



# Balboa Park Station Area Circulation Study



## Background

The Balboa Park BART/Muni Station is one of the busiest intermodal transit facilities in the region. As the major hub for the southern part of San Francisco, the station serves more than 25,000 passengers daily with its four BART lines, multiple major local bus routes, and three light rail transit lines. But access to the station, particularly for non-auto modes, is complicated by tightly squeezed station functions and its location adjacent to the I-280 Geneva-Ocean Avenue interchange system, whose multiple on- and off-ramps deliver heavy auto traffic to the station and its surrounding neighborhoods, causing multimodal conflicts with transit and pedestrians.



## Study Purpose

This Circulation Study focused on potential modifications to the Balboa Park Station and adjacent I-280 interchanges at Geneva Avenue and Ocean Avenue. The main goals of the Study were to:

- Reduce multimodal conflicts (vehicles, transit, pedestrians) at the I-280 freeway ramps while not substantially degrading vehicle operations in the area, including the I-280 freeway mainline.
- Provide safe, accessible, and convenient connections for pedestrians, bicyclists, and intermodal travelers.
- Develop cost-effective solutions that support the community's values and goals, without substantial construction-related impacts, that can be implemented in 2–10 years.

## Community Involvement

A Balboa Park Community Advisory Committee (BPCAC), whose membership and bi-monthly meetings are open to the public, has provided input on this Study's work to develop the next generation of capital improvements in the station area. The San Francisco County Transportation Authority (SFCTA) has also conducted additional outreach, including public meetings, to seek wider input throughout the study.

## Existing Circulation and Access Issues

- The southbound freeway exit onto Ocean Avenue is a high-speed, uncontrolled ramp that has limited visibility with high pedestrian and bicycle conflicts.
- The I-280 interchange has redundant southbound off- and northbound on-ramps.
- The northbound ramps on Geneva Avenue conflict with high volumes of pedestrian activity, including those dropped off along the ramps, creating a safety issue and contributing to queues along the off-ramp.
- Northbound freeway access from Ocean Avenue experiences high pedestrian, bicycle, and transit conflicts.
- Geneva Avenue is heavily used by vehicles, pedestrians, and buses; delays for transit caused by congestion are common.
- The designated Kiss-and-Ride area is difficult to access and is underutilized, particularly during the AM peak period.

## Relationship to Other Efforts

Previous plans in the study area, including the Planning Department's 2009 Balboa Park Station Area Plan and the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency's 2012 Balboa Park Station Capacity Study, recommended multiple improvement concepts. Of those recommendations, several short-term projects have been completed or are underway. But the mid- and long-term visions remain to be clarified. This study's focus was on a particular mid-term concept that the Station Capacity Study did not examine in detail: potential modifications to the I-280 interchange and accompanying station reconfiguration.

## Study Partners

The SFCTA led the study in collaboration with:

- California Department of Transportation (funder)
- San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency
- Bay Area Rapid Transit District

## For Final Report and More Information

Contact Mike Tan, Administrative Engineer, at the SF County Transportation Authority, via email (balboa@sfcta.org) or at 415.522.4826.

# Staff-Recommended Alternative

## Partial Split Interchange (Alternative 1)

After exploring several potential alternative circulation networks, the Study recommended advancing Alternative 1 as the higher-performing alternative for further study and implementation. Alternative 1 would create a partial split interchange, in which northbound I-280 traffic would exit onto Geneva Avenue but enter the freeway from Ocean Avenue. Southbound traffic would still be able to exit both Geneva and Ocean Avenues while only entering from Geneva Avenue. This alternative would reduce conflicts among different types of users at several locations in the study area. It would improve pedestrian and bicycle conditions while balancing vehicle operational needs. The elements are as follows:

- **ELEMENT 1.** Close the northbound Geneva Avenue on-ramp. Closure of this ramp would greatly reduce the pedestrian and transit conflicts with turning automobiles at this intersection. The element lends itself to being first implemented as a pilot project, allowing for the traffic impacts associated with the circulation changes to be evaluated prior to a decision to permanently close the ramp.
- **ELEMENT 2.** Realign the southbound Ocean Avenue off-ramp to a T-intersection and construct a new traffic signal. This redesign would greatly improve the merging conflicts presented by the current off-ramp—a high-speed, uncontrolled, free right-turn to westbound Ocean Avenue that poses a major challenge for pedestrians and bicyclists crossing the ramp.
- **ELEMENT 3.** Construct a northbound frontage road between Geneva and Ocean Avenues. This frontage road provides new space next to the station that could be used for various purposes, including as a new kiss-and-ride location or bus loading space. A new kiss-and-ride facility could discourage the current impromptu use of the area's freeway ramps and transit stops for dropping off passengers.



## Next Steps

This Study is the first stage of project development for proposed improvements to the Balboa Park Station Area circulation. Several more steps lie between conclusion of this stage and the time a project is ready for implementation, including funding gathering and prioritization, additional stakeholder and public outreach, environmental review including further transportation analysis, and more detailed design and engineering. With strong support, consensus, and high priority from the community, agencies, and elected officials, the initial pilot projects could begin in 2019, with full implementation by 2023.

### POTENTIAL IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

