

AC Transit BRT Public Hearing June 14, 2007

Vincent Casalaina Presentation
2619 Benvenue Ave. Berkeley

My name is Vincent Casalaina and I'm the president of the Willard Neighborhood Association, but I'm speaking tonight on my own behalf. The Willard neighborhood is very pro-transit. That has been one of the strongest points of consensus in our discussions about Bus Rapid Transit – discussions that have been on going now for several years and included a neighborhood forum last year.

After reading the Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Report, we still have a lot of reservations about BRT's impact on our neighborhood and the adequacy of the DEIS/R in addressing those impacts.

As an example, the section of the document that summarizes the Cumulative Impact of projects is deficient because it does not consider the effect that UC Berkeley's Long Range Development Plan will have on increased employment and hence increased commuting. The document is likewise silent on LBL's LRDP and what effect the completion of the Caldecott Tunnel 4th Bore will have on reverse commute congestion along Telegraph and at the intersections of Ashby with College / Telegraph & Adeline.

With limited dollars available to address congestion problems, it is important that any analysis that is done goes beyond simply estimating how vehicles are affected by the proposed improvement. It is also necessary to estimate how neighborhoods, households and businesses will be affected. This document gives short shrift to what impacts are expected from the implementation of BRT. This is clear when looking at the lack of analysis regarding the removal of parking along the northern section of Telegraph Ave. which is "mitigated" by putting meters in residential neighborhoods. This mitigation affects both the residents whose already limited parking is decreased and the businesses whose customers must park further away.

The DEIS/R is deficient in not considering an alternative that covered the soon to be implemented Rapid Bus enhanced with many of the features of BRT. This alternative which others have described as Rapid Bus + could have nearly the same trip time as BRT without the permanent loss of traffic lanes along Telegraph Ave.

The DEIS/R is deficient because it does not consider the effects of CO² as a pollutant. Its true that when BRT was first proposed CO² was not considered a pollutant by the EPA. Recent court cases have changed that definition and I believe that any analysis of the effect of BRT implementation on the environment should contain a description on the reduction of CO², if any.

An analysis that looks at CO² reduction is vital from the City of Berkeley's standpoint because of our Measure G goal of reducing greenhouse gasses by 80%.

Finally, the traffic model used in the DEIS/R is deficient because its results fly in the face of both common sense, and also empirical evidence. We are asked to believe that the traffic model is correct when it says that there will be a net decrease in auto traffic of over 600 car trips/hr in the

peak pm traffic along Telegraph and other North/South streets in the corridor by 2050. This reduction is during a period where the projected growth in Berkeley housing is over 160 units per year, that's an increase of over 6,400 new residents through 2050.

For all these reasons, I believe this Draft EIS/R should be withdrawn and corrected before this project is allowed to move forward. We should immediately look into which of the time saving features can be implemented in conjunction with Rapid Bus.