the two routes in 2011. Passengers have voiced concerns about having to walk across a street to catch their connecting bus, long transfer wait times due to buses operating off schedule and at different frequencies, and missing connections due to connecting bus operators being unaware of transferring passengers when pulling away.

To resolve the issue, staff investigated four near-term and five long-term solutions that are detailed in the attached Alternatives Analysis (Attachment 1). In the near-term, staff is recommending interlining lines 51A and 51B at the Rockridge BART Station for the following reasons:

- Lines 51A and 51B are able to maintain their existing route lengths. Shorter routes are easier to manage from an operations standpoint.
- The interline maintains recovery time at the Rockridge BART Station which can help mitigate delays.
- Layovers will occur at the Rockridge BART Station where operator restrooms are available.
- Riders will be able to transfer between buses that are adjacent to each other and without crossing a city street.
- The transfer will occur along College Avenue, close to the Rockridge BART Station.
- Minor community impacts (the passenger loading zones will need to be relocated)

This option has the least impact on the community and has the best chance to maintain the previous gains made to the reliability of the Line 51A/51B corridors by splitting the former Line 51.

Staff also recommends implementing the Connection Protection application included in the District's Clever Devices communications system on lines 51A and 51B once it is approved for use. This technology will allow buses to wait for connecting passengers based on real-time arrival data.

In the event an unforeseen infusion of capital dollars is found and there are no other more pressing needs in the District, staff recommends Alternative A in the alternatives analysis report, which is an Off-Street Transit Center in the eastside parking lot for the following reasons:

- Allows for at least four bus bays.
- Allows passengers to transfer between lines 51A and 51B easily.
- Eliminates need for Line 51A passengers to cross the street.
- Shortens the turn-around for Line 51A.
- Brings Line 51A terminal closer to the BART station.
- Frees up space for Line 79 terminal to be relocated between Keith Avenue and Miles Avenue, closer to the station.
- Does not impact bikes lanes along College Avenue.

- Minimal on-street parking impacts.
- Frees up space in front of Claremont Middle School for other curb use purposes
- Does not require city roadway geometry adjustments.
- Does not present any operational concerns.

Staff will look for the next opportunity to interline Lines 51A and B which will mean consolidating them at Division 2 and moving a line currently at Division 2 to another garage. The soonest this could be completed is March 2022.

ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES:

Pursuing the near-term recommendation in this study will lead to tangible improvements in customer connections at the Rockridge BART Station. The primary disadvantage is the risk of reduced reliability as the 51A will once again be potentially affected by poor traffic conditions on the 51B and vice versa.

Pursuing the long-term recommendation in this report will result in real improvements for customers but is not necessarily a cost-effective solution.

ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS:

The primary alternative to acting on any recommendations in this report is to maintain the current operating condition which has led to improved service reliability but places the burden of a transfer on some customers. In addition, staff analyzed multiple alternatives in the attached report and explained why less desirable alternatives were dismissed.

Staff did not investigate the capital investment required to have AC Transit buses turn from southbound College Avenue to northbound Broadway. The need for this turn would be to provide transit access to the Oakland Hills. However, due to the pandemic and the current state of operations, staff is not exploring transit expansion to low-density areas and is focusing on the restoration of service eliminated at the pandemic onset as detailed in the Board-approved Service Recovery Priorities.

PRIOR RELEVANT BOARD ACTION/POLICIES:

None

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Rockridge BART Station Alternatives Analysis

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