

# BRT for Berkeley Proposal for Discussion



This document describes elements of the City of Berkeley's staff proposal for a Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) of the East Bay Bus Rapid Transit project. The proposal is *not final*. It is merely meant to provide a framework for community discussion.

## Bus Rapid Transit and Transit Service

The purpose of the East Bay Bus Rapid Transit project is to provide faster, more reliable, and more comfortable transit service in AC Transit's busiest corridor. This is intended to both improve the quality of service for existing riders and attract new riders to transit. Key service improvements include:

- **Faster Service:** AC Transit has estimated that 2025 BRT travel times between downtown Berkeley and Telegraph and Alcatraz would be 25% faster than Route 1R service. BRT buses are expected to be approximately 18% faster over the length of the corridor.
- **Improved Reliability:** BRT service will be considerably more reliable than the existing 1R rapid bus. Today, nearly two out of five buses arrive at their destinations several minutes later than scheduled.<sup>1</sup> Most current bus delays are caused by traffic congestion (57%) and boarding/alighting and merging into and out of traffic (24%).<sup>2</sup> A dedicated lane, level boarding, stops flush with travel lanes, and pre-paid boarding will remove most of these issues.
- **More frequent service:** AC Transit has proposed BRT frequencies of five minutes throughout the day, every 10 minutes in the evening, and hourly from midnight to 5 a.m. On weekends between Berkeley and Oakland, BRT headways would be 12 minutes during the day and every 15 minutes in the evening. BRT's improved reliability in part enables this high peak frequency.
- **Easier Boarding:** Raised platforms and pre-paid boarding using ticket machines would make boarding the bus easier and faster for all riders, in particular those with mobility impairments.
- **Improved "legibility" of the service:** A single BRT line rather than a rapid and a local line would be easier for riders to understand. Also, BRT service would operate in both directions on Telegraph, rather than operating in one direction on Telegraph and the other direction on Dana.

Despite these benefits, the BRT project also has some downsides for transit riders:

- **Center Boarding Platforms:** To access BRT stops in the center of the street, all transit riders would have to cross at least one traffic lane. Today, some riders must cross the entire street, while others don't cross at all – depending on their direction of travel.
- **Removal of Local Stops:** Without local bus service in the corridor, some bus riders would have to walk farther to access a stop than they do today. BRT buses would make more stops than the 1R, but a number of local stops would be removed. These are shown in the map below.

<sup>1</sup> The scheduled gap between Route 1R buses is 12 minutes, yet in the 2008 survey, nearly 40 percent of buses arrived at their destinations more than 15 minutes after the previous bus.

<sup>2</sup> Source: AC Transit Route 1R Sources of Delay study.

The greater distances some passengers, including mobility-impaired passengers, would have to travel to stops would be offset to some extent by the increased speed and reliability of BRT service, as well as by the ease of level boarding onto vehicles. The decreased access that results from removal of local stops also has to be balanced against the gains in speed and reliability that accrue from wider stop spacing and the project's ability to attract new riders. Analysis done by AC Transit shows that 87% of current Berkeley riders would continue to use the same stops as today.<sup>3</sup> For the remaining 13%, there would be a BRT stop within 400-1,200 feet of their former local stop, except at Bancroft and Durant at Ellsworth, where the nearest BRT stop is just over a quarter-mile away.



<sup>3</sup> Source: Information provided to City of Berkeley by AC Transit. Stop locations in analysis may have been slightly different from those in the proposed LPA.