

Community Efforts Lead the Way in River District Transit Plans

Community and Partner Engagement Case Study | January 2024

Sacramento Integrated Multimodal Place-Based Living (SIMPL) Project



Bike Storage at Mirasol Village | Photo Courtesy of [MirasolVillage.Net](https://www.mirasolvillage.net)

The **Sacramento Integrated Multimodal Place-Based Living (SIMPL) Project** is a collection of efforts led by the Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency (SHRA) and 15 local community partners. The SIMPL Project is part of the California Strategic Growth Council's \$23 million Transformative Climate Communities (TCC) Program Grant. The site of the SIMPL Project is located within the River District neighborhood, a once-bustling hub for the railroad industry located just north of Downtown Sacramento and adjacent to the confluence of the Sacramento and American Rivers.

The **Dos Rios Light Rail Station** is a SIMPL TCC Funded Project that has been a decade in the making. This infrastructure is integral to the River District's redevelopment strategy to improve accessibility and mobility. The Dos Rios Light Rail Station will sit at North 12th Street, just south of Richards Boulevard. The station will serve as a transportation hub that can connect residents to Downtown Sacramento and into the Greater Sacramento Region. Following the redevelopment of the Dos Rios Public Housing Project into Mirasol Village (another funded SIMPL Project), residents anticipated the Light Rail Station would be completed by 2025. Instead, the Light Rail Station has experienced delays due to soil remediation and rising construction and materials costs, resulting in a project shortfall of \$19.2M. Due to adjustments in the timeline and budget, SHRA received notice on July 31, 2023 of non-performance by SGC that requires a stop of all transit project work and an updated funding plan to address the project budget increases. The transit project risks losing its \$17 million TCC funding; TCC Grant funds must be liquidated by the end of the grant year 2026/2027 in accordance with SB101. On August 29, 2023, SHRA received a second non-performance letter that denied an extension of the grant term and requested additional information about possible substitute

projects. After receiving the notice, an alternative transit action plan began to be crafted by SHRA, project partners, and community members as a contingency if the gap funding is not filled and the Light Rail Station cannot move forward.

Alternative Transit Community Engagement

Several community engagement activities and public meetings were held with both community members and project partners to discuss and craft both the Dos Rios Light Rail and alternative transit plans from August 2023 to January 2024 .

Date	Engagement Activity	Attendees
August 2023	9 th Quarterly Leadership Council – Virtual	22
	21 st Special Leadership Council Meeting to Discuss Non-Performance Letter – Virtual	24
September 2023	28 th MV Resident Meeting – TCC Transit Needs Survey Distributed	16
October 2023	9 th Electronic Version of Alternative Transit Survey Distributed	-
	12 th Alkali Mansion Flats Neighborhood Association Meeting at the Boys and Girls Club	20
	18 th Quarterly Leadership Council Meeting – Virtual	22
	25 th Leadership Council Subcommittee Virtual	33
	26 th City of Sacramento TDM Focus Group Meeting	-
	27 th Implementation Subcommittee Meeting Virtual	19
	31 st River District Transportation Survey Distributed Electronically	-
November 2023	1 st Leadership Council Subcommittee Virtual & 250 Hard Copies of Transportation Survey Distributed	16
	2 nd Townhall Meeting at MV	6
	2 nd Executive Leadership Convening – Plan for Light Rail Station Funding; led by Senator Ashby with community attendance	-
	3 rd Implementation Subcommittee Meeting Virtual	9
	4 th Townhall Meeting at MV	3
	7 th Townhall Meeting at Track 281	4
	8 th Leadership Council Subcommittee Meeting Virtual	22
	10 th Townhall at MV	6
	13 th Leadership Council Subcommittee Virtual	22
	13 th SacRT Board Meeting – Community support of Dos Rios Station, SHRA provides private bus transportation for Mirasol Village residents	-
	14 th Emergency Leadership Council Subcommittee Virtual	25
	15 th Project Partners Begin Drafting Transit Project Proposals	-
	21 st Leadership Council Subcommittee Virtual	22
	21 st SHRA Leadership Requests Extension for Transit Proposals	-
December 2023	11 th SacRT Board Meets Again – Voted to Extend Until January 8 th	-
	13 th SACOG Approves Allocation Spending for Light Rail Station	-
January 2024	3 rd Project Partner Meeting - Dos Rios Station Update	-
	8 th SacRT Approves Proposed Funding Strategy for Light Rail Station	-

As outlined in the timeline above, the SIMPL Leadership Council and its transit subcommittee (comprised of both project partners and community members) met **eleven** times over four months, averaging approximately 22 attendees per session. In addition to the subcommittee meetings, Project Partners held townhall sessions at Mirasol Village and Track 281, another housing complex in the River District.

SIMPL Project Transit Improvements

The process of developing a contingency transportation proposal involved community members and project partners identifying the existing transit access and mobility strategies within the River District. Connecting communities to ensure mobility for all residents and workers is foundational to the entire SIMPL Project. *The SIMPL Project's mobility was designed around the Dos Rios Light Rail Station as the central transportation hub in the district for Mirasol Village Residents and the public.*

In addition to the Dos Rios Light Rail Station, the SIMPL project incorporates multiple transit modalities throughout the development. The Mirasol Village complex implemented a Bike Share program, installed three electric vehicle (EV) chargers on-site, incorporated protected bike lanes and bike lockers, and distributed public transit vouchers for residents.

Outside of Mirasol Village, the SIMPL Project constructed protected pedestrian and bike pathways along 12th street, installed new signals and street signs, and added 8,689 square feet of ADA-Compliant sidewalks. The project also used leverage funding to purchase six zero-emission buses and chargers and five gasoline buses to increase SmART Ride Transit service capacity.

The majority of these transit improvements are waiting for established infrastructure or additional service to operate as reliable transportation modalities for the River District. For example, the EV Chargers installed are not useful without residents' access to an electric car. The majority of the microtransit improvements activities thus far are also designated exclusively for Mirasol Village residents, excluding the growing population living or working throughout the River District.

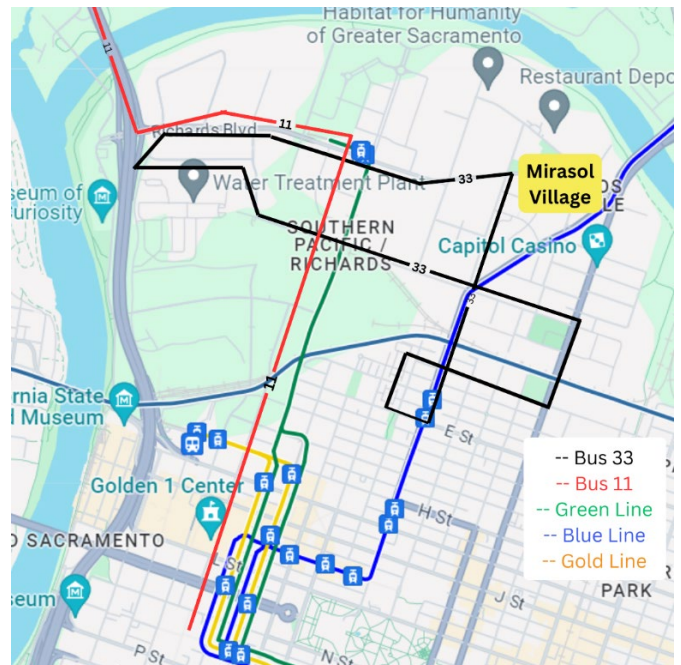


North 12th Street Complete Streets Project Rendering
Photo Courtesy of [City of Sacramento](#)

Existing Public Transit

The map to the right indicates the River District's current public transit options. Public transit in the River District includes Buses #33 and #11, and the Green and Blue Light Rail Lines. SmART Ride also services the area.

Bus #33 is a more localized route that has no weekend or holiday service, and no service past 6:00 o'clock in the evening. Its expanded route is limited to certain times of the day. Bus #11 is a more expansive route, running North to Natomas and South to Land Park and SCC. It has weekend service, but the stops are currently limited to Richards Blvd. Both the Green and Blue Light Rail Lines run through the River District, but the stations (Township 9 and Alkali Flat/La Valentina) are located on the corners of the neighborhood. Walking to the stations can take a lot of time (and might not feel the safest), with the Township 9 Station



Base Map Courtesy of Google

a 13-minute walk from Mirasol Village and the Alkali Flat/La Valentina Station a 15-minute walk that involves crossing the 12th Street underpass.

Community Insights: Survey Findings and Community Suggestions

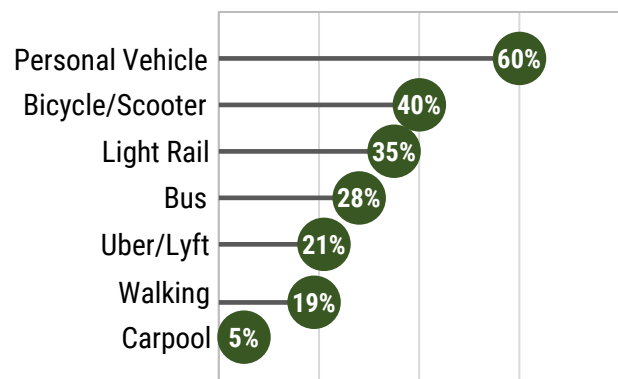
Community meetings, townhalls, and Leadership Council meetings provided insight to community needs. Alternative transit surveys were also distributed to better understand community use and explore additional transit options.¹ The first survey was distributed solely to River District Residents at Mirasol Village, Alkali Mansion Flats, and Cannery Place and received 57 responses. The second survey was distributed to the same complexes as well as those who work in the area. The second survey had a sample of 28 responses. The surveys were distributed by Project Partners (SHRA, Alechemist CDC, CivicThread, and Urban Strategies) in both electronic and physical form.

Current Transit Use

The most popular form of transportation used by respondents was a personal vehicle, with 60%.² Bicycle/Scooter usage was the second most used form of transit, particularly among Alkali Mansion Flats residents, with 68% of the housing complex's respondents indicating use. Even without the Dos Rios Light Rail Station, 35% of River District respondents indicated Light Rail use.

Respondents reported that they are most likely leaving the River District to head to Downtown. Other popular destinations included Natomas, Arden Arcade, and Rancho Cordova.

Personal Vehicles are the most commonly used transit type of River District Residents.



Public Transit Barriers & Suggestions

"I have to walk under the Amtrak Bridge to the Light Rail Station. **It is not safe.**"

"SacRT **doesn't run often enough or late enough.** I used to use it exclusively but needed to get a car so I could travel the city quicker and easier."

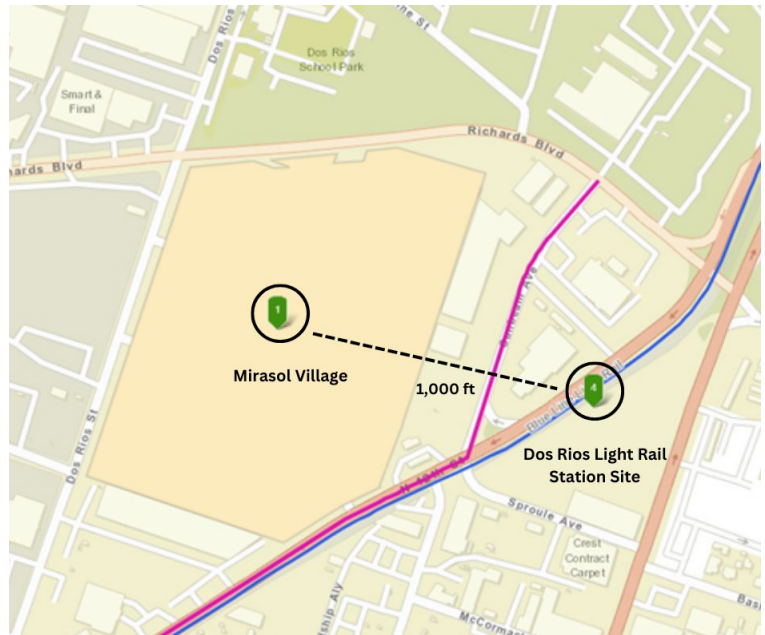
"**So disappointed** that the light rail is not available closer to home"

Respondents were asked what might be keeping them from utilizing public transit and the most commonly indicated barrier was **Ease of Access**, with 46%, followed by **Time/Distance** at 36%. Despite being in close proximity to Downtown Sacramento, one resident indicated that taking public transit is difficult because there are *"too many transfers of one+ mile walks to destinations after exiting transit."*

¹ The Alternative Transit Surveys were designed and distributed through a collaboration of SIMPL Project Partners. ISR did not participate in the design or distribution of the first survey, and provided insight and input only on the second transit survey.

² Results presented here are from the first transit survey, consisting of 57 River District Respondents indicating all modes of transit they currently use.

The construction of the Dos Rios Light Rail Station could make the process easier, as 35% of residents still indicated utilizing Light Rail despite the long walks to stations. The Dos Rios Light Rail Station would make public transit more accessible and available to those unable to make those long walks or feel unsafe doing so. The Station, only about 1,000 feet from Mirasol Village as shown to the right, would also reduce the time barrier related to using public transit. Residents indicated that a Light Rail Station is essential for making public transit a more favorable, accessible option for travel.



Proximity of the Dos Rios Light Rail Station to Mirasol Village | Base Map Courtesy of SHRA

In addition to advocating for the Dos Rios Light Rail Station, residents also indicated that they need better access (extended service hours and stops) to buses #11 and #33, as well as the Green, Blue, and Gold Light Rail Lines. For better access, the most common resident suggestion was to provide weekend, evening, and late night service. In an open response box, three residents called for the return of Bus Line #15, which provides service to Del Paso Heights and Arden and discontinued service south of the Arden/Del Paso Station in September 2019. Other comments included a need for getting over the river to the North (Del Paso, Natomas, Arden), which could include an express service on Bus #11.

Active Transit Barriers & Suggestions

Respondents were also asked about barriers in active forms of transit (bicycling, scootering, and walking). The most commonly indicated barrier to biking was **Time/Distance** (32%), with one resident saying that a bike commute *“would be over an hour and a half bike ride – one way.”* The second most common barrier was **safety** (29%) with one respondent sharing that *“the trails and parks don’t feel safe anymore. If we can fix that more people would walk and bike.”* In addition to time and safety barriers, 14% of the respondents indicated that they are physically unable to use a bike.

There is interest in a Public Bike Share Program, with 50% of respondents sharing that they would use the program if available. Additionally, 57% of respondents indicated that they would be more likely to bike or walk if **new pedestrian walkways and protected bike lanes** were installed. In an open box for comments, 15 of the respondents indicated a need for more bike lanes, especially along 16th Street. Another resident suggested holding free bike repair clinics.



Where are protected pedestrian walkways and bike lanes needed?

- On 12th Street coming off the 160 Highway
- Under the Amtrak bridge on 12th street
- Downtown and to Natomas - particularly on Airport Road where you must connect when riding from Downtown to Natomas
- North 7th, Fair Oaks Blvd
- Richards Blvd needs wider sidewalks and protected bike lanes
- North 10th Street is one of the only access points to the river and does not have sidewalks on one side and does not have bike lanes
- Richards Blvd., 12th street, Truxel, and freeway overpasses
- Connect North Sac with more bike bridges
- Convert the fourth lane on North 16th Street to a bike lane
- 12th Street all the way to K Street/Capitol Park
- One lane on 16th Street should be converted into a multi-direction bike and pedestrian path to alleviate bottle necks and improve connectivity on 16th and B



A Community-Supported Solution



Rendering of Dos Rios Light Rail Station Design | Photo Courtesy of SacRT

The Dos Rios Light Rail Station has been an important agenda item for the SacRT Board of Directors meetings.³ The SacRT Board met on November 13, 2023 to vote on a funding strategy to fill the \$19.2M funding needed for the Station. The new funding strategy would allocate \$10M in SB125 funds and \$9.2M in other SacRT funds for the station⁴. The SB125 Transit Program is a state General Fund for state regional planning agencies. Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG) received an award of \$238M to distribute for regional transit, with SacRT expecting to receive about 89% of that funding. This funding strategy proposes using \$10M from SB125, and requires approval from SACOG for use of the funds. At the time of the November 13th Board Meeting, SACOG had not yet met to approve this funding allocation.

Community support swelled for this new strategy to fund the Dos Rios Light Rail Station. Community engagement was supported by the Project Partners CivicThread and Alchemist CDC who provided food for residents before the November 13th meeting. SHRA also arranged for a private bus charter to transport residents to the meeting in Downtown Sacramento. Mirasol Village resident Kesha Harris brought 50 signatures in support of the Station from her fellow residents who could not be present.

“Building the Light Rail is a culmination of a lot of hard work and promises.”

LaShelle Dozier, SHRA Executive Director

“[The station] is viewed as an essential building block for the future.”

Greta Lucin, River District Board President

³ SacRT Board Meeting recordings can be found [HERE](#).

⁴ Please find Dos Rios Station Agenda item notes from November 13, 2023 SacRT Board Meeting [HERE](#).

Despite the strong support for the station, the Board denied the newly proposed funding strategy in a six to five vote. All Sacramento City Council board members and one County representative approved the motion. Those who casted their votes against the motion are representatives of areas outside of the City. The nay votes cited concerns about the possibility of SACOG not approving the SB125 allocation and showed preference for increasing bus service to serve River District Residents instead. County Supervisor Patrick Kennedy, who voted against the motion, stated that *"this love affair with light rail just confounds me when we do have a great bus system."*⁵

Community members and project partners alike continued their campaign for the light rail station as a critical public infrastructure for the redevelopment of the River District. When the SacRT Board met again in December, they tabled the Dos Rios Light Rail vote until their next meeting, giving time for SACOG to approve the SacRT allocation of \$10M of their SB125 funding in the December Board meeting.⁶ Following the SACOG allocation approval, the SacRT Board reviewed the motion again in their January 8th 2024 meeting. **The SacRT Board approved the new funding strategy for the Dos Rios Light Rail Station on January 8, 2024**, filling in the funding gap and reaffirming the power of community voice and action.

With a goal of creating connected, mobile communities, the Light Rail Station (and other SIMPL Project alternative transit activities) will be crucial for the success of the SIMPL Project and the TCC grant.

⁵ See voting results and Board Member responses from the Sacramento Bee's recap article [HERE](#).

⁶ Please find meeting minutes for the December 11, 2023 SacRT Board Meeting [HERE](#).