



June 14, 2018

To: Transit Committee

From: Darrell E. Johnson, Chief Executive Officer

Subject: Central Harbor Boulevard Transit Corridor Study

Overview

The Orange County Transportation Authority has prepared the Central Harbor Boulevard Transit Corridor Study to develop and evaluate conceptual transit alternatives for the Harbor Boulevard Corridor. In January 2018, evaluation results for 12 conceptual alternatives were presented to the Orange County Transportation Authority Board of Directors. The results were then presented to each city council in the study area for their review and comment. This report provides a final summary of the feedback received and recommended next steps.

Recommendations

- A. Conclude the Central Harbor Boulevard Transit Corridor Study.
- B. Focus future Central Harbor Boulevard efforts on service speed and amenity improvements for existing bus service.

Background

Work on the Central Harbor Boulevard Transit Corridor Study (Harbor Study) began in August 2015. During the course of the study, staff provided several updates to the Board of Directors (Board) and sought direction on elements of the study and range of alternatives. Evaluation results for the Harbor Boulevard conceptual transit alternatives were presented to the Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) Transit Committee in December 2017, and the Board in January 2018. Modes evaluated included enhanced bus, bus rapid transit (BRT), streetcar, and rapid streetcar, which represented a range of implementation costs and ridership potential.

The Harbor Study evaluation results were presented to each of the city councils in the study area on the following dates: Anaheim (March 6, 2018), Fullerton (January 16, 2018), Garden Grove (January 23, 2018), and Santa Ana (February 5, 2018). The comments received are summarized in Attachment A.

The city council feedback confirmed a lack of consensus among the study area cities regarding the type of transit investments desired and is further discussed below.

Discussion

Lack of Consensus on Long-Term Transit Strategy

City council feedback indicates a lack of consensus regarding a long-term transit strategy for the Harbor Boulevard corridor. The cities were divided in terms of the types of transit modes and level of transit capital investment they would support. Councilmembers from the cities of Garden Grove and Santa Ana expressed support for extending the OC Streetcar (currently in design) northward up Harbor Boulevard to other destinations. The Santa Ana Council voiced a specific preference for the streetcar modes over the BRT or enhanced bus modes for long-term investment in the transit system.

Councilmembers from the cities of Anaheim and Fullerton stated opposition to the streetcar mode citing concerns about traffic impacts, safety, capital costs, and recent declining transit ridership. These cities also shared concerns about how implementation of dedicated transit lanes would impact automobile traffic. The City of Anaheim (City) reinforced its position opposing a streetcar system within the City by adopting a second resolution (Attachment B). However, these cities did indicate support for improvements to existing bus service.

Support for Enhanced Bus Service Improvements

As a near-term service improvement strategy, there is support for service speed improvements such as those included with the enhanced bus alternatives, including:

- Off-board fare collection,
- All-door boarding,
- Transit signal priority,
- Queue jumps (i.e., use of right turn only lanes as bypass lanes).

These improvements have been shown to reduce boarding time at stops, reduce traffic delay for buses, and improve schedule reliability. Implementation of these improvements in the Harbor Boulevard corridor is a logical first step for any

long-term transit strategy. These improvements are also consistent with the service improvement strategies outlined in the OC Transit Vision, OCTA's 20-Year Transit Master Plan.

Based on the city council comments received, no conceptual alternatives are being recommended for advancement into the next study phase. However, staff will seek opportunities to work with the corridor cities to implement features of the enhanced bus alternatives to improve transit service in the corridor. Harbor Boulevard continues to be one of the county's top ridership corridors, and OCTA customers consistently express the desire for faster, more expedited travel times.

Key Issues for Future Transit Studies

The comments received during the course of the study highlighted several issues that will require more attention and analysis during future planning studies.

- Transit ridership trends: Recent declines in transit ridership generated many questions about future transit demand and the specific reasons for the declines. There was also a feeling that some existing or emerging technologies would make the need for transit capital investment irrelevant. Continued efforts to understand the future role of transit and changing needs of transit riders will be critical to future study efforts and development of long-term transit strategies.
- Transit prioritization strategies and trade-offs: Better information is needed regarding the options, benefits, and impacts of transit prioritization strategies such as, traffic signal priority, queue jumps, and dedicated transit lanes. In the absence of any transit prioritization, bus operating speeds, on-time performance will continue to decline, resulting in higher operating costs and less effective service.
- Evaluation criteria: More explanation of project evaluation criteria may be helpful to stakeholders and decision makers, in particular information about how ridership estimates are derived or how cost-effectiveness is measured. As new transit capital projects are developed in Orange County, stakeholders will need to develop the same familiarity with the transit project development process as they have with other transportation projects (such as freeways and streets and roads).

Efforts will be made to address and illuminate these issues during future transit corridor studies and other planning efforts.

Next Transit Corridor Study: Bristol Street

The Bristol Street corridor between West 17th Street and Sunflower Avenue (the South Coast Metro district), and John Wayne Airport has been selected for the next transit corridor study. This portion of Bristol Street was identified in the OC Transit Vision as one portion of a longer opportunity corridor: Goldenwest Transportation Center to the University of California, Irvine Campus via Westminster Avenue/17th Street and Bristol Street (Attachment C).

This portion of Bristol Street is a high-ridership area which provides access to several key destinations, including Santa Ana College, South Coast Plaza, and South Coast Metro offices. There is significant potential to connect to major nodes in the transit network, such as the future OC Streetcar line, the Santa Ana Regional Transportation Center, and John Wayne Airport. Based on an analysis of existing ridership, key destinations, and special trip generators, improvements to transit in this corridor have the potential to provide significant benefits.

In addition to the next transit corridor study, limited stop Bravo! service will be implemented in two new corridors: Beach Boulevard and Main Street. The Beach Boulevard service is scheduled for February 2019, and the Main Street service is anticipated in 2023. Although OCTA has received grant funding for hydrogen buses for these corridors, a plan to support the operating cost is pending.

Summary

The project team has completed the conceptual alternatives evaluation for the Central Harbor Boulevard Transit Corridor Study. Based on the city council comments received, no conceptual transit alternatives are being recommended for advancement into the next study phase. Staff will seek out opportunities to work with the corridor cities to implement speed and customer-facing amenity improvements to enhance existing bus service, with due consideration for overall transit system needs. Based on Board direction, the Central Harbor Boulevard Transit Corridor Study Final Report will be updated to reflect the comments received and made available to the public online at www.octa.net/harbor.

Attachments

- A. Central Harbor Boulevard Transit Corridor Study, Summary of City Council Comments
- B. Letter from Linda Andal, Interim City Manager, City of Anaheim, to Darrell Johnson, Chief Executive Officer, Orange County Transportation Authority, dated April 13, 2018
- C. Bristol Street Transit Corridor Study Area

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