

# **West County High-Capacity Transit Study**

## **Community Workshops**

**April 2016**

### **Public Outreach Summary Report**



## Introduction

From April 12-14, 2016, the West County High-Capacity Transit Study project team facilitated the first of two rounds of Community Workshops along the I-80 corridor to solicit community feedback related to a set of proposed high-capacity transit options to help alleviate congestion in West Contra Costa County. An online survey was also made available to gather input from a broad cross section of current and potential high-capacity transit users. The project team specifically sought input to inform which of the eight preliminary alternatives would be selected for further study as preferred alternatives. As the public was informed, there is no right or wrong answer, and the solution may be a suite of alternatives for the near and longer term.



*Attendees at the Pinole Community Workshop*

## Workshop Dates

Workshop Location	Workshop Date/Time	Estimated Attendees
San Pablo City Council Chambers 13831 San Pablo Avenue, San Pablo	Tuesday, April 12, 2016 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.	21
Pinole City Council Chambers 2131 Pear Street, Pinole	Wednesday, April 13, 2016 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.	21
Richmond City Council Chambers 440 Civic Center Plaza, Richmond	Thursday, April 14, 2016 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.	20

## Workshop Format

The Community Workshops utilized a combined open house and presentation format, with handouts (Study fact sheets, comment cards) and informative, interactive exhibit displays at different stations. During the open house, attendees were invited to view the exhibits, discuss alternatives in detail with Study team members, participate in a survey, and indicate their preferences for one or multiple of the four preliminary preferred alternatives in a “dollar investment” game. A formal presentation and a Q&A session provided attendees the platform to ask questions and comment on the proposed alternatives and were followed by a second open house interval. Spanish and Cantonese interpretation services were available. Refreshments were provided, and attendees also had a chance to win five pre-loaded Clipper cards at each workshop by submitting a written comment.

The following informational materials were provided at the Community Workshops:

- **Handouts:** The meeting agenda; comment form; project fact sheet in English, Spanish, and Traditional Chinese; and a survey in English, Spanish, and Traditional Chinese
- **Exhibit boards:** Exhibit boards showing an overview of the Study, trivia about the Study corridor, details about the proposed alternatives, and corresponding budgets
- **Presentation:** A PowerPoint presentation, delivered by WSP | Parsons Brinckerhoff, providing an overview of the Study, a summary of West County residents’ origins and destinations, future transit markets, and the eight preliminary alternatives

The presentation was made available for download on the Study website ([www.WestCountyTransitStudy.com](http://www.WestCountyTransitStudy.com)) after the workshops.



*Attendees at the San Pablo Community Workshop*

## Comments

At the community meeting, there were multiple ways attendees could provide comments and express their interests:

- Comment forms
- Filling out a speaker card and expressing their comments verbally
- Completing paper or online versions of a survey
- “Investing” in a preferred alternative(s) using play \$1 bills

## Key Themes

In general, although the team noted a wide range of issues and concerns at the Community Workshops, there were several key themes that consistently emerged through verbal and written comments.

### Commuter Rail

- Concerns about interaction between passenger and freight rail – service capacity and impacts from potential accidents. (2)
- Preference for commuter rail alternative(s) to relieve road and freeway congestion. (2)

### Bus Rapid Transit/Express Bus

- Concerns about hours of operation and extended hours, including on Line 74. (2)
- Requests for more frequent bus service, including in Rodeo and Hercules. (2)
- Requests for bus services at proposed Appian Way Station, at El Sobrante via San Pablo Dam Road, and from Pinole/San Pablo border to Richmond and the rest of the region. (4)
- Concerns about number/location of stops on BRT/Express Bus alternatives. (2)
- Concerns about total travel time and question about whether bus will travel in a dedicated lane on San Pablo Avenue. (2)
- Preference expressed for BRT/Express Bus alternatives, at least in the short term, with one commenter noting that buses are cost-effective and easier to tweak. (4)

### BART

- Preference expressed for BART alternative as a connection to the rest of the Bay Area, including Silicon Valley. Comment that more BART stations can provide greater access to economic

growth and jobs beyond Oakland and San Francisco. Request for BART service at Contra Costa College, at Hilltop Mall, and in less dense areas. (10)

- Questions and concerns about funding sources, particularly for BART alternative via a potential tax increase, and question about whether such a tax would be exclusive to West County residents. (4)
- Question about whether Study examined a BART alignment along rail corridors to Rumrill Boulevard and Richmond Parkway. (1)
- Concerns about ridership capacity on BART, including existing core capacity issues, as well as maximizing capacity via feeder service, including from Richmond via shuttle vans. (3)



*Attendees at the Richmond Community Workshop*

### **Administration and Transit Customer Service**

- Requests for a single transit pass and/or free transfers across all systems, including parking, and/or a flat fare for BART. (3)
- Concerns that public transportation is not as reliable as driving. (2)
- Concern about safety at stations and stops. (1)
- Question about availability of real-time BART headway information for passengers. (1)

### **Parking, Local Issues, and Other**

- Request for more bus service within San Pablo. (1)

- Request for more parking capacity at Hercules Transit Center. (1)
- Request that BART alternative does not build additional parking. (1)
- Concern about traffic light on Richmond Parkway at Lakeside needlessly turning red. (1)
- Concern about impacts to property and property taxes. (1)
- Question about I-80 SMART Corridor Project’s status and long-term impact on transit. (1)

### High-Capacity Transit Study

- Questions about Study’s evaluation criteria and whether criteria included: benefits to an individual commuter’s trip times; congestion relief; mobility; land use; or economic development and increasing the attractiveness of the region for employers. (2)
- Concern that West Contra Costa is cut off from the rest of the county, and request for Study to consider transportation between West County and Central/East County. (3)
- Concern about prioritization of transit improvements and consideration of upcoming development plans such as University of California, Berkeley and LBNL’s Global Lab in Richmond Bay and Richmond’s projected 15-20,000 new housing units over the next 20 years. (2)
- Request for ridership studies. (1)
- Request for outreach to residents via utility bill advertisement. (1)

## Results of “Dollar Investment” Game

During the workshops, participants had the opportunity to receive four play \$1 bills and distribute them among buckets representing the four preferred alternatives, to “invest” in for their favorite(s). The results of the game were as follows:

	Express Bus	Bus Rapid Transit	Commuter Rail	BART
San Pablo	\$11.00	\$11.00	\$2.00	\$12.00
Pinole	\$13.00	\$5.00	\$10.00	\$10.00
Richmond	\$11.00	\$5.00	\$6.00	\$11.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$35.00</b>	<b>\$21.00</b>	<b>\$18.00</b>	<b>\$33.00</b>



*Buckets for “dollar investment” game*

## Survey Results

The project team developed a survey to obtain an understanding of existing trip patterns and demographic and information on current transportation challenges from existing and potential future transit users in West County, including those who might not be able to attend the Community Workshops.

In addition to providing paper copies of the survey at the workshops in English, Spanish, and Traditional Chinese, the project team posted an online version of the survey to SurveyMonkey, also multi-lingual, and made it available on the Study website from April 5, 2016, to April 29, 2016.

During this time, 184 responses were captured from the combination of the paper and online survey. Of these, 27 were paper responses, and 157 were online responses. One Chinese survey was returned.



*An attendee fills out a survey at the San Pablo workshop*

Below is a snapshot of survey participants' most frequently reported answers.

### **Your Typical Travel**

1. Where do you live?
  - Richmond
  - Other – El Sobrante
  - Pinole
  
2. How do you typically travel to work or school? (Check all that apply.)
  - Drive alone in a private vehicle (for example, car or motorcycle)
  - BART
  - Bus / Express bus
  
3. Where does your trip to work or school usually START?
  - Richmond
  - Other – El Sobrante, N/A (retired)
  - Pinole
  
4. Where does your trip to work or school usually END?
  - Other – N/A (retired), San Francisco, Oakland
  - Downtown San Francisco
  - Downtown Berkeley/Downtown Oakland/Richmond

5. When traveling outside West County (the towns between Crockett and El Cerrito), what areas do you most frequently visit? (Check all that apply.)
  - Albany/Berkeley
  - Oakland
  - San Francisco
  
6. What is the one place (city or location) that you travel to the most?
  - Berkeley
  - San Francisco
  - Oakland
  
7. What are your biggest challenges in using public transit to get to or from the place in Question #6? Indicate your top THREE challenges. (Mark a 1 by your biggest challenge, a 2 by your next biggest challenge, etc.)
  - Transit takes too long
  - Nearest transit station/stop is too far to walk/bike to
  - Transit doesn't come often enough
  
8. Do you have any other suggestions for improving your commute in West County?
  - Extend BART
  - Restore the bus from El Sobrante to Orinda BART
  - More frequent bus trips, especially during commute hours

### **Possible Transit Improvements**

9. Express Buses usually operate on the freeway and on a faster schedule by not making as many stops as other bus services. Would you consider taking an Express Bus if it STARTED in (check all that apply):
  - Other – N/A or would not prefer this option, El Sobrante, San Pablo Dam Road
  - San Francisco Transbay Transit Center
  - El Cerrito del Norte BART
  
10. Would you consider taking an Express Bus if it ENDED in (check all that apply):
  - Other – N/A or would not prefer this option
  - Downtown Pinole
  - Richmond Parkway Transit Center
  
11. Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) is a type of specialized service that helps buses operate faster and more reliably. It has been called “rail on tires” and can use a combination of traffic signal priority for transit, off-board ticketing, state-of-the-art buses, bus-only lanes in select locations, and stations

with high-quality amenities to provide a rail-like experience on surface streets. If these types of improvements were implemented, how likely would you be to take a BRT bus to work or school?

- Weighted average: 3.21 / 5

12. If it meant we could make street improvements that would reduce overall bus travel time and improve reliability, how likely would you be to support moving some on-street parking spaces to off-street locations?

- Weighted average: 3.57 / 5

13. If a new Capitol Corridor/Amtrak station were constructed at the foot of John Muir Parkway in Hercules, how likely would you be to commute on a Capitol Corridor/Amtrak train from this new station to existing Amtrak stations in Richmond, Berkeley, Emeryville, or Jack London Square?

- Weighted average: 2.63 / 5

14. If BART were extended north to Hercules, where would you prefer stations be located? (Check your top two choices.)

- Hercules Transit Center
- At Appian Way and I-80
- Hilltop Mall

### **Survey Demographic Information**

Survey participants were also asked for some optional demographic and contact information. The majority of survey respondents who chose to answer these questions were between the ages of 35-64, white (not Hispanic/Latino), and earning moderate to high incomes (\$50,000 to \$150,000 or more). Survey participants most popularly indicated that they had heard of the survey through social media outlets, such as Facebook and NextDoor.

## **Notification Methods**

### **Partner Agency Communications**

The project team worked with member agencies and partners to develop compelling messages and utilize their existing communication channels to ensure broad public notification. As part of the public outreach effort, social media, newspaper, and online advertising were used to increase awareness of the workshops, Study process, and purpose of the survey. The project team developed tailored notification materials for the most popular channels of communication among the Study partners (email, social media, flyer, local TV) to make it as easy as possible for partners to assist with publicizing the community workshops and online survey.

Study partners who assisted with distributing communications included:

- City of Richmond City Manager’s Weekly Report
- City of Richmond Environmental & Health Initiative newsletter
- Mayor Tom Butt’s newsletter/e-forum
- Contra Costa Transportation Authority newsletter
- 511 Contra Costa Twitter
- City of El Cerrito Public Works Newsflash
- City of El Cerrito Green Happenings newsletter
- BART Director Zakhary Mallett’s newsletter
- BART Digital System Signage at Richmond, El Cerrito, and El Cerrito del Norte Stations

### Press Release

In addition to the notifications disseminated by Study partners, a press release was developed and distributed to media outlets, including West County-focused online and print outlets.

### Newspaper and Online Advertising

Newspaper and online advertising were developed for circulation in the print and online versions of the *East Bay Times* (formerly *Contra Costa Times*). The online advertisement included 105,000 banner ad impressions, and an email advertisement was also sent to 8,000 *East Bay Times* subscribers in the Study area as part of the advertising package.

The notification materials from the Community Workshops are available as part of the appendix to this report.

## Press Coverage

The list of news media that publicized or covered the Community Workshops includes the following:

- KRON: <http://kron4.com/2016/04/12/video-bart-board-member-calls-for-more-service-around-the-bay-area/>
- *East Bay Times*: [http://www.eastbaytimes.com/news/ci\\_29772812/transit-study-seeks-alternatives-to-congested-interstate-80-commute](http://www.eastbaytimes.com/news/ci_29772812/transit-study-seeks-alternatives-to-congested-interstate-80-commute)
- KCBS: <http://sanfrancisco.cbslocal.com/2016/04/13/gridlock-planners-look-to-ease-traffic-along-east-bays-i-80-corridor/>
- *Richmond Standard*: <http://richmondstandard.com/2016/04/30599/>
- KCRT-TV
- Streetsblog SF: <http://sf.streetsblog.org/2016/04/11/this-week-west-contra-costa-transit-walk-roll-to-school-market-st-hub-2/>

## Appendix

The following materials are included as an appendix to this public outreach summary report.

- I. Fact Sheet
- II. Notification Content
- III. Survey
- IV. Survey Summary Report