

Link21 Equity Advisory Council Office Hours #10

November 7, 2023

Office Hours Recap Link21 Equity Advisory Council Office Hours #10 Concept Benefits and Tradeoffs

November 7, 2023

6:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

I. Attendees

Present Members

Angela E. Herring
Gracyna Mohabir

Clarence R. Fischer
David Ying

Staff

Brian Soland, Link21
Manager of Rail Planning,
BART

Tim Lohrentz, Equity
Programs Administrator,
BART Office of Civil
Rights

Iris Osorio-Villatoro,
Link21 EAC Facilitation
Team

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

BART Office of Civil Rights Tim Lohrentz welcomed everyone to the Concept Benefits & Tradeoffs Office Hours meeting. EAC Facilitation Team Member Iris Osorio-Villatoro introduced herself as this session's facilitator. Link21 Manager of Rail Planning Brian Soland also re-introduced himself.

II. Comments and Questions

- A. **Clarence R Fischer:** Has there been a study done that analyzes whether Capitol Corridor, San Joaquin, etc. services more populations than BART within a 1-mile radius of current and future stations, like in San Antonio or Hercules? Who is going to be more affected? Who is going to be displaced, and how many with each technology?
 - a. **Tim Lohrentz:** Are you asking about direct or indirect displacement?
 - b. **Clarence R. Fischer:** Both! Some will have to leave due to construction, others may want to move there because of the new stations and the access they provide.
 - c. **Brian Soland:** The simple answer is yes; we are doing that analysis. Everything you mentioned is part of our evaluation: displacement, access, ridership in terms of priority population and the general population. We are running all of that through a model and results are coming in. We should be able to share some of that information at the upcoming January EAC meeting that will go along with a

wider engagement effort to share that information. To answer more in detail, we have multiple different alignments and we have identified representative alignments to use to think through what each of these metrics look for either Regional Rail or BART. Because different options still exist in terms of stations and alignments, displacement is tricky to measure. The potential for displacement is higher for Regional Rail because there are some at-grade parts of the alignment, but I do not want to overstate that because there is also a lot of opportunity for mitigation and to find solutions. I do not expect that this project would be palatable for the wider public, or for anyone, if it was directly displacing a lot of people.

- d. **Tim Lohrentz:** Just to clarify, the results from all this analysis are being prepared for the January 16 EAC meeting.
- B. **Gracyna Mohabir:** I was reviewing the slides from this presentation and there was a section comparing the passenger experiences specific to each crossing technology. Is the travel fare being considered? From my experience, I do not think they are comparable in terms of cost. I know they have different stop lengths, distances, and speeds, but fare is a facet of accessibility and a contributor to demand.
 - a. **Tim Lohrentz:** We are planning to have fares and payments be a major focus of our November 28 EAC meeting, so we will be talking in much more detail about where fares are moving for both systems then. For the modeling being done, there was an assumption for urban metro service that fares on Regional Rail from Richmond to San Francisco, for example, would be similar to the BART fare from Richmond to San Francisco. I am not sure what the assumption would be for Sacramento to San Francisco, for example, but that might be something we would be able to answer at the November 28 EAC meeting.
 - b. **Brian Soland:** You are right that fares are a contributing factor to passenger experience. We have made some assumptions around fares, and it is a sort of broader discussion for the region.
- C. **Clarence R. Fischer:** Is the modeling assuming that, even though fares should be roughly the same distance for either Regional Rail or BART, the demand is the same for each type of rail technology?
 - a. **Tim Lohrentz:** The modeling is not assuming demand; it is really suggesting what the demand would be. The demand is the output, not the input.
- D. **Clarence R. Fischer:** I did some analysis myself on trips from Richmond to San Francisco, Martinez to San Francisco, and a few other places where both BART and Capitol Corridor run. Capitol Corridor is anywhere from two and a half to four times more expensive for an adult for trips to the same cities, with the exact destinations sometimes being a little different. That is not considering disabled people, seniors, or youth that are a part of these priority populations. If you purchase an Amtrak ticket three days in advance, you could get a fifteen percent discount that you must go through some hoops to acquire. BART automatically provides you with a sixty-two-and-a-half percent discount if you have an RTC card, which is almost five times as much of a discount. If the adult fare on BART is 4 dollars, a rider could pay around 1.50 dollars for the discount, but on Regional Rail, the fare would be ten dollars or 8.50 with the discount. 1.50 versus 8.50 is a huge difference in cost.
 - a. **Brian Soland:** What I am hearing from you and from the last EAC meeting is around the status quo when it comes to fares. Our assumption is that the status quo will not continue in terms of how fares are administered. It is difficult for

Link21 because it is not our charge to come up with a new fare structure. It is worth noting and exploring, however, that there are major issues with how the existing Regional Rail fare structure is set up. When I think about the type of service that we would be putting forth, the fare structure would be something completely different than what we have today. Link21 does not have control over that, however. We are not yet thinking about who operates this service and it would need to be a re-envisioning of governance. If that were to happen, we could completely rethink how fares are structured. It would need a completely different model, and I doubt it would skew in the direction of Capitol Corridor as opposed to what is typical in the Bay Area with Caltrain or with BART, but these are unknowns. I know these are important questions that have come up with the EAC and in other public forums, and we will have to take a hard look at fares moving forward. The presentation on fares at the next EAC meeting should be helpful for setting the context and exploring it further.

- b. **Clarence R. Fischer:** If we selected the standard gauge over BART, Caltrain does offer half fares for disabled people, seniors, and children. Link21 could try to convince Union Pacific that when a Caltrain comes into the East Bay, then it should run on a discounted system. As you do these analyses for the November meeting in a few weeks, I am just trying to give you things to look at and help decide between Regional Rail and BART.
- c. **Brian Soland:** I understand. You see BART and you see the benefits of the distance-based fare structure, including that it is more conducive to an equitable fare system. You see things that Capitol Corridor may not have, including Clipper. Stepping beyond that a bit, I think we need to create a whole new way of looking at operators and governance for a more interconnected rail network. It is really an opportunity to make improvements in that area for Regional Rail. It also might be identified as a risk that existing fare structures with Regional Rail can be less equitable. I am hearing from you that it would be a risk we would need to overcome on the Regional Rail option.
- d. **Iris Osorio-Villatoro:** That is helpful framing that the decision we are making is not about governance model so much as it is about what technology we are choosing for the crossing.
- E. **David Ying:** Would the long-distance trains in the Regional Rail scenario have to have extra ventilation, considering that at least in the near term, they would have to be diesel? Or is the idea that the long-distance trains would already be zero emission in some way, so they would not need any sort of advanced ventilation?
 - a. **Brian Soland:** The idea is that the fleet would be updated with non-diesel trains. That is our assumption as it is currently required by state law.
- F. **Angela E. Herring:** I agree with what Clarence was saying earlier, and I think there should be a discussion regarding governance. Right now, everyone is jumping on the bandwagon and using the word “equity.” They talk about climate change, heat islands, the whole nine yards. But when a project is put into place, the last thing that is thought about is trees. And after the project is there, then everyone complains about needing more trees, clean air, things of that nature. I bring that up to say, I think that we need to think and consider governance. I really agree with what Mr. Clarence says. We are part of an equity team, but we are still glossing over the fees, and how they will affect community members that will use the system. I do not want to sound like a broken record, but that is what I am always going to end up making a comment about. Fares are

important; that's something that we should be discussing. Now, I know it is going to be in 100 years, and we will probably be dead before Link21 comes into effect, but it is very important that we have a blueprint. We should not wait to the very end to scramble and say who is in charge of what and how are we going to charge folks and what are we going to do.

- a. **Iris Osorio-Villatoro:** We appreciate the comment and will add them to the record every time.
 - b. **Brian Soland:** Angela, it is really important to hear that sort of thing. I do not want to be a broken record, so I do not want to say the same responses. We are early in this process, so sometimes it is too early to find a solution as opposed to identifying things that need to be solved. And in some cases, that is where we are at. We are identifying things that need to be solved as opposed to defining what those solutions are. In any planning process, you start out with a whole long list of ideas and you kind of try to start screening those ideas out, but then you take it through a planning process, and that planning process eventually gets to the things that you are talking about. But I wholeheartedly know that it is important to document and make sure what those things are and what questions should be identified. That being said, not all of those need to be answered at this time.
 - c. **Iris Osorio-Villatoro:** This is a long-term project. We are talking decades in terms of timeline, and it makes sense that it might not be the time to talk about those issues at this point of the program. I am wondering if the program has a sense of when those issues would start to be tackled, and I wonder if a timeline would help us ground ourselves in terms of answering the question of "if not now, then when?"
 - d. **Brian Soland:** I think we can map out when those things would be addressed and answered. That is definitely doable.
- G. **Clarence R. Fischer:** When the Bay Bridge was built, it had two different kinds of rail systems. You had some rail systems operating on 600 volts. You had some rail systems operating on 1200 volts. That is why on the Bay Bridge there was a third rail for some of the trains and a catenary for the other trains so they both could run, but they were electrically serviced separately. In Europe you have a lot of trains running, some on what they call their standard gauge and some on their narrow gauge on the same right of way. BART has pluses and Regional Rail has pluses. What would stop us from having both in that tube in a scenario where BART is running on the wider five-foot six-inch gauge, and the metro system runs on the four-foot eight-and-a-half-inch gauge? BART would get their electricity from a third rail. Metro would get it from the overhead catenary. The only catch 22 is that to keep up speeds, you would need a new blocking system that would allow the trains to run on the same type of system manually or automatically through the tube. And yet you could maybe have the advantages of both systems through the tube, so that when they get to their destinations outside the tube, in the East Bay or San Francisco, they could go their separate ways and serve different disadvantaged communities. It could serve a wider spectrum of disadvantaged communities.
- a. **Brian Soland:** We did assess having both BART and Regional Rail technologies within a new crossing during our exploratory analysis, which happened before I started on the team. We learned that just one set of tracks and one train technology meets the demand in 2050 and beyond. And based on that, we have been focusing on one set of tracks. If we built two sets of tracks, it would

basically be overbuilt for what is needed, making it more financially difficult to advance a project. You would think there would be decent cost savings in only having one tube under the Bay, and there are some, but the size of the tunnel boring machine you would need to accommodate four tracks is significant alone. If you are not saying that you want two tracks, you can clarify, Clarence.

- b. **Clarence R. Fischer:** In Europe, on the same pathway, both narrow and standard gauge, you have three rails. Let's say the leftmost rail services the wheels on the left side of the train for both the standard and narrow gauge. Then on the right side, what you would consider the middle rail, for lack of a better term, would then service the right wheels of the narrow-gauge train. Then the very rightmost running rail on the right side would be for the standard gauge (sic BART gauge). What I am envisioning is with those three rails, the very leftmost and the middle rail, for lack of a better term, 4-foot 8-and-a-half inches for a standard gauge train, such as Capital Corridor, would use the electrification overhead to get through the tube. Then the BART trains, at 5-feet 6-inches would use again the left running rail and the furthest rail to accommodate the width of the BART train. Europe can do it. Why can't we do it in America? BART trains would then use a third rail on the left side, powered versus the metro trains overhead catenary, because overhead would be 600 volts and BART would be your 1000 volts.
 - c. **Brian Soland:** It is certainly possible. We call it dual gauge, where you can accommodate two different gauges on the same set of tracks. I actually have produced a fact sheet on this because it comes up quite a bit. The main limiting factor on that is the very high crash safety standards that go along with the different types of rail. Heavy rail is extremely heavy. Sharing tracks between the lighter BART trains and the heavier rail trains would drastically limit the opportunity to operate on the same set of tracks. You would basically have to wait until one train clears the tunnel before another train enters. It is just a fact of the Federal Railroad Administration's standards when it comes to interoperability of different types of trains on tracks. The trains that would be using this crossing would be the heavier, more interregional type of trains that share tracks with freight on portions of the alignment. To interoperate them with BART trains, there would be drastic limitations on how that could actually happen. So, yes, maybe the standards are different elsewhere, or maybe the types of trains they are using are actually different in Europe. I do not have that knowledge, and certainly I can share the fact sheet that we have produced with you online. I can see if I can dig it up and post it.
 - d. **Clarence R. Fischer:** Maybe you and I can have an offline conversation about this.
 - e. **Brian Soland:** Absolutely.
- H. **Brian Soland:** One thing I will highlight is that we are currently in an engagement window right now. I do not know if any of you were able to attend the public webinar that was held on November 1. That went well. We are going to have an online open house. I do not know exactly when it will be released, possibly next week. I am sure an email will go out to the EAC on that content, but it takes a deeper look at some of the things I highlighted for the EAC a couple of weeks ago around the benefits, tradeoffs, and key differentiators between Regional Rail and BART. So that is certainly something to look at; hopefully it will be useful for you all.

- I. **Clarence R. Fischer:** We talk about the second crossing as a way to get people between the East Bay and West Bay on a regular basis, especially to ensure connectivity in one way or another if one of the tubes has to be closed for maintenance emergencies or whatever reason. What that means is if that second tube is BART, you could easily have the BART trains go through the first tube or the second tube. If it is Regional Rail through the new tube, you at least could have transfer points that are BART to Regional Rail and Regional Rail back to BART to go across the Bay. The one thing I am confused about that really does not seem to be addressed is how right now BART shuts down between approximately 1:00 AM to 4:00 AM at night to have maintenance done, which would include maintenance in the transbay tube as needed. Once the second tube opens in 20, 30, 40 years from now, how will connectivity be so that if tube number one shuts down from 1:00 to 4:00, the other tube also has a scheduled time to shut down? That way there is still always a connection between both tubes, but you can still perform maintenance as needed. People would understand that because right now people understand the main BART tube shuts down from 1:00 AM to 4:00 AM. Once you open that second tube, no matter if it is BART or Regional Rail, how are people going to understand there is always going to be a time window for closure, whether it is BART trains or Regional Rail trains?
 - a. **Brian Soland:** It certainly does open more possibility for expanded service hours. Whether or not that is 24 hours, I do not know, but the potential is there regardless of the chosen technology. It would require some policy changes, but it is something that people have requested for decades. It is something that we can try and make happen.
 - b. **Tim Lohrentz:** I would just point out that the maintenance on the BART system happens all over the system, not just in the tube, so there may be difficulty in keeping the rest of the BART system active between that 1:00 AM and 4:00 AM period; actually, now it is 05:00 a.m. Right now, with that closure time, it may be difficult to run trains through that 1:00 AM to 5:00 AM window. That has to be assessed.
 - c. **Clarence R. Fischer:** Would Regional Rail be the answer then?
 - d. **Tim Lohrentz:** Well, then you run into the problem on the East Bay side that the freight trains often run through the nighttime, and so there is a little bit of an issue with the UP there.
- J. **Angela E. Herring:** Will we discuss our mission statement at our next meeting? And will we find out more information on how you guys will decide on the term situation for EAC members either serving for two years or three?
 - a. **Tim Lohrentz:** In terms of the bylaws, we will be sending out a survey soon about the bylaws to see if there is any feedback. I think that actually went out already asking for feedback related to each specific bylaw amendment. We will most likely be voting on the bylaws at the November EAC meeting, which will include the staggered terms, meaning some terms would be two and some would be three years. After the vote, we would work on the specifics of how to do that if those bylaws are changed. It will not happen right away. It would probably be next summer when we would actually be working on that. And then in terms of the anti-displacement focus statement, it is not quite a mission statement, just to clarify. There will be time during the November EAC meeting to look at that and to discuss that again with the members.

- b. **Iris Osorio-Villatoro:** I will also plug that next Tuesday, we are actually going to be having an office hours dedicated to talking about the anti-displacement focus statement and all of its associated work. No decisions being made, no formal changes being made, but just acknowledging that the vote was tight, so we are hoping to gather some feedback as to why everyone voted the way they did, thoughts about moving forward, etc.
- K. **Angela E. Hearing:** Can we consider responding back to the public? When someone makes a public comment, I personally feel that it is important to keep up the public engagement. You only have one or two people each time, but I do not want them to fall off because they are the main advocates that actually listen and participate. I know two meetings ago we had someone who asked really good questions and we just listened and no one from the panel responded. The public might be asking questions that EAC members themselves might have themselves and are too scared to ask. What is the process for those that are interested, like me, in advocating for community members to get answers to their public comments?
 - a. **Tim Lohrentz:** We do listen to public comment, and we do take that into consideration as we are planning out topics to be addressed at the EAC. I would also encourage EAC members, if you would like, to echo the same concern or the same question. That is probably the best way to really make sure it gets incorporated into the different processes we have in terms of deciding on topics and of addressing those issues.
 - b. **Iris Osorio-Villatoro:** To your question as to how you can go about raising the issue and trying to change the public comment process, I think office hours are a great place to do that. Office hours is where the suggestion to start recording meetings was made as well. I do not know exactly whether these processes can be changed, but I do know that we will go back and have a discussion about this at some point in the next few weeks because it is now in the record, so we'll consider it and get back with the response.

Next EAC Meeting Date: November 28, 2023

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