



# LINK21

CONNECT NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

## Link21 Program Stakeholder Update

### Concept Exploration and Refinement Underway

Last fall, the Link21 Team shared four example concepts for initial feedback from stakeholders and the public. The concepts included options for a second BART crossing, a new Regional Rail crossing, or the opportunity for both.

The example concepts would result in service benefits, including connections to new communities and destinations, and potentially fewer and more convenient transfers. These improvements would enhance travel options throughout the Megaregion and locally within the Bay Area. Each concept was developed to operate and provide benefits on its own, and not impede other planned and proposed projects driven by Link21 partner agencies.

Over the last several months, the program team has considered valuable stakeholder input received, and further analyzed the example concepts as part of the exploratory work to evaluate how concepts achieve program's [goals and objectives](#) for the Megaregion. Through this exploratory work, the Link21 Team has learned that a single two-track crossing (with either type of train technology) can provide quality transfers to create a truly integrated rail network.

#### More specifically, a single two-track crossing with associated improvements to both BART and Regional Rail systems:

- Provides faster and more frequent service for both long- and short-distance trips
- Relieves crowding in transbay corridor
- Expands service to new communities
- Provides needed redundancy and reliability for passengers
- Advances equity and livability for residents by creating better access to communities who may not have access today, and more connected travel options
- Becomes more cost effective

Regardless of which train technology is in the new crossing, rail improvements will extend beyond the crossing area and be designed to meet the

region's evolving travel needs. Link21 planning and design assumes that any proposed rail improvements will not preclude the possibility of an additional crossing in the future.

The team has identified six potential concepts to continue analyzing for further refinement. These concepts include the four examples shared with the public previously, and two additional concepts that were developed through additional analysis and to address input received, including specific connections and service needs. These six concepts are currently being analyzed and assessed to identify future solutions that take into consideration the region's population, changing workforce needs and travel patterns, air quality and climate change impacts, and more.

### Link21 Awarded \$11.3M from State While Pursuing Additional Federal Funds

#### State Funding

On April 24, 2023, the California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA) announced that the Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program (TIRCP) is awarding Capitol Corridor Joint Powers Authority (Capitol Corridor) \$11.3 million in project development funds for Link21 to be used for program design and environmental advancement. This award reaffirms Link21 Program's critical role in helping the State achieve their State Rail Plan vision for Northern California.

#### Federal Grant Funding

The Link21 Team recently submitted a \$125 million Federal-State Partnership (FSP) Grant proposal to the Federal Railroad Administration. The grant is funded by the federal Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) to advance Intercity Passenger Rail projects, like Link21 would do to advance intercity rail connections through Capitol Corridor (BART is not eligible for this funding as an urban metro system). The FSP grant would leverage other committed regional and state investments to advance Link21 Program planning.

## Planning for an Uncertain Future

As a result of changes in travel patterns due to remote work, and other societal and economic impacts in this post pandemic world, the future is uncertain and a challenge to predict. However, Link21 along with agencies like the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) are committed to exploring different scenarios that are impacting our lives today and have the potential to do so in the future. The goal is to identify strategies that could address a variety of circumstances while meeting the needs of our residents. Transit agencies have yet to see a return to pre-pandemic ridership, and BART is recovering more slowly than peer agencies. Testing the Link21 concepts against different uncertain future scenarios is a critical part of the process for decision-making along with obtaining stakeholder/public understanding and support for those decisions.

Testing and analysis will be done using travel demand and land use models. Future scenarios include those used by MTC in Plan Bay Area 2050, in addition to future scenarios with sustained low rates of commuting due to working from home, low population growth, varying economic growth, reduced preference for transit, and other policy uncertainties.

This work will take place in fall 2023 and provide insights on the ability of Link21 to provide benefits across uncertain futures. It will help the program team further refine concepts and inform the discussion with stakeholders and decision-makers.

## Join the Discussion

Since February, the Link21 Team has been meeting with jurisdictions, agency partners, and priority populations throughout the Megaregion to provide updates, and share the initial six concepts for feedback. This engagement will continue through June 2023 when Link21 will host large public outreach events for information sharing, addressing questions, and listening to ideas and concerns.

Stakeholder involvement with Link21 is more important than ever as the program team works to further develop train network concepts to serve the Megaregion. Participation is encouraged! Link21 engagement opportunities for 2023 are scheduled frequently. Details available on the Link21 [Get Involved](#) webpage.

## Equity Advisory Council in Action

Through recruitment and a rigorous selection process last fall, Link21 selected 18 community members to serve on the Link21 [Equity Advisory Council \(EAC\)](#). Members bring diverse perspectives and represent many megaregional communities, including low-income communities and communities of color that have been most impacted by transportation inequities, or historically underserved. Members bring their lived experience and/or professional expertise in technical and policy areas such as passenger

rail transportation and land use, housing, environmental, environmental justice, transit justice, and economic development.

The EAC serves as an advisory body to Link21, providing input and guidance on key milestones. Link21 program leadership connects regularly with EAC members, creating a space for meaningful community collaboration to help advance equity throughout program development.

The EAC convened for the first virtual meeting on [February 14, 2023](#), a second meeting on [February 28, 2023](#), and a third meeting on [April 18, 2023](#) (click dates to view meeting agendas and minutes). Topics shared and discussed included the Link21 Business Case Framework and approach, concept development and refinement, an overview of early environmental work, the Stage Gate process, and how equity metrics are being considered in program development.

Outside of EAC meetings, members will review and provide input on program-related documents, attend relevant Link21 meetings and events, and participate in subcommittee meetings and office hours with staff to better understand key areas and information that is shared, resulting in more informed input and guidance.

## Past and Upcoming Meetings/Presentations

March 1	Link21 Jurisdictional Working Group
March 3	Oakland Youth Commission Leadership Oakland: Business & Transportation Event
March 18	Indigenous Red Market: Oakland Tribal Event
March 20	Solano Rail Hub Executive Steering Committee
March 21	Link21 Staff Project Development Team
March 22	City of Alameda Transportation Commission
April 18	Link21 Equity Advisory Council
April 19	CCJPA Board of Directors
April 20	West Oakland Neighborhood Group Presentation
April 22	Urban Tilth's Earth Day Celebration
April 23	Earth Day Napa
April 25	Potrero Boosters Neighborhood Association
April 29	Alameda Point Collaborative Saturday Residents Breakfast

Agency coordination and ongoing collaboration is critical to the development of rail solutions for our Megaregion. Link21 continues to schedule meetings regularly.

## Connecting with Link21

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