



SPUR

San Francisco | San Jose | Oakland

Attention: Melissa Reggiardo
San Mateo County Transit District
P.O. Box 3006,
1250 San Carlos Avenue,
San Carlos, CA 94070

September 28, 2017

SPUR Comments re: Samtrans Dumbarton Transportation Corridor Study

Dear Ms. Reggiardo:

SPUR is a member-supported nonprofit organization that promotes good planning and good government in the San Francisco Bay Area through research, education and advocacy. Improving mobility and increasing transit use in cities are core priorities for our organization.

SPUR shares Samtrans' goal to increase mobility in and around the Dumbarton Corridor, and to utilize the Dumbarton rail structure for transportation purposes. We value the feasibility analysis offered in the Samtrans *Dumbarton Transportation Corridor Study (DTCS)*. The Dumbarton Study relates to recent SPUR research: the *Caltrain Corridor Vision Plan*, *The Future of the Corporate Campus*, *Freedom to Move*, and *Seamless Transit*, all of which describe ways we can keep the innovation economy growing and moving.

This letter comments on the DTCS, and offers considerations as the planning process moves forward.

Near Term Strategy for Corridor

Based on the information in the DTCS and lessons from other corridors, we think the following near-term strategies should be developed further:

- Identify cost-effective bus priority improvements (e.g metering with bus bypass, priority connectors, bus lanes on bridge).
- Focus on bus service improvements to build a market.
- Better understand of demand including corporate shuttles.
- Include pricing and roadway management strategies (even consider 3+ or 4+ carpooling, to enable free flow in the peak period and direction).
- Improve the bus connection at Redwood City Caltrain.
- Develop bike/pedestrian facility in rail corridors.
- Evaluate DARS (Direct Access Ramps) to 101 NB and SB.

Goals and Screening Criteria

In addition to the current goals and screening criteria of the DTCS, we suggest the following additional goals/screening criteria be prioritized.

- 1. Promoting Equity.** In addition to looking at “avoiding disproportionate burden and disparate impacts”, we suggest that the study look at opportunities to *grow* equity. Example strategies: improve streets; increase transit service and multi-modal access to low-income neighborhoods; increase TOD opportunities at transit stations; address road pricing and transit/multi-modal fare policies.
- 2. Mode Shift, Reducing Demand, and Local Mobility Goals.** Further analysis should consider a corridor/sub-regional mode shift goal (performance-based planning). A focus on mode shift would help connect the proposals to local goals and other transportation programs. The DTCS aims to “Ensure local communities are protected from adverse impacts”; it would be helpful for further study to explain how the alternatives do or do not advance local mode shift goals. DTCS Goal 1 is to ‘enhance mobility for local and regional travelers’; further analysis could consider how regional and local connections reinforce one another (rather than layering a regional system on top of a local system). Complimentary investments in transit lanes, bike networks, bikeshare, etc. can benefit the residents and employees who circulate in this area today, and connect to the regional system so that people do not need to drive as much.
- 3. Integration with Land use and Transit-Oriented Development.** Underlying the Dumbarton study is a question about the future of this peninsula sub-region and the inner core of the Bay Area: Is this going to be a cluster of job centers and downtowns, with easy access among them? Or, will it continue to be a dispersed and somewhat disconnected group of places? While the study focuses on some key nodes on the Peninsula – Facebook, Redwood City – a matching node in the East Bay is not identified (eg. Union City or Fremont). A central node in the East Bay should be identified, particularly for future rail connections, to give the bus/rail expansions regional legibility and support transit-oriented development. Connecting to existing/growing nodes in the East Bay helps add transit riders and improve the cost-effectiveness of transit projects. We should look to other Bay Area rail stations for lessons learned.

Comments on Corridor Alternatives

We have the following comments on the alternatives evaluated in the DTCS.

- **Multiuse Path in Dumbarton Corridor.** We are concerned that a bike/pedestrian path was determined infeasible for many of the corridor alternatives. A bike/pedestrian path should be a low-cost and efficient mobility solution, which also supports transit use/transit-oriented development (rather than car use). Given that rail would not appear in this corridor for some

time, we suggest looking at re-examining the corridor with the goal of developing a bike/pedestrian path in the near-term.

- **Highways, Interchanges and Grade Separations.** In general, highways, limited-access roads, flyovers and trenches all create barriers to local access (especially walking) while serving regional access; it is for this reason that cities in the Bay Area and elsewhere are studying the removal of freeways through neighborhoods. Highway structures have also caused new traffic problems upstream and downstream of the separated links. We ask that you carefully consider the safety, mobility, land use and environmental impacts of each instance of building more separated highways through neighborhoods on both sides of the bay.
- **Additional Alternative: Road Pricing.** The alternatives in the DTCS focus on major capital and transit projects. Another transportation strategy which should be evaluated is pricing or congestion charges on either or both sides of the bridge. Changing the price to travel can be used to reduce demand, or shift the peak hour and can solve for traffic delays, pollution and fill transit seats. Several types of pricing strategies are possible, including a bridge toll, cordon or zonal pricing and can be targeted at specific types of road users. In the future, the Dumbarton corridor should be part of a cohesive regional pricing strategy.
- **Additional Alternative – Aggressive Transportation Demand Management Programs, Transit Operation Integration.** Trip caps, pricing parking, transit passes, carpooling and other ‘Transportation Demand Management’ strategies have been extremely effective in this sub-region and should be improved upon further to address local and Dumbarton corridor travel. Another strategy worth considering is integration of public and private transit operations (including local and regional shuttles) to increase the effectiveness of transit service. The result could be more frequent buses serving more destinations without much additional cost. These TDM strategies should be combined with pricing strategies for maximum impact.

Questions for Further Consideration

- **What is the role of each transit station?** Further study should include an analysis of which transit station locations which are the most promising for walkable and compact neighborhoods. Conceptual designs would be useful to show how to grow transit operations at existing stations (particularly at Redwood City). Having more people walking to stations leads to all-day transit use and decreases the need for more mobility projects and services.
- **How can we grow the transit market in advance of beginning rail service?** The potential to grow the bus/transit market (public and private), both peak-hour and off-peak,

should be explored. Ideally, any new infrastructure and transit vehicles serve people outside of just peak hours and serve many trip purposes. Further studies should also look at how local bus service can be restructured given an increase in regional bus services and new bus-only lanes.

- **How does the Dumbarton Rail Corridor connect with the regional rail network and stations?** Further work should design how Dumbarton Rail, Capitol Corridor service, ACE service, BART service can come together in the East Bay, and analyze what it would take to get there. Significant investment and policy change is needed in order to get more frequent train service on the Caltrain, Capitol Corridor and ACE lines. Frequent and connecting rail service is necessary to meaningfully shape land use.
- **How does the Dumbarton Corridor integrate with the State Rail Plan?** A Dumbarton rail link would be connected with the regional and state rail network. The draft California State Rail Plan 2040, to be released shortly, puts forth a vision for a cohesive and integrated rail network centered on a “pulse system” (timed connections), which is a benefit to passengers and helps to prioritize capital and fleet investments. We hope that decisions about Dumbarton rail are made in light of the State Rail Plan proposals and in partnership with the State.
- **Can we use pricing to decrease neighborhood impacts?** The queueing of cars and buses on the west side of the Dumbarton bridge causes noise, pollution, and reduces access and safety. A non-traditional solution to queueing on the west side of the bridge could be to establish a bridge access toll, and then re-invest those funds in local connectivity or mobility. Any new capacity creating on the bridge is likely to be used, thanks to latent demand; therefore, we should continue to develop alternate transportation options.
- **How can we incorporate Sea Level Rise into planning?** Sea Level Rise is anticipated to impact this area significantly. Both Sea Level Rise and extreme climate events should be incorporated into considerations of travel patterns and infrastructure over the coming decades. The Dumbarton Corridor connects two low-lying areas on the Bay and the need for relocated key links in the transportation network should be included in medium and long-term proposals.
- **How can the Dumbarton coordinate with other Bridge Corridors?** A large study was recently completed for the Transbay corridor, resulting bus, light rail, BART and bridge strategies (the Core Capacity Transit Study). To the extent possible, the Dumbarton corridor strategies should use the findings from the Transbay corridor and also offer a consistent experience for transit users.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to working with you improve mobility in the Dumbarton Corridor.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ratna Amin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letter "R" being particularly large and stylized.

Ratna Amin
Transportation Policy Director