



Transportation Authority of Marin Stakeholder Working Group Meeting #4 Summary

Northbound US-101 – Eastbound I-580 Direct Connector Project
Wednesday, January 20, 2021, 3:00 p.m. via Zoom

The fourth meeting of the Stakeholder Working Group (SWG) focused on equity considerations with respect to the US 101-I-580 Direct Connector project and associated improvements to Bellam Blvd. Comments were taken from SWG members. The meeting was open to the public with members of the public in attendance invited to provide comments.

The meeting provided information and discussion on the following topics:

1. Recap of SWG meeting #3 and team activities
2. Equity considerations and SWG discussion
 - TAM's commitment to equity
 - What the team has heard about equity from community outreach
 - Equity approach and issues for consideration
 - Public comment
3. Topics for virtual SWG meeting #5

Comments and requested clarifications provided by the SWG members are summarized below. The PowerPoint presentation for the meeting is [available here](#).

Connie Fremier, TAM Project Manager, reviewed the discussion issues from SWG #3 and provided an update on outreach activities in 2020 and team activities since SWG #3. During SWG introductions, several members provided notes on what they are hearing about the project from the communities they represent.

- There are questions about how the project would benefit San Rafael, particularly concerns about the impacts to East San Rafael, the source of 65% of the City's tax revenue.
- Air quality, noise and sea level rise should be considered for impacts on alternative designs.
- The public process and outreach to businesses and neighborhoods, is important. Provide more details on the process.
- The project evaluation should consider environmental, economic, and equity issues.
- The relocation of southbound 101 access to Bellam is problematic.
- Pedestrian features on Bellam are important. A "walk audit" of the project area would be beneficial.
- Equity, safety, and coordination with other projects in the area are important (e.g., 2040 General Plan and the upcoming neighborhood specific plan related to the Priority Development Area).

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Understanding and Addressing Equity in TAM Activities

At SWG meeting #3, several SWG members asked that the project consider the alternatives through an equity lens. The team was asked to evaluate the impacts on the community and people, including access, cultural, water, and air quality impacts, particularly for the Canal neighborhood.

Anne Richman, TAM Executive Director, presented an overview of TAM's commitment to equity. See slide 12.

Equity – What the team heard on equity issues

Connie Fremier, TAM Project Manager, described what the project team has heard from the community at SWG #3 and through subsequent outreach activities (see slides 14-16). While some of the concerns of the community are related to the TAM 101-580 Connector project, this project is one piece of the much greater landscape of what is needed to address equity needs in the project area. TAM continues to review ways to collaborate with the other related planning efforts to develop a greater vision for the community.

Equity – Approach and Context

Chadi Chazbek, Kimley-Horn Project Manager, described the overall approach for evaluating equity as part of project planning. The equity analysis is a four-step process:

1. Define the population and community and determine the impacts.
2. Identify the needs and concerns.
3. Measure how the project impacts the community and outline the disparities.
4. Develop strategies to avoid or mitigate impacts that may be caused by alternatives and compare how the alternatives would impact or benefit the community.

In parallel with all phases of the project, a two-way public engagement process between TAM, the SWG and the broader community will refine the equity considerations and project options. TAM will continually refine the outreach and engagement process to ensure meaningful collaboration, refine the data, and refine the opportunities and mitigation strategies for more effective outcomes.

Chadi Chazbek reviewed the project area and demographics for San Rafael. The Federal Highway Administration defines communities of concern by considering the following characteristics. Bay Area regional transportation planning considers similar factors.

- Cultural: Race, languages spoken, national origin
- Physical: Age, income, ability status
- Transportation: Personal vehicle availability

The proposed alternatives are located within commercial industrial areas of East San Rafael with the residential areas of the Canal, California Park, and Bret Harte neighborhoods immediately adjacent.

SWG Comments and Discussion

- Include California Park as a neighborhood in the assessment, in addition to the Canal and Bret Harte neighborhoods. The California Park neighborhood is located between the Canal and Bret Harte.
- Bellam Blvd. bicycle / pedestrian improvements and the Northbound US 101 to Eastbound I-580 direct freeway-to-freeway connector project seem like separate projects. It is important to understand how each element benefits and impacts different communities, including regional commuters and neighborhoods. The primary benefit of the Northbound US 101 to Eastbound I-580 direct connector, assuming no exit closures for the three neighborhoods, are for

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commuters who travel from San Francisco to the East Bay not Marin commuters. It is harder to gather surveys and information from commuters than residents. Clarify if the Bellam Blvd. bike/pedestrian improvements are a part of the direct connector project or a separate project.

- *The Northbound 101 to Eastbound I-580 Direct Connector project is linked to the Bellam Blvd. improvements and makes the Bellam improvement project possible. The freeway connector project would replace the overcrossing for eastbound I-580, which would eliminate the support columns on Bellam and push abutments further out thus creating more space for protected bike lanes and other proposed safety improvements.*
 - *The Bellam Blvd. improvements will provide an opportunity to engage the community and stakeholders and receive input and ideas on safety and connectivity improvements as well as equity issues.*
 - *Regardless of the alternative selected, there are significant local benefits from the Bellam Blvd. improvements.*
- Refer to the Canal as a neighborhood instead of a district; a neighborhood is where people live.
 - Consider/recognize the apartments along Woodland Avenue and the Montecito neighborhood are other low income or minority areas in the project area.
 - Consider different framing of “equity.” Rather than looking for mitigation strategies, look at how the project can correct some of the existing inequities or reduce community and environmental impacts from previous transportation projects. When reviewing the impacts, list the ways to improve inequities and list the benefits to the communities, rather than simply as “mitigation.”

Chadi Chazbek reviewed five categories of planning issues for how equity can be considered during project planning, including Bellam Blvd. improvements, or in other adjacent planning activities: access and parking, safety; environment, beautification and placemaking; and land use and jobs (slides 23-32). The SWG discussed and provided input on each category.

Equity – Access and Parking

The project team can consider equity through the following planning activities.

- Review how traffic movement and travel times to and from each neighborhood change with each alternative.
- Study pedestrian access to services such as clinics, schools, churches, and transit.
- Review the impacts to auto and bike parking for each alternative. Clarify if the project creates or removes parking spaces.
- Review the access to transit services and connections (SMART, Ferry Terminal, and San Rafael Transit Center).

Comments about Access and Parking

- Review how any alternatives with changes or modifications to the East Francisco and Bellam intersection might affect travel times in and out of the Canal neighborhood.
- Consider more than just increasing speed (reducing travel time), review for safety and comfort.
- Include bike parking, bikers can only frequent the businesses when there is secure bike parking.

Equity – Safety

The project team can consider equity through the following planning activities.

- Review how the project impacts emergency response and evacuations.
- Study pedestrian and bike safety; how the intersections and crossings are designed. Include safe routes to schools, especially at intersections and freeway access points.
- Review each option for vehicle safety, accident reduction, and traffic flow.

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Comments about Safety

- With respect to the Canal, review the emergency concept from emergency vehicles needing access into the Canal as well as residents needing to evacuate the area in emergencies.
- If evacuation is needed, address where community should go as each emergency is different, (fire, flood). This requires a highly coordinated effort for the community.
- Consider the various languages, the communications pieces need to be available in various translations.
- Include the City of San Rafael in the planning effort. They are doing emergency and evacuation planning.
- Most of the traffic is at the Bellam off ramp, are we just shifting the back up somewhere else?

Equity – Environment

The project team can consider equity through the following planning activities.

- Conduct an in-depth air quality analysis of each alternative for nearby residences and businesses during the environmental review phase.
- Include a visual impact assessment (the height of each option) and sea level rise in the environmental review.
- Environmental justice and community impact assessment are requirements of California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). They are a review process for an equity lens.

Comments about Environment

- Is the intent to drop alternatives prior to the environmental review phase?
- Early technical studies are valuable for reducing the number of alternatives prior to preparing the Environmental Impact Report (EIR).
- The Highway 37 project is using the Planning Environmental Linkages (PEL) approach which raises environmental issues early in the planning phase of the project. Consider that approach here.
- It is valuable to link the evaluation of environmental and community inequity improvements during the technical studies prior to the full EIR phase.
- Be specific and intentional on environmental justice issues related to the air quality analysis, include toxic air, particulate matter, and contaminants specific to the neighborhoods.
- The 101-580 Connector project could be part of the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) pedestrian study and planning effort on highway crossing. Continue to keep Caltrans informed on this project.
 - *Caltrans District 4 has a Bay Area pedestrian plan out for review and comments. Comments are due February 5th. TAM will ensure this project area is represented in the plan.*
 - *Caltrans is aware of the early stage planning of this project. TAM is working in partnership with them.*
- Evaluate the air quality (particulate matter) differences between the alternatives for nearby residences and businesses. Consider air quality impacts as an equity issue.

Equity – Beautification and Placemaking

The project team can consider equity through the following planning activities.

- There is an opportunity to make Bellam Blvd. safer, more comfortable, more appealing for pedestrian and bikers.
- Beautification of the area with landscape, art, and designated art displays. Collaborate with the ongoing Canal art initiative.

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- Re-envisioning the Bellam exit to be the gateway to the Canal neighborhood and history of the area.
- There will be more wall space with the replacement of the bridge over Bellam and removal of the center column. The plan is to align the abutment so both the East and West side of the new bridge is on the same line. The space could be for public art and murals.
- An increase in way-finding signs and multi-lingual signs.
- Possible planted buffers with the protected bike lanes.

Comments about Beautification and Placemaking

- Consider opportunities for Sustainable Streets along Bellam such as water drainage and collection.
- Gather deeper knowledge of the origins and destinations as considered through equity and safety. Replace assumptions of where the population is going and how the corridor is used with local knowledge. Conduct the study earlier.
- Have the Canal Alliance and the Multicultural Center bring neighborhood users together and conduct a site visit/walk audit.
- When visuals are shown in presentations, present equal visual representation of pedestrians and bikers.
- Utilize the transit stop waiting areas in a different way. Paris, The Netherlands, Sweden, Copenhagen are good examples of not just using pavement but a community design with more natural open space. Improve the appearance of the area.

Equity – Land Use and Job Impacts

The project team can consider equity through the following planning activities.

- Review job creation, job impacts, and possible business relocations. Coordinate with regional planning efforts and the upcoming specific area plan for the Canal neighborhood.

Comments about Beautification and Placemaking

- Consider how the project could provide incentives for future development, showing currently underutilized parcels. Show the commitment to economic vitality and job growth with good paying jobs.
- When the City/State leave abandoned areas such as the Anderson off ramp, it creates other issues such as homeless encampments – need to think about how spare space is utilized.
- Identify the parcels now without waiting for another regional planning effort. Have the discussions about the impact and opportunities discussed with business owners now.

Project Schedule and Community Engagement

Chadi Chazbek reviewed the project schedule and Molly Graham reviewed the outreach approach (slides 33-35).

SWG Discussion of Project Schedule and Outreach

- What is the timing for reducing the number of alternatives? During the community engagement will TAM continue to present all seven alternatives?
 - *The target for a shorter list is approximately 6-9 months, which will be followed by scoping meetings for the environmental review.*
 - *For the community, we need to conduct an education process and put the project in context so the community can provide informed input.*
 - *The team will continue to share the community input with the technical advisory committee and executive steering committee to inform decisions about the alternatives.*

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- Are there elements of the project that can be implemented sooner such as the Bellam improvements?
- When community surveys are conducted, they should be shared broadly with the business community.
- Add an alternative with improvements on Sir Francis Drake. Consider that there may be another way to look at the project and another alternative.

Equity – Public Comment

There were no comments from the public on the equity issue.

Next Steps

SWG #5 will be scheduled for March 2021 to update and discuss the alternatives.

Public Comments

There were no public comments made during the time set aside for public comments.

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Standing Working Group Members

SWG Participation – SWG #4, January 20, 2021			
Present	Name	Interest	Affiliation
	Air Gallegos	Commuter	East Bay to/from San Rafael
	Becky Kittredge	Commuter	East Bay to/from Larkspur
	Betsy Swenerton	Community	Brett Harte Community Assoc
✓	Dave Pedroli	Community	San Rafael City Schools
✓	Dave Troup	Transit Rider	Rides GGT through project area
✓	DJ Allison	Bike & Pedestrian	San Rafael Bike/Ped Adv. Comm.
✓	Douglas Mundo	Community	Multicultural Center of Marin
✓	Jim Draper/Richard Bernstein	Community	Fed. of San Rafael Neighborhoods
	Jim Rosenfield/Elaine Lin/Libby Schenkel	Business	Country Mart, Larkspur Landing
✓	Joanne Webster	Business	San Rafael Chamber of Commerce
	Jon Horinek	Community	College of Marin
	Julie Cervetto	Business	Larkspur Chamber of Commerce
✓	Kate Powers	Environmental	Marin Conservation League
✓	Kevin Hagerty	Community	League of Women Voters
✓	Linda Jackson	Environmental	Sustainable San Rafael
✓	Michele Barni	Community	Pt. San Quentin Village HOA
✓	Omar Carrera	Community	Canal Alliance
	Stephanie Plante	Business	East San Rafael Businesses
✓	Tarrell Kullaway	Bike & Pedestrian	Marin County Bicycle Coalition
	Wendi Kallins	Environmental	Sustainable Marin

✓ signifies in attendance