An AC Transit drawing shows modern, elevated platforms for the BRT stations.

By Amy Sylvestri

San Leandro Times

The City Council heard from AC Transit about the next step in the Bus Rapid Transit project at its last meeting of the year.

Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) has been described as a light rail on wheels, with a 9.5-mile route planned from downtown Oakland to the San Leandro BART station. It received the official approval of the City Council last summer. At the Dec. 17 meeting, the City Council heard more about the design of the BRT stations.

The majority of the route will be dedicated bus lanes, though in San Leandro the dedicated lanes will go just four blocks into the city before turning off East 14th Street and using side streets to get to the downtown BART station.

The $150 million BRT project has been in the works for years and was originally planned to run to UC Berkeley, but the City of Berkeley didn't want the line. The route was also originally supposed to go all the way to the Bayfair, but the San Leandro City Council nixed the longer route, saying it would be too disruptive to East 14th Street traffic.

There will be over 30 stations on the BRT line, most on International Boulevard and most spaced about half a mile from each other, AC Transit BRT project engineer Mitra Moheb told the council.

Moheb said that the opening day for BRT is more than three years away, but construction is going to start in 2014 and be done in increments in order to cause as little disruption to traffic as possible.

“We are on a fast pace,” said Moheb.

When the BRT line opens in 2016, AC Transit predicts that 36,000 people will ride the busses each day – up from 25,000 today. They predict the busses will travel 25 percent faster during the day and 28 percent faster during rush hour.

The stations will have ticket machines and elevated loading platforms. Many of the stations will be in the middle of the street, though some will be on the side of the street. The crosswalks near the stations will be painted in stripes to let people know they are near a BRT station.

Each station will also have cameras and bright lighting to deter crime. Moheb also said the stations will be in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, even though elevated

stations in the middle of busy streets could make that challenging.

Moheb said that the BRT corridor and stations will be landscaped with lots of trees and that the aesthetics of the stations can be customized by local artists.

Councilman Jim Prola asked Moheb how AC Transit will try to deter graffiti. She replied that murals and other art are ways to mitigate that and that they are also looking into constructing the shelters using materials that are easier to clean.

Mayor Stephen Cassidy asked about the local art elements and said that AC Transit should present draft designs to the city at all stages before going ahead.

“It’s very exciting, but we just want to have a voice in the project as it moves along,” said Cassidy.