



East Bay Young Democrats

“Our Future is Worth the Fight”

April 27, 2010

Via Email

Berkeley City Council
2134 Martin Luther King Jr. Way
Berkeley, CA 94704

Re: Letter of Support for Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Proposal through Berkeley & Staff's Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) Plan

Dear Councilmembers,

My name is Reuben Duarte and I am a 6 year resident of Berkeley. Speaking on behalf of myself, as an executive board member of the East Bay Young Democrats (EBYD) and as a recently appointed Waterfront Commissioner, I am writing to express both EBVD's and my own support of Berkeley's Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) plan and urge the City Council to adopt the staff's LPA for the final phase of study of AC Transit's Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project.

Bus Rapid Transit offers the cities of Berkeley, Oakland and San Leandro a great opportunity to improve the quality of our transportation system and, in turn, affect the quality of life of our residents. As young people, we are excited about the prospect of improved public transit and the reduction of greenhouse gasses from excessive auto use. However, this is not to say that we do not acknowledge the concerns related to this project in Berkeley.

Improved transit corridors provide many benefits to the streetscape as well as the communities they serve. But this means that Telegraph Avenue will change and I would be remiss to suggest that it would not. Telegraph Ave. south of Dwight will lose parking spaces and the dedicated lanes on Telegraph Ave. will reduce capacity for automobile traffic. We do not discount the practical impacts this will have on local businesses and neighborhoods and we respectfully acknowledge those concerns as we support the staff's LPA.

In 2006, Berkeley residents overwhelmingly approved Measure G, setting an 80% reduction target in greenhouse gasses. Last year in 2009, the City Council approved Berkeley's Climate Action Plan where one goal of the plan is to ensure that “public transit, walking, cycling and other sustainable mobility modes are the primary modes of transportation by residents and visitors.” BRT allows Berkeley to achieve this stated goal and we believe Telegraph Ave. is just the sort of corridor that should be tailored for use by transit-riders and pedestrians rather than private automobiles.

Printed in-house.

East Bay Young Democrats · PO Box 24957 Oakland, CA 94610 · www.ebyd.org · info@ebyd.org

As suggested, a better public transit system means more transit riders and fewer automobiles on the road. With the projected number of 50,000 daily riders by 2025, BRT could eliminate 10,000 daily auto trips. Not only does this help to mitigate the lower auto-capacity on Telegraph Ave., but it helps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the use of private cars pushed into the atmosphere. Improved transit that is faster and more reliable will encourage drivers to take the bus to jobs in Downtown Oakland and San Leandro and vice versa into Berkeley. Additionally, the resulting reduction and calming of traffic conditions along the Telegraph corridor will allow for improved bike lanes with better bike access and rider safety, thus promoting an additional alternative to the automobile.

The East Bay BRT project is both exciting and long overdue. Berkeley must take this step to move our region forward, away from an auto-tailored culture and to encourage more residents to ride transit. Berkeley has a long tradition of leadership in the area to fight global warming and reduce greenhouse gasses. By approving the staff's LPA, Berkeley can continue this great tradition and set the foundation for a transit-oriented community.

Again, on behalf of myself as a 6 year resident of Berkeley and on behalf of the East Bay Young Democrats, I strongly encourage the City Council to endorse the staff's LPA plan for the final phase of study of AC Transit's Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Reuben Duarte
Executive-Board Member, East Bay Young Democrats
Waterfront Commissioner, City of Berkeley

Cc: Rebecca Saltzman, President of the East Bay Young Democrats
president@ebyd.org