LBNL COMMUNITY ADVISORY GROUP (CAG)

CAG Meeting Summary

Wednesday, April 28, 2010
7:00 pm – 9:30 pm
South Berkeley Senior Center

CAG Members Present:

Whitney Dotson, Community member
Farid Javandel, City of Berkeley (in place of Dan Marks)
Marcos Gandara, Community member
William Gilbert, Claremont Elmwood Neighborhood Association (CENA)
Paul Licht, UC Botanical Garden
Rebecca Daly, UC Berkeley Student
Dean Metzger, Berkeleyans for a Livable University Environment (BLUE)
Phil Price, LBNL employee
Phila Rogers, Community member
Carole Schemmerling, Strawberry Creek Watershed Council
Elizabeth Stage, Lawrence Hall of Science
Anne Wagley, Community member

CAG Members Absent:

Mark Berson, Berkeley Chamber of Commerce
Dan Marks, City of Berkeley Planning Department
Mark McLeod, Buy Local Berkeley

Welcome and Introductions

Daniel Iacofano of MIG welcomed CAG members, community members and staff, briefly reviewed the evening's agenda, and invited a round of introductions.

Daniel announced that the CAG website (www.lbnl-cag.org) is now live. Meeting documents, presentation materials, and meeting dates, times and locations will be available on the website. Website visitors can sign up to receive automated email updates which are sent when new information is posted to the website. All CAG members have been signed up to receive automatic emails.

LBNL Transportation System Overview

LBNL staff gave three brief presentations to orient CAG members to LBNL's current transportation system, program and activities, and management of construction traffic. CAG members were invited to comment and ask questions following each presentation. Community members were then given opportunity to comment and ask questions.

Laura Chen, the Lab's Chief Facilities Planner, presented an overview of LBNL's transportation system. In 2007, the Lab initiated a transportation demand management

(TDM) program with the goal of managing future trip demand, reducing emissions, and increasing awareness.

In 2008, LBNL conducted a survey and found that 48 percent of all Lab employees drive a single occupant vehicle to the Lab. All others use some other form of transportation.

The Lab shuttle system is free to employees and visitors and is used by 32 percent of Lab employees for some portion of their commute. The shuttle buses route through the City of Berkeley, connect to BART and AC Transit, as well as through the Berkeley Lab. Department of Energy (DOE) employees, Lab employees, and faculty and students who work at the Lab are allowed to use the shuttles.

The Lab recently hired a subcontractor to provide the shuttle service. The number of buses currently running at the Lab is exactly the same as before the Lab subcontracted the service. The fleet includes fewer buses because the new shuttles don't break down as much. Jim Dahlgard, Department Manager of Bus Operations and Transportation, provided additional information about the shuttle service in his presentation of the Lab transportation program and activities.

LBNL currently has 2220 parking spaces, a figure that represents a loss of roughly 100 parking spaces over the past couple of years as a result of construction activities. Only 1,785 spaces are for employees. U.C. students who work at the Lab do not have parking privileges.

LBNL has also increased the number of bike racks onsite, added shower facilities to accommodate cyclists, and purchased electric vehicles to replace its aging fleet. Shuttles include on average six racks in the back and two in the front. The Lab will continue to look for ways to safely increase the number of bike racks on shuttles. Currently, LBNL has replaced 43 gasoline-burning government vehicles with 43 electric vehicles. Last year, it owned roughly 20.

Jim Dahlgard then presented information on the Lab transportation program and activities. The transportation program includes many services designed to encourage the use of alternative modes of transportation. LBNL employees and guests on LBNL business have access to these services.

- **Bus operations and amenities.** LBNL's bus service includes five routes and provides about 2,000 passenger trips per day. The current bus system operates B20 biodiesel buses. The Lab's Nextbus service allows riders waiting at stops to see when the next bus will arrive. Shuttles are now equipped with WiFi.
- **Taxi service.** The Lab taxi service is intended to encourage people who work late to take public transportation. The service provides rides home after 7:30pm and on weekends and holidays when buses no longer run.
- **Zimride.** Zimride is a third party service that helps connect carpool riders. Over 400 people are signed up for this service.

- **Guaranteed Ride Home.** Guaranteed Ride Home provides 6 trips home per year, which provides the assurance needed to encourage use of alternative transportation.
- **Wageworks.** Wageworks allows Lab employees to purchase BART, AC Transit and Amtrak tickets with pre-tax dollars. Twelve percent of employees participate in Wageworks.

Jerry O'Hearn presented information on the construction traffic management program at LBNL. The Lab's designated construction truck route runs from I-80 to University Avenue, then left on Oxford Avenue, and up Hearst Avenue to the Lab. Most construction-related vehicles use Blackberry Gate, the front gate to the Lab. LBNL has had conversations with the City of Berkeley to identify the best corridor for construction truck trips. So far, University Avenue is the City's preferred route.

LBNL has capped the number of daily construction truck trips allowed and monitors them closely as part of its site construction coordinator program. LBNL reviews all construction projects on a daily basis, and halts and reschedules trips if the daily number of trips is projected to exceed 49 round trips.[1]

LBNL's construction contract specifications ensure that the Lab has the ability to manage trucks when they enter the gate. According to Farid Javandel, Transportation Planner for the City of Berkeley, the Lab is required to follow DOE regulations related to covering and labeling trucks that carry post-construction materials.

Farid reported briefly on impacts to pavement along the Lab's designated truck route. According to Farid, the volume of truck traffic to and from the Lab along University Avenue accounts for a relatively small proportion of all traffic along University Avenue. Farid estimates that the Lab's fair share costs for damage to the roadway resulting from these trips may be negligible.[2]

CAG members shared comments and observations about LBNL's current transportation program. The following reflect key points of discussion:

[1] **Further clarification from LBNL staff**: The number 49 was conservatively established as a working limit by LBNL staff. The actual threshold of impact, established in a 2009 study by an independent traffic engineer, is much higher. If the Lab were to ever propose exceeding the working limit of 49 daily truck trips on a particular day, several special procedures must first be followed to determine that a significant traffic impact would not result. On average, Lab construction-related truck trips have totaled 13 round-trips daily.

[2] **Further comment from LBNL staff**: This is corroborated by a pavement impact study conducted by an independent traffic engineer based on Caltrans methodology that is included in the Lab's 2006 LRDP EIR. The study found that projected Lab "wear and tear" impacts to Berkeley roadways under LRDP development would be far below significance thresholds and would be near negligible.

- The Lab has generally done a good job upgrading its fleet of shuttle buses and providing a system that encourages the use of alternate modes of transportation. The new buses are a clear improvement with respect to reducing emissions and overall community and environmental impacts.
- The shuttle system is at capacity during peak hours, and this means that there is limited space for bikes and/or passengers during these times. Lack of capacity is a limiting factor for people who would otherwise take the morning shuttle to the Lab.
- Adjusting shuttle bus schedules and routes to provide a more efficient service that better matches capacity with demand would potentially increase the productivity of employees and bring environmental benefits as well.
- The buses that run up and down Centennial are almost empty. The negative impacts of this route outweigh the benefits it provides.
- Consider the challenge that many have of commuting from areas that are not well-served by transit. Driving for some is simply easier than having to make multiple transit connections.
- In many ways, the Lab operates based on the presumption that public transportation connections from one's home to the Lab or transit that serves the Lab are adequate. In reality, the lack of transit access for some is more of a regional issue that requires a more holistic approach and solution.
- Consider the long-term, cumulative impacts of Lab-related construction (including contractor parking) on City streets, including street parking, access and connectivity.

Concepts and Strategies for Improving LBNL Transportation

CAG members identified the following potential strategies to improve the LBNL transportation system and to address community impacts of the current system.

- Explore options to meet peak shuttle demand. Adjust the shuttle schedule to encourage ridership and reduce crowding during peak hours. Strengthen efforts to encourage staggered work hours to help balance demand.
- Consider options to lessen the impact of shuttles on the east side of the Lab, including adjusting the level of service, using smaller buses, combining City and Lab bus service along Centennial, and serving non-Lab affiliated community members.
- Collect more information to inform future improvements to the Lab's transportation system and programs. Identify where car commuters are coming from and what their transportation options are. Collect more information on employee modes of travel. Gather information on fuel types used by trucks.
- Provide transportation service to encourage construction contractors and employees to leave their SUVs and large cars at home.
- Better advertise the Lab's taxi service and other transportation programs.

- Look back to past models such as the Lab's internal taxi service and explore the feasibility of reinstituting effective programs.
- Explore the possibility of establishing a shared fleet of electric golf carts that employees could use to get from one part of Lab to the other.
- Restrict the number of large trucks and prohibit trucks from entering through the Strawberry Canyon Gate.
- Add a representative of the University to the CAG.
- Emulate what cities are doing (i.e., lessening parking requirements) and modify Lab parking requirements for new projects. Create incentives to encourage the use of alternative modes of transportation in lieu of constructing more parking spaces.
- Charge employees for parking spaces. Offer premium parking spaces at a higher cost and use the money to fund the Lab's shuttle service.
- Explore the feasibility of an aerial lift from the flatlands to the Lab (see Spokane and Portland as potential models).
- Identify opportunities to work collaboratively with the University and public transportation agencies to address regional and local connectivity issues.
- Contribute to keeping City transportation infrastructure up-to-date, regardless of the relative impact of Lab-related truck traffic on City roadways.
- Engage the community in the earliest stages of planning and provide opportunities for the community to be a truly integrated player in LBNL planning processes.

Public Comment and Additional CAG Comments

Following Lab presentations and CAG discussion of transportation-related issues, community participants shared a number of comments and suggestions. CAG members participated in this discussion as well. Many comments highlighted the importance of addressing fundamental site-related planning issues in upcoming meetings.

Disaster Management and Response

- Plan for disaster management and response in an integrated fashion. In other words, determine how to prevent and minimize downstream impacts and how to ensure the safety of LBNL employees and community members.[3]

[3] **Further clarification from LBNL staff**: The Lab engages in extensive disaster and emergency planning at all levels of the organization. This will be the topic of a future CAG meeting. In the meantime, please refer to the 2006 LRDP EIR for an overview and to the Lab's EH&S website for information regarding the Lab's Emergency Response Organization and Master Emergency Program Plan (see http://www.lbl.gov/ehs/ep/).

- LBNL is located on the interface between the hills and the City and should play a role in emergency and fire response. Clarify the role of LBNL and Alameda County firefighters in first and second response for fire and emergency events in the surrounding community.[4]
- Link future CAG discussion of disaster planning to hazardous materials management and disposal.

LBNL Site and Future Facility Locations

- Let's not assume that the Lab is appropriately located given the geo-technical issues associated with the current site.
- Give very serious consideration to whether the Lab's current site is the appropriate place for expansion. Seriously consider and discuss alternative sites in the Bay Area. As buildings become obsolete, remove them and put them somewhere else. Find opportunities to locate certain facilities elsewhere, such as the Computational Research and Theory (CRT) building. Consider Fremont's NUMMI plant as a potential, alternative site with good transportation access and parking facilities. Invite Keith Carson to attend the next CAG meeting to explore this opportunity.
- Identify and address the potential impacts of LBNL fences on connectivity for wildlife, etc.
- Re-locating the Lab in a location such as Fremont is a recipe for sprawl.
- There is a clear benefit to the Lab's current location. The Lab as currently constituted depends heavily on UC Berkeley. Also, the Lab has clearly demonstrated that people will in fact use alternative means of transportation if it is convenient to do so. Its location is an important part of this success.

Next Steps

The next CAG meetings will take place on July 8 and September 13th, and meeting locations will be announced as soon as venues are determined. CAG meetings may continue to take place at different locations. Meeting locations will be highlighted in future communications.

On Friday, April 23rd, LBNL hosted a tour of Lab facilities for CAG members. The tour will be conducted again for those CAG members who were not able to participate.

[4] **Further clarification from LBNL staff**: A description of the Lab's role in wild land fire prevention and fire response, including a map showing primary, secondary, and tertiary response areas for the fire station at Berkeley Lab, are available in the 2006 LRDP EIR (http://www.lbl.gov/Community/LRDP/index.html).