

Regional Network Management Customer Advisory Group

June 24, 2025

Agenda Item 4a

Regional Mapping & Wayfinding - Update

Subject:

Informational update on the Regional Mapping & Wayfinding Project (RMWP).

Background:

The Blue Ribbon Transit Recovery Task Force recommended a regionally harmonized mapping and wayfinding system as a key action item in the Task Force's Transformation Action Plan. The RMWP will redesign and standardize maps and signage across all nine Bay Area counties to help people use transit more easily. Project milestones achieved in the last three years include:

- 2022: Selected Applied Wayfinding, Inc., to design and support project implementation.
- 2023: Developed approach for public and transit agency outreach and engagement, drafted design standards, and identified two initial prototype locations.
- 2024: Introduced prototype design standards, finalized nine pilot locations, and unveiled the El Cerrito del Norte Prototype.
- 2025: Installed the Santa Rosa Transit Mall and Downtown Santa Rosa SMART station Prototypes.

Prototype Evaluation

Prototype designs were developed through an iterative and collaborative process with transit agency staff. Since 2023, the project team has held numerous meetings to learn and gather feedback from over two dozen agencies. Specifically, the team convened four "service types" meetings to determine a regional design for bus routes on signs and maps and held two in-person workshops to review new maps in detail.

On December 12, 2024, MTC and transit agency leaders officially unveiled the RMWP Prototype signs and maps at the El Cerrito del Norte Station, and new signs and maps were subsequently launched at the Santa Rosa Transit Mall and SMART station on February 20, 2025. A smaller temporary "mini-Prototype" was installed at Powell Street Station in San Francisco in early June 2025 to test new signage at one of the Bay Area's most complex multi-agency stations.

Evaluation of the El Cerrito del Norte and Santa Rosa Prototypes involved a multifaceted outreach effort to engage a diverse set of transit riders to assess the viability and impact of Prototype design choices. Evaluation activities began in late summer 2024 with over 150 on-site intercept surveys and 16 test journeys across both locations to provide a baseline. Engagement after the Prototype delivery included:

- 3,215 Online survey responses from participants around the region;
- 5 Online focus groups, including groups with Chinese and Spanish speakers and people with cognitive disabilities;
- 586 On-site intercept surveys;
- 19 On-site individual test journeys, including Chinese and Spanish speakers and people with disabilities;
- 2 On-site Accessibility Working Group tours and 3 On-site transit agency staff tours.

Overall, results were positive and informative. Key findings include:

- New signs and maps made using transit easier than before;
- Customers use frequency to plan trips, confirming its utility on signs and maps;
- Customers primarily look for the route number and destination on an approaching bus, affirming the prioritization of service information over agency logos on bus stop signs;
- Agency logos are often proxies for information like fares, so bus stop sign designs could be changed to accommodate larger logos and agency-specific customer service information; and
- Customers could successfully associate a single train icon with most rail services.

The project team has synthesized hundreds of individual comments and prioritized them for action according to the project's values: designing for all, regional interconnectedness, operational viability, and design excellence. Design refinements are underway in collaboration with transit agency partner staff.

Regional Wayfinding Standard

A primary deliverable of the RMWP is a new Regional Wayfinding Standard. This document contains planning guidance and technical specifications so transit agencies can generate signs

and maps that have a consistent “look and feel” across the region, making the transit network easier to understand.

The project team is developing the first full Version 1 (V1) of the Regional Wayfinding Standard iteratively using feedback from the Prototype evaluation and agency partners. Building off collaboration during earlier project stages, the team is holding sessions with agency staff to present the latest refined design options and receive and incorporate feedback. Two preliminary deliverables are being fast-tracked this summer to support agency-funded projects: 1) Bus Stop Signage Design Guidelines, to support BART, County Connection, and WestCAT’s bus signage projects; and, 2) Surface Rail Station Guidelines, which will support SMART’s signage upgrades. These initial guidelines will be incorporated into the full V1 Standard later this year.

The Regional Wayfinding Standard will be a living document. While the V1 Standard is expected to address most Bay Area transit environments, a Version 1.1 will be prepared that will include additions or revisions based on the delivery of the Pilot Projects. After 2027, the Regional Wayfinding Standard will continue to be updated periodically to ensure a consistent customer experience.

Pilot Projects Update

With institutional knowledge and feedback gained in the Prototype phase, the RMWP has moved into the Pilot phase. The project team has completed site visits at seven new hub Pilot locations (Larkspur, Millbrae, Powell, Palo Alto, Dublin/Pleasanton, Vallejo Transit Center and Ferry Terminal, and Suisun-Fairfield station) and is preparing preliminary site plans for new signs and maps. Starting in 2026, the Pilots will include:

- New wayfinding at seven additional multimodal transit hubs around the region, including full buildouts of El Cerrito del Norte and Santa Rosa Prototype locations; and
- New wayfinding on a selection of bus lines in Sonoma and Solano Counties; and
- Agency sign replacement projects using the new V1 Standards.

This timeline will allow the project team to conduct preliminary work for a smoother implementation process. This includes:

- Finalizing the V1 Standards, which will be used to design Pilot materials;
- Collaborating with Pilot site agency partners to finalize sign and map content;

- Completing the procurement process for a Design-Build contractor to fabricate and install new wayfinding materials for the Pilot projects;
- Onboarding the selected fabrication contractor and beginning engineering;
- Working with transit agencies, cities and other entities on facilitating permitting processes; and
- Developing a Memorandum of Understanding between MTC and Pilot agencies specifying operations and maintenance responsibilities.

Based on feedback from the prototype evaluation, the project team is also adding a new “Accessibility Pilot”, which will research and test additional navigation tools for people with disabilities at one of the regional hub pilot sites. The goal is to identify cost-effective tool(s) for potential regional implementation as part of the Standards.

Next Steps:

These updates were shared with the Regional Network Management Council on Monday, June 23. The anticipated next steps and project schedule are:

- Summer 2025: Release Bus Stop Design Guidelines for agency-led projects and release the RFP for Pilot fabrication and installation.
- Fall 2025: Release Surface Rail Station Design Guidelines, and final planning and design for Pilots.
- 2026: Begin to implement new wayfinding as part of the Pilots, including a new Accessibility Pilot, and support incremental rollout of agency-led sign replacement projects using the V1 Regional Wayfinding Standard.

Issues:

None identified.

Recommendations:

Information only.

Attachments:

- Attachment A: Presentation