

**BETTER BART. BETTER BAY AREA.**

**DOWNTOWN BERKELEY  
BART STATION**

**Modernization Study**

**Outreach and Survey Summary Fall 2015**



# DOWNTOWN BERKELEY BART STATION

## Modernization Study: Outreach + Survey Summary



### Introduction

BART held two public in-station outreach events at the Downtown Berkeley BART Station to acquire riders’ opinions on the modernization of the Downtown Berkeley station. They were held on September 30, 2015 during the evening commute (4-7 pm) and on October 1, 2015 during the morning commute (7-10 am). BART riders and members of the public could learn about the modernization study, fill out a survey, talk to BART planning staff and provide comments. In addition, between September 30 and October 19, 2015, BART collected feedback through an online survey. BART received **1,031** responses and **357** comments during this period. **Part I** of this summary report displays the results of the survey responses; **Part II** summarizes the free-response comments and suggestions received, which were analyzed for popular themes and requests from BART riders.

### Part I – Survey Question Results

Respondents ranked the level of importance of investments at the Downtown Berkeley BART station in the first survey question. **Table 1** provides an overview of the responses received (as calculated averages) based on popularity, showing the highest-ranked improvements at the top.

**Table 1 – Survey Question One** - Ranking the Importance of Various BART Station Features.

**Q1: Which of the following new or modernized features do you think BART should invest in? (On a scale of 1-5 where 1 is “not at all important” and 5 is “extremely important”).**

| Feature   | Weighted Average |
|---|------------------|
| Maintain and upgrade station infrastructure and functionality                         | 4.28             |
| Improve general station cleanliness and upkeep  | 4.1              |
| Promote sustainability through efficient building systems and design                  | 3.87             |
| Improve safety through better sightlines/visibility                                   | 3.66             |
| Improve lighting quality and efficiency   | 3.55             |
| Provide public restrooms  | 3.45             |
| Reopen the fare gates/platform access at south end of station                         | 3.4              |
| Improve bicycle access (new stairwell channels, more parking)                         | 3.36             |
| Add additional escalator access from street to concourse and/or concourse to platform | 3.1              |
| Update station architecture and finishes  | 3.04             |
| Replace the street-to-concourse elevator  | 2.99             |
| Integrate art in the station, to reflect the area’s unique character                  | 2.97             |
| Create thematic links to Berkeley culture and institutions                            | 2.76             |
| Provide more in-station shops and services  | 2.56             |

# DOWNTOWN BERKELEY BART STATION

## Modernization Study: Outreach + Survey Summary

The three features BART survey respondents ranked as most important were maintaining station infrastructure and functionality, improving general station cleanliness and upkeep, and promoting sustainability through efficient building systems and design.

### Questions Two and Three: Use of the Berkeley BART Station

The following two graphics convey information regarding the survey respondents' use of the Berkeley BART station. **Figure 1** and **Figure 2** provide data on how frequently and during what times respondents use the Downtown Berkeley BART station.

In addition to prioritizing what features they think BART should invest in, survey respondents also answered questions regarding how often and when they use the Downtown Berkeley station, conveyed in **Figure 1** and **Figure 2**.

The majority of survey respondents were frequent riders who rode four or more days a week, and most respondents use this station during commute times, between 7-9 AM and 4-7 PM.

Figure 1 - Survey Question Two

Q2: How often do you use this station?

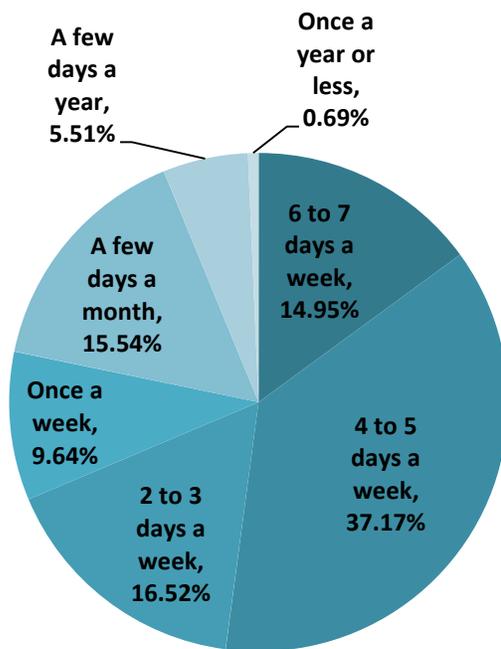
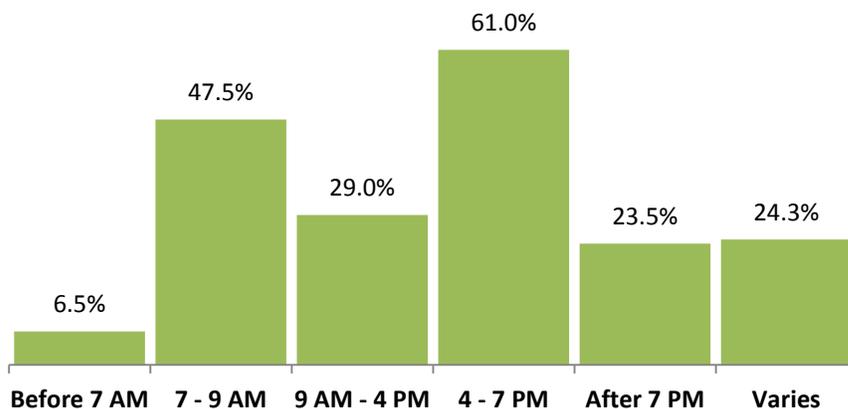


Figure 2 - Survey Question Three

Q3: When do you usually use this station?



# DOWNTOWN BERKELEY BART STATION

## Modernization Study: Outreach + Survey Summary

### Part II – Survey Comments & Suggestions

After ranking their station improvement priorities in Question One, respondents had the opportunity to submit their own comments in a free-response section. **357** comments were received during the survey period. The comments were then analyzed and placed into categories, which are summarized in the table below. The categories with the highest response rates of the overall number of responses are bolded and shown with the percentage they made up of the total responses.

**Table 2 – Summary of Respondent Comments**

| Station Environment  | Station Accessibility  | Service Improvements  |
|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>14.8% Improve signage- in particular, arrival information before gates</b></li> <li>• <b>14.8% Improve overall cleanliness, reduce unpleasant smells</b></li> <li>• <b>12.3% Increase security, reduce presence of homeless and panhandlers</b></li> <li>• 5.9% Provide public restrooms</li> <li>• 4.2% Implement art to reflect local area</li> <li>• 1.4% Provide additional trashcans</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>15.7% Improve accessibility by adding more entrances and fare gates; reopen south gates</b></li> <li>• <b>14.0% Add more elevators, escalators, and stairs; widen staircases; improve elevator functionality</b></li> <li>• 7.0% Improve bike infrastructure and access, implement bike-specific escalators</li> <li>• 4.2% Improve overall access for disabled persons</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6.4% Increase capacity of train cars and station waiting areas</li> <li>• 4.8% Increase number of cars and trips</li> <li>• 2.8% Prevent fare jumpers from gaining access without charge</li> <li>• 2.2% Install doors or windows to separate concourse from tracks</li> </ul> |

Based on the free-response comments, the top suggestions were 1) improving access with more entrances and fare gates, 2) increasing signage, 3) improving station cleanliness and smell, 4) adding more elevators, escalators, and stairs, and 5) increasing safety. These topics are discussed in more detail below.

#### 1) Improve Access

Suggestions related to increasing accessibility ranged from adding more entrances, adding more fare gates, reopening the south entrance, and installing more elevators/escalators/staircases. Many of the respondents who called for improved accessibility referred to reopening the south gates to improve flow and relieve congestion. Others cited a lack of sufficient staircases, elevators, and escalators as a cause for pedestrian traffic.

#### Sample quotes from the survey:

“Install escalators at the north and south end of the station.”

“Add a station entrance at the NE corner of Shattuck and Center St...Access from the south can be improved by opening the south fare gates”

“Reduce congestion by providing more staircases / escalators”

“More turnstiles open in certain directions during busy hours. More stairs/escalators from platforms to station.”

# DOWNTOWN BERKELEY BART STATION

## Modernization Study: Outreach + Survey Summary

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### 2) Improve Signage

An overwhelming 40 respondents specifically requested concourse-level signs indicating real-time train arrival forecasts, which would allow riders to know if they need to hurry or have time when passing the fare gates. This would also prevent people from running at the sound of a train without knowing its destination. Other signage requests included multiple requests for clearer signage in general, replacing the red LED train signage, and adding additional signs for connecting transit to the station.

#### Sample quotes from the survey:

“Install real-time [signage] on street and concourse showing when trains are due and arriving, and which trains. People go crazy running when they hear a train coming even though they don’t have a clue as to which train it is.”

“Better station signage for passengers within the train. BART signs can be very hard to see if the train is crowded and announcements are often unintelligible.”

“Clear signs that indicate when trains will arrive when riders are outside the paid areas (like when I’m running to my train from the Allston Way entrance, and the other entrances, too) would be great!”

### 3) Cleanliness & Smell

Additionally, nearly fifteen percent of respondents also complained of unpleasant smells in the stations and requested increased overall station cleanliness. The stairwells and elevators were repeatedly identified as problem areas for the “urine smell.”

#### Sample quotes from the survey:

“Cleanliness and safety in elevators. Discovering urine in stairwells and elevators.”

“A huge improvement would be more thorough/regular cleaning. The stairwells are particularly gross.”

“A regularly-maintained public bathroom is desperately needed”

### Increasing Safety and Other Comments

Other popular comments included requests for increased bike infrastructure, particularly addressing the issue of bikes on escalators. Others suggested improved overall accessibility for disabled persons to the elevators and the fare gates. Many also requested that BART open public restrooms and install more trash receptacles throughout the station. Safety was another important concern to many respondents, some of whom cited high levels of homeless and vagrant loiterers in the station as a related concern.

#### Additional sample quotes from the survey:

“Better signage to keep bikes off the escalators!!!”

“Please make it easier to navigate fare gates for wheelchair users”

“Add kickplate buttons to interior and exterior of elevators for better accessibility; have more than one elevator on each level; put new elevator in public view instead of hidden hallways”

“Please make sure these changes improve the SAFETY of the station. I go out of my way to go to North Berkeley or El Cerrito Plaza (during the day) instead of this station, especially at night.”

“Improve bike accessibility to BART station”

# DOWNTOWN BERKELEY BART STATION Modernization Study: Outreach + Survey Summary

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Figure 3 – Word Cloud: Survey Comments



This word cloud (**Figure 3**) visually represents the frequency of words used in the comments section of the survey. The size of the word represents its frequency of use.

## Conclusion

The Downtown Berkeley survey results conveyed that the majority of BART riders prioritize function, service, and cleanliness over aesthetics, and would like to see investment in improving these areas before other modernization occurs. Many BART riders who took the survey would like to see improvements in accessibility, which include adding more entrances, elevators, stairs, and escalators. In addition, many would like to see signs added at the ground level indicating train departure times. Many other additional comments were also taken into consideration, including requests for better bike accessibility and wheelchair access, and more public art in the station.

