Link 21 Equity Advisory Council Office Hours | Topic: Link21 Program Update and Analysis Overview

June 4, 2024

Office Hours Recap

Link21 Equity Advisory Council Office Hours #15

Link21 Program Update and Analysis Overview

June 4, 2024

6:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

I. Attendees

David Ying	

Staff

Brian Soland, Link21 Manager of Rail Planning - BART	Iris Osorio-Villatoro, Link21 EAC Facilitation Team
Tim Lohrentz, Equity Programs Administrator, BART Office of Civil Rights	Santiago Vazquez Garcia, Link21 EAC Facilitation Team

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 Link21 Program Update and Analysis Overview Office Hours meeting and proceeded to call the session to order.

II. Comments and Questions

A. **David Ying:** How did you calculate the ridership for standard gauge vs broad gauge?
   a. **Brian Soland:** We used a travel demand model to generate the ridership in different scenarios. You may notice there are two different numbers for the ridership for Regional Rail. We ran a test case with an extra station in San Francisco, and the projected ridership is higher in that test case. The lower number is without that station. So, we basically ran what we called a representative concept that analyzed one basic concept. This is the best foot

forward for Regional Rail, and we did the same for BART. Then we tested a different scenario, as I mentioned, with Bayview, and that's where we got that variable number. The reason we included that is to show that the number of stations included in the scenario significantly impacts the ridership. By including that one station, we increased the ridership by 30% for Regional Rail. For our BART representative concept, we ran the model with three new stations in San Francisco: Mission Bay, South Of Market, and 3rd and Mission. That came back with 130,000, but when we tested it with only one station in San Francisco, which could be a variable of that scenario with the three stations, it was down to 110,000. So, we get a bit of a range, and it's highly dependent on the number of stations we have in San Francisco.

B. **David Ying:** That makes sense. Does a lot of that difference between standard gauge and broad gauge projected ridership come from the fact that you'd be having fewer trains per hour with the standard gauge in the baseline?
    a. **Brian Soland:** So, with standard gauge we only have 16 trains per hour in the crossing, while with broad gauge there are 24. That's due to the opportunities for turning trains or connecting into Salesforce Transit Center onto the Caltrain right away. The opportunity with standard gauge is more limited because of all the other activities there and following all train assumptions. It's more limited than what BART can do. So, we have 16 trains per hour, and frequency is a factor in ridership. This is why the two scenarios are pretty on par with one another in terms of ridership. If we did a few things to increase the number of trains through the crossing to match BART, the ridership number would likely increase. These are things we will continue to hone as the project advances. It wasn't part of this initial concept, but they will be part of our work as we move forward to emphasize them and make it the best project with stations in the right locations to maximize ridership.
C. **David Ying:** What was the representative concept you used for standard gauge? With BART, there's one where you had only one station in San Francisco versus three, with one of those being Mission Bay. You have two different BART concepts, but what was it like on the Regional Rail side, especially since it sounds like the only variation is that there's a Bayview station?
    a. **Brian Soland**: Right. So, on the Caltrain corridor on the San Francisco side, we increased the number of trains south of Salesforce Transit Center all the way down to Millbrae. It was part of the scenario we modeled because it returned good ridership. We increased service through San Francisco, and if we make improvements along the Caltrain corridor, we can generate a decent amount of ridership. So, we included that in the representative concept.
D. **David Ying:** Yeah, that makes sense. Is it feasible to send the Caltrain electrical multiple units (EMUs) through to the East Bay, or is the tunnel size precluding that?
    a. **Brian Soland:** Yes, every single Caltrain train was assumed to go through the tunnel, either up to Richmond or down to Coliseum. We assumed eight trains per hour, as stated in Caltrain's business plan. We also included shuttle trains that go

from Richmond through STC down to Millbrae and back, and the same from Coliseum. Additionally, we had intercity trains connecting all the way to Millbrae.

E. **David Ying:** Can you explain why there is such a big difference between the costs associated with broad and standard gauge? What is the $5 to $10 billion for broad gauge and the $15 to $25 billion for standard gauge going toward?
    a. **Brian Soland:** Right, this is another area where we're very early in the process. With only 1% to 2% design, we made very conservative assumptions. On the East Bay side, on the Union Pacific (UP) corridor, we assumed we wouldn't interfere with UP's tracks and would have our own tracks to accommodate the service, which was costly. This accounts for some of the additional cost. There are other approaches we could take that involve reconfiguring or using UP's tracks, and that would require negotiation with UP. This conservative approach to cost assumptions resulted in higher costs. Additionally, there are other projects, such as the Corridor Identification (ID) Program being advanced by the state and Capitol Corridor that could take on some of these responsibilities. We assumed we would do it to make the project more interconnected, but other projects could potentially overlap and take on those costs.
F. **David Ying:** You highlighted the new funding source for intercity passenger rail. Is there any comparable program on the other side? I know it wouldn't go through the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), but is there a Federal Transit Administration (FTA) program that could be drawn from, or is this unique to standard gauge?
    a. **Brian Soland:** I'm not super well-versed, but other programs that mix intercity rail and urban metro transit sharing facilities are eligible for both FRA and FTA funding. FTA's New Starts program could be part of that. Standard gauge would be open to both FRA and FTA funding. FRA has received a lot of recent federal investment, but FTA is still a significant funding mechanism for transit. Broad gauge solutions would be eligible for FTA funds, while standard gauge would be eligible for both FRA and FTA, accommodating both types of service.
G. **David Ying**: Do you have a sense of how competitive Link21 might be compared to other identified corridors? How well is the program doing in terms of likelihood to get funded? How much money is it possible to expect?
    a. **Brian Soland:** Link21 is part of the Capitol Corridor, one of six corridors in California. The proposed corridor would enhance the existing state-supported Capitol Corridor between San José and Auburn, CA, with an extension to San Francisco, Salinas, and Novato, CA, and to Reno/Sparks, NV. The proposed corridor would also include new frequencies. The corridor sponsor would enter Step 1 of the program to develop a scope, schedule, and cost estimate for preparing, completing, or documenting its service development plan. The Capitol Corridor has an existing Vision Plan, and building on this, 0and in combination with the State Rail Plan, this Corridor is more well established and will likely be able to advance the Service Development Plan in a timely manner. The Service Development Plan will identify and prioritize investment packages for improvement, of which Link21 will likely be a priority. At this point the Projects

identifies are eligible for FRA Federal-State Partnership funds for up to 80% of the Project Development Cost – a significant amount of money to get to the milestone of having an environmentally cleared project.

H. **David Ying:** Did you analyze the potential effects in terms of vehicle miles traveled (VMT) reduction with these possibilities? It seems like with the standard gauge option, you're shifting potentially a lot of longer-distance trips that wouldn't be captured by broad gauge.
    a. **Brian Soland:** The range in VMT corresponds with the range of ridership very closely. The VMT reduction ranges between 300 and 500 million vehicle miles traveled annually, with 300 million VMT reduction in the lower-end scenario for Regional Rail ridership and 500 million VMT reduction in the higher-end scenario for BART ridership. This data point overlaps with the ridership findings and as ridership forecasts change, so will the VMT reduction. The bigger savings from travel time with regional rail were offset by the higher number of riders for BART.

Next EAC Meeting Date: Tuesday, June 11, 2024

The Office Hours virtual meeting ended at 6:51 p.m. Iris Osorio-Villatoro thanked everyone for attending. Tim Lohrentz closed the meeting.