

Alameda – San Joaquin Regional Rail Working Group
Meeting of October 11, 2017

STAFF REPORT

Item 7

ACTION

Project Concept: Megaregion Connection to Tri-Valley BART Extension

Recommendation:

It is recommended that the Alameda – San Joaquin Regional Rail Working Group adopt the proposed Project Concept: *Megaregion Connection to the Tri-Valley BART Extension* for purposes of: 1) clarifying the project definition for the State Rail Plan; 2) expediting the development of a project scope, schedule and budget; and 3) facilitating the opportunity to meet all possible funding application opportunities in the near future.

Megaregion Connection to Tri-Valley BART Extension

This important project will connect Northern San Joaquin County communities to the Tri-Valley and BART through frequent and fast EMU/DMU rail service via the route of the historic Transcontinental Railroad right-of-way through the Altamont Pass. This approximately 12-mile long abandoned right-of-way, deeded to Alameda County by Southern Pacific in 1984, provides an unprecedented opportunity to deliver fast and efficient inter-regional rail - connecting the Northern California Megaregion work force to affordable housing and providing much needed congestion relief in one of the Bay Area's most congested corridors. The line will extend initially from West Tracy through the Altamont Pass and then readily connect with a BART terminus station in the Tri-Valley - the location to be determined soon through the BART to Livermore environmental analysis. An initial analysis completed by ACE found this concept to have competitive travel time, significant emissions reduction and significant environmental benefit. Travel demand forecasting is currently underway and ridership is expected at a robust level. In addition, it had a capital cost of under \$400 million for the segment of West Tracy to Greenville Road in Livermore - the project segment not addressed in BART environmental review and now proposed for immediate further study. This segment includes two stations as well as an operations, maintenance and storage facility in West Tracy. On weekdays it would operate on half-hour service intervals that would meet every other BART train. Travel from West Tracy to a potential Greenville BART station would take an estimated 26.2 minutes.

Assembly Bill 758 was enacted to advance regional rail planning that leads to project implementation that is fast, cost-effective, and responsive to community goals and objectives. This project concept is consistent with its primary goal to deliver an interregional rail connection between the San Joaquin Valley and BART in the Tri-Valley. The project is also consistent with the recommendations of the Bay Area Council Northern California Megaregion Report (2016) that identifies this connection as critical to the burgeoning economies of both the Bay Area and San Joaquin County. It is also identified in the MTC Bay Area Regional Rail Plan (2007) as a much needed missing rail link to BART in the Tri-Valley. This vital rail connection provides a highly-cost-effective way to close a significant passenger rail gap but in addition, it will improve the overall mobility in this key freight movement corridor between the San Joaquin Valley and the Port of Oakland.

Background

The San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission (SJRRC), examined the feasibility of a number of alternatives to connect BART to ACE, as part of the ACEForward environmental review process that is currently underway. These alternatives included options to extend ACE to a BART terminus in the Tri-Valley – at Greenville, Isabel or the existing Dublin/Pleasanton Station. Further study looked at the feasibility of extending an EMU/DMU rail line from West Tracy along the County-owned railroad rights-of-way in the Altamont Pass to a BART terminus in the Tri-Valley at one of these potential intermodal locations. A yard/shop site for this line is tentatively identified in the vicinity of Tracy.

An important element of Assembly Bill 758 is a requirement to complete a project feasibility report no later than July 1, 2019 that identifies the project, a funding plan and schedule for project implementation and delivery. Although there has been significant study and environmental review for rail alternatives in the Tri-Valley, the link through the Altamont Pass to West Tracy requires immediate further study. Adoption of the proposed project concept will allow project study to advance in earnest to meet AB758 requirements, and importantly to be ready for funding opportunities on the near horizon.

Next Steps

If the Project Concept is adopted by the Working Group, further study will be advanced and it is anticipated that a detailed scope, schedule and budget for this work could be presented to the Working Group at the next meeting in November. This Project Concept will also be advanced in project funding applications pending further project definition of the BART terminus location in the Tri-Valley.