

SPUR Comments on BART Objectives for the Lake Merritt BART Station RFQ 12/19/17

Complete Communities

- Developing a strong urban design framework will be critical for this project. The master developer for this project should include an urban designer as part of their team. Urban design, the public realm and development uses should be considered holistically. At the bare minimum, developments must include active uses (such as retail) along the street; any parking should be wrapped, curb cuts should be minimized.
- Wayfinding to neighborhood amenities, the BART station and other sustainable transportation elements should be prioritized. Increased pedestrian and bike access to amenities, including Lake Merritt pathways, can help increase access to the station by these modes.
- We have included some thoughts about the Transit Operations Facility, which are included at the end of this document.

Sustainable Communities Strategy

- We agree with BART's objectives of building high density office and residential uses on these sites. To the extent that parking can be minimized on these sites, it should. We appreciate that BART is setting parking maximums instead of minimums. In order to address the neighborhood concerns about parking, it may be a good idea to develop a plan to better manage parking on a neighborhood wide scale, coupled with neighborhood wide demand management strategies.
- Consider including sustainability standards for the building, such as requiring LEED Gold performance that the capturing and treatment of rainfall onsite.

Ridership

- We agree strongly that future development should result in a net gain in riders. We think BART should have a defined target for ridership growth that is more explicit than "net gain." Is it possible to say by how much?
- It would be helpful to explain to the public why office development in particular will help move the goal of increased ridership forward (reverse commute etc).

Value Creation & Value Capture

- At the stakeholder meeting you mentioned that there were substantial unknown costs associated with development above the BART track tunnel. Is it possible to develop a potential cost range for this so that the amount of public benefits can be calibrated in some way to accommodate this future cost? We are concerned that the public will be very disappointed if the cost of building above the track tunnel reduces the amount of public benefits that can be offered.
- We like the idea of on-going value recapture mechanisms to fund public investments in this area.

Transportation Choice

- We agree with BART's objectives. Wayfinding that conforms to regional standards (in coordination with the City of Oakland) is a critical component to ensuring the success of this station.
- Coordinate station design and wayfinding with the BRT line currently under construction.
- Street calming on 8th Street and 9th Street can help make walking in the area more safe and pleasant.
- If possible, add a bike station at this site (such as the one at the 19th Street BART Station).

Affordability

- We agree with BART's objectives for the inclusion of affordable housing at this site. BART should work closely with the City of Oakland, the County of Alameda and other potential funders to increase the depth and amount of affordability on this site.

Transit Operations Facility (TOF)

- Though the TOF is not part of the RFQ for this project, we are concerned about the impact of the TOF on the station area. Even if the intention is to wrap the TOF with active uses, actually achieving this goal will require the spaces to be large enough and well designed to attract retail tenants. We are likewise concerned that the future plaza will be underutilized. We recommend that BART, in coordination with the City of Oakland, study the possibility of swapping the TOF site with Madison Square Park. This would allow for more development to occur on the Madison Square Park site (because the tunnel track does not run under most of the site), while building a new park on the TOF site that would be bounded on four sides by active uses, effectively consolidating the open space in the station area and make it more usable.