San Francisco County Transportation Authority

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Memorandum

Date: 03.10.2016

RE: Plans and Programs Committee March 15, 2016

To: Plans and Programs Committee: Commissioners Tang (Chair), Farrell (Vice Chair), Avalos, Cohen, Peskin and Wiener (Ex Officio)

From: Rachel Hiatt – Acting Deputy Director for Planning

Through: Tilly Chang – Executive Director

Subject: ACTION – Recommend Approval of the Improving West Side Transit Access Strategic Analysis Report

Summary

At the November 18, 2014 meeting of the Finance Committee, Commissioner Tang requested that we initiate a Strategic Analysis Report (SAR) to investigate options for improving access to transit on the west side of San Francisco. The purpose of the study is to recommend options for improving access to major West Side transit hubs, especially the West Portal Muni station and Daly City BART station, with the ultimate goal of encouraging alternatives to driving alone to access transit hubs or downtown. As called for in the Transportation Authority's adopted procedures governing the development of SARs, the draft SAR is brought directly to the committee on which the requestor sits for comments and guidance. In this case, we brought the draft SAR to the February Plans and Programs Committee meeting which Commissioner Tang chairs, and subsequently sought and incorporated input from relevant city agencies, the Transportation Authority's Citizens Advisory Committee, and other interested parties.

BACKGROUND

Strategic Analysis Reports (SARs) are prepared periodically by Transportation Authority staff to advise the Transportation Authority (TA) on policy issues or topics of interest to Board members. This SAR, initiated at the request of Transportation Authority Commissioner Tang, analyzes options for improving access to West Side transit hubs, particularly Daly City BART and West Portal Muni stations, primarily via bicycling, public transit or carpooling to hubs. This study uses the term "West Side" to refer to the area south of Golden Gate Park, West of the hill districts, and north of the county line.

Supporting alternatives to driving is particularly critical for West Side residents, who drive more for their daily trips than residents of most other San Francisco neighborhoods. About 62 percent of daily person-trips from the West Side are made by driving, higher than all neighborhoods except the Hill Districts, Outer Mission, and Bayshore areas. Multiple factors contribute to West Side residents' relatively higher car use. One likely factor is the lack of grade-separated transit access to major job centers, which exists only at the periphery of the area, at the Muni rail Forest Hill and West Portal Stations, and at the BART Daly City and Balboa Bark Stations. West side residents must therefore rely primarily on surface-running transit, which can be slower and subject to delays from cross traffic at intersections. Extending subways into to the West Side, or providing other forms of transit grade-separation would help address the problem, but these kinds of improvements take many years to plan and deliver. This study provides near term recommendations for improving access to existing transit

hubs while longer-term solutions are being developed.

DISCUSSION

Purpose of the SAR: The purpose of the SAR was to analyze options for improving access to West Side transit hubs, especially the West Portal Muni Station and the Daly City BART Station, with the ultimate goal of encouraging greater access by transit, bicycling, and carpooling.

Analysis Approach: We approached the study questions in three steps:

- **Existing conditions review.** We developed an inventory of known transportation challenges that may be inhibiting access to West Side transit hubs, based on reviewing previous studies and planned projects, interviewing relevant agency staff, analyzing the quality of available access modes (focusing on bicycling, pickup/drop-off, and transit), and holding a community focus group.
- **Prioritization of access improvement concepts.** To help prioritize access improvement concepts, we surveyed West Side households and intercepted transit riders at West Portal, Daly City, and Balboa Park stations to ask them about which types of investments would be most likely to encourage them to take transit or bike to West Side transit hubs rather than driving alone to the hubs or their final destination.
- **Recommendations.** Using the survey results, we prioritized improvement concepts according to what would appeal to the largest number of West Side drivers. We then prepared recommendations linking the general access challenges identified in the survey with the more specific access challenges identified as part of the existing conditions review. These recommendations reflect agency input from both BART and the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency. Draft recommendations have also been shared with the Transportation Authority's Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) and West Portal community groups.

Near Term Recommendations:

- **Improve the travel time and reliability of West Side transit routes.** Surveys of West Side residents and transit users collected for this study indicated that faster transit service (e.g. shorter travel times) and improved reliability are most likely to encourage drivers to take transit to access West Side hubs. Multiple projects are underway to improve travel time and on many of the routes serving West Side transit hubs, such as the ongoing project to speed service on the L-Taraval, which connects to West Portal and directly downtown. Implementing these projects is critical to improving access to transit hubs. Beyond these efforts, the 29-Sunset stands out as a promising opportunity for additional improvement. This route serves a major West Side transit hub (Balboa Park BART), but travel times are long for most West Side residents. Ridership has grown by about 40 percent since 2007, and vehicles are experiencing crowding in some locations. All these factors suggest that additional investment is justified. Additional work is also needed to address reliability problems affecting access to transit hubs. We recommend continuing and augmenting ongoing efforts to address reliability at the West Portal Station by addressing circulation issues affecting all modes of travel and identifying strategies to reduce transit delay. A final recommendation is to develop a plan for accommodating more frequent bus service to the Daly City BART station. Our analysis found that Daly City BART station as currently configured lacks space to absorb more frequent connecting bus service.
- **Leverage Underutilized Routes to Strengthen Connections to Hubs.** Survey responses suggest that lack of nearby transit routes is not a top barrier to taking transit. However, there

are opportunities to reconfigure existing, lower-performing routes to improve performance and strengthen connections to transit hubs. Several routes on the West Side are underutilized but the 66-Quintara stands out as the least utilized route in the study area and one that lacks connections to major destinations or transit hubs. We recommend studying options to improve the 66-Quintara or other lower performing routes.

- **Pilot methods of encouraging carpooling and ridesharing to transit hubs.** Our survey found that about a third of drivers would consider taking a shared ride service to access West Side transit hubs; drivers appeared to be more interested in these services than non-drivers. Shared ride services have the potential to expand the options available to drivers interested in taking transit from a major hub, especially for those who live outside walking distance of their preferred transit route. We recommend developing a scope of work and seeking funding for a pilot project to encourage carpooling and ridesharing to hubs.
- **Increase bicyclist' safety and comfort to encourage bicycling to hubs.** Survey results suggest that improving bicycle safety, addressing challenges associated with hilly terrain, and reducing the incidence of bicycle theft should be top priorities for encouraging more bicycling by residents in the Southwest part of the city. Based on this, top recommendations include implementing planned projects to improve bicycle safety in the Geneva Corridor and on Ocean Avenue (or on parallel routes), which provide connections to the Balboa Park BART station; implementing secure bicycle parking in the West Portal area to allow commuters to leave bikes securely while they travel downtown; and identifying funding for a study to develop a plan for improved bicycle connections to the Daly City BART station.

Long Term Recommendations:

- **Explore subway extensions and creating freeway high occupancy vehicle lanes for express buses.** Expanding direct access to underground rail or other grade-separated transit has the potential to significantly improve travel times to downtown for West Side residents, especially those not currently living near a hub. Plans are already underway to underground portions of the M-Line through the M-Ocean View/19th Avenue Project, and the potential for additional subway expansions could be considered as part of the Transit Modal Concept Study in the next Long Range Transportation Planning Process. Another strategy for reducing travel times between the West Side and downtown would be to dedicate a lane to transit buses on I-280, which would allow buses from the West Side to express downtown within 20 minutes or less once on the freeway. The viability of this idea could be explored as part of developing the Freeway and Street Traffic Management Strategy in the Long Range Transportation Planning Process (LRTPP).
- **Develop a strategy for reducing reliance on single occupant vehicle driving for travel between the West Side and South Bay.** Our analysis focused on travel between the West Side and downtown San Francisco, which is the second most common commute destination. Future studies should also examine how best to reduce driving dependence for West Side workers destined for the South Bay, which is the top commute destination but more difficult to serve by transit given low employment densities and an abundance of parking relative to downtown San Francisco. Approximately 90 percent of morning peak period trips between the Sunset and South Bay are currently made by driving, compared to about 28 percent of trips between the Sunset and downtown. Future studies could examine options such as providing direct express bus services between the West Side and top South Bay commute destinations; providing more continuous dedicated high occupancy vehicle/transit lanes on US 101 or I-280; providing direct incentives for carpooling/ridesharing; or strengthening connections to Caltrain.

These ideas could be considered as part of developing the Freeway and Street Traffic Management Strategy in the LRTPP.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Recommend approval of the Improving West Side Transit Access SAR, as requested.
2. Recommend approval of the Improving West Side Transit Access SAR, with modifications.
3. Defer action, pending additional information or further staff analysis.

CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The CAC was briefed on this item at its February 24, 2016 meeting and unanimously adopted a motion of support for the staff recommendation.

FINANCIAL IMPACTS

None.

RECOMMENDATION

Recommend approval of the Improving West Side Transit Access SAR.

Enclosure:

1. Draft Improving West Side Transit Access Strategic Analysis Report