Parking garage near Dublin BART still not built three years after ‘groundbreaking’

$34 million project is currently out for bid to contractors

This digital rendering shows what the Dublin Transit Center Parking Garage is expected to look like when complete. (Image courtesy of Alameda County)

By JOSEPH GEHA | jgeha@bayareanewsgroup.com | Bay Area News Group
PUBLISHED: October 25, 2021 at 6:03 a.m. | UPDATED: October 26, 2021 at 4:19 a.m.
DUBLIN — It’s been roughly three years since Alameda County and state officials drove golden shovels into the ground to mark the ceremonial start of construction of a new $34 million parking garage project envisioned to add more than 500 more spaces near the Dublin/Pleasanton BART station.

Since that sunny day, a county supervisor and a state assemblymember who advocated strongly for the project have both left office, a global pandemic has tanked public transportation ridership and not a single additional shovel has hit the ground.

The project, dubbed the Dublin Transit Center Parking Garage, would allow more people commuting to and from Dublin, Pleasanton, Livermore, San Ramon and the Central Valley a chance to park and ride BART, as thousands of parking spots there in an existing BART-owned garage and lots filled up every weekday by the early morning.

The new garage would be built next to the current BART garage, on half of a roughly 4-acre site located at the corner of Iron Horse Parkway and Martinelli Way in Dublin. The other half of the land is being eyed for an affordable housing development, Dublin officials said.

But despite the delays and the uncertainty surrounding transit ridership, local officials are confident the garage project is still needed, and county supervisors are set to get an update on where things stand later this month.

“It’s taken a long time,” David Haubert, Alameda County Supervisor for District 1, said in an interview Tuesday about the project.

“I’m perplexed as to why it is taking so long, I guess I would say I wish we were further along than we are, and I have asked for more information on why it has taken so long,” he said.

It’s unclear what may have contributed to the project’s stall. It has been delayed multiple times, with county documents from mid-2019 indicating construction would begin in 2020 and last about a year.

The project is being headed up by the Alameda County General Services Agency, in partnership with the Livermore Amador Valley Transit Authority, which runs the Tri-Valley Wheels bus lines, among other services.

The executive program coordinator for the county agency, Dolly Bryan, said the pandemic could have contributed to the project’s current timeline, but declined to speak to any specific reasons for delays on the project because it is currently out for bid to contractors.

The General Services Agency was lambasted by the Alameda County civil grand jury in a 2020 report, which concluded that many projects the agency ran “suffered from project management failures which contributed greatly to delays and cost overruns.”

The total cost for the garage project was most recently pegged at about $34 million, with $20 million in funding coming from a state Transit and Rail Intercity Capital Program grant, which
The project is also receiving $7 million in Regional Measure 2 funds from the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, and $7 million more through tax Measure BB funds, allocated by the Alameda County Transportation Commission, according to Michael Tree, the director of the Livermore transit authority.

Numbers from county planning documents have varied slightly, but show the garage is planned to be five stories tall, and will likely include about 515 parking spaces, with 10% of spaces reserved for electric vehicles with charging stations on the ground floor.

The garage could increase parking availability near the BART station by roughly 16%, and county documents say it would result in 1.4 million less vehicle miles traveled per year, most of which would occur on Interstates 580 and 680.

According to BART, there are currently a total of 3,133 spaces managed by the transit agency available near the station, including 1,524 in its existing garage and 1,609 in the surface lots. About 50 of those spaces are reserved for BART police officers and train operators who start or end shifts at that station, however.

Before the pandemic, when ridership was at its peak, the lots and garage would fill up in the early morning hours, typically by 7:30 a.m., according to James Allison, a BART representative.

Currently, the lots are only about 15% to 20% full, with ridership around 25% of pre-
Overall, BART expects to have about half of its normal ridership by July 2022. An analysis the agency completed in February projected ridership returning to full pre-pandemic levels in about eight years, but, Allison noted, “It’s obviously very difficult to predict.”

County documents indicate that the garage’s first level will be “convertible,” so if demand for parking falls in the future, “most of the first-floor footprint … can be converted into future office and retail uses complementary to Dublin’s downtown area.”

Though Haggerty and Baker are both no longer in office, current officials, including Haubert, think the project will be a boon for the Tri-Valley area and BART riders, as well as a growing number of commuters from Central Valley cities, as current and planned transit connections to the expanded region can link up near BART station.

“I think we’re dealing with a much longer time frame for this decision than two, or four, or six, or even eight years,” Haubert said. “If you’re committed to public transportation then you have to hope or believe that riders will come back to public transportation. And I don’t see that changing,” he said.

According to Tree, his agency believes commuter traffic will continue returning in the region, “which is one of the country’s worst commutes for our Bay Area workers,” he said in an email.

“Building this project before the traffic congestion returns is a high priority,” he said.
Joseph Geha | Reporter

Joseph Geha is a multimedia journalist covering Fremont, Milpitas, Union City, and Newark for the Bay Area News Group. His prior work has been seen in multiple Bay Area outlets, including SF Weekly, as well as on KQED and KLIV radio. He is a graduate of California State University, East Bay (Hayward), a Fremont native and a lifelong Oakland Athletics fan.

jgeha@bayareanewsgroup.com

Follow Joseph Geha josephgeha16 Follow Joseph Geha @josephgeha16

SUBSCRIBE TODAY!
ALL ACCESS DIGITAL OFFER FOR JUST 99 CENTS!