

## MEMORANDUM

**FROM:** Brian Soland, BART

**TO:** Nicole Ferrara, City of Oakland

**CC:** Sadie Graham, BART

**DATE:** November 29, 2023

**SUBJECT:** Lake Merritt and I-580 Corridor Considerations for the Link21 Concept Development

## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this memorandum is to present a documentation of Lake Merritt and I-580 Corridor rail potential in Oakland that was not included within the Link21 concepts.

The primary component of Link21 is a new train crossing between Oakland and San Francisco and at the time of writing, an analysis is being completed by the Link21 team to select a technology for the crossing, either BART or Regional Rail. The analysis to-date included a process for identifying potential markets, developing service options, and understanding the extent of the infrastructure required. Options for station locations and alignments in Oakland are an integral part of the potential concepts ([link](#)).

A market analysis was undertaken to identify unmet transbay rail potential between Oakland and San Francisco for the 21-county megaregion. The findings helped identify the location of potential alignments to be considered as part of Link21. These included locations north and northeast of Lake Merritt and along the I-580 corridor in Oakland. An assessment was then undertaken to screen the potential markets for inclusion in the Link21 concepts.

## ASSESSMENT

The Link21 Team established planning requirements to guide the concept development process of the crossing project. Key planning requirements include the need for any potential Link21 crossing project to:

- **Provide a second rail crossing** between Oakland and San Francisco with BART and/or Regional Rail technology.
- **Provide wider improvements** to the BART and Regional Rail networks that enhance the performance of the crossing.
- **Demonstrate independent utility**, achieves Link21's goals and objectives, is economically and financially viable, and is deliverable.
- **Build upon existing adopted plans** and support other relevant projects that are in megaregional program.

For wider improvements, including extensions and new alignments, beyond more direct connections to existing rail corridors, the primary consideration is whether they could enhance

the performance of the crossing by advancing one or more key components of the program problem statement, including:

- Providing convenient transfers to/from the new crossing and to/from existing rail networks;
- Supporting frequent and reliable service through a new crossing;
- Reducing potential crowding in the transbay corridor; and
- Improving the cost effectiveness of a new crossing.

To the extent that information was available, these considerations were qualitatively assessed for the Lake Merritt and I-580 areas.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

In the early market analysis, locations northeast of Lake Merritt and along the I-580 corridor showed potential demand for transbay trips. While there may be potential demand for transbay trips, extensions to these areas would not advance key aspects of the program problem statement and were not included within the Link21 concepts. This is because these extensions are not along a potential transbay crossing alignment, would not add connections between existing passenger rail networks or facilitate new transfer opportunities between BART and Regional Rail; nor would they enable more frequent and reliable service through the crossing. In addition, extensions to these areas would increase Link21's scope, scale, and complexity related to deliverability and fundability considerations.

Since these corridors have not been previously studied for high-capacity transit, Link21 would support efforts by others to advance planning in analyzing if new rail is the preferred way to meet the demand -- particularly for corridors that are complementary to Link21. This type of effort could be advanced in line with BART's newly adopted System Development Policy that provides guidance on advancing BART extension or infill station projects ([Link](#)). Further, Link21 will not preclude providing connection to such a potential future rail project.

## **NEXT STEPS**

Link21 will continue working with Oakland city staff on potential crossing project alignments, stations, and other rail infrastructure within Oakland. In addition, Link21 will be seeking action in the new year by the BART and CCJPA boards to select a crossing technology (either BART or Regional Rail). The selected technology will be advanced for further refinement with community, stakeholder, and public engagement.

In support of efforts by others to plan for transit improvements in Oakland, Link21 will continue to share data from analysis related to Oakland.