

# Frequently Asked Questions

## Monterey Branch Line

### 1) What are the Benefits of Light Rail?

- Ability to Expand with Growth:
  - Light rail has the ability to meet the transit needs of residents in this corridor on opening day as well as providing a superior transit service in the future once developments are completed in Marina, Seaside, and Sand City.
  - Light rail transit provides this long-term advantage with vehicles that hold 100-seated passengers, and up to 200 including standees.
  - Rail vehicles have the ability to add train cars at a nominal operating cost, which will be beneficial when ridership increases in the future.
  - This ability to add train cars is key for the capacity of the line since the corridor is single lane/track adjacent to Window on the Bay in Monterey.
- Environmentally Friendly:
  - The light rail vehicle proposed for the Monterey Branch Line is a diesel/electric vehicle, which runs cleaner than a typical diesel vehicle.
  - Light rail also provides an alternative to driving allowing residents the option of leaving their vehicles at home, with the ability to take 200 single occupancy vehicles off the road per train.
  - Driving less leads to reduced oil consumption, reduced greenhouse gas emissions
  - Light rail requires less pavement than a corresponding lane widening
  - This project will also add parkland to the Window on the Bay Park and more landscaping and enhanced beautification of the corridor.
- Bypasses Congestion: Because light rail is not part of the road system, light rail vehicles will not be held up in traffic on Highway 1 or Del Monte Avenue.
- Less Expensive than Widening Highway 1: Widening Highway 1 will cost \$53 million for 1.3 miles while light rail will cost \$10-\$13 million a mile.
- Economic Growth Around Stations:
  - Studies show that well-designed transit facilities improve property values. In fact, properties that lie within 0.5 mile of light rail stations command a higher lease rate than other properties in the area.
  - A portion of the increase is attributable to congestion relief (shorter travel times). But transit facilities also contribute increased quality of life for some, such as the enjoyment of living and/or working near a spectrum of activities and amenities, a common feature of transit-oriented, urban environments.
  - One study has concluded that the economic value of commercial and residential growth around stations, alone can be sufficient to justify light rail investment.
- Safety:
  - Each light rail intersection will have crossing arms that briefly lower before the train enters the intersection, to prevent vehicles and people from entering onto the tracks when a train is passing, then immediately rise after the train has passed.

- In many areas along the corridor there will be safety fencing placed parallel to tracks in order to prevent pedestrians from crossing the tracks.
- Research has shown that , in the US, driving is about 15 times as risky as taking a train.
- **Quiet:**
  - Light rail vehicles aren't your typical diesel heavy rail train. They are quiet and when crossing intersections, the train will ding a few times, alerting vehicles and pedestrians that it is nearby. There will be no bells on the crossing arms themselves.
  - Only a couple single-family residences would be impacted by light rail transit ground -borne vibration, but these impacts could be mitigated through design of the trackbed in later phases of development, if a second track was added between Monterey Road and Canyon del Rey Boulevard.
  - The few residences adjacent to the light rail transit line would be moderately impacted by operational noise, but these impacts could be mitigated via the construction of a low level, three-foot high noise wall replacing the existing split rail wood fence at the same location.
- **Bicycle Benefits:**
  - Light rail vehicles can accommodate six hanging bicycles. If more space is requested for bicycles, seats can be removed for more open space.
  - Light rail offers level boarding allowing bikes to be rolled instead of carried onto the vehicle.
  - There will also be a number of places that the light rail stations will connect with the bicycle trail. Allowing riders the ability to ride the light rail to their favorite location on the trail.
- **Ease of boarding for Wheelchairs:**
  - Persons with disabilities can quickly and easily board and alight the vehicles particularly for those in wheelchairs.
  - Driver assistance is not needed for disabled persons to board and alight.
- **Possible Future Intercity Rail to Monterey:** With tracks in the corridor, intercity rail can one day run from San Francisco to Monterey, providing a fast and efficient way of getting to and from San Francisco.

## 2) Costs

- **What is the capital and operating cost for light rail?**
  - The capital cost for Phase 1 of ight rail transit is \$145 million
  - Annual operating costs is \$4.3 million
- **What is the Financial Plan for the light rail?** As currently planned, sufficient funding for the proposed Monterey Peninsula Fixed Guideway project is expected and will be obtained from a mix of revenue sources, including:
  - State of California, Proposition 116 rail bond funds: secured
  - State Transportation Improvement Program–Public Transportation Account funds: \$14.5M is secured and we plan to seek additional PTA funding for construction.
  - Local transportation impact fees: Plan to use Regional Traffic Impact Fees for this project

- Contributions from local partner agencies: Fort Ord Reuse Authority fees are apportioned for this project, approximately \$2.5 million.
- Revenues from the planned Transit Oriented Development on TAMC property is expected to provide ongoing funding for the operations of the Monterey Branch Line and for construction.
- As the Regional Transportation Planning Agency we distribute TDA and STA transit funds, of which a portion could be available for the Monterey Branch Line.
- FTA 5309 Small Starts Funding: Currently this project meets or exceeds all requirements for FTA Small Starts funds. We are working closely with the FTA to secure upto \$75 million in capital funding for this project.
- **What is the Financial Plan for operating the light rail?**
  - The \$4.3 million in annual operating costs for the light rail will be covered by:
    - Fair box revenue, approximately \$1.015 million
    - Funding which is currently used to operate MST line 20
    - Expected Operating Need of \$3.3 million could come from the following sources:
      - Revenue from a transit-oriented development planned for land owned by the agency near the 8th Street Station in Marina.
- **Are there cost-effectiveness measures for the project to move forward?**
  - In order for the federal government to provide funding for construction of the project it must meet the Federal Transit Administration's Small Starts project justification criteria which include:
    - **Cost Effectiveness** – Incremental cost per hour of transportation system user benefits compared to the baseline alternative; using opening year forecast.
    - **Land Use** - 3 categories are evaluated for this criterion:
      - Existing land use patterns
      - Transit supportive plans and policies and
      - The performance and impact of these policies.
    - **Other Factors** - Economic Development benefits and congestion pricing will be considered in this category
  - The Federal Transit Administration also evaluates the project on its Local Financial Commitment – The project must show:
    - A reasonable plan to secure funding for the local share of capital costs or sufficient available funds for the local (non Federal) share
    - The additional operating and maintenance costs of the project are less than 5% of the agency's operating budget, and
    - The agency is in reasonably good financial condition
- **What will light rail passengers pay to ride? Fares will be the same as equivalent bus service, which is \$2.50 for a one-zone ride. Riders will pay the same out-of pocket cost for bus rapid transit or light rail transit. The service can be set up so that there is no out of pocket cost to a rider for transferring between MST buses and the Monterey Branch Line guideway.**

### 3) System

- How were the location and number of stations determined? Stations are located where there will be a high number of boardings such as at high-density residential areas or commercial/business districts. Research has shown that people are comfortable walking up to ¼ of a mile to a transit station. In order to capture the highest ridership along the corridor it is important to locate stations at the most convenient location for riders.
- Does the Transportation Agency own the rail right of way between Castroville and Seaside and do the cities of Monterey and Seaside own their rights of way? Yes, the Transportation Agency owns the right of way between Castroville and Seaside and the cities of Seaside and Monterey own their rights of way. The cities of Seaside and Monterey purchased the branch line right of way from Union Pacific with state rail funds. This means that the right of way must be planned and used for mass public transportation, or the cities will be required to return the money used to purchase the land (which is now most of Window on the Bay).
- What is the expected ridership of the Monterey Branch Line on opening day in 2015? And how did the Transportation Agency come up with the numbers?
  - Daily ridership: 3,725 passengers per day.
  - This number is expected to grow as more development occurs along the peninsula and as congestion on Highway 1 and Del Monte Avenue worsens.
  - Ridership is calculated using the
    - Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AMBAG) regional travel demand model. It predicts where people are traveling based on land use, and travel patterns connecting the origins and destinations.
    - Monterey Salinas Transit on board transit rider survey
    - A future year forecast for 2015 for light rail, which provides faster speeds, and fewer stops. It is also more attractive to users due to station and vehicle amenities. The “value” of the light rail amenities is established by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), which considers route alignment, station locations, speed, traffic congestion, gasoline price, transit fares plus station and vehicle amenities.
- Who will use the light rail, locals or tourists? According to our ridership estimates approximately 85% of those using the light rail will be commuters, students, shoppers. 15% of those using the light rail will be visitors or tourists.
- What is the travel time savings compared to the current bus service? Currently, the travel time on MST Line 20 between downtown Monterey and Reservation Rd. in Marina is 33 minutes. Light rail transit will provide a 25-minute ride from North Marina to downtown Monterey, offering almost a 10-minute timesaving.
- How much will it cost to prepare the Salinas River bridge for light rail transit? Rehabilitation with seismic retrofitting is estimated to cost \$8.4 million in 2005 dollars. Replacement of the bridge on a new alignment, adjacent to the existing bridge, was estimated to cost \$7.7 million to \$10.1 million, depending on the bridge type selection.

- Is there an operator in light rail transit vehicles? Yes, light rail transit vehicles are operated by a live operator.
- How many existing Line 20 and other MST riders commute daily from Salinas to Seaside, Monterey? The number of line 20 riders boarding in Salinas and alighting in Monterey Peninsula is less than 400 riders per day, or less than 200 per direction.
- Will light Rail preserve Window on the Bay: The proposed alignment for the single track light rail transit runs adjacent to Del Monte Avenue on road right-of-way currently used for parking and an asphalt temporary sidewalk. An overhead utility line also currently occupies this space. Plans to widen Del Monte Avenue may utilize the space currently used for parking and the adjacent sidewalk. In any scenario, the light rail transit would run adjacent to the curb line of Del Monte Avenue, not bisecting the Windows on the Bay Park. Both light rail transit and bus rapid transit would have the same impact on Window on the Bay Park.
- Will light rail transit split my city in half? Bus rapid transit will provide the same service as light rail transit and neither bus rapid transit nor light rail transit will create barriers more than its current state with Del Monte Ave running beside it.
- How many parking spaces will be taken if the Custom House Plaza station is built in Monterey? Approximately 40 spaces would be removed by the project, all-adjacent to the existing bicycle path, which parallels Lighthouse Avenue.

#### 4) **Bus Rapid Transit**

- Why not Bus Rapid Transit?
  - Light rail has the ability to meet the transit needs of residents in this corridor on opening day as well as providing a superior transit service in the future once developments are completed in Marina, Seaside, and Sand City.
  - Light rail transit provides this long-term advantage with vehicles that hold 100 seated passengers, and up to 200 including standees. The buses hold 60 seated passengers and up to 100 including standees. Rail vehicles have the ability to add train cars at a nominal operating cost, which will be beneficial when ridership increases in the future. This ability to add train cars is key for the capacity of the line since the corridor is single lane/track through Windows on the Bay in Monterey.
  - Another significant capacity constraint of the Monterey Branch Line lies at the intersection of Highway 1 with Fremont Boulevard, at Monterey Road at the northern edge of Sand City. This intersection is expected to operate at Level of Service D/E in the future. Because this intersection is so busy only six vehicles or trains will be allowed to cross the intersection per direction per hour.
  - This combined with the single lane/track through Monterey will require a very strict operating schedule on the Monterey Branch Line.
  - Simply adding buses to the guideway or other vehicles using the guideway would delay the line and decrease or eliminate the benefits of a fixed-guideway.
  - At the terminal stations on each end of the route, bus rapid transit vehicles will need to leave the right-of-way and drive with local traffic to turn around,

increasing circulation complexity. Light rail vehicles have a control compartment at each end.

- What is the capital and operating cost for light rail? What is the capital and operation cost for bus rapid transit?
  - The capital cost for Phase 1 of light rail transit is \$145 million while bus rapid transit is only \$14 million less.
  - Annual operating costs are \$4.3 million for light rail transit and \$3.6 million for bus rapid transit.
  - Although the operating costs for the light rail alternative are slightly higher than the bus rapid transit alternative the long-term benefits of capturing the “choice” rider (discretionary rider) and greater capacity will eventually cover this cost and will prove to increase ridership beyond that of bus rapid transit.
- Would bus rapid transit and light rail transit be about equal in their noise and vibration generation and safety, as far as a danger to pedestrians?
  - Regarding noise and vibration, the two modes are about equal.
  - Insofar as safety, both modes are similar. The bus and light rail vehicles both have the same acceleration and emergency deceleration rates. As they would both be traveling at the same speed, the stopping distance would be similar.
- Are light rail transit vehicles better for accommodating bikes than bus rapid transit vehicles?
  - The light rail vehicles are larger and can accommodate more bikes: six versus three for bus rapid transit
  - The width of the light rail transit vehicles is 9 feet 10 inches, compared to 8 feet six inches on the buses. So the aisles are wider, providing more open, less crowded interiors, which can accommodate more standees or bike riders standing with their bicycles.
  - Light rail transit offers level boarding allowing bikes to be rolled instead of carried onto the vehicle.
- How would the planned bus rapid transit east-west multi-modal corridor from CSUMB connect with the Monterey Branch Line bus rapid transit vs. the Monterey Branch Line light rail transit? The future planned bus rapid transit east-west corridor along Intergarrison Road would connect most seamlessly by having a transfer to the Monterey Branch Line guideway vehicles at the multimodal station at 8<sup>th</sup> Street. This change of vehicles would allow the Intergarrison Road service to operate on its own schedule, independent from the Monterey Branch Line service. The Intergarrison Road service will be subject to unscheduled delays in the non guideway portions of the route, particularly within Salinas. These delays could cause buses, upon reaching the Monterey Branch Line guideway, to sit and wait for the next available scheduling operating “slot” along the guideway. It is unknown when the multimodal bus rapid transit service might be implemented. Presently, there is no schedule established or funding identified for establishing this service.