

Myths And Facts About Bus Rapid Transit

A.C. Transit is planning to introduce a new and significantly different form of bus service from San Leandro to Downtown Berkeley. Called Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), the new service will follow routes along International Boulevard in Oakland and Telegraph Avenue in Oakland and Berkeley, and it will extend around UC to Shattuck Avenue to serve downtown Berkeley. By using a variety of devices such as dedicated bus lanes and bus-activated traffic signals, the new system promises much faster and more efficient service along this highly traveled route.

Some aspects of the proposed plan have been controversial. As often happens when planning controversies occur, misinformation and misunderstandings have begun to be accepted as Fact. Friends of Bus Rapid Transit, an ad hoc volunteer advocacy group, has developed this flyer to present factually accurate information about BRT as currently planned.

Myth: BRT will not be any different than the service we have today.

Fact: According to AC Transit, the proposed BRT line will upgrade current bus service by.

- Giving the bus its own traffic lane in some places so it can run faster.
- Giving it priority at traffic signals so it doesn't get stuck waiting for red lights.
- Providing real-time information to riders about when the next bus is coming, allowing them to manage their time better.
- Building well-designed bus stations to improve safety and comfort.
- Using low-emission vehicles to reduce pollution.

It is expected that East Oakland's BRT system will reduce travel time on the corridor by up to 40% and attract 27,600 new daily transit trips.

Myth: Why should we improve bus service on this corridor, when no one uses those buses now?

Fact: The proposed route encompasses some of AC Transit's most heavily used bus lines, with over 40,000 boardings per day. The corridor connects communities with many job centers, schools, shopping centers, churches, and recreational opportunities.

Myth: It makes no sense to provide better bus service on this route since it duplicates existing BART service.

Fact: Buses and BART serve different but complementary needs. BART dominates long-distance trips, and local buses will continue to serve neighborhoods and dispersed destinations. BRT, however, will serve a previously unmet need somewhere between the two by serving neighborhoods while at the same time attracting new travelers who need to make trips too long for the local bus but not conveniently served by BART.

Myth: We should forget about buses. What's really needed on the corridor is light rail.

Fact: One reason for implementing BRT with a dedicated lane is to reserve the space for later

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implementation of light rail along the corridor. As ridership increases and funds become available, light rail is a real possibility. BRT is a necessary precursor of light rail, which we can implement immediately because it costs far less than light rail.

Myth: No one wants BRT. AC Transit shouldn't be pushing this on cities without local support.

Fact: The City of Berkeley has endorsed this project in its General Plan. A number of prominent local groups also have come out in support of the proposed project. They include the Sierra Club, Livable Berkeley, and the Transportation and Land Use Coalition.

Myth: If the BRT buses have a dedicated traffic lane, car traffic will get worse.

Fact: The problem of traffic congestion is likely to be with us for the foreseeable future. We live in a region that continues to grow, and there is only so much space people can use to travel. Transit is a much more efficient use of space than a single occupancy car, and BRT is a step in the right direction to make it a better transportation option and to decrease the need for car travel

Myth: If the BRT buses have a dedicated lane, cars will start cutting through my neighborhood.

Fact: Car traffic is not expected to increase significantly because of BRT. Even though cut through traffic is not expected to be a problem, cities will be able to pursue traffic calming and other diversion tactics if it occurs.

Myth: AC Transit should forget about the dedicated lane—we get almost the same time savings for the bus just by making the corridor a "Rapid" line like the one on San Pablo Avenue.

Fact: A Rapid line would dramatically improve transit times on the corridor in the short term. However, as car traffic on the route continues to increase (an inevitable reality in a region that continues to grow), Rapid bus travel times will eventually be slower as buses get stuck in the same traffic as the rest of the cars on the road. A dedicated lane would solve this problem by allowing buses to travel independently of car traffic, providing a way out of the congestion.

Myth: AC Transit is using money from the San Pablo Rapid Bus to pay for BRT on this corridor.

Fact: \$3 million in Measure B funds is being allocated to finish the initially planned facilities and equipment for Rapid Bus along San Pablo. Both Measure B and Regional Measure 2 monies can be legally used to pay for bus improvements on this corridor according to their voter-approved ballot measures.

Myth: There's no sense in planning for this project. AC Transit will never find the money to build it.

Fact: Funding is already available for the first phase, which will be similar to the Rapid Bus along San Pablo. In order to qualify for federal funding, AC Transit must present a well-documented plan. No one can predict the availability of federal funds for transit in the present fiscal and political climate, but the Telegraph/International Avenue BRT proposal should be competitive with rival proposals from other cities.

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