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## Fact v. Fiction: the East-West Connector

The East-West Connector will be an integral component to serve Union City's Station District. Alameda County voters twice voted to fund the East-West Connector to provide a second point of access to the Station District, now an award-winning Priority Development Area. The Station District has built or entitled 1,700 new housing units, with an additional 1.2 million square feet of planned office space, and over 80 acres of underutilized land that await activation – all of which are adjacent to the Union City BART Station. Several myths have recently been published in newspapers and on social media concerning the East-West Connector. This brief fact sheet separates fact from fiction.

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**FICTION: Union City has committed to funding a \$320 million highway and will bear the responsibility for all cost overruns.**

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**FACT:** The unanimous vote by the City Council on Tuesday, February 27, 2018, only authorized City staff to start negotiations with Alameda County Transportation Commission (ACTC) staff for Union City to take responsibility for the construction of the East-West Connector. Any proposed agreement will need to be approved by a 2/3 vote of the ACTC Commissioners after a 45-day public comment period, and a vote of the City Council.

There is no obligation to build the road. If authorized by ACTC and the City Council, construction drawings will be completed and construction bids will be solicited. If the bids come in higher than available funding, the construction of the East-West Connector will not proceed.

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**FICTION: Union City is diverting \$25 million in scarce public funds to build the East-West Connector.**

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**FACT:** Union City is donating \$25 million in land value as its local match for the East-West Connector. Union City's redevelopment agency purchased right-of-way needed for the East-West Connector in the early 2000's. Since then, the right-of-way land value has increased to \$25 million and Union City is donating this land as its local match.

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**FICTION: Dumbarton Corridor funds are being diverted away from the Dumbarton Rail project to fund the East-West Connector.**

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**FACT:** Dumbarton Rail and Dumbarton Corridor sound similar, but are two different projects with different funding sources. Dumbarton Corridor funds were always intended to fund road improvements for buses, cars, and bicycles between the Dumbarton Bridge and the Station District, and are not authorized to be spent on the Dumbarton Rail project, which is funded separately.

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**FICTION: Union City is secretive and ignoring public input in its effort to build a new highway.**

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**FACT:** The East-West Connector and its predecessor, State Route 84, have been part of the public planning process for more than 30 years with more than 30 hearings and public workshops. The project has consistently been envisioned and supported by voters as a critical second point of access to the Station District and the surrounding area. Funding the East-West Connector is widely supported by the public, having been approved by Alameda County voters in two elections. The East-West Connector and earlier versions were always planned to provide a second public road to serve the Station District and the surrounding area, and was identified in two General Plans, two Redevelopment Plans, two EIRs, two pedestrian and bicycle master plans, and the DIPSA Specific Plan.

The public is welcome to get involved by following updates and opportunities for public feedback at [www.unioncity.org/eastwestconnector](http://www.unioncity.org/eastwestconnector).

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**FICTION: Union City is diverting bicycle funds to build a highway.**

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**FACT:** Union City has a track record of building bicycle lanes and bicycle paths, and will continue to do so with the East-West Connector, which will include Class 1 bicycle paths, Class 2 bicycle lanes, and Class 4 bicycle lanes to accommodate both recreational and commuter bicyclists. Recently, Union City removed parking from Decoto Road, adjacent to the Station District, to construct bicycle lanes. Union City has 6.9 miles of Class 1 bicycle paths and 27 miles of Class 2 bicycle paths.

Over the remaining 27-year life of Measures B and BB, ACTC will provide Union City \$10.8 million (our local share of bicycle and pedestrian funding) to construct new bicycle and pedestrian paths and lanes. Union City will receive an additional \$37.8 million for maintaining local streets and roads.

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**FICTION: The road is built to accommodate commuters to the Tri-Valley and Central Valley.**

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**FACT:** The purpose of this roadway is to serve the Station District, our high-density development adjacent to BART, regional bus service, and planned passenger rail. The roadway is imperative for a second fire-access road to the new high-density housing and offices located in the Station District. The roadway will provide direct connectivity from the east side of the Union City BART Station to the Dumbarton Bridge for express buses, bicycles, and pedestrians.

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**FICTION: \$75 million intended to construct a two-sided BART Station, bus transit facility, and passenger amenities will be diverted to construct the East-West Connector.**

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**FACT:** All of these improvements to the Union City BART Station are already built. Construction of the two-sided Union City BART Station with new fare gates, new public restrooms, a new station agent booth, and two new elevators was completed a year ago. Bus parking facilities, bus access roads, bus shelters equipped with solar collectors to power the BART Station, new escalators and stairs, and a widened southbound platform have been in place for eight years.

Construction drawings for new stairs, escalators, and a widened northbound platform are completed, and BART will bid the project later this year. More than \$160 million in public funds has been spent already to improve the Union City BART Station, construct infrastructure for the Station District, and build affordable housing. The funding came from the Union City Redevelopment Agency, Measure B, One Bay Area Grant, and Proposition 1C.

In addition to these completed investments, the California Public Utilities Commission issued Union City a permit in December 2017 to construct an at-grade pedestrian crossing from the east side of the Union City BART Station to provide easy access to 1,200 housing units recently built or entitled. The City will bid the pedestrian crossing for construction later this year. The City is awaiting Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) to sign the contract to construct components of the pedestrian crossing that UPRR is responsible for construction.

Union City BART is one of the most modern and efficient stations in the BART system. All of these improvements were spearheaded by Union City. Union City has demonstrated a strong commitment to high-density, transit-oriented development through its leadership in the Station District.

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**FICTION: Union City seeks to reallocate \$75 million earmarked for rail improvements needed for ACE, Capitol Corridor and Dumbarton Rail to connect to Union City BART, to the East-West Connector.**

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**FACT:** Measure BB programs \$75 million to the Union City Intermodal Station under the category “Major Transit Corridor Improvements and Rail Connections Investments.” ACTC staff recommends reprogramming these funds to construct the East-West Connector as a transit corridor improvement.

Bringing passenger rail to Union City’s BART station has long been part of Union City’s vision for the Station District, and ACTC staff believes that other funding can be secured to construct the rail improvements needed for passenger rail to connect to Union City BART. These rail improvements include the construction of the Industrial and Shinn connections and a passenger rail platform, all of which completed CEQA review initiated by Union City. ACTC staff recommendations to reprogram Measure BB funding will need to be approved by a 2/3 vote of the ACTC Commission after a 45-day public comment period.

Once funding is secure for the rail improvements, construction of the improvements will require approval from Union Pacific Railroad and the Alameda County Board of Supervisors. ACE, Capitol Corridor, and Dumbarton Rail would also need to formally commit to providing service to Union City BART. Mayor Carol Dutra-Vernaci is leading the advocacy effort with her colleague ACTC Commissioners and MTC Commissioners to fund Dumbarton Rail, ACE, and Capitol Corridor connectivity to Union City BART and to encourage the passenger rail providers to provide service to the Union City Station District.