

Chapter 1. Executive Summary

Caltrans awarded BART a Community-Based Transportation Planning Grant to conduct a station area plan around the Bay Fair BART Station. The Plan would provide a vision and framework for Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) opportunities, as well as identify and recommend access improvements. BART and the City of San Leandro also contributed funding for this study.

The study area borders the City of San Leandro and the unincorporated Alameda County area of Ashland and includes the Bay Fair BART Station, Bayfair Center, and East 14th Street and Hesperian Boulevard corridors. Because of its multi-jurisdictional location and complex land and access issues, BART prepared the Bay Fair BART TOD and Access Plan in partnership with the City, County, Caltrans, Bayfair Center and AC Transit.

This area has exciting possibilities as a transit-oriented retail and residential destination. The public policy framework set forth by the City, County, BART and AC Transit favors the creation of an environment at Bay Fair Station area that is higher density, mixed-use and promotes pedestrian, bicycle and transit activities. This framework is further guided by the project Goals and Objectives (Appendix A) to make the Bay Fair Station area “a great place” that is attractive and safe; improve connections to jobs, services and transit; provide a range of housing options and foster fiscal and economic growth.

Through BART’s Strategic Plan and TOD Policy, the transit agency is looking at creative ways to enhance its financial base. One strategy is to work with local jurisdictions, developers and community to build TOD projects on available BART properties. These projects would help BART achieve two goals: (1) receive a revenue stream that would help fund BART operations to maintain on-time service, focus efforts to clean stations and vehicles, and upgrade the 35-year old transit system; and (2) grow ridership without significant physical infrastructure investments.

The 11-month planning process included frequent consultation with private and public stakeholders. The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) was formed to provide technical input, while the Policy Advisory Committee (PAC) was established to provide higher level policy guidance. The TAC, PAC and consultant team identified and evaluated the following key issues that informed the overall plan development:

- Lack of direct connections from BART to Bayfair Center, Hesperian Boulevard and East 14th Street creates access and development challenges.
- Physical barriers such as Estudillo Canal, Union Pacific (UP) and BART tracks also create access and development challenges.
- Bayfair Center tenant lease agreements to maintain customer parking is critical to the shared parking discussions.
- Projected area growth, future BART expansions and the City’s desire to reduce parking in Downtown San Leandro are crucial in the discussion and decision for BART replacement parking.

- Residential market around BART is strong, and the City desires to focus commercial uses in their downtown area.
- Triangular and irregular-shaped parcels on the BART sites are difficult to assemble, and also present additional challenges for similar parcels along the Hesperian Boulevard and East 14th Street corridors.

The Plan also considered input received at stakeholder interviews, community presentations and meetings with neighborhood groups, local residents and BART patrons. Their most pressing concerns are summarized below:

- Safety and security. This is the most critical issue for residents and BART patrons particularly around the BART parking lots, pedestrian underpass and the area near the theaters. BART, City and County police, residents and patrons have reported criminal activities ranging from car break-ins and vandalism to physical attacks. These incidents have discouraged pedestrian activities in the area, and many who live within walking distance to the station choose to drive instead.
- Eminent domain. Many expressed concern that eminent domain would be used to take away their homes for development. Staff and elected officials have reassured local residents that development is only being considered on the BART and Bayfair Center sites, and that their neighborhoods would be preserved.
- Lack of direct, safe and ADA-accessible connections for patrons and residents. Frequently mentioned examples are the BART pedestrian underpass, pedestrian bridge to the back side of Target and lack of a direct connection to Bayfair Center.
- Add BART parking. Parking is fully occupied in the morning due to free daily parking and the fact that this station is served by two BART lines. Adjacent neighborhoods and Bayfair Center have complained about spillover parking.
- Strong concerns for TOD. Many worried that higher-density affordable and rental housing would adversely impact their neighborhoods by attracting more crime and lowering property values. Other concerns include traffic, parking and visual impacts.

Urban Design

Good urban design can achieve many goals: help make the development, connections and surrounding area more attractive and safer; increase pedestrian and bicycle activities; increase the marketability of the development; and minimizes community impacts. Design recommendations for access improvements include:

Access

- Add more “active frontages,” buildings that have doors and windows facing the street.
- Integrate landscaping, wide sidewalks, street parking, bike lanes, street furniture, lighting and public art.

- Provide simple, visible and readable signage at BART, Bayfair Center and major roads.
- Develop a circulation system that creates developable parcels.
- Develop a circulation system that connects development to Bayfair Center, Hesperian Boulevard and East 14th Street.

Local residents have expressed concern over how TOD will impact their neighborhoods in height and scale. The following are urban design recommendations to help reduce the visual appearance and transition from existing neighborhoods to TOD projects.

Development for Transition to Existing Neighborhoods – Townhouses

- Help transition from low to higher densities.
- Need active and attractive street interface.
- Provide appropriately-scaled street frontage.
- Locate parking access behind units.
- Add residential stoops.

Development for Higher Density Projects

- Need active and attractive street interface.
- Provide appropriately-scaled street frontage.
- Add porches and rooftop amenities.
- Parking can be submerged, podium or wrapped.
- Multiple street-level entrances distribute flow.
- No exposed ground floor parking garage.
- Favor wrap-around garages with some residential or ground-floor retail.
- Step up in density toward BART tracks, Estudillo Canal and Bayfair Center.

Alternative Options Under Consideration

The key issues and the recommended urban design goals summarized above provided the framework for the development of three alternative options. They present a range of improvements and concepts, from minor modifications to more significant long-term changes. It should be noted that the options presented in this report are very conceptual and additional analyses will be performed in the next planning phase. The three options are:

- Option 1 proposes minimal modifications to the already existing site conditions. It introduces a BART parking garage and a range of residential development on BART

property. Access improvements include BART Entry and Key Way. A mixed-use development is proposed for Bayfair Center.

- Option 2 assumes a range of residential development on BART property. Development opportunities increase on the BART site with shared parking garages at Bayfair Center, adjacent to the Cinemark Theatres and Target. Access improvements include Diagonal Street and Key Way.
- Option 3 is a long-term look at Option 2 and assumes the UP tracks are removed. Significant access improvements that simplify the street network include Thornally Drive, Diagonal Street, Key Way and Straight Drive. Also, a direct pathway connects both BART parking lots to and through the station, while the pedestrian underpass is eliminated. The intermodal transfer center wraps around the station, which maximizes the development footprint on BART property. Finally, other areas around Bayfair Center are identified as having long-term development potential for retail, commercial and/or residential uses.

Findings and Recommendations

The existing access and circulation network between the BART site, Bayfair Center, and their surrounding areas lacks direct, safe and comfortable connections. The three development options include ways to enhance and better connect this network by filling in gaps and designing high-quality pedestrian, bicycle, transit and vehicular amenities:

Pedestrian/Bike Treatments

- Improve safety and security in the BART pedestrian underpass with lighting, security cameras and planters to eliminate hiding places (Options 1, 2).
- Create "Grand Main Streets" with streetscape, raised crosswalks, wide sidewalks (BART Entry - Option 1; Diagonal - Options 2, 3).
- Replace UP tracks with an urban greenway for pedestrians and bicyclists (Option 3).
- Connect both sides of the BART parking lots to and through the station and remove the underpass (Option 3).
- Increase bicycle parking (in location and number) at station (all options).
- Provide simple, visible and readable signage throughout the station area (all options).

Transit Treatments

- Improve transit access with bus circulation wrapped around the station (Option 3).
- Initiate planned AC Transit BRT service (all options).
- Re-evaluate local bus service to consider adding service and reconfigure routes to capture more riders in future high growth areas (all options).

- Consider off-peak BART pricing strategies to increase ridership (all options).
- Consider signal priority for transit (all options).

Vehicular Treatments

- Elevate Thornally Drive to grade level and make roadway bicycle and pedestrian-friendly (Option 3).
- Add Straight Drive to simplify circulation network between BART and East 14th Street and BART (Option 3).
- Add Key Way for more direct vehicle access between BART and East 14th Street (all options).
- Implement bike-friendly indications on access streets - "share the road" signs or pavement markings (all options).
- Increase BART replacement parking (all options).

Parking

Considering local policies and plans, as well as community input received, Bay Fair Station is seen as an appropriate location for maintaining or increasing BART passenger parking supply. However, the cost for providing structured parking is significant. BART must therefore be creative about securing additional or replacement parking for its riders. One potential solution may be for BART and Bayfair Center to share some parking with each other, taking advantage of the different parking peaking characteristics of each use.

Furthermore parking at TOD projects should be handled differently from more auto-oriented neighborhoods:

- Parking for Residential Development
 - No more than 1.25 spaces per unit adjacent to BART.
 - Households with fewer cars can afford higher housing prices.
 - Unbundling of parking costs from housing costs.
 - Carshare programs can help reduce the need for car ownership and parking.
- Parking for Commercial Development
 - Demand rarely exceeds 3 spaces/1,000 s.f. if parking is shared.
 - Front door spaces should be reserved for high-turnover shoppers.
 - Spaces for transit patrons and employees should be located further back.

Market Feasibility

The market analysis highlights the market implications and tradeoffs between design and circulation choices. The market for townhouses around the BART station is strong. Either apartments or condominiums are marketable over the long-term. However, future

development is challenged by the fact that the sites lack direct physical connections to Bayfair Center, East 14th Street and Hesperian Boulevard. Furthermore, the parcels are triangularly shaped, and barriers such as Estudillo Canal, the BART tracks and the Union Pacific railroad make it difficult to reconfigure the sites for development. Finally, the sites are surrounded by neighborhoods at a smaller scale than is typical for TOD.

Financial Feasibility

Given the fact that the expected timeframe for development of the BART and Bayfair Center sites would make any feasibility analysis at this time outdated, this section will provide a qualitative assessment of the feasibility of the three development alternatives. Key factors affecting financial feasibility include:

- Good urban design adds value to residential units ~ between 10 – 20% increase.
- Construction of new buildings between 5 and 11 stories is not cost effective.
- Development revenue cannot cover construction cost for 100%+ BART replacement parking structure.
- Development options should reduce residential parking as much as possible to lower project costs.
- The presence of the parking garage should be minimized from the street.
- Developer could build the shared garage for less, thereby reducing overall project cost.