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JULY 7, 2022

TO: BOARD OF DIRECTORS

THROUGH: STEPHANIE N. WIGGINS 
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

FROM: JAMES DE LA LOZA 
CHIEF PLANNING OFFICER

**SUBJECT: I-605 CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENT PROJECT - MOTION
42 RESPONSE**

ISSUE

At the October 22, 2020 Regular Board meeting, Directors Solis, Hahn, Garcia, Fasana, Garcetti and Bonin introduced Motion 42 on the I-605 Corridor Improvement Project (CIP) (Attachment A). The Motion directed staff to pause the circulation of the I-605 CIP Environmental Impact Report/ Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS) and to provide a status update to the Board with additional alternatives that are locally supported and minimize right-of-way impacts. Additionally, the Board asked for a review of the project's purpose and need and its alignment with various state policies related to equity, greenhouse gas emissions and vehicle miles traveled. This board box summarizes activities to-date and outlines next steps in the development of a revised suite of project alternatives.

BACKGROUND

The I-605 CIP project was initiated in October 2016 and encompasses a major segment of Interstate 605 in both the Gateway Cities and San Gabriel Valley Subregions, including the major freeway-to-freeway connections at the I-105, I-5, SR-60 and I-10. To increase the movement of people, ease congestion and improve mobility and safety, the current project alternatives are considering High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) or ExpressLanes alternatives. Moreover, the project is evaluating and developing local multimodal improvements within the project's environmental impact area, inclusive of locally-prioritized complete streets improvements.

On I-5, at the terminus of the construction currently underway in Norwalk, the addition of an HOV lane is being evaluated through the City of Downey. Improvements on SR-60 include the consideration of a general purpose lane through the SR-60/605 interchange and HOV or ExpressLane Direct connectors at I-605/105 and I-605/10 interchanges.

DISCUSSION

Since the introduction of Motion 42, staff has worked with the cities of Downey and Santa Fe Springs, the Gateway Cities Councils of Governments (GCCOG), the I-5 Joint Powers Authority (JPA) and Caltrans to revisit the design of the current project alternatives. Through these collaborative efforts, staff developed design options that substantially reduce but do not eliminate potential property impacts. In early 2021 these new design options were presented to the I-5 JPA Board, the 91/605/405 Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), and the 91/605/405 Corridor Cities Committee (CCC), comprising locally-elected officials from the corridors. These three bodies voted to include the design options in the Draft EIR/EIS and to circulate the document for public review and comment after their review and approval of an outreach plan.

While these efforts led to significant right-of-way impact reductions, a more holistic review of the current alternatives as well as the development of other possible alternatives is required to appropriately respond to Motion 42. Brief presentation updates in May and June 2022 were provided to the CCC and TAC to inform them of project re-engagement efforts that will be forthcoming.

Staff has also met with Caltrans leadership this year to discuss how recent changes in State policies, plans and guidelines may also inform the development of alternative refinements and/or new alternatives for the Project. For example, the Climate Action Plan for Transportation Infrastructure, Complete Streets guidance, SB743, and other policies will likely influence the new direction for the Project. Furthermore, the Board adopted the Multimodal Highway Investment Objectives (Attachment B) at the June 2022 meeting, which will inform the refinement of Project alternatives and all future community engagement efforts on the Project.

NEXT STEPS

Starting July and through September, staff will meet with each of the cities within the corridor, the two Councils of Governments, i.e., Gateway Cities (GC) and San Gabriel Valley (SGV), the I-5 JPA, and Caltrans to re-engage on the project, listen, gather input and develop updated alternatives/design options. Through these efforts, staff will seek to understand local priorities, concerns and uses of the I-605 CIP.

Staff will also continue to work closely with Caltrans, the owner/operator of the State highway system, to develop and lead this collaborative review and consultation process with the corridors' stakeholders. The consultation with each of the stakeholders above is critical to further develop locally-supported options to reduce the Project's footprint and address the policy-level concerns raised by the Board in Motion 42. Following this initial consultation with agency stakeholders, and based on their feedback, the Project team will initiate a community engagement process in the fall of this year to update the public on the status of current project alternatives and new Board and State policies, and to listen to their perspectives, concerns and ideas on how the corridor can be improved, including any potential revision to the current alternatives and potential new ones.

Through these efforts, staff will develop revised project alternatives that reduce or eliminate community impacts and are consistent with current Caltrans and Metro policy objectives. A board report will be provided in December outlining the next steps on the project for the Board's consideration.

Attachments

Attachment A – Motion 42 I-605 Corridor Improvement Project

Attachment B – Metro Highway Objectives for Multimodal Highway Investments

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Board Report

File #: 2020-0733, File Type: Motion / Motion Response

Agenda Number: 42.

**REGULAR BOARD MEETING
OCTOBER 22, 2020**

Motion by:

DIRECTORS SOLIS, HAHN, GARCIA, FASANA, GARCETTI, AND BONIN

I-605 Corridor Improvement Project Build Alternatives

The I-605 Corridor Improvement Project seeks to modify and/or widen 16 miles of freeway including segments on the I-605, I-10, SR-60, I-5, and I-105 in the Gateway and San Gabriel Valley Subregions. The Project scope currently includes several alternatives that would build various combinations of additional auxiliary, general purpose, high-occupancy vehicle, and high-occupancy toll lanes along the corridor. Preliminary reports for the project suggest that hundreds of partial and full property acquisitions will be necessary in addition to hundreds of temporary and permanent easements, which would affect unincorporated communities as well as the cities of Baldwin Park, Industry, Pico Rivera, El Monte, South El Monte, Whittier, Downey, Norwalk, Santa Fe Springs. The Project alignment moves largely through disadvantaged communities experiencing housing and homelessness crises that have only been exacerbated by the ongoing pandemic.

On September 2, 2020, the Gateway Cities Council of Governments (GCCOG) sent a letter to Metro's Chief Executive Officer requesting to delay the release of the I-605 Corridor Improvement Project Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (EIS/EIR) and to incorporate a local option alternative that reflects the Guiding Principles adopted by the SR-91/I-605/I-405 Corridor Cities Committee in October 2007. The GCCOG's Guiding Principles include a provision that new freeway construction, including the addition of lanes, should be confined to existing State right-of-way in order to preserve and enhance local economies and environments. In response to this letter and to concerns raised by other stakeholders, Metro has agreed to delay the release of the EIS/EIR until early 2021. However, the impacts anticipated for the Project necessitate a fresh look at the scope of work and the alternatives proposed.

California's transportation sector currently accounts for more than 50 percent of the state's greenhouse gas emissions, and vehicle ownership rates have significantly increased in the region over the last 30 years. According to a 2018 study from the UCLA Institute of Transportation Studies, the six-county region covered by the Southern California Association of Governments (Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside San Bernardino, Ventura, and Imperial Counties) added 1.8 million people and 456,000 household vehicles between 1990 and 2000 with an average of 0.25 vehicles per new

resident. The These numbers exploded to 0.95 vehicles per new resident between 2000 and 2015 when the region saw 2.3 million people and 2.1 million household vehicles added. Despite Metro's efforts to rapidly expand its transit network, vehicle miles traveled per capita have steadily climbed upwards throughout the county since 2010, and transit ridership across the state has been declining since 2012. Metro has put forth several efforts to restore and increase transit ridership and reduce greenhouse gas emissions including the ongoing NextGen initiative and the advancement of Twenty-Eight by 28' Pillar Projects. Per a motion written by Director Bonin last year, Metro is also working to align its highway program with the Executive Order issued by Governor Newsom in September 2019 which directed the California State Transportation Agency to realign its portfolio of construction, operations and maintenance projects to help reverse trends of rising fuel consumption and greenhouse gas emissions from the transportation sector. However, Metro must also begin taking on a wholistic, equity-based examination of its projects' scopes to ensure investments do not increase induced demand or work against existing greenhouse gas emissions reduction goals.

SUBJECT: I-605 CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENT PROJECT BUILD ALTERNATIVES

RECOMMENDATION

APPROVE Motion by Directors Solis, Hahn, Garcia, Fasana, Garcetti, and Bonin that the Board direct the Chief Executive Officer to report back to the Planning and Programming Committee in January 2021 with a status update and in April 2021 with a final report on suggestions for other I-605 build alternatives that consider:

- A. An additional locally-supported alternative that minimizes right-of-way impacts and/or a stand-alone Transportation System/Demand Management (TSM/TDM) alternative similar to the TSM/TDM alternative put forth on the SR-710 North Project; and
- B. A review of the project's purpose and need and its alignment with various local and state policies and plans related to equity, greenhouse gas emissions and vehicle miles traveled.

WE FURTHER MOVE that staff, including the Executive Officer of Equity and Race, engage with the San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments, the Gateway Cities Council of Governments, the I-5 Joint Powers Authority, the County of Los Angeles, corridor cities, and community stakeholders to develop this report. The release of the EIS/EIR should be further delayed until after the final report is received by the Metro Board.

Metro Objectives for Multimodal Highway Investment

1. Advance the mobility needs of people and goods within LA County by developing projects and programs that support traffic mobility and enhanced safety, economic vitality, equitable impacts, access to opportunity, regional sustainability, and resiliency for affected local communities and the region.
2. Recognizing LA County's history of inequitable highway investment policies and construction, work with local communities to reduce disparities caused by the existing highway system and develop holistic, positive approaches to maintain and improve the integrity and quality of life of those communities with minimal or no displacements during the implementation of highway improvements.
3. Ensure that local and regional investment in LA County's highway system— particularly the implementation of Measures R and M priorities—is considered within the context of a countywide multimodal, integrated planning vision that reflects a holistic approach to meeting the needs of local communities, reducing disparities, creating a safer and well-maintained transportation system, and fostering greater regional mobility and access to opportunity.
4. Develop early, constructive, and meaningful public engagement processes and planning tools with subregional partners that foster engagement with a wide range of stakeholders, specifically people most directly impacted, with the goal of informing the planning, development, and implementation of subregional corridor investment strategies in LA County's highway system aligning with local and subregional needs and priorities.
5. Partner with Caltrans and regional stakeholders to create an LA County multimodal highway strategic plan that is developed through a collaborative planning approach to improve the overall regional mobility of people and goods throughout the county, safely and equitably, while taking action to reduce the negative environmental and climate impacts of car and truck travel.
6. Support the optimization of existing highway facilities by using technology and innovation that maximizes the throughput and travel time of people and goods, while supporting sustainable, resilient, and healthy outcomes, including reducing air pollutants and greenhouse gas emissions generated from the use of the facilities.