



ALAMEDA COUNTY HEALTH CARE SERVICES AGENCY
PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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To Whom It May Concern:

The Alameda County Public Health Department (ACPHD) is writing to share our comments and recommendations regarding the AC Transit's proposal to build Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) and analysis in the Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR). As the agency responsible for protecting the public health of Alameda County residents, our department analyzes public health impacts of planning processes for consideration in decision-making. **I write to express our support of the Bus Rapid Transit Plan with two recommendations.**¹

In order to promote the public's health and advance greater health equity, we recommend the following:

- *Consider setting aside funds for ongoing meaningful community engagement, particularly around the impacts of diverted traffic on air quality and safety, post-BRT implementation;*
- *Consider earmarking a portion of any cost savings from BRT to mitigate planned AC Transit fare increases, recent service reductions, or other challenges that have the effect of reducing overall public transit affordability and/or accessibility for low-income communities of color.*

ACPHD supports the BRT plan because of its contribution to more healthy and equitable development in Alameda County. We believe that the BRT will improve transit access and reliability, improve pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure and safety, increase physical activity and improve air quality. ACPHD has documented the health inequities in Alameda County that disproportionately impact low-income communities and communities of color. The BRT route will serve some of Alameda County's neighborhoods with the highest concentrations of poverty, whose residents are predominately African Americans and Latinos and who rely on AC Transit for access to services, cultural and commercial centers and transportation to much needed jobs. Furthermore, the BRT plan includes benefits for people with limited mobility, including: improved boarding via raised platforms level with buses; increased reliability via higher frequencies of buses; and increased pedestrian safety improvements, including creating more visible crosswalks and pedestrian signals. By enhancing the reliability and capacity of public transit along this corridor, it will improve access to economic opportunities within these communities, thereby contributing to better health outcomes and health equity.

¹ We are working with the office of Alameda County Supervisor Keith Carson on this issue.

In our comments on the DEIR, we raised concerns about the potential changes in traffic, pedestrian and bicyclist safety and localized air quality on side streets, particularly on vulnerable populations, parallel to the BRT corridor due to diverted traffic. The FEIR included a traffic and circulation analysis of diverted traffic showing that the impacts were either insignificant or able to be mitigated. AC Transit has committed to funding a neighborhood traffic management program to monitor and address potential negative traffic impacts pre- and post-construction, including working with Cities to establish criteria for triggering action. In addition, a second fund will be created to address miscellaneous BRT-related traffic issues over the next 10 years. ***We applaud AC Transit on developing this policy, and recommend setting aside funds for meaningful community engagement. Through this process vulnerable populations, such as seniors, those with limited mobility, and low-income residents living near BRT lines, should have opportunities to discuss the impacts of diverted traffic on air quality and safety.***

One goal of the BRT plan is to improve service efficiency by reducing operating costs for AC Transit. In Alameda County, low-income households dedicate a larger share of their income to transportation costs than higher income households and low-income communities, particularly African Americans, also rely more on public transportation.² Affordable transportation is vital for accessing employment, goods and services and medical services. ***To promote health equity, consider earmarking a portion of any cost savings from BRT to mitigate future AC Transit fare increases, service reductions, or other challenges that have the effect of reducing public transit affordability and/or accessibility for low-income communities of color.***

ACPHD is dedicated to improving health of Alameda County residents and preventing avoidable health risks. Thank you for considering our recommendations. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns.

Regards,

Anita Siegel
Alameda County Public Health Department Director

cc: Alex Briscoe, Health Care Services Agency Director

² Alameda County Public Health Department. 2008. *Life and Death from Unnatural Causes: Health and social inequity in Alameda County*. Chapter on Transportation.