

Comments on Hayward-BART Access JPA, May 17, 2011

The resolution seems worth supporting as a framework for more efficient and sustainable access policy, if only because it says “parking and access,” recognizing that parking is not the only or necessarily the best means of access to BART.

As far as I know, and I am not kept in the loop, the Eden Housing project bundles parking with housing, making the housing more expensive to taxpayers and some low income residents than it should be. Eden faces serious regulatory barriers to fair pricing of rents, but has made no effort I know of to get unbundling approved. We know from The Frederick (AHC Inc.), explained in my earlier reports, that unbundling can be achieved. I’ve annoyed Eden on this as much as I’m willing to, and I lack the time to figure out exactly what can be done. The underlying political problem is that hardly anyone understands or advocates for social equity on this issue, allowing those who should try harder to give up too easily. More effort needs to be made to restructure the financing to exclude the parking from the basis for the 9% funding.

The new project includes the “replacement parking garage,” instead of replacement access. Previous reports were that this garage would not be built; now it seems to be back on. The staff report refers to \$15.8 million in Prop 1-C for infrastructure. The last data I saw showed \$30 million. How do I get details on the new application, communications to and from HCD, and Prop 1c infrastructure details?

The staff report refers to the Nelson Nygaard Access Study and says that it “analyzed the appropriate level of parking for BART patrons...” For reasons previously reported to Council, I believe this analysis was inadequate as it used a generalized methodology not appropriate for the details of the South Hayward situation.

As a result, unbundling, shared parking, SF Park technologies, short shuttle financing and costs, market-based equilibrium between parking and shuttle based on specific time and cost comparison, and related elements of an alternative system have not been studied for phase 1. There is only an interest in talking about shared parking in future phases. I have reported in considerable details on these ideas in a PowerPoint and spreadsheet with no response from the City.

The emphasis on control of parking for specific users should be supplemented by consideration of a far simpler system open to all users for any duration at any time based on willingness to pay, with a combination of market-based monthly, daily, and hourly rates.

The staff report does not discuss the interplay between parking demand and the forthcoming parking charges. The BART system now charges at 25 stations, has no parking at 12, and only 6 are left with no charges. Since South Hayward is not parked up, it seems certain in the short run that parking demand will decrease with a parking charge.

It is useful, and one aspect of shared parking, for the City to make available city streets for BART parking when need is demonstrated. However, it is not clear that anything now prevents BART users from parking on any city streets.

BART riders will have more incentive to park in a neighborhood with a parking charge, but it is clear that a short shuttle, even with parking and wait time, becomes increasingly advantageous as parking distance increases. There is also the issue of security of parking in the Dixon neighborhood compared to parking in a dedicated fenced shuttle lot. The same time-cost comparison is adverse to the parking structure above the fourth floor, as quantified in my spreadsheets. Nelson Nygaard did not look at this data, only commenting that they did not do micro-analysis.

The list of JPA elements should include shuttle access in the last bullet parenthesis, unless the City intends to signal its intent to not consider any shuttles. Short-distance, free, fast, frequent shuttles are more cost effective, sustainable, and scalable than remote neighborhood parking or parking structures, as quantified on the “comparison” tab of my spreadsheet.

The JPA provides an opportunity to discuss unbundling for phase 1, and not put it off to some distant future. The first step is to realize how unbundling increases revenues for the developer and the JPA, lowers rent for some tenants, and provides a pricing signal reflecting the real cost of parking.

The financing problem is that parking historically has been paid for by other uses and if it has to pay its own way, many people will find alternatives, leaving empty spaces. Financing, therefore, could be a problem—a lender could fear that a parking space would have no takers at the price necessary to pay off the loan. The state could be willing to allow Prop 1C funds to pay for structured parking spaces in phase one parking on an as-needed basis. New tenants would rent housing for less, or, alternatively, rent housing plus a space at the bundled cost. The unrented spaces would be covered by the Prop 1C funds and made available to other users..

Shuttle service is also being put off when it and shared parking would provide more access at less cost than a parking structure. The commitment to a parking structure does not seem to be consistent with the goals of BART Access Policy. Building a structure goes against the policy goals and precludes proceeding with more effective policy for many years.

I infer that no effort has been made to use Prop 1C funds for shared parking and alternative access. The subsidy will be used for continued auto dependency rather than steps that could gradually lead to more efficiency and sustainability. Parkers will be charged \$1 per day to park in spaces that cost \$10 per day to provide, based on figures provided by the City and Nelson Nygaard.

I infer from the staff report that the Project in phase 1 will not unbundle parking. If so, rents will be substantially higher, convenient parking for BART riders will be closed to them even if they would pay for it, BART ridership will be reduced accordingly, and there will be no ecopass, no revenues from parking, and no incentive to reduce driving. Business as usual will not achieve the Climate Action Plan.

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