

Regional Network Management Council

July 22, 2024

Agenda Item 3a

Regional Mapping and Wayfinding Project – Pilot Projects Update

Subject:

Update on the pilot stage of 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 goal of the RMWP is to retain existing and attract new transit riders by developing and deploying standardized wayfinding, maps, and other transit information in all Bay Area transit environments. MTC has achieved several project milestones in the past two years:

- 2022: Approved a contract with Applied Wayfinding, Inc. (Applied), to design and support implementation of the new wayfinding system.
- 2023: Completed wayfinding existing conditions review, and conducted initial engagement with transit operator working groups, transit riders and non-riders, and members of Equity Priority Communities (EPCs) to develop initial draft design specifications for a family of wayfinding signs (“standards”).
- January 2024: Introduced the draft standards and a new “regional network identity,” which is a consistent design language to simplify the navigation of transit services throughout the region.

Prototypes and Pilots

Given the complexity of regional transit services, the RMWP is adopting an iterative design approach. In fall 2024, initial models of wayfinding signs and maps (aka “prototypes”) will be installed at El Cerrito del Norte BART station, the Santa Rosa Transit Mall and SMART station, and the Powell Street station in downtown San Francisco. These locations were selected because they are served by multiple transit agencies, offer transfers between bus and rail modes, and are within or near MTC Equity Priority Communities (EPCs). MTC will solicit public, stakeholder, and transit agency feedback on the prototype signage to inform a revised set of wayfinding standards.

Next, MTC will implement the revised wayfinding standards by installing new signage and maps in additional locations throughout the region as part of the “pilot projects.” The pilots will test the operational feasibility of widescale production, installation, and maintenance of the new wayfinding system to make further refinements before expansion throughout the region. The pilots include:

1. A set of nine regional transfer stations, ideally one per county, starting in 2025; and
2. A selection of end-to-end bus lines in Sonoma and Solano Counties, starting in 2026.

MTC will also provide support to transit agencies who want to use the new wayfinding standards to implement their own signage-related projects, starting in 2025.

Selection of Regional Pilot Project Locations

During June and July 2024, MTC conducted a multi-step screening process to determine the nine regional pilot locations. This process included convening an ad hoc Working Group to solicit the feedback of transit operators across all nine Bay Area counties.

Conducted by MTC staff, the first screening evaluated the presence of multimodal connecting services and available ridership data. This process resulted in three potential sites per county, with the exception of Contra Costa and Sonoma Counties. For those two counties, staff selected El Cerrito del Norte and Santa Rosa, respectively, as those sites had already undergone extensive screening during the prototype selection process. During the pilot phase, the prototype signage at these locations will be upgraded and expanded to meet the new regional standards.

Project staff then convened a panel of transit agency representatives to complete a second screening. To ensure objectivity, they represented agencies from existing prototype locations. The panel evaluated potential locations to ensure representation of a diversity of operating environments, transit modes, riders, and wayfinding needs across the region while also maximizing the number of participating transit operators.

At the first working group meeting, staff from Napa Valley Transportation Authority (NVTA) noted that NVTA Vine makes connections to regional services outside Napa County. As such, NVTA recommended that MTC designate the “Napa County” pilot as a multimodal station in Solano County that is served by NVTA Vine and other agencies providing connections to regional destinations.

As a result, the nine recommended pilot locations are:

- Dublin/Pleasanton (Alameda County)
- El Cerrito del Norte (Contra Costa County)
- Larkspur (Marin County)
- Suisun-Fairfield Station (Napa County, *located in Solano County*)
- Powell (San Francisco County)
- Millbrae (San Mateo County)
- San Jose Diridon (Santa Clara County)
- Vallejo Transit Center & Ferry Terminal (Solano County)
- Santa Rosa Transit Mall & SMART Station (Sonoma County)

These locations cover all transit modes (bus, rail and ferry) and are served by transit operators that combined provide over 97% of the region's ridership.

Next Steps:

MTC's prime contractor Applied Wayfinding Inc. will begin planning and designing the pilots this fall. MTC will continue to work with transit agency staff to facilitate planning and permitting processes, with installation expected to begin in late 2025.

Issues:

None identified.

Recommendations:

None.

Attachments:

- Attachment A: Presentation