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FEATURED

Dumbarton rail seeks path

Outreach, feasibility, funding still needed to complete once-touted project Outreach, feasibility, funding still needed to complete once-touted project

By Curtis Driscoll Daily Journal staff

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SamTrans is continuing feasibility and local outreach studies for the Dumbarton rail project, a potential commuter link between the East Bay and the Peninsula, despite no current funding plan to complete it.

The project was put on hold in early 2020 due to the pandemic and Facebook deciding to scale back its participation in funding initial studies. It restarted in the fall, and Facebook is still involved with the current feasibility and outreach planning, although it is no longer providing as much financial support as originally

hoped, according to SamTrans Board Member Charles Stone, also the mayor of Belmont. Facebook and the San Mateo County Transit District, the administration body for SamTrans, are still working together on feasibility efforts in environmental and engineering areas.

According to SamTrans, it is working with Facebook on a conceptual design of the alignment and stations, developing concepts for a bike and pedestrian facility and evaluating technology options for the proposed service. Stone is hopeful SamTrans can complete the project, and he believes there are still opportunities from the private sector or federal funding to ensure it is financially possible. He expects more details about potential funding and project scope available by the end of the year. SamTrans estimated construction costs to be around \$3 billion in its initial projections, with an update on the preliminary cost for the project expected to be available at the end of January. Funding talks with San Mateo County, Santa Clara County, the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, the Alameda County Transportation Commission and Caltrain will also occur to determine if funding is available for the project.

SamTrans Board Member Carole Groom, also a San Mateo County supervisor, did not know when the project might be moved forward or completed beyond its current outreach stage, as progress on the project depends on securing financing.

“It’s a good project, and it needs to be done,” Groom said.

SamTrans’ main focus now is refining design and service planning concepts, with local feedback and technical information to ensure the project reflects the region’s needs. It is considering commuter rail, light rail, autonomous vehicle transit and bus rapid transit options to connect both sides of the Bay. Stations could be at Redwood City, Middlefield Road, Willow Road, Newark, Ardenwood and Union City, with possible other stops along Decoto Road in Fremont. Bike and pedestrian facilities are also being considered.

Since the fall, SamTrans has continued planning and outreach discussions by meeting with staff from cities on the Peninsula and the East Bay to plan and receive input. These cities include Redwood City, Menlo Park, East Palo Alto, Union City, Fremont and Newark. Additional virtual meetings are planned in January and February with stakeholders in the Dumbarton corridor on the project's status, along with a community meeting. The feedback efforts will help confirm details about conceptual alignments and technology options. The SamTrans board will consider options for the project advancement in the spring.

The proposed transit project along the Dumbarton Rail Bridge would connect the Caltrain corridor at Redwood City to the East Bay to help traveling through a new mass transit system. The project would help connect Redwood City, Menlo Park and East Palo Alto with Newark, Fremont and Union City in the East Bay.

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