

Friday, July 9, 2010

BART backup plan revives airport tram

San Francisco Business Times - by [Eric Young](#)

Undaunted after losing millions of dollars in funding, BART is cobbling together a backup funding plan to build a link to Oakland's airport.

BART staffers said they may be able to raise \$70 million by tapping federal programs, additional county sales tax funds, more Port of Oakland contributions and more money from bridge tolls.

That would replace the \$70 million yanked last February after federal transportation officials said BART failed to submit an adequate study of whether the airport connector project discriminated against poor residents.

BART staffers will present the backup funding plan to the BART board as early as July 22.

BART already has most of the needed funding for the approximately \$500 million project. It has \$430 million coming from a variety of state, federal and local sources.

The airport connector project, which has been on the drawing board since BART began service in the 1970s, would travel the 3.2 miles between BART's Oakland Coliseum stop and the airport in about 15 minutes. Ticket prices would be comparable to the \$3 it now costs to ride an airport bus shuttle that takes between 12 and 30 minutes, BART said.

The Oakland Airport connector project has stirred opposition from groups that say it will deliver little benefit.

"The question is are we getting half a billion dollars of benefit from this project? That is the question no one (at BART) wants to answer," said John Knox White, a program director at Transform, an Oakland-based transportation policy group. "The answer is absolutely not."

Transform said a bus shuttle that is allowed to drive along a designated lane to the airport would be a cheaper and more effective alternative.

BART officials said they continue to pursue the airport connector project because it will deliver many benefits.

The connector, which would run mostly along Hegenberger Road, would give travelers a predictable link to the airport regardless of traffic, said Jim Allison, a BART spokesman. It would also help **Oakland International Airport** handle what is expected to be increasing passenger traffic in coming years. Finally, the project could generate more than 2,500 jobs, Allison said, giving a boost to the region's battered construction industry.

The connector could be in operation as early as 2013, BART officials said.



Eric Young covers law and government for the ***San Francisco Business Times***.
Contact him at eyoung@bizjournals.com or (415) 288-4969.
Read his blog postings at [Bay Area BizTalk](#).