

Link21 Equity Advisory Council Office Hours #9

September 19, 2023

Office Hours Recap Link21 Equity Advisory Council Office Hours #9 Preliminary Purpose & Need

September 19, 2023

6:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

I. Attendees

Present Members

Clarence R. Fischer	Gracyna Mohabir	Vanessa Ross Aquino
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Staff

Tim Lohrentz, BART Office of Civil Rights	Stefania Diaz, Link21 Notetaker	Iris Osorio-Villatoro, Link21 EAC Facilitation Team
Donald Dean, Link21 Environmental Lead	Cathy LaFata, Link21 Environmental Justice and Equity Lead	

The Office Hours virtual meeting began at 6:00 p.m.

BART Office of Civil Rights Tim Lohrentz welcomed everyone to the Preliminary Purpose & Need Office Hours meeting. EAC Facilitation Team Member Iris Osorio-Villatoro introduced herself as this session's facilitator. Donald Dean and Cathy LaFata also re-introduced themselves.

Donald then provided a brief recap of the August EAC meeting presentation which focused on the project's preliminary Purpose & Need statement.

II. Comments and Questions

- A. **Clarence R. Fischer:** We need to better understand how to effectively provide solutions to serving priority populations' needs. BART has already been talking about

an additional San Antonio station between Lake Merritt and Fruitvale, and there has also been some concern around the Coliseum station. When you talk about last-mile and getting priority populations to and from BART, we need to make sure that we define how far those areas extend. Having sufficient bus service and bandwidth to get people to and from those areas is important. We need to be inclusive when we talk about serving priority populations because they don't just live within a one-mile radius of stations.

- a. **Cathy LaFata:** I agree with you Clarence. It is important for us to know who we need to include when it comes to priority populations. Our Link21 team needs to continue to give this a closer look and identify who those priority populations are. There is new guidance from the federal government on what is considered an environmental justice community as well as new information that we are learning from communities. Another thing that you mentioned which is important is how to address the needs. We don't have a project in mind when we start the process. We start off by trying to identify how to solve the problem. If we define the problem in the right way based on input, we can begin looking into potential solutions, but we first need to define what the problem that we want to solve is.
 - b. **Tim Lohrentz:** Just to clarify, "first and last mile" is more of a saying than it is a distance around the station set in stone. As we improve access to stations for people who live within one mile, it also improves access for people who might live farther away. If you improve the bike, walk, and ride-share routes, it will ultimately help people who live a couple of miles away from the station.
 - c. **Donald Dean:** Following up on what Tim said, Link21 isn't just about physical infrastructure; service planning will also be involved in that. Learning how to get people in and out of the stations in an affordable manner is a key part of this process.
- B. **Vanessa Ross Aquino:** Sometimes it is very difficult for me to make my way to the BART station, especially when I am on my way to work. In the daytime, if I were able to ride my bike, it would be nice to have bike or scooter lanes that will lead us safely to the stations. This would help encourage public transit.
- C. **Clarence R. Fischer:** Looking back at history, I understand why federal government environmental review requirements are important. As we get further along the planning conversation, I constantly think back to 29 years ago when BART, Southern Pacific, and MTC convened and hosted the "Beat the Backup Week." BART and Southern Pacific had great modes of services. This goes to show you that it is possible to get things moving when agencies collaborate and work together. As we look into these things, I think it's important to leave some room for trial and error so that we can see what ridership could be. Coordination between those service agencies is important.
- D. **Vanessa Ross Aquino:** Paying attention to how this can have an impact on smaller towns is also important. In cities like San Francisco, Oakland, and San Jose, it is

- possible that they have much more frequent public transit than in smaller cities. Service delays in our rail systems affect people much more when there aren't frequent buses to take instead of their missed one. Peak time, number of riders, and frequency are some key factors that should always be considered. Neighboring cities need to ensure that their transit agencies coordinate with one another. I know first-hand that in San Francisco, BART can sometimes be held back because of police activity or other factors. If I am going to miss my bus, I at least would like to know that there is another one that I can take. I also want to say that I am really liking that the frequency of BART at San Francisco International Airport (SFO) has improved. Something that I would like to see more of is an increase in train services during the holidays and weekends. Workers do not get weekends and holidays off, and they need to get around to be able to make people's holiday and weekend excursions happen. The service workers at the airports would benefit from more frequent train services and improvements in train service signage.
- a. **Cathy Lafata:** I really like what you said because it includes a little bit of everything. There are so many people who are relying heavily on these services because it provides them with so much access. Having an improved system is key.
 - b. **Donal Dean:** It is important to understand that this world of service planning is a system-wide multiple-transit agency issue that everyone needs to be working on.
- E. **Vanessa Ross Aquino:** I know that the Link21 team is looking into building a second tunnel. Is the second tunnel going to have a similar feel to the one in New York City? Will there be a similar train layout in the near future?
- a. **Donal Dean:** Are you thinking about two different systems?
 - b. **Vanessa Ross Aquino:** Yes. For example, one goes towards Oakland and then a second one goes down to the South Bay.
 - c. **Donald Dean:** All transit-oriented people love the transit services in New York, but I have a feeling that we are never going to quite get there in the Bay Area because of the nature of our development. One of the things that you are eluding to is whether we are going to have more options for more stations and to go to more places. These are the things that the Link21 team is discussing when it comes to the concepts and stations, and what the alignments will be. A couple of those concepts are with BART and some other ones are with Regional Rail. We are looking into all those different variables. There are still concepts on the table that the Link21 team is looking into.
- F. **Clarence R. Fischer:** I know you mentioned that there are still a lot of conversations that are happening as well as moving pieces and thank you for bringing all those different factors to the conversation. I have many things that I would like to bring up during these office hours, but I try to be thoughtful of time because we are only here for an hour. Is there an opportunity for us to have more office hours? Is there a

possibility for EAC members to come to your office and have more thorough conversations? There are a lot of us in the EAC who have some really good ideas, but we can't share them out due to the time constraints.

- a. **Vanessa Ross Aquino:** I really like that we have multiple office hours because if I can't make it to one, I can make it to the other. It feels like these will help keep the conversation active and the momentum going.
- G. **Iris Osorio-Villatoro:** The Link21 team is always thinking of ways to improve these office hours and how EAC members can share valuable input. Office hours were actually created after the EAC met a few times and we realized EAC members would be responsive to the additional opportunity for discussion. Any ideas on how to best improve the current office hours are always welcomed, as are any additional suggestions related to the EAC.
 - a. **Tim Lohrentz:** We are thinking of ways on how to improve the office hours so that it can be more of a discussion and encourage all EAC members to be a part of the conversation.
- H. **Vanessa Ross Aquino:** The surveys that were sent out are a little bit long. Can the surveys be slightly condensed?
 - a. **Gracyna Mohabir:** Sometimes the length is beneficial because the information provided helps me think through what my response will be.
 - b. **Clarence R. Fischer:** I don't mind the longer surveys because as you go through the survey, a certain item might help you think about another issue. I do think that the Link21 team should give the EAC members the opportunity to skip over questions that don't apply to them. Each one of us brings in different perspectives and I think that is important to reflect in the survey.
 - c. **Iris Osorio-Villatoro:** I appreciate the suggestion of giving the EAC members the choice to select which questions on the survey they would like to answer. I will check-in with the Link21 team and make sure that the questions are not mandatory. Just to be transparent, I don't think the Link21 team has received a great number of responses on the survey, and it might have to do with what Vanessa brought up. The EAC team will sit down and think about different ways to better format the surveys and make them more accessible.
- I. **Vanessa Ross Aquino:** Could these surveys maybe be once a month and one page long? Maybe this can be more enticing for EAC members.
 - a. **Iris Osorio-Villatoro:** Thank you! This is something that the Link21 team can consider. Having surveys be shorter and more frequent might be a solution. I will take this back to the EAC planning team. As a reminder, if you ever have comments, suggestions, or questions that you don't communicate through the survey or other channels, you can always send them to the EAC program team email.

Next EAC Meeting Date: October 17, 2023

The Office Hours virtual meeting ended at 7 p.m. Tim Lohrentz thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.