



Draft Minutes

Geary Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE (GCAC) Meeting 32 - Thursday November 17, 2016

Present were the following members:

Asher Butnik, Joanna Fong, Peter Gallotta, Richard Hashimoto, Benjamin Horne, William Newsom, Winston Parsons, Alexander Post, Kevin Stull

Transportation Authority staff: Colin Dentel-Post

SFMTA Staff: Wahid Amiri, Liz Brisson, Kate Elliott, Monica Munowitch

1. Committee Meeting Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Meeting 32 moderator William Newsom at 6:07 PM.

2. Adoption of Minutes of the September 29 Meeting – ACTION

Joanna Fong moved to approve the September 29, 2016 minutes. Mr. Newsom seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

3. Updates and Announcements – INFORMATION

Colin Dentel-Post welcomed Liz Brisson to the project team in the role of SFMTA Phase I lead. He announced that there would be a SPUR panel forum on November 22nd and there was an open spot for a GCAC member. Kevin Stull volunteered to join the panel.

Peter Gallotta asked how the previous week's election results would impact federal funding for Geary BRT. Mr. Dentel-Post indicated the project is planning for \$100M in Small Starts funding from the Federal Transit Administration, but it was too early to tell what the election's implications would be.

4. Update on Stakeholder Outreach and Next Steps– INFORMATION

Liz Brisson gave an update on outreach since the last GCAC meeting. She explained the outreach process leading up to the milestone of the Final Environmental Impact Report (EIR). Ms. Brisson explained that Cathedral Hill stakeholders requested conversion of the Gough stop to a Rapid stop; staff explained it is not a good candidate for a Rapid stop but that local service would get faster and more reliable. Japantown requested to retain Laguna as a Rapid stop; staff recommends it be retained as a local-only stop primarily to save time for more transit riders, but it committed to including better wayfinding, streetscaping, an education campaign (including ambassadors), and improved vehicle branding (including sign heads, new bus flags).

Wahid Amiri gave an update on outreach with representatives of the Holy Virgin Cathedral, who had three main concerns: parking, the center-to-side bus lane transition location, and the Collins stop.

There are a total of 20 parking spaces lost near the Cathedral, so staff evaluated alternatives like shared parking or street reconfiguration. A potential design at 29th Avenue shows parking reconfiguration could result in 19 new parking spaces. Mr. Amiri explained that the transition location west of 25th Avenue is to avoid the busiest retail area but staff is committed to continuing review of tradeoffs at other locations, including further outreach. The Collins local stop is proposed for removal, but the project team understands that seniors use it frequently and is committed to re-evaluating the proposal. Mr. Amiri explained that upcoming milestones were the publication of the Final Environmental Document and Board approvals.

Richard Hashimoto raised concerns about converting the Laguna stop to a local-only stop, noting that people currently use the Rapid service and are concerned about wait times for local buses, but also noted the communications strategies staff has proposed could help with some concerns. Ms. Brisson said she was committed to further discussions with the community.

William Newsom asked how reversible a decision on the stop would be, like making it local-only and later converting it back to Rapid. Ms. Brisson indicated that staff had done technical studies to develop their recommendation but the Transportation Authority and SFMTA Boards would need to give final approval. Kate Elliot indicated that the stop changes would happen first, followed by the expensive construction to build bus bulbs later in the process. Mr. Dentel-Post added that the environmental document analyzed alternatives and that Board approval represents overall project approval; additional outreach will occur to inform design details in the next phase.

Benjamin Horne asked about possible streetscape design refinements in Japantown. Ms. Brisson indicated staff would meet with community members to discuss the improvements they desire.

Peter Gallota asked what the travel time difference would be if the Laguna were Rapid. Ms. Brisson said the analysis found that about 5-8% of the project's travel time benefit for through riders would be lost.

Winston Parsons asked about the stop removal at Collins. Mr. Amiri indicated that the team was still evaluating options, but if the analysis found that keeping the stop would not affect the environmental analysis then the design could be changed to keep the stop as-is.

Joanna Fong asked why the stop elimination was proposed in the first place. Mr. Dentel-Post said it was part of the consolidated service design and that the project team had met with area stakeholders previously and the issue had not come up.

Kevin Stull asked if the idea was to have these issues resolved by a Board hearing in December. Mr. Amiri stated that these analyses were on a parallel track and the team did not want to hold up the environmental analysis.

Joanna Fong stated that this approval of concept is at a high level and the process would then forward to the next phase of work and refinement, and that this is typical.

During public comment, Maureen Duffey said she lived at the corner of Laguna and Geary and petitioned for a Limited bus stop many years ago. She noted that there are hills on either side of Laguna so it would be difficult for seniors to go to Fillmore or Van Ness.

David Hyry said that Laguna has the highest density of senior housing and is an economic and tourist center. He asked if the California Pacific Medical Center (CPMC) expansion was accounted for in the project analysis, and said how this would affect travel time at Laguna was unknown. He questioned whether the Board of Supervisors would approve the plan and said a lot remained unaddressed.

Suzanne Smith said she was the president of Residents Association at the Sequoias, and that it was

important talk in terms of the environment people live in, specifically that the Laguna stop is on a hill and many seniors live there.

Lois Scott said she lived at the intersection of Laguna and Geary in a cooperative, and wished that the project team had done more outreach to the disabled community since it looked like there would be unanticipated consequences. She said that many people need to use walkers if they go very far, but can walk to destinations close by, and if the stop change resulted in more people using walkers it could slow down bus loading times. She said she was glad the team was working to better identify Rapid and Local buses.

Bob Starzel said he was disappointed that a request to move the CAC meeting to the Richmond was turned down, and thought the CAC should get out to see things their way from Masonic west and the fragile businesses there. He said he was concerned about changes to the Boulevard. He asked if copies of the EIR had been made available, and also whether the California Traffic Control Devices Committee had anything to do with the Federal Transit Administration delay.

Euliky Sisca said she lived near Laguna and did not care if it was a Local or Rapid stop but she could not fit on a bus in the morning because it so busy. She expressed concern that if the Rapid stop were eliminated and there were fewer buses stopping at Laguna it would be even harder for commuters to get on a bus.

Cindy Jo said she was at the meeting to oppose elimination of the Laguna stop, and she is also part of Chinatown groups, which have many members who use the Laguna stop.

In response to public comments, Mr. Dentel-Post explained that the Laguna stop is a challenging trade-off and explained the technical analysis of travel time and ridership, which found that many more riders would benefit from a Local-only stop at Laguna, and also noted that the project would include more service overall on the corridor to address crowding and bus bunching. He also clarified that both the Local and Rapid are getting the new low-floor buses, and said the CPMC project was included in the project analysis assumptions.

Peter Gallotta asked what the ratio of local to rapid service would be. Ms. Brisson responded that SFMTA consistently monitors ridership on both and it is challenging for the agency to balance service to minimize crowding. She noted that the service plan assumptions for the project include 6-minute headways for the Local and 2-3 minute headways for the Rapid at peak times.

5. Update on Final Environmental Document and Preview of Notifications and Outreach – INFORMATION

Colin Dentel-Post gave a presentation and update on the environmental process, next steps on approvals, and upcoming notification activities.

Kate Elliot talk about the SPUR panel on November 22nd at 12:30pm, which was featured in the SFGate blog and an article. She said a mailer is planned to be published after Thanksgiving, that flyers/postcards would be passed out at bus stops to announce when the environmental document is released, that web updates and new content would be added, and social media notifications were planned.

Richard Hashimoto asked if there would be opportunity for public comment at the TA Board. Mr. Dentel-Post said yes, there would be.

Kevin Stull asked how Scott Weiner's election to the State Senate would affect the TA Board. Mr. Dentel-Post mentioned that the Mayor would assign a person to the seat, but the timing was unknown.

Joanna Fong thanked Kate for her presentation and said the transparency is good. She said it was a good idea to emphasise that the environmental document was not the end of the public process.

Alexander Post asked if the GCAC could learn about outreach efforts ahead of time so they could get involved. Ms. Elliot said yes.

Richard Hashimoto asked about letters submitted from the public and whether the GCAC could see them. Mr. Dentel-Post said he would share them with the GCAC.

Winston Parsons said he wanted to share thoughts about the Laguna stop since it's a hard thing to balance. He noted that people in the outer Richmond buy cars or move because the bus is slow. He said he was hopeful there was a way to make it work so it is not detrimental to seniors and can benefit the project. He said his inclination is to keep the stop at Laguna local.

Kevin Stull asked if the team could send links to articles and the blog. Mr. Dentel-Post said he would send them again.

Peter Gallotta asked if the GCAC would receive the final environmental document and wanted to know the timeline of who decides first. He said he hope that the approvals would be in January due to the December holidays. Mr. Dentel-Post said the project team would let the GCAC know when the document is available and that the GCAC recommendation would be first, followed by the TA Board, then the SFMTA Board.

During public comment, Bob Starzel asked if it takes 10 days after the FTA publishes the notice in the Federal Register before the TA Board could act. Mr. Dentel Post said the ten-day requirement is for CEQA purposes so it would be ten days from release of the document. Mr. Starzel also asked if the final document would include a more precise categorization of Phase I and Phase II and the Federal funding amount. Mr. Dentel Post clarified that the final document is mostly responses to comments, including changes in response to feedback, but there would be no changes to the assumed Federal funding amount.

6. Public Comment

Nick Carnero said he lived in the Richmond and that people really want the project, and it should be built now.

7. Adjournment

Winston Parsons moved to adjourn the meeting. Kevin Stull seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously and the meeting adjourned at 7:48 p.m.