Transit 2050+: Existing Conditions & Preliminary Needs and Gaps Assessment

Subject:

Staff will provide an update on the Transit 2050+ long-range plan, including preliminary findings related to existing conditions and identified needs and gaps for the region's transit system.

Background:

Transit 2050+ advances Transit Transformation Action Plan Action #18 to "fund, develop and adopt a Bay Area Connected Network Plan" by applying a connected network planning approach to the comprehensive update of the six transit-related strategies in Plan Bay Area 2050's Transportation Element. While Plan Bay Area 2050[1] envisioned a robust connected transit network for the region, the rapid changes in commute patterns brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, significant reductions in anticipated transportation revenue through 2050, and the challenges posed by our region's fragmented transit system identified in the Transit Transformation Action Plan necessitated a more comprehensive update to the Plan's transit-related strategies. Consequently, Transit 2050+ is being undertaken as a parallel planning process to the limited and focused Plan Bay Area update (Plan Bay Area 2050+) in close coordination with transit operators. The Transit 2050+ recommended transit network will identify the strategies and investments (capital and operating) envisioned for the next decade through 2035

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[1] Plan Bay Area is the long-range fiscally constrained regional plan for transportation, housing, the economy, and the environment, updated every four years. Developed in compliance with federal and state regulations and guidelines, it satisfies Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) requirements for the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area.

and over the long term through 2050. This network will flow directly into the development of the Plan Bay Area 2050+ Final Blueprint in summer 2024.

In summer 2023, staff sought feedback on the Transit 2050+ problem statement, goals, and outcomes from the MTC Policy Advisory Council and Joint MTC Planning/ABAG Administrative Committee. Staff also conducted an initial round of public and stakeholder outreach in conjunction with Plan Bay Area 2050+ that included a survey, virtual webinars and workshops, and in-person pop-up events in all nine counties.

Transit 2050+ Schedule and Approach:
In addition to establishing goals and outcomes and conducting an initial round of public outreach, the Project Management Team comprised of staff from MTC, seven large operators, and four small operators in conjunction with the consultant team, led by Fehr & Peers, have completed an analysis of existing conditions and an assessment of preliminary transit service needs and gaps. This analysis focused on 2023, integrating post-pandemic changes in transit service and travel demand. Work is also underway on the Project Performance Assessment, which analyzes the costs and benefits of major capacity-increasing projects being considered for inclusion in Plan Bay Area, the vast majority of which are transit projects. The team has also developed a draft methodology for the Network Performance Assessment, which will use the regional travel model to forecast future outcomes of the draft Transit 2050+ transit network.

Existing Conditions and Preliminary Needs and Gaps Assessment:
Plan Bay Area 2050 and the Horizon initiative included a robust assessment of mid- and long-term transit needs for the region. Given the significant impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on transit service and travel patterns, one of the first tasks undertaken as part of Transit 2050+ is an assessment of existing conditions, needs, and gaps to better understand post-pandemic conditions in 2023 and inform development of the draft recommended transit network.

The assessment is intended to complement the extensive set of locally-nominated transit projects (including both service and capital improvements) included in Plan Bay Area 2050 and updated by project sponsors last year. The objective of the assessment is to identify transit service and/or capital needs that may not be met by projects already submitted by project sponsors. The needs

and gaps assessment will also inform development of the draft recommended transit network, along with the Project Performance Assessment for major projects, the strategies and investment priorities identified in Plan Bay Area 2050, and the problem statement, goals and desired outcomes identified for Transit 2050+. Moreover, it is important to note that a particular project's ability to fill a potential transit service gap is only one of multiple factors in determining whether or not that project will ultimately be recommended for inclusion in the draft recommended transit network. Federal regulations require that the transportation element of Plan Bay Area 2050+, including Transit 2050+, can only include capital and service improvement projects whose capital and operating costs are within the anticipated revenues expected over the plan's 25-year horizon. Consequently, a project's anticipated benefits and overall effectiveness are key factors for potential inclusion in the draft recommended transit network.

The needs and gaps assessment identifies where there may be gaps in transit service in terms of location, frequency, and days/times when service is available. The assessment used transit service data from spring 2023 and then used the Replica software platform to assess travel patterns across all transportation modes and types of trips for both the general population as well as equity priority populations during that same time. Equity priority populations included both Equity Priority Communities, as defined by MTC/ABAG, as well as more dispersed populations of low-income and Black and Hispanic/Latino populations. Potential gaps are identified by comparing the level and location of existing transit service to travel patterns (for both the general population and equity priority populations) and land use patterns that are supportive of fixed-route transit service based on population and employment density and urban form.

In addition to service frequency and span of service gaps, speed data for surface transit operating in mixed-flow traffic conditions was assessed to identify locations where transit priority treatments, including the provision of dedicated transit lanes and/or transit signal priority, may be needed to ensure fast, frequent, and reliable transit operations. Draft findings from these analyses may be found in **Attachment A**.

Next Steps:

The consultant team will compare transit service and transit priority needs and gaps to the current set of locally-nominated transit service and capital projects, including those that were

included in the adopted Plan Bay Area 2050 and those that were recently submitted last year. If a service or capital project has not yet been identified to address current gaps, Transit 2050+ will identify "opportunities" for new project concepts for consideration and potential inclusion in the draft recommended transit network later this winter. Once the needs, gaps, and opportunities assessment is officially finalized, the consultant team will document the approach to the analysis, as well as findings and recommendations in a technical memo.

In spring 2024, staff will seek feedback on the preliminary Project Performance Assessment results and the draft recommended transit network, which will include transit strategies and capital and service investments. A second round of public outreach will also be conducted in spring 2024 in conjunction with Plan Bay Area 2050+. Feedback from the public, stakeholders, and other partner agencies will inform development of the final recommended transit network prior to the summer 2024 deadline.

Issues:

None identified.

Recommendations:

Information.

Attachments:

- Attachment A: Presentation

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