AGENDA

Geary Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)
CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE (GCAC) – Meeting 22

Date: 6:00 p.m., Thursday, November 21, 2013
Location: 1455 Market Street, 22nd Floor
Members: Paul Chan, Joanna Fong, Peter Gallotta, Jonathon Goldberg, Matthew Goldberg, Benjamin Home, Jolsna John, Paul Kniha, Richard Marshall, Winston Parsons, and Jette Swan

6:00 1. Committee Meeting Call to Order

6:05 2. Adoption of Minutes of the September 12 Meeting – ACTION *

6:10 3. Updates and Announcements – INFORMATION

Numerous environmental technical studies for the Geary BRT project are continuing. An update will be provided on the status and schedule of the environmental technical studies.
We are seeking comments and input from the Committee.

6:35 5. Alternatives Screening for Fatal Flaws and Locally Preferred Alternative Performance Evaluation – INFORMATION * +
The Geary BRT team has been refining project design alternatives toward the goal of identifying a staff-recommended Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA). The team will summarize the current alternatives and present the results of a screening and evaluation of those alternatives. A draft memorandum has been prepared for review by the GCAC.
We are seeking comments and input from the Committee.

7:30 6. Public Outreach Planning – INFORMATION +
Public outreach is planned this fall and winter, with open houses being scheduled for early December. The Geary BRT team will provide an overview of the goals of the outreach, and will discuss materials to be shared with the public.
We are seeking comments and input from the Committee.

7:45 7. Public Comment

8:00 8. Adjournment

* Materials attached.
+ Materials distributed at meeting

This meeting location is wheelchair accessible. In order to allow individuals with environmental illness or multiple-chemical sensitivity to attend the meeting, individuals are requested to refrain from wearing perfume or other scented products. All times shown are for information only. Items will be called at the discretion of the Moderator.
Geary Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)
Citizens Advisory Committee (GCAC):
Meeting Twenty One – Thursday, September 12, 2013

Present were the following members: Tony Biancalana, Joanna Fong, Jonathan Goldberg, Matthew Goldberg, Jolsna John, Jette Swan, Jim Misener, Richard Marshall, Winston Parsons

Transportation Authority staff: Chester Fung, Colin Dentel-Post
SFMTA staff: Andrew Lee, Paul Bignardi
Consultant: Irene Avetyan

1. Committee Meeting Call to Order
The meeting was called to order by Meeting 21 Moderator Winston Parsons at 6:04 p.m.

2. Adoption of Minutes of the July 11th, 2013 Meeting – ACTION
Winston Parsons moved to approve the July 11, 2013 minutes. Jolsna John seconded the motion. There was no public comment, and the minutes were approved unanimously.

3. Updates and Announcements – INFORMATION
Chester Fung noted that the appointment process for the eight seats of members with expired terms is ongoing. The Transportation Authority Board adopted two-year terms for all project-related CAC members at its July meeting, and as a result the terms of all members who have served more than two years are expiring. The Board may opt to reappoint existing members or appoint new members to those seats. The Board’s Plans and Programs Committee will consider appointments or reappointments at its meeting on September 17, 2013. Mr. Fung stated that Transportation Authority staff does not make recommendations regarding appointments but only provides information on candidates to Board members. Mr. Fung stated that all the CAC members’ participation throughout the project has been greatly appreciated.

Jolsna John asked whether reappointments are possible with the term limits for CAC. Mr. Fung responded that reappointments are possible after the 2-year term is up. Mr. Fung also stated that the same member could be reappointed several times as there are no term limits.

Mr. Fung also announced that the Transportation Authority is planning a round of outreach for the project in late fall, with content to include material that the CAC will see at the current meeting as well as at the next meeting in November 2013. The process will be similar to the last outreach round in Summer 2012, including hosted community meetings and meetings with stakeholder groups, which have already begun.
Ms. Fong inquired whether the stakeholder list is going to be the same as in 2012 or if there are new groups. Mr. Fung responded that the stakeholder list has about 20-30 groups, most of whom were included last time, and that staff is planning to add some additional groups to the list.

Jim Misener inquired whether the Japantown Task Force would be included in the outreach list since their leadership has expressed a strong interest to meet up with the Geary BRT team. Mr. Fung informed him that the team has added the Task Force to the list.

Mr. Fung welcomed new CAC member Richard Marshall to the group and to his first CAC meeting.

There was no public comment on the item.

4. Update on Inner Geary Analysis of Options – INFORMATION +

Colin Dentel-Post presented an analysis of options considered by the project team for the portion of the corridor along one-way Geary and O’Farrell Streets between Gough and Market Streets. Improvements implemented between 2002 and 2010 improved bus travel times, particularly west of Powell Street, but speeds in the Union Square area remain very slow. The team considered two options (A and B), which involve upgrades and spot improvements to the existing bus lane on the right side of the street or moving the bus lane curbside along the left side of the street, respectively. Mr. Dentel-Post enumerated the impacts to parking and loading that would result from Option B and noted that it would also limit the potential for buses to pass each other. The team is moving forward with Option A for environmental analysis, since the loading issue in Option B is a fatal flaw and Option A would still improve transit speeds, particularly with the focused spot treatments in the Union Square area.

Jim Misener inquired whether the average travel speed of private vehicles was considered in addition to transit speeds. Mr. Dentel-Post replied that traffic speeds were monitored as part of the Congestion Management Program and that this data is available but has not been included in this presentation.

Jolsna John inquired when the survey was taken and whether it was taken before the SFMTA Central Subway construction was going on. Chester Fung responded that the data is from before the Central Subway construction began.

Ms. John asked what the ‘flexible treatment’ mentioned as a possibility for Option B would be. Mr. Dentel-Post responded that it could be additional landscaping or other streetscape treatments upstream from bus boarding islands.

Matthew Goldberg inquired whether Option B would require buses with the ability to load on the left side. Mr. Dentel-Post responded that it would not.

Richard Marshall asked whether there would be impacts to tour bus drop-off areas. Mr. Dentel-Post indicated that tour bus zones were not individually identified but were considered as a subset of white passenger loading zones.
Tony Biancalana inquired about impacts to passenger loading zones, and how many of those would be to tour buses. Mr. Dentel-Post responded that most of the passenger loading impacts would be to theatres and hotels, as well as some senior housing.

Jonathan Goldberg asked whether other passengers can load and unload in tour bus loading zones. Mr. Dentel-Post responded that the team needs to check on this. There is only one tour bus zone that would be impacted.

Winston Parsons inquired whether the team has any data from SFPark. Mr. Dentel-Post responded that SFPark data has not been analyzed, but that the team has looked at the number of spaces that would be impacted and which businesses they serve.

Mr. Misener asked whether queue jumps were considered. Mr. Dentel-Post responded that queue jumps are part of the Option A proposal. Andrew Lee added that one such location would be at Powell Street to allow buses to get ahead of turning traffic. Mr Dentel-Post added that Stockton Street has a major right turn as well. Mr. Fung commented that queue jumps are part of a larger set of improvements to improve bus travel times.

The public was invited to comment on the agenda item.

A member of the public asked if it is possible to address loading with time of day loading. Mr. Lee responded that the late night service on the Geary corridor and transit islands proposed with Option B would be challenging, but it still could be a possibility. Mr. Dentel-Post also responded that much of the loading is passenger loading, and that it would be difficult to limit loading times at hotels and theatres.

5. **Update on SFMTA Fleet Management Issues Relating to Alternative 4 – INFORMATION**

Paul Bignardi presented the challenges SFMTA would expect if buses with five doors, three on the right and two on the left, were added to the fleet as would be necessitated by Alternative 4. SFMTA maintenance facilities are not configured to maintain a subfleet of five-door buses, the buses would not be interchangeable with others for service flexibility, and the vehicles’ long-term durability is unproven. Due to these issues, as well as cost and capacity issues, SFMTA is not willing to purchase and operate five-door buses.

Matthew Goldberg inquired why the Metro East yard is overcrowded. Mr. Bignardi responded that it does not have a complete facility and that there are functionality issues. The elements needed for five-door buses are available at the Green Yard only, which is 35 years old and needs to be renovated. The current goal is to fully refurbish it and move vehicles from Green to Metro East.

Joanna Fong asked whether the team is suggesting that Alternative 4 is not realistic at all. Mr. Fung responded that this will be addressed in a following presentation, but that the team believes other alternatives can provide most of the advantages of Alternative 4.

Jette Swan asked whether the buses will be bought a couple of years before the service starts. Mr. Bignardi responded that this is correct, the procurement will start in two to three years.
Ms. Swan inquired whether the branding of the BRT buses would accrue additional costs. Mr. Bignardi responded that the Transit Effectiveness Project is also working to figure out how to brand buses in the Rapid Network. TEP branding could be applied to the BRT buses to reduce the number of subfleets that need to be managed.

Ms. John asked how the Presidio Yard’s full replacement will impact current 38 services. Mr. Bignardi responded that Presidio is primarily a trolley bus yard, so the future BRT buses would not be impacted. Mr. Fung added that the Presidio renovation is not on the same timeline as Geary BRT so construction should not be affected.

Tony Biancalana inquired whether any attempt has been made to consider Candlestick Park as an area to store buses during yard renovations. Mr. Bignardi responded that it has been discussed informally.

Matthew Goldberg inquired whether the remodelling of the Presidio Yard will affect other bus service in the area and whether any of those riders would be forced to use the Geary lines. Mr. Bignardi responded that it is too early to know, but that SFMTA might have longer deadheads for buses to reach other yards. Still, the trolleybuses must remain in operation.

Mr. Parsons asked whether, with the new bus specs, if New Flyer would also manage the signage at the stations. Mr. Bignardi responded that it is not New Flyer but another company that will do the branding. He noted that the first full-color head signs will be installed on all vehicles, which will provide some flexibility with branding.

There was no public comment on the item.

6. Status of Environmental Technical Studies - INFORMATION+

Chester Fung informed the CAC members that the team plans to provide regular updates on the environmental studies.

Irene Avetyan with Jacobs Engineering provided an update on progress on the environmental analysis, focusing on the Hazardous Materials, Hydrology/Water Quality, and Archeology studies. The Hazardous Materials study purpose is to identify any hazardous materials and potential sources of contamination near the corridor; the analysis has identified three potential sources of contamination. The Hydrology/Water Quality analysis evaluates potential effects to water supply and quality and has identified potential beneficial impacts due to increased stormwater retention with the project. The archaeology study identifies historic properties that could be affected, assesses project effects to historic properties, and seeks methods to avoid, minimize, or mitigate adverse effects to historic properties; no expected impacts have been identified.

Jonathan Goldberg inquired why a 1/8-mile distance from Geary is being used to define the Hazardous Materials study area. Mr. Fung responded that this is a standard methodology for similar transit projects. Ms. Avetyan suggested that she could provide more information if requested.
Jim Misener inquired whether the hydrology analysis considered potential impacts due to filling the Fillmore underpass. Tony Biancalana said that there are already flooding issues in that area. Ms. Avetyan responded that she will provide additional information to CAC members on that issue.

Winston Parsons noted that there was once a cemetery at the Target site. Mr. Fung said the project would not be digging there, and therefore would not impact anything on that site.

Mr. Misener explained that the Japantown Cultural History and Economic Sustainability Strategy would also have visual impacts, and asked how the BRT analysis accounts for this. Mr. Fung replied that the analysis would consider other projects that are reasonably foreseeable and incorporate those impacts in the analysis.

There was no public comment on the item.


Chester Fung presented the process for selecting a Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA), including screening alternatives that have fatal flaws or perform poorly and evaluating remaining promising options based on a set of key performance metrics. Alternative 4 is fatally flawed due to the fleet management issues presented by SFMTA. Center-running bus-only lanes through Masonic will also be screened out due to the poor passenger experience of using below-grade stations and also because of traffic issues and diversions that result from removing traffic from the underpass. Timing dictates that filling the Fillmore underpass cannot be accomplished as part of this project and will be the subject of a separate planning effort. Center-running bus-only lanes at Fillmore are dependent on filling the underpass and therefore will not be implemented as part of the BRT project. The remaining alternatives have several possible options between Palm and 27th Avenues, and these combinations will be fully evaluated. Both the screening process and evaluation of remaining alternatives will be presented to the CAC in a memo prior to the next meeting, and will also be presented to the Transportation Authority Board.

Jim Misener asked whether Fillmore could be filled before or with the project, rather than later. Mr. Fung explained that, while there is community and Board support for the project, the issue is whether the fill can be completed in the timeline needed to keep the BRT project on schedule, and it appears it cannot. Commissioner Breed has called a hearing to explore some of the planning issues that need to be addressed, including how to connect the communities on either side of Geary, the design of new street space created, and pedestrian needs. The BRT project has presented one vision for what the fill could look like, but there are other possibilities such as a boulevard or wider sidewalks, and the project does not have time to fully evaluate these possibilities. The fill does not directly relate to the project except for Alternative 3.

Jonathan Goldberg inquired whether there would be any measurable transit improvement with filling in the Fillmore underpass. Mr. Fung responded that there could be travel time benefits with a fill, but that timing is the issue. There could be a phased approach with a pre-fill LPA and a post-fill LPA. Andrew Lee added that this project cannot undertake the level of community process and evaluation that is needed to take full advantage of the potential for the fill.
Joanna Fong asked what the effect on trees would be and whether the team is looking at each alternative for opportunities to add more trees. Mr. Fung said the team is evaluating landscaping opportunities with each alternative.

Tony Biancalana noted that it would be difficult to move the 22-Fillmore stop at Fillmore and Geary.

Winston Parsons asked whether the team is asking operators about the designs to ensure safety. Mr. Fung responded that this is in process within SFMTA.

Ms. Fong asked whether the consolidated service idea would apply only to Alternative 3 or if it would also apply to Alternative 2. Mr. Fung responded that consolidated service would apply only to Alternative 3 because the benefits of consolidation are less for Alternative 2. With Alternative 3, consolidation removes the need for passing lanes and their associated impacts, especially on parking. Ms. Fong inquired whether there is a need to analyze 3.2 with consolidated service. Mr. Fung said there is such a need.

Jolsna John inquired whether the consolidated service would take into account senior centers, schools, retirement homes, and similar uses. Mr. Fung responded that the team is looking at all of those issues.

Jonathan Goldberg inquired how the federal grant funding would be affected by a phased construction approach. Mr. Fung replied that the team is currently working on this issue. Generally, if a project is phased, Federal funders want to know what all of the phases will be.

Mr. Misener inquired whether the project is going after FTA New or Small Starts grants. Mr. Fung responded that it would be Small Starts, which sponsors projects from $75M to $250M.

There was no public comment on the item.

8. Public Comment

There was no additional public comment.

9. Adjournment

Winston Parsons moved to adjourn the meeting. Jolsna John seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 8:04 pm.