

San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit Project
Oakland Airport Connector Project

Title VI, Environmental Justice, and Limited English Proficiency Analysis of
Proposed Service and Fare Changes
January 14, 2010

Oakland Airport Connector (OAC) Title VI, Environmental Justice, and Limited English Proficiency Analysis of Proposed Service and Fare Changes

- 1) What service and/or fare changes does the Oakland Airport Connector (OAC) propose? Please describe the nature of the change, the basis or rationale for the change, the modes of service impacted, and the communities affected by the change.**

The OAC project is an automated guideway transit (AGT) system that would replace the existing AirBART bus service that provides a transit connection between the Coliseum BART Station and Oakland International Airport. The service change would be implemented following completion of the OAC project in 2013.

Current AirBART Service

The current AirBART system is a direct shuttle bus system between Oakland International Airport (OAK) and Coliseum BART Station, located approximately 3 miles north of OAK. There are no intermediate stops. AirBART provides service with headways of 10 minutes between 5:00 a.m. and 12:05 a.m. Monday through Saturday, and between 8:00 a.m. and 12:05 a.m. on Sundays. AirBART is operated by the Port of Oakland. The one-way fare is \$3.00 for adults.

AirBART vehicles are 40-foot low-floor diesel buses with capacity for 32 seated passengers and about 10 standees with luggage on each bus. The traditional AirBART route from the Coliseum BART station is along San Leandro Street, 66th Avenue, Oakport Street, Edgewater Road, Hegenberger Road, and Airport Drive to the OAK terminals. The AirBART route is illustrated on Figure 1. From OAK, AirBART travels along Airport Drive, Airport Access Road, and Hegenberger Road to San Leandro Street and the Coliseum BART Station. The average running time (in-vehicle travel time) is approximately 12 minutes, and the total travel time is approximately 23 minutes, but there can be considerable variability in travel times.

Passengers and employees regard reliability an important characteristic in transit service, particularly when traveling to an airport where passengers are concerned with making scheduled flights and employees need to arrive at work on time. AirBART runs on city streets with autos, trucks, buses, and other traffic and is subject to traffic-related delays. The unpredictability of traffic congestion, the potential for stalls, and the extra crowds during Oakland Coliseum events raise concerns for air passengers using AirBART to try to make scheduled flights. Travel times for AirBART between the Coliseum Station and the airport are highly variable, as are the wait times for AirBART at the Coliseum Station and at the airport. Purchasing tickets at the Coliseum BART Station and the airport also can be confusing and inconvenient for travelers. Travelers have to purchase a

separate ticket before exiting the terminal or BART station and walking to the AirBART stop or pay cash (exact change) to the driver.

OAC Service

The OAC Project will replace the AirBART service with an AGT system that will run on an exclusive aerial guideway between the Coliseum BART Station and OAK without interference from street-level traffic. Starting at the Coliseum BART Station, the AGT generally travels along the median of Hegenberger Road, going into a subway under Doolittle Drive, and then traveling at-grade along the east side of Airport Drive before ascending to an aerial structure over the parking lot and a terminus station at OAK. Figure 2 illustrates the AGT alignment. The AGT Station at Coliseum will be integrated into the BART Coliseum Station with direct connections to the BART platform. At the airport, the AGT terminus station will be located adjacent to the inside of the ring roadway between Terminals 1 and 2. There are no intermediate stops planned for initial construction, but a future station at the intersection of Hegenberger Road and Doolittle Drive is planned.

The AGT will provide clean electric-powered automated vehicles that run in three-car trains with a capacity of 113 passengers with luggage operating on 4.5-minute headways during the same hours that the BART system runs. In-vehicle travel time will be 8.2 minutes. Total travel time will be 14.5 minutes.¹ Separation from other traffic will allow the AGT to operate without being delayed by traffic congestion, Coliseum events, accidents, or other roadway incidents. The AGT will operate with 99.5 percent reliability on-time service. This will provide the airport traveler with a quicker and more reliable connection between the Coliseum BART Station and OAK. In addition, patrons will have a direct connection from the BART platform to the AGT platform and will not have to buy a separate ticket or exit the BART station to board the vehicle.

Replacing the AirBART bus system with an AGT system will provide riders with a direct, more reliable connection with shorter wait times between BART and the airport.

OAC Fares

A fare for the AGT has not been set. The BART Board of Directors will set the fare prior to the connector beginning service. The OAC Project is designed as a self-sustaining project, which means that the passenger fares will pay for the long-term capital and operating costs of the project. Many factors will be involved in setting a fare, including the loan amount taken by BART to construct the project, the state of the economy, the ridership on AirBART and the market conditions at

¹ Total travel time is the total combined time to walk from the BART platform to the AGT platform, wait for the next vehicle, the in-vehicle travel time, and the walk time from the AGT airport station to the terminal.

the Oakland Airport at the time of opening. Prior to opening service, BART will initiate a process to seek public participation from low income and minority communities, assess alternatives and identify proposed actions to minimize, mitigate, or offset any adverse effects of proposed fare changes on minority and low-income populations.

A range of fares has been investigated, from the current one-way \$3 AirBART fare (which may escalate in price by 2013) to a high of \$6. In May of 2009 the BART Board discussed the potential \$6 fare. The \$6 fare was developed as part of a conservative financial modeling exercise designed to characterize the order of magnitude of BART's financial risk in implementing the OAC Project in the event that the economy does not recover quickly.

Whether future conditions replicate the assumptions made in that initial financial analysis will not be fully known until the Project is closer to beginning revenue service. For instance, the construction bid amounts of \$361M was approximately \$45M less than estimated in the study, thereby reducing the loan needed to close the funding gap necessary to build the project from \$100 million to approximately \$60 million. Also, the Project has budgeted a \$43 million contingency fund (12 percent of the bid amount) for issues that could arise during construction. The 12 percent is a conservative amount for a design-build project, in which the contractor will design and construct the entire APM system in coordination with the APM system provider. These factors, together with the conservative ridership assumed in the study, indicate that the "break-even" fare necessary to operate the system and repay any long-term loans is closer to \$5. A 10 percent increase above the assumed ridership reduces the break-even fare to approximately \$4.50.

There are also several significant alternative concepts proposed by the proposed contractor that could significantly reduce costs by \$20 to \$30 million if implemented. While hurdles exist to obtain all the approvals necessary to allow for these alternative concepts to be realized, any savings in the Project cost will reduce the loan and reduce the need to raise the fares.

Another factor contributing to uncertainty in setting fares 4 years prior to revenue service has been the very recent volatility in the Bay Area airport market. Between mid - 2007 and early 2009, Oakland International Airport (OAK) lost significant market share as San Francisco International Airport (SFIA) attracted several large discount airline carriers (Virgin America & Jet Blue), including Southwest Airlines, which had operated exclusively out of Oakland since 2003. The combination of a convenient BART connection to SFIA and Southwest Airline's re-entry to SFIA, contributed to a patronage drop at OAK from a peak of 14 million annual passengers (MAP) in 2007 to approximately 10 million air passengers in early 2009. Subsequently, the AirBART bus patronage dropped from a peak of 1.3 million passengers to approximately 0.75 million passengers today. This recent and dramatic drop at OAK, as well as the recent economic downturn, played a significant role in BART's conservative approach to closing

the funding gap with a loan. The financial study takes the current OAK market and economic conditions into account and assumes a very slow recovery.

Normally with an established service, the period between the time when an agency begins to evaluate a fare or service change and seeks public input to the proposed change, is just a few months. Public outreach to obtain community input at a time when an agency has current economic data, current ridership and revenue history, and an exact proposal for a change in fare structure seems appropriate. In this case, it does not seem appropriate for BART to hold public meetings to specifically seek input on a new fare structure with only a worse case fare scenario that may not need to be fully implemented for a service that will replace an existing service 3 or 4 years later.

In the next several years, BART will follow the OAK market closely and expects to survey the conditions and the actual patronage of the Oakland Airport and the AirBART bus in the later part of the 2012. BART will also develop a market strategy for attracting and building OAC ridership. After public participation from low income and minority communities and a staff recommendation based upon the then current market conditions and a ridership building market strategy, the Board of Directors will most likely set a fare somewhere between the current \$3 AirBART bus fare and the financially conservative \$6 fare.

Public Participation

Because OAC does not implement revenue service until the middle of 2013 and for the reasons stated above, BART has not yet held meetings specifically to address the potential fare increase. However, the Project has participated in many public meetings where the financial study and the break even fare were discussed. Between February 2009 and December 2009, the OAC Project participated in 15 city or regional funding agency meetings including 4 at the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, 3 with the Oakland Port Commission, 3 with the Oakland City Council, 2 with the Alameda County Transportation Implementation Authority (ACTIA) and 3 meetings of the BART Board.

Far from riding below the public radar, the Project has actively sought out and participated in numerous public forums. During the same period, the Project also made presentations to the Oakland Airport Business Association, the Bay Area Council, East Bay Small Business Council, the Oakland Black Board of Trade and Commerce, the Oakland African American Chamber, East Bay Interagency Alliance, Oakland Community Economic Leadership Forum and the Oakland Chamber of Commerce. As part of the outreach to get the local community involved in the construction and operation of the Project, OAC Staff participated in several industry forums. Three pre-proposal meetings were held between May and August 2009 with the DBE/MBE/WBE community, the contracting community at large, and the general public. Each pre-proposal meeting was attended by hundreds of local businesses.

Groups Affected

Air Passengers. Oakland International Airport passengers would be the community most affected by the replacement of AirBART by the Connector. The primary purpose of both AirBART and the AGT is to provide a direct connection between the BART system at Coliseum Station and Oakland International Airport. On-Board surveys of AirBART passengers indicate that about 90 percent of AirBART users are travelers flying in or out of OAK. An additional 5 percent work at the airport. The remaining patrons (approximately 5 percent) were traveling to airport to accompany a traveler, have business at the airport, or for another reason.² AirBART patrons fly for a variety of reasons, but the predominate reasons to fly are for business, visiting friends or relatives, and for vacations (See table 1 below).

Table 1
Primary Purpose of Air Trip at Oakland International Airport

Purpose	Percent
Business	35.3
Convention/Trade Show	2.6
Visit Friends/Relatives	38.0
Vacation	18.4
School	1.4
<u>Other</u>	<u>4.3</u>
Total	100

Source: Wilbur Smith; October, 2006

The passenger community using the AirBART is a very widespread community. An on-board survey of AirBART riders demonstrated that AirBART patrons came from a range of locations throughout the East Bay and San Francisco, including some from San Mateo, Santa Clara, and Marin Counties. A study by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission³ (MTC) indicated that although more than three-quarters of the Oakland Airport passengers came from Alameda (40.1 percent), Contra Costa (22.7 percent), and San Francisco (15.2 percent) counties, the airport was used by passengers from every Bay Area county.

According to the on-board AirBART survey, more than 36 percent of travelers between the Coliseum BART Station and the airport had annual household incomes of \$100,000 or more. Approximately 27 percent had household incomes

² AirBART Bus System On-Board Survey Results, Wilbur Smith Associates, September 29 through October 3, 2006. Reported in Appendix B of the BART-Oakland Airport Connector Patronage Refinement, April 24, 2007, Wilbur Smith Associates.

³ Metropolitan Transportation Commission, Oakland International Airport-San Francisco International Airport, 2006 Airline Passenger Survey, December 2007.

between \$50,000 and \$100,000. Approximately 25 percent had household incomes of under \$50,000. For comparison, the average household income in Alameda County during the same period was approximately \$89,500.⁴ In addition, over 35 percent of those riding AirBART were traveling for business, and approximately 30 percent indicated that their employer or business was paying for their trip.

The potential increase in fares to ride the Connector vis-a-vis the fare for the AirBART service is a reflection of the “premium” nature of the Connector service between the BART Station and the airport. The vast majority of the patrons are travelers for whom the premium fare is reasonable payment for enhanced direct service to the airport.

Employees. Employees, who account for 5 percent of the current AirBART ridership, would be the other group that would be affected by any changes on the transit connection. Employee riders are expected to be more price-sensitive than air passengers. Airport employees have a range of incomes and would be riding the Connector five or more days per week. In evaluating the fare structure for the service, subsequent to an assessment of the factors identified above and the results of BART’s survey of minority and/or low-income populations including OAK employees, BART intends examine ways to accommodate airport workers. The recent increases in pretax benefits now available to transit patrons commuting to work offer substantial discounts to the standard fare. For OAC, appropriate mitigation will be determined and submitted to FTA for review as part of the overall fare and service change analysis before the BART Board sets fares for this service to ensure that employee riders are not disproportionately affected by a fare increase.

2) What are the impacts of the Oakland Airport Connector (OAC) service and/or fare change have on minority and/or low-income communities?

In accordance with Circular 4702.1A, Chapter IV, an analysis of discriminatory impact is required for “major” service changes. BART concurs that the upgrade from an at-grade diesel bus service to an elevated AGT system constitutes a major service change. Therefore, we are providing this information with respect to service as well as the possible fare change.

The OAC Project will provide a major transit upgrade when it begins service in 2013. In addition to faster overall travel times and increased reliability, the Connector Project will reduce headways from 10 minutes to 4.5 minutes. This represents a 120 percent increase in service for patrons compared to AirBART. Transfers between BART trains and the AGT will be easier and more convenient for patrons and the ticketing process simplified. The vehicles themselves will be

⁴ ABAG, January 12, 2010. Mean Household Income for Alameda County in 2005 was \$88,800 and estimated to be \$91,200 in 2010 (constant 2005\$). Mean Household Income for the period 2006-2007 is estimated at approximately \$89,500.

easier to board, particularly for travelers with luggage and those in groups. These benefits would accrue to all passengers using the Connector.

There are two environmental justice communities in the project area. Both the residential area north of the Coliseum BART Station (referred to as “North of BART”) and Columbia Gardens, which is located west of Interstate 880 between Hegenberger Road and 98th Avenue, have been identified as environmental justice communities.⁵ Figures 1 and 2 identify the location of the two communities.

The AGT Connector project will be located in the median of Hegenberger Road between the Coliseum BART Station and Oakland International Airport. Hegenberger Road is located in a regional commercial corridor, and residential land uses in the area are separated from the roadway (and the Connector alignment) by those commercial land uses. As analyzed in the 2002 Final EIR/Final EIS and 2007 Addendum for the project, the Connector project would not adversely affect the two local environmental justice communities; however, the communities would benefit from reduced traffic congestion and related reductions in noise and air pollution.

There is the potential for a fare increase to affect the low income and minority communities. In the on-board survey, 96 percent of the AirBART riders were also using the BART rail system, indicating that the great majority of those riding AirBART are coming from outside the immediate area. However, slightly more than 2 percent of the AirBART riders walked to the Coliseum Station to ride AirBART. Although some of those walking to the Coliseum Station to ride AirBART may be going to the airport for air travel, some of the walkers may include airport employees who live in the residential area north of the station (North of BART) and use the AirBART shuttle to travel to work at the airport. Those riding the AirBART to work at the airport would qualify for any mitigation made for employees (see response 1 above), thus ensuring the minority and low-income community would not be disproportionately affected by a fare increase.

3) What are the transit alternatives available for riders who would be impacted by the Oakland Airport Connector (OAC)?

AC Transit provides local bus service between the Coliseum BART Station and Oakland International Airport. The AC Transit 50 Line runs between Fruitvale BART Station and the Bay Fair BART Station via Alameda, Harbor Bay Ferry Terminal, Oakland Airport, the Coliseum BART Station and the Eastmont Transit Center. The portion of the route between the Coliseum BART Station and the airport is on Hegenberger Road and Airport Drive. Scheduled travel times between the Coliseum BART Station and the airport range from 11 to 14 minutes.

⁵ BART-Oakland International Airport Connector, Final Environmental Impact Report/Final Environmental Impact Statement, Section 3.15, March, 2002; updated by BART-Oakland International Airport Connector, Final Environmental Impact Report /Final Environmental Impact Statement Addendum, Section 3.15, November 2006 (adopted by the BART Board in February 2007).

The 50 Line generally runs at 15-minute intervals throughout the day with 30-minute headways in the evening hours after 8:30 p.m. The 50 Line runs from approximately 5:30 a.m. until 12:45 a.m.

The AC Transit 805 line provides late night bus service. The 805 Line runs from downtown Oakland to the Oakland Airport via MacArthur Boulevard, the Eastmont Transit Center, and the Coliseum BART Station. The portion of the route between the Coliseum BART Station and OAK is along Hegenberger Road. The 805 line runs once an hour between approximately 12:30 a.m. and 5:30 a.m.

The AC Transit fare for adults is \$2.00 (1.75 with a transfer issued by BART).

AC Transit will continue to provide bus service between the Coliseum BART Station and Oakland International Airport when the AGT begins running in 2013.

- 4) What, if any measures would BART take to avoid, minimize, or mitigate any adverse effects of the OAC service and/or fare change on minority populations and/or low-income populations? What, if any enhancements or offsetting benefits would BART implement in conjunction with the OAC service and/or fare change?**

As described above, should the BART survey find that minority and/or low-income populations including those working at the airport could be adversely affected by the fare increase, BART staff would investigate mitigation measures at the planning stages to ensure that they are not disproportionately affected by a fare increase. As noted earlier in question 1, pretax benefits for employees commuting to work offer substantial fare reductions. BART will work with the Port and other airport employers to provide that benefit and also will coordinate with AC Transit to assure a good, low-cost transit alternative.

- 5) Would the proposed OAC service and/or fare change have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on minority populations and/or low-income populations?**

Based on the current AirBART ridership, and its overwhelming use by business people, leisure travelers, and students (95.7 percent collectively), BART does not believe that the proposed OAC service and/or fare change have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on minority populations and/or low-income populations. The advent of AGT service will improve transit service and reduce traffic congestion in the Hegenberger corridor with corresponding reductions in noise and air pollution. However, prior to setting fares, BART will seek public participation from low income and minority communities and current AirBART ridership, and provide an evaluation as described above. Should the results of BART's analysis indicate that the proposed OAC service and/or fare change would have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income and minority communities, BART will mitigate this impact.

6) What steps does BART plan to take to seek out and consider the viewpoints of minority and low-income populations in the course of conducting public outreach and involvement activities?

Prior to introducing OAC service, BART will implement a process to consider various viewpoints before setting fares. BART has held a series of public meetings to seek input throughout the OAC environmental, financing, approval, and contracting process. This process will be continued through the final phases of project development with a series of outreach meetings to the low income and minority community and AirBART riders. This process will culminate at meetings of the BART Board of Directors, which will include at least one public hearing (duly noticed in newspapers of the four counties BART serves) at which the Board will receive input from members of the public before the Board makes its decisions regarding fares.

7) Does BART believe that it is necessary to disseminate information on the service changes/fare increases that is accessible to Limited English Proficient persons? If so, what steps to provide information in languages other than English does BART propose?

Traditionally, BART engages in substantial public outreach when a new extension or service is introduced. This can include newspaper announcements, radio announcements, project updates on BART's website, as well as BART staff at the station to demonstrate the system. The BART Media and Public Affairs Department publishes critical passenger bulletins in English, Spanish and Chinese. The new OAC service and any fare changes related to it will be announced as outlined in BART's Limited English Proficiency Plan.