

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.

East Bay Bus Rapid Transit Features

The definition of Bus Rapid Transit varies from place to place. The East Bay BRT project is proposed to have the following features:

- **Dedicated bus lanes** for most of the route. Almost all of the route in Oakland and over half of the route through San Leandro is proposed for dedicated transit lanes (as in Berkeley, the exact route decisions will be made through the LPA process). These bus lanes would be separated from traffic by mountable curbs, lane markings or rumble strips. Mountable curbs provide the strongest restriction for auto drivers. Transit lanes designated by lane markings or rumble strips often require increased enforcement to ensure automobile driver compliance.
- **Enhanced transit signal priority** using an intelligent transportation systems (ITS) network. Buses would have transponders that allow signals to detect when a bus is coming and hold lights green to allow an oncoming bus to pass.
- **Higher-visibility, more permanent bus “stations” or high quality bus stops** that are proposed to feature:
 - **Ticket machines at stations and a “proof-of-payment” fare system** allowing riders to quickly board through all doors, without having to line up in front to pay fares.
 - **Raised stop platforms to allow “level-boarding.”** Platforms would be 13 inches tall, the same level as bus floors, so riders can more easily and speedily board. In some locations space constraints might make it necessary to provide “near-level” boarding at 10.5 inches or standard sidewalk height (both of which would require a small step up into vehicles, and deployment of lifts for wheelchairs).
 - **Stations integrated with bus lanes** so buses don't have to weave into and out of stops.
 - **Stations on the far side of intersections** wherever possible so that buses aren't prevented from reaching stops by red light queues
 - **Specially branded shelters, route maps, and large visible signage**
 - **Electronic “NextBus” signs** at bus stations that let waiting passengers know how long it will be until the next bus arrives
- **Buses with low floors and several sets of doors**, so they're faster to load and unload. AC Transit proposes to use either the 60-foot “articulated” buses it now operates on Route 1R, diesel-powered vehicles manufactured by Van Hool or a similar model. City of Berkeley staff is recommending that the agency utilize lower-emission vehicles as soon as is practically possible.

- **Schedules that are more frequent and “headway-based.”** BRT service is proposed to run every 5 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.¹ A “headway-based” schedule like this means that bus drivers never have to “hold back” to remain on schedule to arrive at a specific minute.

All these features combined are designed to make BRT service faster, more reliable, and more frequent, and to promote a sense of “distinction” from standard bus service. In 2015 at peak periods (rush hours), BRT buses are projected to make one-way trips from end to end 18% faster than today (approximately 1 hour and 6 minutes compared to 1 hour and 20 minutes today). Any of these improvements individually would likely attract more riders. With all these features combined, BRT is projected to attract 6,820 more users to transit every weekday by 2015 over a no-change (“no-build”) scenario.

¹ Alameda Contra Costa Transit District, *Fiscal Year 2010 Small Starts Submittal*, September 2008