

**THIS PRINT COVERS CALENDAR ITEM NO. : 11**

**SAN FRANCISCO  
MUNICIPAL TRANSPORTATION AGENCY**

**DIVISION:** Sustainable Streets

**BRIEF DESCRIPTION:**

This item is a request for the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA) Board of Directors to approve a staff recommendation designating the locally preferred alternative (LPA) for the proposed Van Ness Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project.

**SUMMARY:**

- The action requested of the Board is adoption of the staff recommended LPA for the Van Ness BRT project. The proposed LPA combines elements of Alternatives 3 and 4 as presented in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Report (DEIS/DEIR).
- A brief description of the staff recommended LPA is included. An LPA selection report is being drafted by San Francisco County Transportation Authority (SFCTA) staff with assistance from SFMTA staff. This report is consistent with the recommended LPA in the current request, and will be incorporated into the Final Environmental Impact Statement/Report (FEIS/FEIR), anticipated to be released in fall 2012.

**ENCLOSURES:**

1. SFMTAB Resolution
2. LPA Plan View Drawing

**APPROVALS:**

**DATE**

DIRECTOR \_\_\_\_\_

5/7/12

SECRETARY \_\_\_\_\_

5/7/12

**ASSIGNED SFMTAB CALENDAR DATE:** May 15, 2012

## PAGE 2.

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this calendar item is for the SFMTA Board to select a locally preferred alternative (LPA) for the proposed Van Ness BRT project, which is a necessary step in the federal process for the project to be considered for approval, including completion of the joint EIS/EIR for the project.

### GOAL

The Van Ness BRT project would assist in meeting or furthering the following goals of the SFMTA Strategic Plan:

**Goal 1:** Customer Focus: To provide safe, accessible, clean, environmentally sustainable service and encourage the use of auto-alternative modes through the Transit First Policy.

*Objective 1.1:* Improve safety and security across all modes of transportation.

*Objective 1.5:* Increase percentage of trips using more sustainable modes (such as transit, walking, bicycling, rideshare).

**Goal 5:** SFMTA Workforce: To provide a flexible, supportive work environment and develop a workforce that takes pride and ownership of the agency's mission and vision and leads the agency into an evolving, technology-driven future.

### DESCRIPTION

The proposed Van Ness BRT project is a large scale plan to implement "full-feature" bus rapid transit (BRT) on one of the busiest transit routes that is also a major "north-south" transportation corridor for all transportation modes in San Francisco. Once completed, it will be an integral part of the Muni "Rapid" network of transit service proposed in 2008 that will gradually be implemented on all major corridors in San Francisco.

As recommended under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the CEQA Guidelines (CEQA Section 21083.7; CEQA Guidelines Section 15222), there should be coordination of the preparation of environmental review documents whenever both a federal Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) under CEQA are required. Staff has prepared a joint Draft EIS/EIR (DEIS/DEIR) for the proposed project. Prior to publishing the final EIS for the project, federal regulations require the selection of the locally preferred alternative. Once they have completed alternatives analysis and selected an LPA, project sponsors request FTA approval to begin preliminary engineering (PE). During PE, the project sponsor refines the definition of the LPA's scope, schedule, and budget sufficient to complete the federal environmental review process; that is to determine the environmental, transportation cultural, and social impacts of the proposed project and to develop (and commit to the implementation of) strategies for mitigating them. Accordingly, the selection of the LPA is requested at this time and will be identified in the FEIS/FEIR for the project.

After reviewing four alternatives as presented in the DEIS/DEIR, staff recommends selection of: "The Center-running BRT with Right Side Boarding Platforms/Single Median and Limited Left Turns" for the Van Ness BRT project. This proposal combines elements of Alternatives 3 and 4 of the DEIS/DEIR.

Under this proposal BRT lanes would flank the center median except at stations where the BRT vehicles would transition to the center of the roadway and be protected by right side boarding platforms. This alternative would also eliminate all left turns from Van Ness Avenue between Mission and Lombard streets, with the exception of a two-lane left turn onto Broadway from southbound Van Ness, in order to gain the most transit travel time benefits.

Staff believes this to be the best solution to further the identified goals of the project to ensure faster service and improved reliability, while also meeting specific needs regarding fleet flexibility, operations flexibility and continuation toward a zero emission fleet.

### **Background and Previous SFMTA Actions**

Several past actions and studies by SFMTA and other government agencies over the past 25 years have led to recommending the proposed LPA for adoption. Some of the more noteworthy milestones are listed below.

- 1989 Four Corridors Study – Third Street first priority, along with Van Ness, Geary and North Beach
- 2002 SFMTA Vision for Rapid Transit – Identified major transit corridors for future improvements
- 2003 Prop K identified Van Ness, Geary and Potrero as priority corridors for BRT service
- 2006 MTC Regional Transit Expansion Policy (Resolution 3434) – Amended to include Van Ness BRT
- 2006 Van Ness BRT Feasibility Study is approved by the SFMTA Board of Directors
- 2007 Environmental Review (NEPA/CEQA) on Van Ness BRT is initiated
- 2008 Federal Transit Administration approved Van Ness BRT into the Small Starts program

### **BRT Elements of the Staff Recommended Locally Preferred Alternative**

The staff-recommended LPA consists of:

- Semi-exclusive center-running bus lanes with passenger platforms designed for use by new low-floor BRT hybrid buses and low floor trolley coaches that load from the right side
- Increased stop spacing: reconfigured and reduced number of stops that are enhanced to become “stations.” (15 northbound / 14 southbound stops – reduced to eight northbound / eight southbound stations)
- Transit signal priority, replacement of traffic signal system, replacement of streetlights / poles, and relocation of electric overhead wires and power supply for use by trolley coach vehicles
- Off-board fare payment options
- The retaining of a substantial portion of the existing median and greenspace
- Branding on all aspects of the project: vehicles, stations, signage, and other amenities.

### **Performance**

The staff recommended LPA would be expected to provide significant improvements in transit performance in the Van Ness and Mission Street corridors.

- Approximately 30 percent faster run time on Van Ness Avenue between Mission Street and Lombard Street (15 minutes with project vs. 21 minutes today)
- Smoother and straighter transit vehicle ride for passengers than existing service
- Approximately a 25 percent increase in passenger capacity: Route 47 switch from 40-foot buses to 60-foot buses; both Route 47 and 49 to operate at 7.5 minute frequencies
- An estimated 60 percent increase in passenger levels (38,000 in 2007 vs. 61,000 in 2035)

**Project Milestones And Schedule**

A tentative project schedule and milestones is shown below. Efforts will be made to condense the design and construction phases.

- Summer 2012 Commence Conceptual Engineering (CE)
- Fall 2012 Final Environmental Impact Statement / Report (FEIS/FEIR)
- Fall 2012 Federal Record of Decision (ROD)/Notice of Determination
- Fall 2013 30 percent design / engineering
- Fall 2014 100 percent design /engineering complete
- Winter 2015 Construction begins
- Spring 2015 New vehicles begin to arrive
- Spring 2016 Construction complete
- Fall 2016 Revenue service begins

**Project Plan View Drawing**

A plan view drawing of the staff recommended LPA is attached.

**ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED**

The Van Ness BRT environmental review analyzed four alternatives.

- Alternative 1: “No Build”
- Alternative 2: Side Running BRT with Right Side Boarding from sidewalk bulbouts
- Alternative 3: Center Running BRT with Right Side Boarding from platform islands located adjacent to the exclusive bus lanes
- Alternative 4: Center Running BRT with Right and Left side boarding from platform islands located adjacent to the exclusive bus lanes

The two center running Alternatives (3 and 4) also included a design option that eliminated all left turns between Mission and Lombard streets except for a double left turn lane from southbound Van Ness onto Broadway.

After a long period of analysis by staff at SFMTA and SFCTA and after incorporating public comment received during the review period of the DEIS/DEIR, staff is recommending the particular LPA for the project because it best combines the key elements contained in Alternatives 3 and 4.

**FUNDING IMPACT**

**Estimated Costs (figures rounded to closest million)**

- The estimated cost of the BRT project (bus lanes/stations and platforms/landscaping) is between \$125,000,000 – \$130,000,000.
  - \$75,000,000 – Federal Transit Administration “Small Starts” program funds
  - \$19,000,000 – San Francisco – Prop K sales tax
  - \$31,000,000 – \$36,000,000 – Other regional and State grant programs

**OTHER APPROVALS RECEIVED OR STILL REQUIRED**

The SFCTA Board is also required to approve the staff recommended LPA for the Van Ness BRT project. The Authority Board will consider selection of the staff recommended LPA at the Authority’s Plans and Programs Committee Meeting on May 15, 2012, and at the Authority Board meeting scheduled on May 22, 2012.

Because Van Ness Avenue is a State highway, the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) is required to conduct a review process that is performed in parallel to the environmental review process. This activity results in production of a document known as a combined Project Study Report/Project Report (PSR/PR). Caltrans is expected to approve a PSR/PR for this project prior to staff finalizing the joint FEIS/FEIR for the project and FTA approving Record of Decision (ROD) and issuing a Notice of Determination. The FTA approval of the ROD will authorize the SFMTA to begin the detailed design phase of the project.

Additional local, Caltrans, and FTA approvals and permits will be required to approve design and begin construction of the proposed Van Ness Avenue BRT project.

The City Attorney has reviewed this report.

#### RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency Board of Directors endorse the proposed LPA and to adopt the LPA as the Van Ness BRT project alternative. Staff further recommends that the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency Board of Directors authorize the Director of Transportation to direct SFMTA staff to work jointly with SFCTA staff to complete the Final Environmental Impact Statement/Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIS/FEIR).

SAN FRANCISCO  
MUNICIPAL TRANSPORTATION AGENCY  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

RESOLUTION No. \_\_\_\_\_

WHEREAS, The San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA) and the San Francisco County Transportation Authority (SFCTA) are partnering in the development of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) for Van Ness Avenue; and,

WHEREAS, The goals of BRT are robust and stable ridership, efficient, effective and equitable transit service, neighborhood livability and community vitality, and links to a citywide rapid transit network; and,

WHEREAS, The SFMTA and SFCTA have completed a combined Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS)/Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) which analyzes the environmental impacts of four alternatives for construction of the proposed project:

- Alternative 1: “No Build”
- Alternative 2: Side-running BRT with Right Side Boarding from sidewalk bulbouts
- Alternative 3: Center Median running BRT with Right Side Boarding from platform islands located adjacent to the exclusive bus lanes
- Alternative 4: Center Median running BRT with Right and Left Side Boarding from platform islands located adjacent to the exclusive bus lanes; and,

WHEREAS, The DEIS/DEIR also provided comparative information on the need, feasibility, funding and cost for each alternative; and,

WHEREAS, The SFMTA and SFCTA released the DEIS/DEIR for public review and comment from November 4 – December 23, 2011, which included a public meeting where comments could be submitted, and information about the project provided at a webinar and neighborhood briefings; and,

WHEREAS, After a long period of analysis by staff at SFMTA and SFCTA, and after considering the information in the DEIS/DEIR and incorporating public comments received during the review period of the DEIS/DEIR, the staff recommendation for the locally preferred alternative (LPA) for the project is “The Center-running BRT with Right Side Boarding Platforms Single Median and Limited Left Turns,” which combines key elements contained in Alternatives 3 and 4; and,

WHEREAS, In this alternative, BRT lanes would flank the center median except at stations where the BRT vehicles would transition to the center of the roadway and be protected by right side boarding platforms; this alternative would also eliminate all left turns from Van Ness Avenue between Mission and Lombard streets, with the exception of a two-lane left turn onto Broadway from southbound Van Ness, in order to gain the most transit travel time benefits; and,

WHEREAS, Upon adoption of the LPA for the Van Ness BRT project, the Director of Transportation will direct SFMTA staff to work with the SFCTA in finalizing the FEIS/FEIR for the project so that the proposed project can be presented to the SFMTA for its consideration; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency Board of Directors adopts “The Center-running BRT with Right Side Boarding Platforms Single Median and Limited Left Turns” as the Locally Preferred Alternative for the Van Ness Bus Rapid Transit project; and, be it further

I certify that the foregoing resolution was adopted by the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency Board of Directors at its meeting of May 15, 2012.

---

Secretary to the Board of Directors  
San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency

# Van Ness BRT – Adoption of LPA Aerial of Proposed Service Plan

## Recommended LPA Plan View Segment: Eddy St. Station

