

Report of the TA Community Advisory Committee

Meeting of March 4, 2025

Committee Actions

- **9) TA Board Item 12.a Legislative Update and Approve Legislative Proposal: Senate Bill 71 (Wiener)** - No Committee discussion, approved with one abstention

Consent Calendar - all approved unanimously

- **4a) Approval of Minutes of the CAC Meeting of February 4, 2025**
- **4b) TA Board Item 5.b Accept Statement of Revenues and Expenditures for the Period Ending January 31, 2025**
- **4c) TA Board Item 5.c Accept Capital Projects Quarterly Status Report for 2nd Quarter of Fiscal Year**
 - Giuliano Carlini asked whether the Belmont Village bike/pedestrian project included bike improvements. Staff said that the project includes pedestrian hybrid beacons on El Camino Real and design (only) of two bikeways in the Village area.
 - Mr. Carlini said that the list of bike/ped projects did not include an interconnected cycling network. He suggested that City/County Association of Government of San Mateo (C/CAG) or another group focus on connected segments that can increase cycling across the County. Staff said that C/CAG will be updating their countywide bicycle and pedestrian masterplan to reflect a connected regional bike network. Mr. Carlini showed concern over the connectivity of projects.
 - Mr. Carlini said that new state laws addressed Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) and Greenhouse Gas (GHG) and yet many of the projects listed here increase VMT and GHG emissions. He hopes that the TA instead focus future projects on improving road quality and projects that reduce congestion instead of increasing driving.
- **4d) TA Board Item 5.d Adopting a TA Debarment Policy**
 - Mr. Carlini praised the policy but encouraged scrutiny behavior such as affiliates creating new entities to reapply.

Other Items

- **3) Public Comment for Items Not on the Agenda-** no public comments

- **5) TA Board Item 5.a Approval of Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting of February 6, 2025-** no Committee discussion

- **6) TA Board Item 10.a US 101 Managed Lanes North of I-380 Project Schedule Update**
 - Gus Mattammal remarked that six years of planning and design was a lot for a small section of highway.
 - Mike Swire asked about the timing of the public feedback stage. Staff said that there will be three meetings in 2026. The March/April meeting will be prior to the release of the environmental document, focusing on the project and process. The May meeting will include the analysis and findings of the environmental and technical studies, occurring in the public comment period. The June meeting will be after the 45-day comment period and will get Board input on alternatives. The 2025 meetings will focus on the public outreach approach. Mr. Swire said that 45 days is not a lot of time for public comment.
 - Sandra Lang asked about the forms of public outreach. Staff said that they will create the outreach approach in 2025 and present it to the CAC and Board for feedback. The formal public comment period will be in May 2026.
 - Ivan Bucio asked what happens during a Project Study Report. Staff said that it is used to develop project objectives and alternatives. This is followed by the environmental planning phase, which is the current phase. The five-year design period for the North of 380 project is longer than most projects (which are 2-3 years).
 - Mr. Carlini inquired about the long wait time before involving the public in the process. He said that the TA has spent \$7 million prior to asking people whether this money should have been spent at all. Staff said that this is part of the environmental process, which needs to be completed before additional public input. Mr. Carlini said that the public should provide input earlier to determine whether there is interest in the project; this could save time and money. He suggested that future projects have improved sequencing.
 - Mr. Carlini said that questions provided to the public will shape the responses. He asked whether the CAC would see the questions/poll prior to sending it to the public. Staff said that they will be soliciting general feedback on the alternatives and do not anticipate using a poll. If a poll is used, staff can share with the CAC in advance. Mr. Carlini said he wanted to make sure the presentation doesn't lead the public in a certain direction.

- Nheeda Enriquez asked whether the CAC can accelerate the process. Staff said that this is Caltrans' process, and they dictate the schedule. Staff shares the concern on the length of the process and has been trying to work with Caltrans to move more quickly. Ms. Enriquez said that costs increase with time, and recommended that processes should operate in parallel whenever possible. Staff said that Caltrans' processes have limited flexibility. Staff have been successful at getting additional Caltrans resources assigned to the project, but there are still limits to how quickly the process can go.
 - Mr. Swire said that the process is too long, expressing a concern about changes occurring after the initial outreach - e.g., working from home, electrified Caltrain. He said that these projects get momentum and need to be revisited over time if circumstances change. He said that the CAC voted against adding this project earlier in the process due to concerns over the highway widening option. He said that the TA, as a sponsor, should be revisiting whether this project (or all alternatives) is still worth pursuing. Staff said that the Board will ultimately decide on whether and how (i.e., widen vs. conversion) to proceed with the project after the environmental process is complete and its benefits and potential impacts are better understood. They said that the Board is taking an iterative approach to the project and can choose whether to change course. C/CAG could continue as the sole sponsor; however, if the TA decided not to move forward with a project after the environmental review period. Chair Barbara Arietta said that it is very difficult to predict future traffic and commute requirements and how they will impact the need for the project. Richard Hedges said that in the past projects have been killed - e.g., Peninsula on/off ramps in San Mateo/Burlingame. He guesses that the 2nd part of the 101/92 effort will not happen, partially due to federal funding challenges.
- **7) TA Board Item 10.b Update on Grade Separation Program and the South Linden-Scott and Broadway Grade Separation Projects**
 - Linden/Scott in South San Francisco
 - Mr. Swire asked whether the project would alter the number of car lanes. City staff said that the number of car lanes would not change.
 - Karen Kuklin asked about the box jacking process and whether it would work in California (vs. Florida). Caltrain staff said that this construction technique is well established, and local conditions will be adequately considered.
 - Mr. Carlini asked whether they would be able to avoid flooding in the underpass, as it currently occurs on Ralston in Belmont when it rains.

Caltrain staff said that the design will address this issue and they will plan for climate change's impact on storm frequency and intensity.

- Mr. Carlini expressed concerns with lengthening walking and cycling distances. Caltrain staff said that both crossings will include bike and pedestrian facilities, such that the project will not require detours.
 - Mr. Hedges said that electrification would increase the challenges of grade separations but that it is doable without concerns about water intrusion.
- Broadway in Burlingame
- Ms. Lang asked whether the construction cost increases would happen again. Caltrain staff said that the project was already at 65 percent design when the cost estimates were developed by the project designer, but Caltrain wanted to get a commercial cost estimate given electrification and volatility in the construction market. Staff said that the packages were created to get feedback from Burlingame's City Council, which chose Package 4 (no station).
 - Mr. Swire contrasted the grade separation projects with the previous discussion on the express lanes on 101 North of 380. He said that he didn't believe anyone was excited about the 101 project and yet funding was not an issue. He said that the grade separation projects are popular but lack funding and thus we have a "Sophie's Choice" on which grade separation will get funding. He asked why our revenue measures didn't give more money to these popular and effective grade separations when we knew there was a backlog of grade separation projects. Staff said that tax measures are designed through polling of likely voters. There was little interest in grade separations at the time of Measure W. Staff doesn't determine the spending mix for the revenue measures, which is driven by polling and working with local agencies, business, labor and advocacy groups. Also, state and federal funding sources do not prioritize grade separations, increasing reliance on local taxes. Mr. Swire said that perhaps the TA needs to do a better job of explaining to taxpayers the benefits of grade separations or build flexibility into measures given their long timeframes. Staff also said that public interest in grade separations has ebbed and flowed. Also, electrification and more frequent Caltrain service has increased interest in grade separations.
 - Mr. Mattammal asked whether the 50 percent funding match cap was recent. Staff said that in 2016 the Board said that the TA would only fund

50 percent given the continually increasing costs. Mr. Mattammal asked whether the Measure A reauthorization might include funding for grade separations early in the measure and then be tapered off over time. Staff said that this was possible but adding complexity to a measure might confuse voters and reduce their support.

- Chair Arietta asked whether regional funding was available due to the high cost. Staff said that there is no regional funding. A regional funding measure specifically for grade separations would be difficult given that some counties don't have a lot of railroad at-grade crossings.
- John Fox asked whether the Burlingame City Council had endorsed closing the Broadway station. Caltrain staff confirmed this as the Broadway Station has a low ridership. Mr. Fox asked about current car lengths. Caltrain staff said that currently trains have seven cars, and most stations are designed for this length. In the future, more cars may be necessary.
- Mr. Bucio asked why there is a long timeline for the design phase. Caltrain staff said that there were various phases that required significant time, and the designs are very complex. Staff further explained the underlying construction costs, including construction management and contingency. Mr. Bucio said that these costs seem huge given a project that is already designed. Caltrain staff share these concerns over high costs.
- Ms. Kuklin said that soft costs can run 50 percent, including permitting fees, right of way acquisition, insurance, etc. for large public capital projects. She added that given the funds that are available we should invest in the Broadway project as it is the highest priority. She has seen more fatalities there. She shared her support towards Burlingame forgoing the station.
- Mr. Hedges said that Measure W barely passed. He said that the 25th Avenue project got money from an outside source (high-speed rail) that no longer exists. He supports concentrating limited funds on Broadway due to the danger he has personally witnessed. It is the most dangerous crossing in the whole state. He said that costs will increase more quickly due to tariffs and thus we should move quickly.
- Mr. Carlini said that we have gone from 20 to 40 percent in non-capital costs; this seems astonishing. He urged us to pick one project. He sees the importance of Broadway but doesn't think we should pick a project that might not be fundable. He discouraged using Caltrain funds for

grade separation projects and the funds should be used for projects that benefit Caltrain riders, increasing ridership. Highway projects get a large amount of money and grade separations get more money - both are car focused projects. Mr. Carlini said that equity should be a consideration in prioritizing projects. He also said that flexibility would help future revenue measures.

- Public comment
 - Adrian Brandt said that the City of Burlingame was forced to sacrifice the station to get the project through. He urged keeping the bike/ped punch throughs even if money is tight. He said that lowering the overhead catenary system at the proposed crossing would help the North Fair Oaks overpass project, which was scrapped.
 - John Martos said that he is a resident of Burlingame. He supports the Broadway project receiving funding due to the history of crashes (17) and fatalities. He said that intersection is the only way across 101 for the City of Burlingame to get to the Bay. He said lives are at stake. He commended the City for proposing to close the Broadway station to help close the funding gap.
- **8) TA Board Item 11.a US 101 Express Lanes: Semiannual Update on Variable Rate Bonds and Express Lane Performance**
 - Ms. Kuklin (on behalf of John Fox) asked about the number of cars without a pass and the collection of funds. Express Lane staff said that it was a smaller than expected number.
 - Mr. Carlini thanked staff for posting the volume data, which is useful for analysis. He said that looking at the congestion heat maps would indicate trends over time (despite seasonality). He asked about a degradation report; staff said that this Caltrans report looks at express lanes and high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) but not the general purpose lanes' (GP) performance.
 - Mr. Bucio asked about the increase in Administration Expenses. Express Lane staff said that these expenses can be lumpy due to inconsistent invoicing. Staff will look into this in more detail.
 - Mr. Mattammal asked if the CAC could request previous iterations of the deck to compare heat maps; he volunteered to do the time series analysis. Express Lane staff said that they are online with the other express lane data on the 101 express lanes website.
 - Mr. Swire said that the HOV-3 selection has increased significantly in recent months. He asked how many of the people electing HOV-3 actually had three

people in the car. Express Lane staff said that they share this concern, but do not know whether all 43 percent of “HOV-3” drivers are cheating to use Express Lanes for free. The San Mateo County Express Lanes Joint Power Authority (JPA Board) would need to request a manual count to get more information. There is interest in technology solutions to supplement California Highway Patrol (CHP) enforcement. Riverside County is testing these solutions. The JPA is concerned about the misrepresentation and would like to solve this problem. Mr. Swire said that we should not be marketing express lanes as improving carpooling if we can’t confirm that this is happening in the current lanes.

- Ms. Enriquez thanked staff for the data. She noted that the average toll had increased year over year and asked why this had happened. Express Lane staff said that the dynamic pricing considers volume and its impact on vehicle speeds, when there is more traffic the tolls increase to reduce the demand for the express lane.
- Mr. Swire asked whether GP lane congestion has improved since the project launch, per the goals of the project. Express Lane staff said that throughput has increased with widening, but they don’t know the impact on travel times in the GP lanes.
- Mr. Bucio asked about the availability of discounts for lower income drivers. Express Lane staff said that equity is a regional concern. The Equity Program provides lower income groups with transportation benefits –either a preloaded Clipper Card or a FasTrak transponder. Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) is piloting a 50 percent discount for eligible drivers on the I-880 express lanes. The regional toll operators will consider the results of this pilot.
- Mr. Carlini asked whether congestion and trips in the GP lanes had increased, causing price increases in the Express Lanes. Express Lane staff confirmed that the heat maps demonstrated that traffic in all lanes have increased since the start of the express lanes. He urged a focus on mode shift.
- Chair Arietta said that cheating is frequent, including people using dummies in their vehicles. She is concerned with paying overtime rates to CHP for enforcement. Staff said that state law requires CHP enforcement of non-State owned express lane compliance and that the CHP are to be paid overtime for the work.
- Public comment
 - Mr. Brandt supports mode shift. He said that infrared technologies can’t be used for enforcement. He said that the likelihood of getting caught cheating in the Express Lanes is next to zero and thus a high number of people are cheating. He said that it is difficult to enforce by CHP for a

variety of reasons. He said that adding a lane will increase driving and that we can't build our way out of congestion.

- **10) Report of the Chair**

- Good news! MTC has recently reported that it has added the Redwood City Terminal and Service project to Plan Bay Area 2050+, moving it closer to securing federal funding and becoming a reality.
- The project, which has been in development since a 2021 feasibility study, would establish a ferry route connecting Redwood City to Oakland, San Francisco, and other ports.
- It was previously excluded from the plan, making it ineligible for ferry-service-only grants from the Federal Transit Administration. This new designation restores its eligibility.
- This recent inclusion in the plan wasn't easy to achieve. MTC had to choose between including the ferry project or an express bus service. However, the funding gap for the bus project was too large, therefore, it was determined, that the ferry project is the more realistic option to be completed and therefore would better serve local residents.
- Future funding would supplement \$15 million already provided by the San Mateo County Transportation Agency and a \$5 million state budget earmark. The total cost for the project is estimated at \$100 million.
- Planned improvements include a parking lot, a bus and shuttle drop off area, bike storage, rest rooms and public amenities such as a walking trail, benches, picnic tables and space for pop-up vendor carts.

- **11) Report from Staff- no Committee discussion**

- **12) Member Comments/Requests**

- Mr. Swire thanked Supervisor and TA Board Member Corzo for acknowledging the third pedestrian death on San Mateo streets in the previous five months. He encouraged other elected officials to speak out and refuse to accept the deaths of vulnerable users on our streets.
- Ms. Enriquez watched the Board recording from last month and thanked Msrs. Carlini and Swire for providing the Board context on CAC discussions.
- Mr. Carlini thanked staff again for the express lane data on the website. He urged the Board to take action to curtail the widening option for 101 North of 380 before we spend more money on this alternative.

Mr. Hedges said that he lives at the intersection where the deadly crash occurred. The victim passed three crosswalks but crossed in front of a bridge where visibility is limited. This was a dangerous place to cross, not a faulty street design. He doesn't cross in the same location. The sad thing is that the driver did not stop. There is a memorial on the bridge/gutter where he landed. He was beloved in the community, but San Mateo could not have averted this incident.

- **13) Date/Time of Next Regular Meeting: April 1, 2025, 4:30pm**