



December 7, 2023

Via Electronic Mail

AC Transit Board of Directors
1600 Franklin St.
Oakland, CA 94612

SUBJECT: City of Alameda feedback on AC Transit Realign Bus Service Scenarios

Dear AC Transit Board of Directors,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the AC Transit Realignment Study. The City of Alameda appreciates its ongoing partnership with AC Transit and looks forward to working with AC Transit and the other agencies in the region to respond to changing ridership trends and to prepare for funding challenges facing AC Transit in the upcoming years.

The economic vitality and environmental sustainability of the region depends upon effective public transit. Without it, the region will not meet its equity, climate action, affordable housing, or transportation goals. AC Transit's funding challenges are a regional problem that require regional cooperation.

The City of Alameda supports AC Transit's goals to provide residents and businesses in Alameda and Contra Costa counties transit service that is equitable, reliable, and frequent. The City of Alameda would respectfully suggest two objectives within that:

- Support Plan Bay Area, the Bay Area region's sustainability strategy to ensure a sustainable, equitable, and healthy future for the Bay Area and the State, Regional, and local agency housing plans to address the housing crises facing our region.
- Develop additional financial partnership between AC Transit, regional agencies, and local municipalities and organizations to support public transportation.

Of the two cost-constrained scenarios presented, the City of Alameda supports the principles underlying the "Frequent Service Scenario." However, we suggest some critical changes to the conceptual routes shown in Alameda in the Frequent Service Scenario.

The Alameda Workhorse: Line 51. Alameda supports the Frequent Service Scenario proposal to increase frequency on 51A/F51, improving service for Alameda riders on this important and well-used route. We are concerned that combining 51A and 51B will cause delays and bus bunching. The Berkeley segment often has severe congestion, and it hindered reliability for Oakland and Alameda riders before Line 51 was split. Keeping the two sections separate prioritizes reliability and the highest ridership segments of the line, although we have heard from some riders over the years who did not like the transfer. In addition, City of Alameda Transportation Commissioners recommend considering a Line 51A/F51 Express to reduce bus bunching and even better serve the many 51A riders.

Service to Alameda's Priority Development Areas (PDAs): Line 19 and Line 96. The proposed lack of frequent transit service to the City's two PDAs is a significant problem with Frequent Service Scenario. The AC Transit Realign analysis should use growth modeling for upcoming housing and jobs, even in the near term, to account for new housing opening in Alameda this year and in the coming years.

To address regional sustainability and housing goals, Alameda has two designated priority development areas (PDAs) in Plan Bay Area: the Northern Waterfront PDA and the Naval Air Station (NAS) Alameda PDA on Alameda Point. Over 85% of the new housing and over 95% of the new deed-restricted affordable housing constructed over the next ten years in Alameda will be located in these two PDAs. Thanks to the actions taken by the Alameda City Council over the last 15 years, all new housing and all major new businesses in the two PDAs pay an annual assessment to fund supplemental transportation services. As Alameda grows, the funds collected increase. The Alameda Transportation Management Association (Alameda TMA) administers these funds.

The NAS Alameda PDA is currently served by Line 96, and the Northern Waterfront PDA is served by Line 19. Unfortunately the Frequent Service Scenario (and the Unconstrained Service Scenario) eliminates Line 19 completely. This Scenario also provides less than 15 minute service to the NAS Alameda PDA. To receive competitive State Affordable Housing & Sustainable Communities funding for housing development and transportation infrastructure, locations must be served by frequent transit service (at least every 15 minutes in peak hours on a single transit line). Implementation of the Frequent Service Scenario as proposed would mean that Alameda's most vulnerable communities are left without frequent transit service and decrease the likelihood that existing entitled and approved affordable housing projects receive key funding.

The City of Alameda is confident that working together, the City, AC Transit, and the Alameda TMA will be able to find financially viable solutions to solve this problem with the Frequent Service Scenario.

Alameda Crosstown, South Shore, and Bay Farm Services: Lines 20/21/39. The City appreciates AC Transit's effort to accommodate a long-standing desire for service across Alameda by proposing Line F20, which would run from Harbor Bay through Alameda on a southern route and reach as far west as Main St (the eastern edge of Alameda Point) before going to downtown Oakland. However, more data is needed to show that this crosstown route should connect Alameda Point all the way to Bay Farm, and vice versa, especially given the tradeoff shown in the Frequent Service Scenario: the Bay Farm and Shore Line Drive areas would no longer have a one-seat bus ride to the Park St business district and Fruitvale BART (they'd need to transfer at South Shore Center). We believe that a majority of Bay Farm bus riders would prioritize a one-seat ride to Park St and Fruitvale BART over a one-seat ride to western Alameda and downtown Oakland.

We support that the F20 proposal improves connections for locations west of Webster Street and Alameda Point with the rest of Alameda in addition to downtown Oakland. We recommend exploring bringing a line like this a little further west into Alameda Point, to better serve locations like the current Alameda Point Collaborative location and the future RESHAP affordable housing development. With the departure of the US Navy from the western end of Alameda, and the redevelopment of Alameda Point and Alameda Landing with new neighborhoods, commercial services, and public recreation facilities and parks, we see a need for cross town bus service connecting Alameda Point and the eastern end of the main island.

Alameda transportation planning staff created a conceptual variation on the Frequent Service Scenario for Lines 20/21/39 that expands service to western Alameda while retaining a one-seat ride from Bay Farm to Fruitvale BART (see Exhibit 1). They look forward collaborating with AC Transit staff on these details.

Transbay Services: Lines O and W. The City understands that equity goals do not support prioritizing Transbay commuter service over in-district, trunk services. However, the City does recommend that with any AC Transit decision to alter these Transbay services, AC Transit should provide sufficient capacity for west Alameda riders from Equity Priority Areas in the west have access to seats for all Transbay runs (Lines W and O), which as proposed in the Frequent Service Scenario, would all originate in East Alameda (where there are fewer Equity Priority Areas).

Oakland International Airport & Ferry Connections. The Alameda City Council and community are concerned about the lack of bus service to Alameda's ferry terminals and the potential elimination of service to Oakland International Airport. We believe AC Transit should incorporate the Port of Oakland's Terminal Modernization Project's impacts on trip demand in planning efforts moving into the future. Direct service to the airport is valuable for employees

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and travelers, and can mitigate the anticipated vehicular traffic impacts airport expansion will have on Alameda's roadways.

Alameda's three ferry terminals continue to see increased daily ridership as that service rebounds from the pandemic. Parking lots at Seaplane Lagoon and Harbor Bay terminals are reaching capacity and the City anticipates implementing paid parking in 2024. These patterns combined with reduced Transbay Bus capacity will increase the need for future bus service at these ferry terminals. It is important that AC Transit continue monitoring and adapting to changing conditions to make sure these regional transportation facilities are properly served.

We hope these comments are helpful, and the City of Alameda and Alameda TMA are always available to AC Transit to assist in your Realign efforts.

Sincerely,

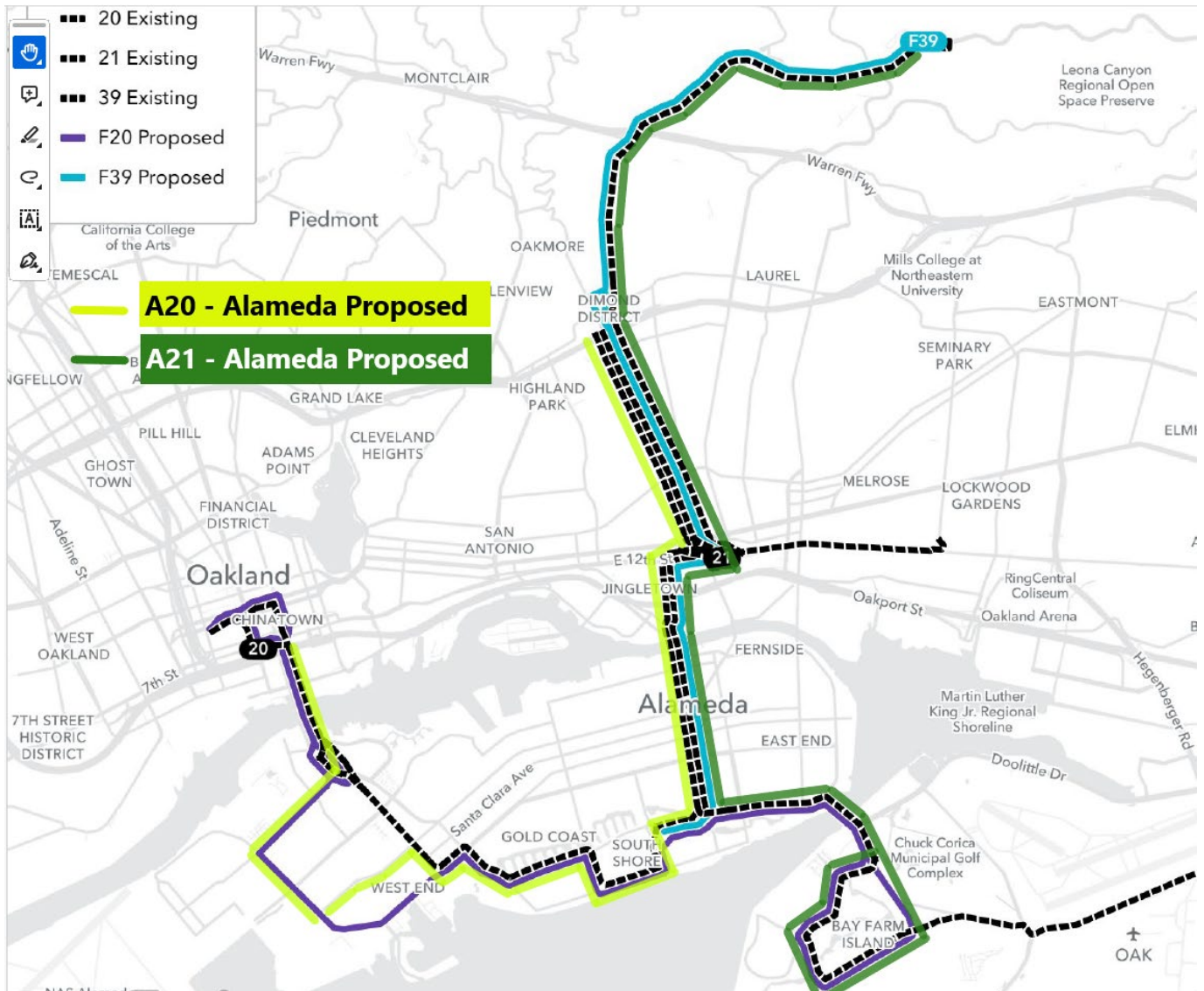


Allen Tai, Planning, Building, and Transportation Director, City of Alameda

cc: Jennifer Ott, City Manager, City of Alameda
Marilyn Ezzy Ashcraft, Mayor, City of Alameda
Tony Daysog, Vice Mayor, City of Alameda
Malia Vella, Councilmember, City of Alameda
Trish Herrera-Spencer, Councilmember, City of Alameda
Tracy Jensen, Councilmember, City of Alameda

Exhibit 1: Line 20/21 Concept (Variation on Frequent Service Scenario)

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In this conceptual variation on the Frequent Service Scenario proposal, Line 21 would continue service and possibly replace Line 39 service to Skyline High School. Line 20 would follow a similar path to existing service, except that it would go farther west in Alameda connecting Alameda Point directly with South Shore Center, Park Street and Fruitvale BART. Because this is a variation on the Frequent Service Scenario, this cost-neutral concept does not show service to Oakland International Airport. As discussed in the letter, the City of Alameda supports airport service if possible.