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**Subject:** SMDJ article on bus and bike lanes over Dumbarton rail bridge  
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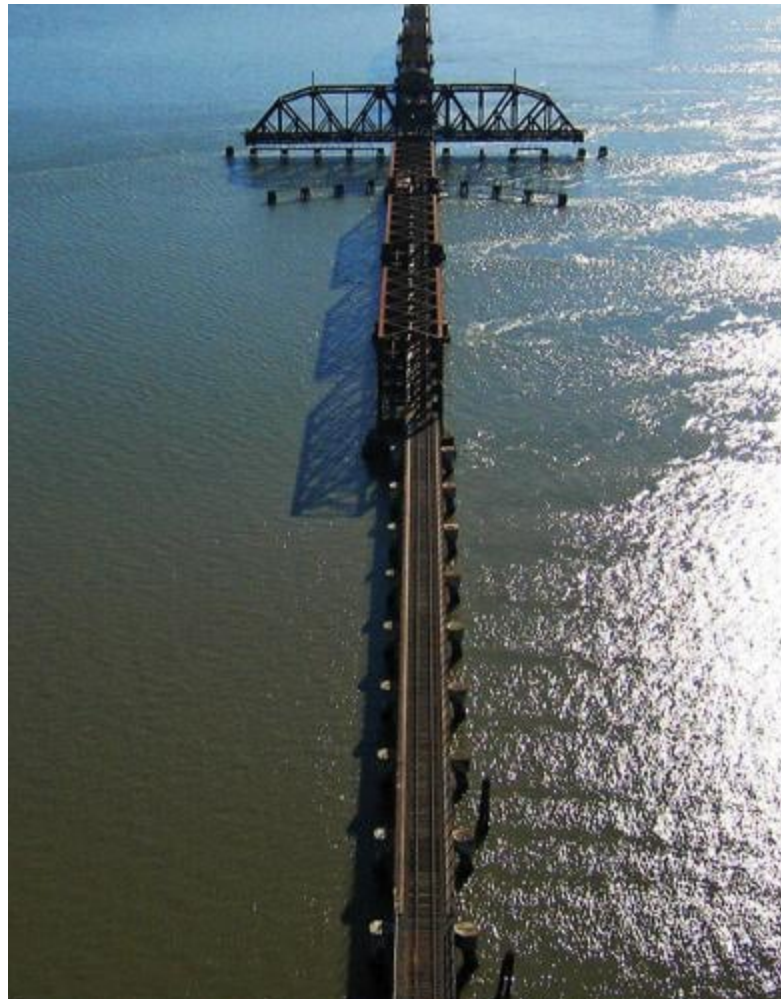
FEATURED

## Deserted Dumbarton rail line could see transit revival

Bus and bike lanes may connect Redwood City Caltrain to Dumbarton

By Alyse DiNapoli, Daily Journal staff

Jul 15, 2024



Aerial view of the existing alignment.



Conversations over a new bus-only road connecting the Dumbarton bridge with several cities in the south Peninsula are being revived, hoping to take advantage of a railway corridor that's been unused for years.

Rather than reopening the corridor to expand rail service — which doesn't have as much estimated demand — the effort would likely create a dedicated bus-only lane parallel to the existing railway.

“Busways are a proven technique to provide high-quality transit service in a very cost-effective manner, especially when compared to a rail service,” SamTrans Strategic Planning Manager Chelsea Schultz said. “The project itself would be flexible by allowing for future rail if that becomes an option.”

The busway would connect the Dumbarton Bridge to Redwood City, passing through several localities in between, such as Menlo Park, East Palo Alto and North Fair Oaks.

The Peninsula's Dumbarton railroad was built in the early 20th century, but hasn't been in operation for several decades, and discussion over its potential use has been discussed on and off for years. Prior to most recent discussions, a public-private partnership was underway between SamTrans and Meta, potentially using the railway to connect the Redwood City Caltrain station to the Union City BART station. But the project was scrapped around 2021, and the latest projections, which do not include Meta anymore, show that a busway would be more cost-efficient and have higher ridership. Average daily trips between East Palo Alto and Redwood City have increased by about 30% since 2019, according to the staff presentation.

“There’s currently insufficient market to support the cost of a transbay regional rail project, and that’s currently estimated at \$3.6 billion,” Schultz said. “A lot of the demand that we found in the study is actually on the Peninsula side, so between East Palo Alto and Redwood City.”

This wouldn't be the first such endeavor in the state. In Los Angeles, the G line uses part of the Southern Pacific's former Burbank line to connect to other rail services and also includes a bike path. In Monterey, a planned 6-mile bus-only road is expected to be completed by 2027.

Most SamTrans Board of Directors vocalized support for the efforts, citing the importance of mass transit, as well as bike and pedestrian-friendly lanes.

“When you go down to Dumbarton corridor, it’s a weed-covered branch line, and some folks probably think, ‘What good is this?’” SamTrans Board Member Peter Ratto said. “Well, it’s a very wide corridor. It can accommodate bus lanes, it can accommodate a rail line as well, even a bike lane. This is an asset that we have that cannot be replicated.”

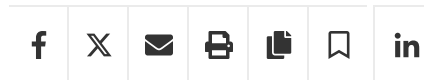
Based on current project plans, the railway corridor would still be preserved for potential future use, and options for a pedestrian or bike pathway are also tentative. The board approved \$5 million for a feasibility study, with construction potentially starting around 2030. Total estimates for the project are about \$150 million.

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