

## Link21 Equity Advisory Council Office Hours #11

November 14, 2023

### Office Hours Recap

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### Anti-Displacement

November 14, 2023

6:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

## I. Attendees

### Present Members

Clarence R. Fischer  
Gracyna Mohabir

Angela E. Herring  
Landon Hill

### Staff

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

Stefania Diaz, Link21  
Notetaker

Iris Osorio-Villatoro,  
Link21 Notetaker

Frank Ponciano,  
Facilitator

Darin Ranelletti, Link21  
Manager of Land Use  
Planning, BART

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

Tim Lohrentz (Equity Programs Administrator, BART Office of Civil Rights) welcomed everyone to the anti-displacement Office Hours meeting. EAC Facilitator Frank Ponciano re-introduced the Link21 team, provided a brief recap of the October EAC focus statement exercise, and explained that the project team was hoping to receive additional feedback on Link21's anti-displacement approach within the EAC by exploring different potential paths forward in this session.

Darin Ranelletti explained that for the initial reflection, the project team is interested in hearing from the EAC on what did and did not work.

## II. Comments and Questions

- a. **Angela E. Herring:** Regarding the office hours, whose decision was it to have it on Tuesday? Was it Link21's decision or the EAC's? The reason I ask this is because we have around 18 EAC members total, and only three or four people show up at office hours. These office hours have

covered important subjects. We had three office hours to prepare, but only one general meeting to decide on the focus statement. At the general EAC meeting, EAC member David Ying brought up thoughts around language and how the Link21 project team should consider adding focusing on persons who do not speak English to the anti-displacement focus statement. That is the reason why I did not want to be the first EAC member to vote on it. When other suggestions for the focus statement were brought up by EAC members, I resonated with them but could not explore them further or vote on them. This is an important topic and it felt like we were rushing it and being forced to make a decision that did not feel right.

- a. **Tim Lohrentz:** In terms of the meeting date, since the EAC meets on Tuesdays and that seemed to work with most people, the project team decided that it would also work well with the office hours. We do not expect full participation from everyone during the office hours. I do think it is worth putting a question in the next survey which days of the week work best for the EAC office hours.

B. **Clarence R. Fischer:** We should spread out the office hours meetings and alternate them on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. I also feel like the office hours are too short and should make them longer and on a weekly basis. This way, we can have longer discussion sessions on topics. Some people, including myself, may have questions on anti-displacement or other topics. There could be an open forum for EAC members to raise any topic. This will also help the EAC think, put ideas together, and provide feedback. Sending emails is not the same as having a conversation.

- a. **Frank Ponciano:** The Link21 team will have a conversation about this struggle. This goes to Angela's question on why Tuesday was selected as the office hour day if the participation rate has varied. At the two anti-displacement office hours leading up to the October EAC focus statement exercise, we had two or three members attend the first session and nine members attend the second. We will make sure to be more cognizant of whether the office hours fall on a holiday week to ensure that participation is better because that might have had something to do with the lower turnout at the first session. The Link21 team is also looking to better define what happens during office hours. For example, do we want to make decisions or just host discussions during office hours? We will continue to have this conversation throughout the meeting, specifically as it relates to anti-displacement.
- b. **Darin Ranelletti:** I agree with you Frank. To Angela and Clarence's point, we are still trying to figure out the best use of the office hours. I agree that lots of folks put in a lot of work at the office hours to craft the focus statement. I also think that others believe that the office hours are more of an opportunity to just ask questions. The team has learned that it is not good to make decisions or have working sessions that produce work for the rest of the group at office hours.

- C. **Frank Ponciano:** Would there be interest in the EAC developing a baseline of principles or goals that could be explored for anti-displacement? The focus statement is a high-level statement to help us with the decision-making process on anti-displacement moving forward, but a conversation on values can help us step back and identify the problems with the focus statement as is. Do EAC members think that there is a need to do that work, and step back a little, or do you think that we are able to start diving into the issues in the Focus Statement that we discussed?
- D. **Clarence R. Fischer:** I am not sure if we need more office hours or if we should sometimes be brought into discussions that project staff are having internally related to anti-displacement. It is important to make sure that we can give some thought and input to anti-displacement because in the past, agencies like BART or Caltrain have given money to people they were displacing when they could have explored alternatives like building new housing for the displaced people or moving all those people into the same community. We should look for alternatives to avoid displacement of people unless it is 100% necessary. Agencies need to put themselves into the shoes of the people being displaced.
- a. **Frank Ponciano:** I am hearing two thoughts: the first is that EAC members should be involved in these conversations in between the EAC meetings, perhaps beyond what an office hour can provide. And then your second point was about just broadly avoiding displacement as much as possible and mitigating it whenever it is unavoidable. That is much more of a conversation about the policy itself and approaching it from an equity perspective. That is the conversation we are talking about moving forward as an EAC.
- E. **Landon Hill:** As the Link21 team is having conversations about anti-displacement, are there any examples from the past that you are looking at to reference the displacement that has happened? Is the Link21 team doing research on the mechanisms that were at play which caused the displacement? Are there any recommendations that other folks have made that can be considered? There are real world and tangible examples that have already happened so if there are references that are being drawn upon in making decisions, it would be helpful to know.
- a. **Darin Ranelletti:** The Link21 team is trying to learn about anti-displacement in a lot of ways. We are trying to learn from you all, and we are trying to learn from existing communities, and we are looking to other projects and other points in time. The team is also looking to other projects in the region and the country, as well as talking to other cities and transit agencies. The idea of looking at history locally is something that the team is really interested in doing. The way that this is going to work is that the EAC will provide high-level guidance to the program, what to consider, and how to do it. Then the Link21 team will have hyper-local conversations with community groups and the general community, so that we can look at the circumstances that are unique to the area. This will

involve pulling the data to understand what the trends are in the area, but also look at past infrastructure projects and the kinds of harm that it caused a community so that we do not replicate it.

- F. **Landon Hill:** As the Link21 team continues to look at some of those examples and case studies I would be interested to know what the outcomes are. This will help us understand how it will inform the kinds of conversations that we will have. There is an understanding at a high-level of what this looks like in terms of anti-displacement but not so much the mechanisms that have been used that have or would have prevented displacement.
  - a. **Frank Ponciano:** The good news is that we are still in the early stages of this conversation. In terms of the processes and discussions, the EAC can really have maximum impact on examining the issue. The bad news is that we are still super early, so it is difficult to get the conversation started. Regarding your point on finding examples and examining them, that would be a good approach.
- G. **Clarence R. Fischer:** One of the many things which could be looked at is the Grove Shafter area that BART bulldozed with Caltrans. This case study can be used as a reference for Link21. The Valley Link project is another project that Link21 staff can concurrently look at since it will hook Dublin BART to somewhere near Tracy or Stockton. The Link21 team should look at how Valley Link is going to approach the topic of anti-displacement, and what information they have gained that could help us.
- H. **Frank Ponciano:** The Link21 team will bookmark and consider all comments made by EAC members. The Link21 team would like to gauge EAC interest in the idea of an anti-displacement subcommittee or working group. There are a few key differences between the two, including that the working group has a specific charge while the subcommittee would have continual conversations on anti-displacement. Do you think that this is something that the Link21 team should consider as soon as possible?
  - a. **Clarence R. Fischer:** There should be different avenues for the 18-member committee who would like to work on different things related to anti-displacement. Perhaps the first sub-committee of Link21 should be the anti-displacement subcommittee.
  - b. **Angela E. Hearing:** I think we should define our goals and have a subcommittee like we discussed before, but things have changed now because the focus statement was passed. My suggestion is to go back into the notes that Iris compiled and find out which people have come to the office hours in the past that said they wanted to be on the subcommittee. Some people volunteer for certain subject matters, and I think that it should be offered to the entire EAC to see who is interested and willing to contribute.
- I. **Frank Ponciano:** It is important to note that ultimately, part of the need for potentially having this group is getting the EAC to understand that they can decide how the focus statement should be changed or considered. Proposed

changes to the EAC bylaws will be up for a vote at the November 28<sup>th</sup> meeting. If the bylaws are passed, then the EAC can act and decide to institute their first subcommittee or working group. Tim, to what degree is the policy determining how many people are in the group or how they are being selected?

- a. **Tim Lohrentz:** I do not recall what the specific proposed language for the subcommittees is, but I do recall that there is self-selection, so if people want to join it, they are welcome to. I do not think there was any restriction in terms of the number of people. If we only get one or two people, that will be a sign that it is not enough to make it work. If we get ten or twelve people, we can make it work but through a different meeting format.
- J. **Angela E. Herring:** The Link21 team can bring it up at the EAC meeting, but I do not think that you will get much participation. There are going to be many people who will remain silent and prefer to provide their feedback through surveys or email. The reason why I said to go back to the drawing board is because the focus statement barely passed. I highly suggest going back to the entire EAC to see which people originally said they wanted to be a part of a subcommittee. It does not matter if you have one or two or ten people for a subcommittee. We know for a fact that there will not be ten people because the focus statement that passed was only with eight votes. There are some people who will not want to spend extra time that they are not getting paid to be part of the subcommittee because the particular issue their advocacy is centered on is not a part of the focus statement. If the goal is to start a subcommittee next year, you should definitely bring it up at this meeting, but just give people a heads-up.
- K. **Darin Ranelletti:** If there is a subcommittee, something that the subcommittee could discuss is setting their own agendas. Link21 can provide support and guidance, but they could work on goals and principles, or they can work on proposed changes to the focus statement. How does the EAC feel about exploring the topics in the existing focus statement while a subcommittee meets, versus pausing the focus statement while the subcommittee meets?
  - a. **Angela E. Herring:** I would give both suggestions to the EAC. In the past, there have been office hours that have been silent, but the Link21 team has provided us with the tools to think and get the conversation started. Sometimes, members need those tools, so it would be nice to have both options available. Make sure that you give the EAC enough time in advance to review both options and do not give us this information a day before the meeting.
- L. **Clarence R. Fischer:** Having an anti-displacement subcommittee would be great because it will allow interested EAC members to have deeper conversation and bring back feedback/input to the Link21 team. The focus statement had a very narrow vote, but finding out how many people might like to be on a focused subcommittee would be good. It sounds like there are two potential subcommittees, one for the focus statement and one for anti-displacement generally. It seems like a good idea to bring these options to the EAC.

- a. **Tim Lohrentz:** A working group would be another option. This group will have a shorter duration and work on a finite, specific thing. If there is an interest in further defining the focus statement, the better place for that would be through a working group that meets once or twice and gives the focus statement more direction. The subcommittee would be something that lasts a little bit longer and focuses on anti-displacement and the approach that the EAC will take on it.
- b. **Frank Ponciano:** To your comment Clarence, I think there ought to be an EAC discussion on this kind of stuff. There may be an opportunity for other topics in which a discussion about this being a device that can be used.
- c. **Clarence R. Fischer:** I like Tim's idea of a working group.
- M. **Angela E. Herring:** I appreciated Javier Pruitt's input on equity, and I wanted to know why he is not a part of this EAC anti-displacement conversation. Is there a process to have someone from the BART Office of Civil Rights give insight into what we should be considering?
  - a. **Tim Lohrentz:** Javier and I work closely together, and we are both in the Office of Civil Rights. In the next EAC meeting, we will formally introduce Javier to the EAC, and he may from time to time be more involved in some of our discussions. Javier did bring up a lot of the regulatory and federal regulations and guidance related to anti-discrimination, and he will continue to monitor and provide input to the EAC.
- N. **Darin Ranelletti:** This meeting has been helpful, and we have documented all of the ideas that came from this group. It is important to note that we're not going to decide anything right now. This conversation will help us shape the conversation with the full EAC so that we can get a broad buy-in from the full group moving forward.

**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.*