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**From:** David Davenport  
**Sent:** Wednesday, July 08, 2015 12:54 PM  
**To:** MTC Info  
**Subject:** Richmond-San Rafael Bridge Access Improvement Project

**Categories:** Green category

Dear MTC:

I am writing to comment on the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge Access Improvement Project amendment to Plan Bay Area.

While the amendment allows for the noble cause of addressing congestion in the Richmond Bridge corridor, it fails to provide for a logical solution that will truly improve the conditions being addressed.

The conversion of the eastbound shoulder lane and associated improvements will have a huge positive impact on local street congestion in Marin County. In fact, immediately opening the shoulder lane would solve this serious issue. While Caltrans claims that the east end of the bridge cannot accommodate the third lane, their own construction project to replace the bridge over Stenmark Drive (previously called Western Drive) proved that it is possible.

Even if the third lane merges at the east end of the bridge, the existing traffic that backs up on surface streets and Highway 101 in Marin County could be accommodated on the bridge itself. This would go a long way towards addressing the afternoon commute problems in San Rafael and Larkspur.

However, the plan to convert the westbound shoulder to a bicycle lane is ill conceived. The access points on each end of the bridge are remote, and only the heartiest weekend "Spandex warriors" would take advantage of the new bridge access. Regular commuters (such as me) would never be able to utilize the bicycle lane. It is simply impractical for anyone to be expected to ride several miles on an elevated structure with strong winds, significant elevation changes, and exposure to adverse weather conditions. And unless significant improvements are made to connect the bridge to the communities on each end, MTC will be failing in its duty to provide even an ill-conceived project because it will be so difficult to access.

Rather than convert the westbound shoulder to a bicycle lane, it would be better if MTC pursued a project that actually helped commuters. A worthwhile project would have two components:

1. Convert the westbound shoulder to a traffic lane, similar to what is planned for the eastbound shoulder. By providing a third lane, Golden Gate Transit buses would be able to operate more efficiently and attract riders, which could result in a reduction in car traffic. Right now there is little incentive to use public transit because buses are stuck in the same congestion as private automobiles.
2. Provide a bicycle shuttle similar to the one operated on the Bay Bridge and/or increase bus service levels on Golden Gate Transit to accommodate bicycles. The shuttle (or extra GGT bus service) should be designed to pick up bike riders within the communities on each end of the bridge, eliminating the problem of poor access east of the Canal area (San Rafael) and west of Point

Richmond. Logical access points for the shuttle would be at Bellam & Andersen in San Rafael, which is near the Cal Park tunnel path and accessible via surface street bike lanes, and at Cutting & 23rd in Richmond, which is accessible via bike lanes on those streets.

Sadly it appears that MTC is on a pre-determined path, and comments like these will be simply ignored. At the very least, the proposed project needs two changes to avoid being maligned upon completion:

1. Bicycle and pedestrian access must be improved on both ends of the bridge. On the west end, this includes the construction of an improved bus stop area on the Main Street on-ramp, bicycle lanes on East Francisco Blvd., and a new bi-directional bicycle path crossing 580 to Andersen Drive and/or Sir Francis Drake Blvd. On the east end, this includes the construction of a new bi-directional bicycle path from the bridge to Tewksbury & Castro in Point Richmond, the creation of well-paved bicycle lanes on Tewksbury, and smooth debris-free bicycle lanes along Cutting Blvd. and Marina Way (to/from the Bay Trail).

2. A bus queue-jump lane onto 580 from Point Richmond (from Castro & Tewksbury) and again from the Richmond Parkway on-ramp to the far side of the toll plaza.

While I applaud MTC's focus on this long-neglected bridge corridor, I am concerned that the plan as it stands will do little to help bicyclists, bus commuters, and morning traffic conditions.

Sincerely,  
David Davenport  
Berkeley, CA  
Avid bicyclist, transit user, and 7-year commuter to San Rafael.