

Metropolitan Transportation Commission
MTC Planning Committee

December 13, 2024

Agenda Item 7c

Transit 2050+: Final Network

Subject:

Final Network recommendations from the Transit 2050+ modal plan developed with the operator-led Project Management Team, for review and input before integration into the fiscally constrained Plan Bay Area 2050+.

Background:

Transit 2050+ applied a connected network planning approach to complete a major update of the transit-related strategies in Plan Bay Area 2050's Transportation Element. This planning effort occurred in parallel with Plan Bay Area 2050+, a limited and focused update to the regional vision for transportation, housing, economic development, and environmental resilience. The Transit 2050+ Final Network will be included as part of the Plan Bay Area 2050+ Final Blueprint Transportation Element, which is acknowledged as part of agenda item 7c.

Staff from MTC/ABAG and an operator-led Project Management Team (PMT), comprised of staff from seven large and five small transit operators, developed the Transit 2050+ problem statement, goals, and outcomes and conducted an initial round of public and stakeholder outreach in conjunction with Plan Bay Area 2050+ in 2023. In early 2024, staff presented key findings from the Transit 2050+ Existing Conditions, Needs, and Gaps Assessment. This analysis was used to identify projects that could address near-term intraregional transit service gaps (e.g., corridors where existing transit service may not be sufficient to serve travel demand for both the general and equity priority populations) and transit speed gaps (e.g., corridors where surface transit operating speeds are too slow and inefficient due to a lack of transit priority infrastructure). Findings from the Needs and Gaps Assessment were complemented by project-level data on major capital and service investments from the Project Performance Assessment, which integrated benefit-cost and equity considerations across three distinct "futures"- "what-if" scenarios for the year 2050.

Initial recommendations from these analyses, as well as early feedback received from the Regional Network Management Council, Policy Advisory Council, county transportation agencies, transit operators, and other project sponsors, informed the Transit 2050+ Draft Network which was presented to the Planning Committee in early September.

Transit 2050+ Final Network:

In September and October 2024, the operator-led Project Management Team considered feedback received throughout summer 2024, including findings from the round 2 public engagement conducted throughout the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area in concert with Plan Bay Area 2050+. The Final Network continues the emphasis on prioritizing “quick and impactful upgrades” during the first half of the planning period (2025 through 2035) and “expansion for future generations” in the longer term (2036 through 2050), reflecting post-pandemic planning realities including tighter fiscal constraints. As noted above, projects were prioritized using Needs & Gaps findings and Project Performance findings, as well as a suite of qualitative factors ranging from local investment priorities to their potential to improve transit network connectivity and customer experience. Technical refinements were also factored into the Final Network, as MTC/ABAG staff worked with project sponsors to review and finalize project scope and cost information and to refine programmatic funding categories for grouped transit investments (e.g., grade separations).

Based on feedback received and review by the operator-led Project Management Team, the following changes were made to the fiscally-constrained project list (i.e., projects that are anticipated to begin revenue service during the 25-year planning horizon) between the Draft and Final Network leveraging a minor increase in forecasted transportation revenues as of October 2024:

- Transit priority elements were added to the scope for VTA frequency improvements to enable improved speeds on key transit corridors, as well as on the SR-85 corridor.
- The AC Transit Rapid Project and ACE Frequency Boost/Service Expansion projects were phased to allow some improvements to proceed prior to 2035, with the remaining improvements assumed to be implemented after 2035.

- Capitol Corridor South Bay Connect, a megaregional priority project, was added to the project list; two lower-cost projects, the U.S. 101 Express Bus Modernization project in Marin County and the WETA Berkeley-San Francisco Ferry Service project, were also added to the project list.

The Transit 2050+ Final Network strategies are included in **Agenda Item 7c Attachment B**; these descriptions did not change between Draft and Final Network development. MTC/ABAG staff have updated anticipated funding needs for the strategies to reflect updated cost information received from project sponsors, as well as changes to the transit project list, and the finalization of the programmatic categories. The Transit 2050+ Final Network project list and programmatic categories are included in **Agenda Item 7b, Plan Bay Area 2050+: Transportation Element Update, Attachment C**.

The presentation included in **Attachment A** summarizes the benefits the Final Transit 2050+ Network will provide to transit customers. The forthcoming Network Performance Assessment will be completed in early 2025; staff will report back on metrics and findings in spring 2025. This analysis will work to quantify the following:

- How will the Transit 2050+ Final Network improve overall accessibility throughout the region?
- How does the Transit 2050+ Final Network improve accessibility for residents of Equity Priority Communities compared to the general population?
- How will the Transit 2050+ Final Network affect the total number of transit trips, mode share, and vehicle miles traveled?
- How will the Transit 2050+ Final Network reduce transit travel times compared to auto travel times?
- How will the Transit 2050+ Final Network increase the average travel speed for surface transit relative to average auto travel speed on select roadway segments and decrease transit crowding?

Issues:

Given that the Transportation Element of Plan Bay Area 2050+, which includes the Transit 2050+ Final Network, must be fiscally constrained to anticipated transportation revenues over the 25-year planning horizon, several rail and ferry projects are *not* included in the fiscally constrained Transportation Project List for construction, including but not limited to SMART to Cloverdale, WETA Redwood City Ferry, and San José Airport Connector. Instead, these projects are included as part of Strategy T12 (“Expand Transit Services throughout the Region”) under a funding program for Transit Studies and Project Development. Projects included in this program can continue to pursue funding to advance through initial planning, design, and environmental review, through adoption of a final EIR for state California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) purposes, and initiation of the federal National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process, if applicable.

To include additional projects in the fiscally constrained Transportation Project List, other transportation projects that are currently recommended for inclusion would need to be removed. Removing those projects, which the operator-led Project Management Team recommended for inclusion due to their cost-effectiveness, ridership potential, and service for equity priority communities, will require trade-offs in one or more of these key policy areas.

Staff presented the Final Network to the Bay Area Partnership Board at their meeting on December 2, 2024. Staff received requests to include both the SMART extension to Cloverdale, the Redwood City Ferry project, and the San Jose Airport Connector in the Transit 2050+ Final Network. Board members also expressed concern about being able to advance projects included in Transit 2050+/Plan Bay Area 2050+ for project development only (i.e., projects *not* included in the fiscally constrained Draft Transportation Project List for anticipated construction during the 25-year planning horizon).

Ahead of this Committee’s January meeting, staff will continue to meet with project sponsors and County Transportation Agency staff to discuss potential tradeoffs involving the Draft Transportation Project List. In addition to the direction received at today’s discussion, this Committee will have a subsequent opportunity in January to make final adjustments to the List prior to approval.

Next Steps:

Staff will also present the Final Network as an information item to the Regional Network Management Council and the Policy Advisory Council at their December meetings. Staff will summarize comments on the Final Network received in December for the January MTC Planning Committee meeting, at which the Committee will be asked to act on the Plan Bay Area 2050+ Final Blueprint, which incorporates the Transit 2050+ Final Network.

Following action on the Plan Bay Area 2050+ Final Blueprint, MTC/ABAG staff anticipate returning to the Committee with the preliminary results of the Network Performance Assessment in 2025. MTC/ABAG staff and the operator-led Project Management Team will also develop a report summarizing the Transit 2050+ process and pathways to accelerate near-term implementation of the Final Network.

Action:

Information.

Attachments:

- Attachment A: PowerPoint



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