



Office of the Mayor

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CONSENT CALENDAR
June 11, 2019

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council
From: Mayor Jesse Arreguín
Subject: Prioritizing Transit Improvements at MacArthur Maze

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt a Resolution requesting transit priority improvements to mitigate congestion associated with the MacArthur Maze Vertical Clearance Project.

BACKGROUND

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) is planning a project to increase the vertical clearance on some roadways within the MacArthur Maze. The project calls for either reconstructing, raising, lowering or replacing the following connectors:

- Westbound I-80 to eastbound I-580
- Westbound I-580 to westbound I-80
- Westbound I-80 to southbound I-880
- Eastbound I-80 to eastbound I-580

The project is huge, “probably running a close second to the building of the eastern span of the Bay Bridge” according to a Caltrans spokeswoman¹. The stated purpose of the rebuild is to bring the Maze’s connectors into compliance with state and national guidelines that call for a minimum clearance of 16 feet, 6 inches. The current connectors are 1 to 2 feet short. Currently, trucks that do not clear the Maze have to make lengthy detours.

Caltrans has issued a draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for this proposed project with a ‘negative declaration’, asserting the project will have no effect on air quality, transportation and traffic, with a less than significant impact on noise.

The construction associated with the project will likely divert significant automobile, freight, and transit traffic onto the streets of Berkeley and our neighbors in Emeryville and Oakland. The proposed infrastructure project centers around one of the most impactful choke points of the San Francisco/East Bay commute affecting 14,000 daily

¹ <https://www.sfchronicle.com/bayarea/philmatier/article/Rebuild-of-MacArthur-Maze-gets-tangled-up-in-East-13799916.php?psid=4Y0fP>

trips, projected to grow by a third by 2025. This will lead to increased gridlock, traffic backup, delayed commutes and more polluted air. Furthermore, nearly every driver or bus transit user that enters the interstate from Berkeley at Gilman, University or Ashby would be impacted by this project in their commute or daily travels. The Maze provides access to the South Bay, Highway 24, Downtown Oakland, Hayward and more. AC Transit has 14,000 riders on weekday transbay buses that would be delayed and 13,000 daily passengers on major surface streets that could be affected by diverted motorists.

With these significant impact to our transit systems and environment it is critical that this project prioritize transit improvements to mitigate congestion on our streets. Berkeley would join Oakland, and the AC Transit Board in supporting this resolution.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Additional traffic congestion caused by this project during construction will likely increase greenhouse gas emissions. However, a design that results in time savings for transit or HOV travel can promote a mode shift toward more sustainable means of transportation.

CONTACT PERSON

Mayor Jesse Arreguín 510-981-7100

Attachments:

- 1: Resolution
- 2: AC Transit Letter to Caltrans regarding MacArthur Maze Project

RESOLUTION NO. ##,###-N.S.

A RESOLUTION REQUESTING TRANSIT PRIORITY IMPROVEMENTS TO MITIGATE
CONGESTION ASSOCIATED WITH MACARTHUR MAZE VERTICAL CLEARANCE
PROJECT

WHEREAS, the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) has issued a draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for a proposed project to increase vertical clearance on some roadways within the MacArthur Maze; and

WHEREAS, the Alameda-Contra Costa Transit District (District or AC Transit) operates nearly 1,000 bus trips each day through the MacArthur Maze, carrying more than 14,000 passengers through the interchange each weekday; and

WHEREAS, the construction associated with the project will likely divert significant automobile, freight and transit traffic onto the streets in the cities of Berkeley, Emeryville, and Oakland; and

WHEREAS, this change in traffic patterns will result in significant delays for transit operations and customers as well as negatively impact conditions for bicyclists and pedestrians; and

WHEREAS, this additional traffic will likely lead to an increase in traffic backup, gridlock, delayed commutes, and worse air quality in Berkeley; and

WHEREAS, once complete, the project will lead to an increase in freight traffic through the interchange, competing for already limited space for transit and leading to delays on AC Transit; and

WHEREAS, the region has made relieving congestion and reducing automobile traffic across the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge a priority, including the completion of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission's Core Capacity Transit Study and through the recent passage of Regional Measure 3; and

WHEREAS, funding from Regional Measure 3 will result in a 30-percent increase in AC Transit Transbay service through the area which should be supported through opportunities to prioritize this increase in transit capacity; and

WHEREAS, the Alameda County Transportation Commission has prioritized improvements to local bus transit service through its County-wide Transportation Plan, which has resulted in such efforts as the San Pablo Avenue Corridor Project; and

WHEREAS, the inclusion of elements supporting transit priority and facilitating complete streets (include transit, bicycles, and pedestrians) within the MacArthur Maze Vertical

Clearance Project is necessary mitigation for the impact from construction and increased freight movement through the interchange; and

NOW, THEREFORE, the Council of the City of Berkeley does resolve as follows:

Section 1. Request that Caltrans include transit-only lanes on all roadways in the project where AC Transit currently operates transit service.

Section 2. Request that Caltrans include measures to mitigate transit service disruption and prioritize transit service in identified mitigations during the construction phase of the project through improvements including but not limited to: dedicated transit lanes, transit signal priority, transit queue-jump lanes, bus stop optimization and traffic signal coordination/actuation.

Section 3. Request that Caltrans coordinate with the cities of Berkeley, Emeryville & Oakland to provide dedicated transit lane access to the Bay Bridge.

Section 4. Request that Caltrans ensure any elements of the project or mitigations associated with the project or its construction conform to and support existing regional plans being developed or already adopted by MTC; ACTC; the District; and the cities of Berkeley, Emeryville, and Oakland.



Alameda-Contra Costa Transit District

Michael Hursh, General Manager

April 23, 2019

Rebecca De Pont, Associate Environmental Planner
California Department of Transportation, District 4
PO Box 23660, MS 8B
Oakland, CA 94623

Dear Rebecca De Pont,

The MacArthur Maze Vertical Clearance Project will affect a key regional junction for AC Transit service. As proposed, the project has the potential to greatly disrupt and delay Transbay Express and local bus services, with no benefit to transit as either a project construction mitigation or project outcome.

This letter details AC Transit's concerns with the project as proposed in the Initial Study (IS). It also advocates for larger project scoping, including transit enhancements to benefit the region's growth at a potentially marginal increase in project cost and scale, depending on the alternative pursued.

AC Transit currently runs Transbay Express buses on I-580 leading up to the approaches to the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge, including lines B, E, NX, NX1, NX2, NXC, NX3, NX4, P and V. On the I-880 to westbound I-80 connector, AC Transit operates lines 800, O, OX, S, SB and W. Along I-80, AC Transit operates lines C, F, FS, G, H, L, LA and Z. Any weekday delays on these Transbay lines will affect over 14,000 passengers per day, while weekend delays will impact over 3,000 passengers per day.

Major local bus lines on surface streets that could be affected by traffic congestion caused by diverting motorists include lines 72, 72M, 72R and 800 serving San Pablo Avenue and Line NL serving West Grand Avenue and Grand Avenue. These lines alone carry over 13,000 daily passengers. Construction detours could also affect Emeryville traffic and impact over 9,000 daily passengers on lines 57, 36, 29 operating on and around Powell St.

By proposing a Negative Declaration for this project, Caltrans asserts there will be no effect on Air Quality, Transportation and Traffic, with a less than significant impact on noise. AC Transit strongly disagrees with these assertions, which consider none of the impacts during the construction period. Also, this proposed major infrastructure project centers around the most impactful choke points of the San Francisco/East Bay commute affecting 14,000 daily trips, projected to grow by a third by 2025. It would be a regional wasted opportunity if Caltrans did not use this project to both meet its vertical height clearance goals but also improve the daily commute for all Bay Area residents.

Section 1.2 Purpose and Need

The IS states the purpose of the project is to meet the Caltrans standards for vertical height clearance, which would allow access for oversized freight vehicles through the maze. While there are stated worthy goals of reducing the numbers of oversized vehicles diverting through local streets, and subsequent reduction in Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) and Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions, the numbers of these affected vehicles (and therefore the scale of this impact) is not specified. This *need* is not articulated anywhere in the IS document. The lack of information on which to initiate a project of this scale, let alone see it through to an initial study is a critical flaw.

Section 1.4.2 Construction Impacts

All the alternatives would create delays to existing Transbay Express bus service, resulting in added operating costs and lost ridership. This should be detailed in the IS. Based on the time required for closures, the construction of Alternative C would cause the highest level of impact to Transbay buses and Alternative B would have the least disruption to existing operations. In addition, all project alternatives would cause traffic to divert onto local streets during construction, creating delays to local bus lines described above.

Section 1.4.2 Project Alternatives

AC Transit recommends any alternative selected should include significant improvements to transit priority in its scope. The most suitable Alternative to include transit priority is Alternative C, which could include widened connector ramps to provide HOV or transit-only lanes. The lanes would benefit AC Transit Transbay Bus service and other HOVs.

Section 1.4.2 Transportation System Management & Transportation Demand Management

The IS states that “No TDM or TSM measures have been incorporated into the build alternatives for this project.” AC Transit urges Caltrans to re-consider the scope of this project to include transit benefits to facilitate regional growth and mode shift to transit and help meet the state’s GHG reduction goals.

The Traffic Management Plan should include mitigations that reduce construction delay to Transbay and local bus service. Overnight or weekend closures should be undertaken to minimize impacts to transit and best management practices to shorten construction times.

Section 2. Affected Environment

- AC Transit’s Major Corridors Plan and Multimodal Design Guidelines should be considered under the local plans and programs list. There will be local impacts during the construction phase and Caltrans should refer to these documents to consider the type of improvements for local arterials as mitigations.
- The Metropolitan Transportation Commission’s (MTC’s) Regional Transportation Plan should be considered under the regional plans and programs list. The plan discusses the Freight Emissions Reduction Action Plan that supports the purpose of this project. It also details recommendations from the Core Capacity Transit Study that outline the importance of transit improvements to support focused growth and reduce GHGs, specifically on the capacity of the

Bay Bridge corridor. Caltrans should explore any synergies from combining these goals into one project. It could be more cost effective than pursuing these goals individually.

- AC Transit disagrees with the statement on the negligible impacts to growth:

“There would be no changes in access to employment, shopping, or other destinations, or permanent impacts to travel times, travel behavior, trip patterns, or the attractiveness of some areas to development.”

There are two points Caltrans needs to consider:

1. This project explicitly allows for increased truck movements through the maze. It will increase slow moving traffic with the potential to increase travel times for all vehicles. Caltrans needs to quantify this impact.
2. The opportunity cost of not including transit/HOV lanes in the project scope is not included. The project could lead to lower regional growth and reduction in attractiveness for development etc., due to the increased congestion projected through 2040.

Section 2.5.4 Construction Mitigation for Traffic and Transportation/Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities

There is no mention of the impacts to transit as part of the potential construction closures. AC Transit requests the following mitigation measures for any of the alternative’s construction phases:

1. **Install temporary bus lanes** on I-580, new or modified connectors and on the following surface streets: West Grand between I-580 and the bridge, San Pablo Avenue between 20th Street and 40th Street.
2. **Fund and expedite the planning and design phases of the Powell St On-Ramp Westbound I-80 transit priority project.** This intersection could be critical during any construction phase with detoured traffic. Expediting and funding this project would help mitigate transit impacts if traffic is detoured to I-80.

Our Board of Directors is expected to pass a resolution on April 24th 2019, officially supporting these mitigation measures as part of the project.

Long-Term Project Impacts - Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions Reductions

Senate Bill 391 sets greenhouse gas emission targets. The IS asserts that estimates of greenhouse gases cannot be made at the project alternative level. By considering construction impacts alone, the IS asserts that all the alternatives would have similar GHG impacts. However, there can be a significant difference in GHG emissions between alternatives during a lifetime of operations. For example, a design that results in time savings to transit or HOV travel time can promote a mode shift toward more sustainable means of transportation. This can be modeled and the GHG emission reductions calculated. Neglecting to include designs that meet both the project purpose and support the mode shift is a significant oversight that must be remedied before a final project alternative is selected.

A modification to the project could produce long-term emission reductions during the operation of the facility. In this regard, the project alternatives do not have the same climate change impacts based only on the embedded energy of construction. The section on “State Efforts” for GHG reduction, while noteworthy is not relevant to this project.

This approach encourages planning for sustainable highways by addressing climate risks while balancing environmental, economic, and social values—“the triple bottom line of sustainability.”¹⁰ Program and project elements that foster sustainability and resilience also support economic vitality and global efficiency, increase safety and mobility, enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, and improve the quality of life. Addressing these factors up front in the planning process will assist in decision making and improve efficiency at the program level, and will inform the analysis and stewardship needs of project-level decision-making.

From SB 391


(b) A strategies element that shall incorporate the broad system concepts and strategies synthesized from the adopted regional transportation plans prepared pursuant to Section 65080. The California Transportation Plan shall not be project specific.

Section 3.3.4 CEQA Conclusion

This section is mostly irrelevant regarding the GHG emissions of the various project alternatives. Caltrans is making a dubious claim that the state’s policies, programs or projects (including those done by Caltrans elsewhere in the State) obviate the need and desirability to reduce GHG emissions associated with the long term operation of the project. Focusing only on construction impacts limits the necessary public disclosure of cumulative impacts.

The lack of transit and HOV accommodation in these design alternatives is a major oversight. Currently, buses and carpools on I-580 experience the same congestion as in the general purpose lanes. Enshrining this situation for the 40-year life of the project is not acceptable and under no circumstances should this project be undertaken in a manner that precludes needed improvements to the transit and HOV network.

We thank you for the opportunity to comment on the project. Unfortunately, the current iteration of the IS is lacking in a discussion of environmental impacts to AC Transit’s service and riders as a result of the project and project construction. We look forward to seeing our comments addressed in the next iteration of the environmental documents and project scope.

Sincerely,


Michael Hursh
General Manager

Cc: AC Transit Board of Directors
Tony Tavares, Caltrans District 4 Director
Sabrina Landreth, Oakland City Manager
Christine Daniel, Emeryville City Manager
Eric Levitt, Alameda City Manager
Dee Williams-Ridley, Berkeley City Manager
Therese McMillan, MTC Executive Director