

## Link21 Equity Advisory Council Office Hours #12

February 6, 2024

### Office Hours Recap

#### Link21 Equity Advisory Council Office Hours #12

#### Stage Gate 2

February 6, 2024

6:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

### I. Attendees

#### Present Members

|                   |                     |                     |
|-------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Ameerah Thomas    | Clarence R. Fischer | Vanessa Ross Aquino |
| Angela E. Herring | Gracyna Mohabir     |                     |

#### Staff

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| Frank Ponciano, EAC Facilitation Team        | Kyle Morales, Link21 Equity Manager            | Tim Lohrentz, Equity Programs Administrator, BART Office of Civil Rights |
| Joseph Chroston-Bell, Link21 Stage Gate Lead | Santiago Vazquez-Garcia, EAC Facilitation Team |  |

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

Link21 EAC facilitator Frank Ponciano welcomed everyone to the Stage Gate 2 Office Hours meeting. Tim Lohrentz (Equity Programs Administrator, BART Office of Civil Rights), Kyle Morales (Link21 Equity Manager), and Joseph Chroston-Bell (Link21 Stage Gate Lead) re-introduced themselves as well.

### II. Comments and Questions

- A. **Clarence R. Fischer:** As I had mentioned before, my concern with Link21 is the funding. Within 9 out of the 21 counties, we have MTC, who I think recognizes the value in the 9 bay area counties having connections to rail services like Capitol

Corridor and Amtrak. Has Link21 reached out to other agencies similar to MTC in the other 12 counties in the Megaregion, like Santa Rosa for example, to make sure that all agencies are on board and ensure that Link21 can be a success so that bus stops to those other counties will be funded as well?

- a. **Kyle Morales:** That's a good point. MTC is what is called a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). We have been in coordination with other MPOs in the Megaregion, as well as other transit agencies and cities. For example, we meet directly with Sacramento staff from the Sacramento Area Council of Governments, SacRT, and City of Sacramento. Since there is not yet certainty about what Link21 work will look like, we have not been able to get into concrete discussions about connecting transit. But I think that early coordination will be very important in order to set up a good partnership.
- B. **Gracyna Mohabir:** Where can we get access to the EAC summary report?
  - a. **Kyle Morales:** In the January meeting, we stated that the report will be made available to EAC members for review and comment in March. That due date may shift backwards, as we are building the timeline around when Link21 information goes to the Board. We'll communicate with the EAC if there is a shift on the timeline.
- C. **Clarence R. Fischer:** I hear Joseph mentioning agencies like BART and Capitol Corridor, but what concerns me is that I'm not hearing any other agency names. We are talking about the Megaregion, so what about Monterey to San Jose? Are we also including Union Pacific or whatever agencies Union Pacific has designated for potential rail service? So that in the case that we go with heavy rail, at least we'll have established who we need to talk to.
  - a. **Tim Lohrentz:** I do know that there have been conversations with Union Pacific, and they are aware of what we are doing, as are other stakeholders. In terms of the stakeholder meetings, we have our closest partners which we are meeting with on a monthly basis with phone calls in between, another set of partners we talk to every 2 months like City of Berkeley, and then there may be partners that we meet every 3 to 5 months. The frequency depends on the partnership.
  - b. **Kyle Morales:** We are also working with agencies that represent the other parts of the Megaregion like Stanislaus County, and we also have been talking with agencies in Monterey.
- D. **Gracyna Mohabir:** If we are moving forward with regional rail, would Amtrak or Caltrain be servicing the new transbay crossing?
  - a. **Joseph Chroston-Bell:** Link21 has been operator agnostic in its operations planning. It could be both or it could be something different; I think we want to remain open to possibilities.
  - b. **Gracyna Mohabir:** I was just curious because of the logistics about connecting the new crossing to the existing Caltrain and Capital Corridor routes, for example.

- c. **Tim Lohrentz:** There's an assumption that Caltrain and High-Speed Rail would go to the Salesforce Transit Center. This connection will be critical.
- E. **Clarence R. Fischer:** If regional rail is the choice, would there be some consideration as to where you would have moving sidewalks, or some sort of under the street connection like in airports? In order to make this a success I would hope that under the street connections would be included to make the transfer more pleasant.
  - a. **Tim Lohrentz:** There have been some conversations around under the street connections near Embarcadero, but no definitive decision has been made.
- F. **Clarence R. Fischer:** Correct me if I misunderstood, but part of this whole idea about the second crossing is the potential of having 24 hour a day rail connection between the East Bay and the West Bay. For example, the current tube could close periodically for maintenance, and the second crossing could potentially be in operation to have some sort of connection between East and West Bay. If I am correct in assuming that, with whatever rail system goes through this new tube, would we see a pause in service?
  - a. **Tim Lohrentz:** There is the potential for extended hours, but I don't know if 24-hour service is feasible. It's a policy decision that the board would make. The question is where the train would go after exiting the tube. Should the whole BART system be in service for 24 hours or just service from San Francisco to Oakland? It's a very difficult issue to look at
- G. **Gracyna Mohabir:** Last year we discussed the different concepts and we got to see equity scores. I'm interested in seeing the breakdown of how we got those scores. I was surprised by some of the scores, and I'm curious to have more insight on how we came to those equity scores.
  - a. **Kyle Morales:** Is there anything specific you were looking for in those equity scores?
  - b. **Gracyna Mohabir:** I would have to look at my notes. Can I email the Link21 email address with a follow up? Also, do you know when I should expect to receive this information?
  - c. **Kyle Morales:** Yes, please send a follow up email to the Link21 email address. As far as the report on the equity scores is concerned, it will come up in a meeting around March to May, but the date is not final.
- H. **Clarence R. Fischer:** When we talk about equity and underserved populations, I go back to when I was living in the West Contra Costa area and BART hosted the Beat the Backup Week. There were stops in Crockett and Hercules, but I was surprised they didn't have a stop in lower Pinole. A stop should've been put there, so in the planning process if we do regional rail, Link21 staff and Union Pacific or whoever should try and ensure either that priority populations have a station if they are near the rail or that a certain percentage of trains will make a stop in these underserved priority populations. It should not be just one or two stops. We have to make sure

- there's a commitment to a certain level of frequency to ensure that priority populations are served as well.
- a. **Kyle Morales:** I think that's insightful nuance that we can include in the language in the EAC Input Report.
  - b. **Tim Lohrentz:** There's some modeling around the cost/benefits of adding stations. For example, Bayview is a difficult situation as there are multiple agencies to work with in the area. There have also been discussions about a new station in Hercules and additional analysis of a potential infill station will be conducted.
- I. **Clarence R. Fischer:** Is there any way, such as a letter from the EAC, to have the Link21 program consider the population in the lower Pinole/ North Richmond station area a priority population? Because if you ran some analysis, you would be able to see if a stop in that area would be beneficial to the priority population there. Would writing a letter help to show that we are serious in our actions?
- a. **Tim Lohrentz:** Writing letters is always welcome, but your input into the EAC itself, including at these office hours, is a really strong message. It is heard, listened to, and has a lot of impact on decisions made.
  - b. **Kyle Morales:** When we think about the upcoming decision around crossing technology, the boards will not be deciding on where exactly new stations associated with Link21 might be built. But for example, if Regional Rail advances forward, there would then be a lot more work on determining where new stations should be. So, there is definitely still significant groundwork to be done. One specific thing we can revisit is some earlier work that was done around a market analysis to try and understand how much unmet rail potential is present in different areas.
- J. **Ameerah Thomas:** I really appreciate Clarence bringing this up. A strategy is needed to push for station access to these areas, especially when communities have been historically and deliberately pushed into these areas isolated from access to food, jobs and schools. That must be part of our equity analysis.
- a. **Kyle Morales:** That is a helpful point to have in mind when it comes to making these decisions. It is really valuable to hear your input about specific communities and we can continue to revisit this topic as station decision making gets more advanced after Stage Gate 2.
- K. **Clarence R. Fischer:** When would be the proper time to start giving such input? Link21 staff, you tell us as the time starts coming around but in the meantime time each EAC member can start brainstorming ideas. Let us know of other stakeholders that we can send letters to as well.
- a. **Tim Lohrentz:** Yes, we will keep you up to date as to when those decisions will be made. We will also let you know when those types of messages could go out.

- L. **Vanessa Ross Aquino:** If some folks were to be misplaced due to the enhancement of BART, can we make sure we have a tally of folks with families, seniors, etc., that will need housing and services?
  - a. **Tim Lohrentz:** Construction at the earliest would not start until 2029 but the intention is to track every impacted household and business.
- M. **Angela E. Herring:** At our January meeting, you mentioned planning on speaking to elected officials this month or next month. Would that be an appropriate time to provide letters to elected officials per Clarence's idea?
  - a. **Tim Lohrentz:** That would be a later conversation. Right now, the immediate conversations with elected officials will not get into details about stations.

**Next EAC Meeting Date: March 19, 2024**

*The Office Hours virtual meeting ended at 7 p.m. Frank Ponciano thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.*