



SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA RAPID TRANSIT DISTRICT

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Attachment D

2009

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July 15, 2009

Ms. Anne Richman
Senior Program and Policy Analyst
Metropolitan Transportation Commission
101 8th Street
Oakland, CA 94607

Subject: Oakland Airport Connector Project – Wilbur Smith Ridership Study
Commissioner Request for Information

Dear Ms. Richman:

The BART Oakland Airport Connector (OAC) Project presented an update to the Programming and Allocations Committee on July 8, 2009, at which several commissioners had questions about the difference between the ridership projections contained in the 2002 Final EIR/EIS for the Project and more recent ridership studies. As a follow up to that meeting, please find attached, the BART-Oakland Airport Connector Patronage Refinement study dated April 24, 2007 and the Final Ridership Update Report dated May 5, 2009.

The 2009 report is independent of the ridership estimates derived in the OAC FEIR/EIS. The FEIR/EIS itself does not need to be revisited because none of the conditions that would require supplemental environmental review have occurred. In particular, there are no new or more severe adverse environmental impacts associated with the 2009 report's conservative financial ridership forecasts. Nevertheless, if there is a delay in a project, agencies may revisit ridership forecasts, outside the environmental review process, to determine whether projects still make sense when economic conditions change. This is essentially what BART has done in a series of financial ridership forecasts, starting with the first updated forecasts prepared in 2007, which were based purposely on conservative assumptions to avoid overstating potential ridership. These forecasts were intended to assist BART in reaching decisions related to the financial viability of the project and whether a portion of the Project funding shortfall could be financed with minimal risk to the BART General Fund.

The updated forecasts are much more conservative than those that were developed for the project FEIR/EIS which had used appropriate assumptions for the environmental review stage. In particular, the ridership forecasting model used in the FEIR/EIS took into consideration subjective factors such as the comfort, convenience, and reliability of the OAC AGT system as compared to the current bus service. In contrast, the investment oriented forecasts that are presented in the 2007 and 2009 reports purposely ignored

these subjective factors and focused on quantifiable factors such as travel times and travel costs. As a result these forecasts were significantly lower than those presented in the FEIR/EIS.

The purpose of the May 5, 2009 Ridership Update was to assess the near term and long term ridership potential of the planned OAC people mover system in light of fairly recent and dramatic changes in the usage of Oakland International Airport. Wilbur Smith conducted a review of the impacts that the current volatile economy and the changes in the national and local commercial aviation marketplace are having on air passenger activity at Oakland International Airport, and at the other airports in the region. Wilbur Smith also revised ridership forecasts and updated information about AirBART use, airport parking costs and other factors to develop updated ridership forecasts for the OAC people mover system. This information is presented in Chapter 3 of the 2009 report. These forecasts are provided in recognition that at present the economic markets and other factors such as fuel availability and costs are extremely volatile and unpredictable. It is difficult to determine how long the current downturn will continue and at what rate the actual recovery will occur. As a result, the forecasts in the 2009 report are more conservative than those in both the FEIR/EIS and the financial ridership report completed in 2007.

Please feel free to call me at (510) 287- 4822 if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'TD', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Tom Dunscombe
Project Manager - Oakland Airport Connector
Transit System Development

CC: File
K Mayo