



Loma Prieta Chapter serving San Mateo, Santa Clara & San Benito Counties

January 10, 2012

Mountain View City Council
500 Castro Street
Mountain View, CA 94039

Re: Bus Rapid Transit

Honorable Mountain View City Council Members,

Thank you for providing this opportunity to comment on Bus Rapid Transit (BRT). Bus Rapid Transit along the El Camino corridor is an excellent opportunity to provide quick and accessible transit along one of the most heavily used transit routes in the region. BRT is an integral component of the vision of the Grand Boulevard along El Camino Real, which imagines a more walkable, mixed-use urban corridor where automobile use is not the primary focus. If done *right*, BRT will provide convenient and safe transit that enhances the quality of life in our region, decreases vehicle miles traveled, helps achieve AB32 goals, and increases the viability of public transit. To fully realize the benefits of BRT, the system must incorporate **designated bus lanes** along the corridor, along with pedestrian and bicycling safety elements. These lanes would not be a detriment to existing roadways, but rather help to **meet the demand** that is already there.

A successful BRT system should include several amenities: 1) designated bus lanes, 2) raised loading platforms, 3) improved and inviting buses, 4) distinct bike lanes, and 5) safe sidewalks. These features would provide a model for a successful multi-modal transit corridor that allows for safe and easy mobility. BRT is as close as we can get to light rail without laying track and catenary. In fact, it can even be considered a precursor to light rail should funding arise.

The Institution for Transportation and Development Policy has created an evaluation guide that scores BRT projects based on their benefits. Existing BRT systems within the United States have only scored a bronze rating at the highest, in comparison with other countries' scores of Silver and Gold. This clearly emphasizes the need for "gold standard" BRT systems within the U.S. that can compete with other highly effective systems throughout the world. The report also emphasizes that capital and operating costs for BRT tend to be considerably lower than those for rail-based mass transit alternatives. If **designated bus lanes** are incorporated into the infrastructure of these systems, BRT has the ability to compete with the auto in terms of travel time. According to the ITDP

report, the only true test of high-quality mass transit intervention is an assessment of cost effectiveness, including a **substantial** reduction in total travel time. This can only be achieved through integrating dedicated bus lanes that allow reduced travel time.

This reduction in travel time can remove the stereotype of buses as a slow way to travel. By providing service similar to light rail, BRT can remove the stigma that buses are only for poor people. Certainly, this is important because for too long the thought was that wealthier people would only ride trains, not buses.

Although slightly outside BRT, cities can encourage other measures to ensure the success of Bus Rapid Transit. Some of these may include 1) transportation demand management programs that reduce travel demand on busy roadways, 2) unbundled parking in order to reduce parking demand, 3) improved bicycle and pedestrian amenities that encourage more walkable and bikeable communities, and 4) more complete neighborhoods that provide an improved sense of place. These measures would greatly contribute to the Grand Boulevard vision for El Camino Real.

With the projected increase in population in Santa Clara County, all of the cities along the El Camino corridor should take advantage of this opportunity *now* given that the Valley Transportation Authority is willing to absorb a significant portion of the costs. **Designated bus lanes are vital to the success of BRT, and we would like to make sure that every city capitalizes on the benefits Bus Rapid Transit has to offer.** El Camino Real is a unique corridor and the perfect place to implement Bus Rapid Transit.

Thank you for allowing us to comment on Bus Rapid Transit and the advantages it could bring to our region. We look forward to hearing your response and working with you again in the future.

Respectfully submitted,

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Sierra Club Loma Prieta Chapter