

## **SURF! Busway and Bus Rapid Transit Project Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

### **1. What is the SURF! Busway and Bus Rapid Transit Project?**

The proposed SURF! line is a 6-mile bus-only lane from Marina to Sand City and Seaside on an established, publicly owned transit corridor parallel to Highway 1.

### **2. What are some of the benefits of the SURF!?**

When complete, bus riders will enjoy accessible, affordable, and faster transit that increases equity and encourages active, healthy lifestyles with a reduced carbon footprint. The project will also:

- Reduce traffic on Highway 1 and local streets
- Improve safety and air quality
- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions
- Add one (1) mile of new bicycle and pedestrian trails
- Reduce microplastics and pollutants from vehicle tires that flow to the Bay
- Offer good-paying jobs for local employees in transportation
- Increase access to work, employment centers, shopping, and research and education

### **3. How will the project impact cyclists?**

The SURF! Busway and Bus Rapid Transit Project will add one (1) mile of new bicycle and pedestrian improvements, supporting and further enhancing existing facilities. These improvements include new, and/or improved connections to the existing and planned trail network at or near:

- Palm Avenue/Del Monte Boulevard (Marina)
- 5th Street Station (Marina)
- California Avenue (Sand City)

### **4. Why is the busway located along Highway 1 instead of surface streets?**

SURF! will use the underutilized railroad corridor and preserve the railroad tracks for future rail service. The faster travel time on this route will encourage more riders to leave Highway 1 than would a slower bus route on local streets.

### **5. What about the plans for light rail service?**

Light rail remains TAMC's long-term vision for the Monterey Branch Line corridor. The SURF! busway project will help build ridership that would make funding a light rail project feasible in the future. One of the major design goals has been to preserve the railroad tracks for future use, while keeping costs minimal.

### **6. Isn't transit use way down due to the pandemic?**

With widespread vaccination, people are returning to workplaces, and traffic is on the rise on Highway 1 and is expected to increase more than 40% by 2040 over pre-pandemic levels. Transit-dependent riders have continued to use local and regional buses throughout 2020 and 2021 and will continue to need affordable travel options.

### **7. Will other vehicles use the busway?**

Current plans call for emergency vehicles to be able to use the busway. Other vehicles, including rideshare, carpools and school buses, will benefit from reduced traffic along existing routes.

**8. What environmental review process is required for this project?**

Although the busway could have qualified as exempt from California Environmental Quality Act review under Senate Bill 288, MST chose to prepare an Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration ([www.mst.org](http://www.mst.org)) to ensure that any potential impacts to the environment are avoided or mitigated. An Environmental Impact Report could have been prepared instead but would have made it possible to create significant impacts without some of the mitigation measures called for by the MND.

**9. Will views of Monterey Bay be affected?**

Motorists and trail users will continue to enjoy the scenic beauty of the Bay, and scenic views will not be negatively affected. The busway lanes are low profile and next to the existing railroad tracks. The project does not block or obstruct public viewpoints looking seaward. New busway lighting will only be added at connection points within the already built areas of Palm Avenue/Del Monte Boulevard, 5th Street Station, and California Avenue (primarily for bike and pedestrian safety), and buses will be infrequent in the evenings and will appear in the same visual plane as vehicles along Highway 1.

**10. Will the project generate noise?**

Construction of the busway will produce temporary noise, but contractors will be required to use noise-reducing equipment and work only during established allowed hours to avoid disturbing surrounding uses. Buses will not produce noise at levels that would disrupt the nearest sensitive uses in the project corridor, including at the FODSP campground area. Vehicles on Highway 1 will continue to be the loudest generator of noise along the corridor.

**11. Will the project disturb native plants and also therefore habitat for endangered or threatened species?**

The project requires that native plants affected during construction be replanted in other locations with a better opportunity to thrive and grow. In addition, invasive species such as ice plant will be removed to support Fort Ord Dunes State Park efforts to reclaim the dunes with native plants.

**12. What have MST and TAMC done to hear from the community about this project?**

During the planning of the SURF! project, MST and TAMC conducted and participated in over 40 meetings with stakeholders and community members between 2019 to current. An online survey in February 2021 resulted in overall community support for the project. Community input from these meetings and surveys was heard by MST and used to develop a project design with minimal impacts to the environment. There have been many more community meetings to discuss transportation along the rail line corridor including the development of the TAMC Measure X Transportation Safety & Investment Plan, approved by 68% of Monterey County voters.