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SEPTEMBER 20, 2021

TO: BOARD OF DIRECTORS

THROUGH: STEPHANIE N. WIGGINS 
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

FROM: JIM DE LA LOZA 
CHIEF PLANNING OFFICER

SUBJECT: LOS ANGELES AERIAL RAPID TRANSIT PROJECT

ISSUE

This is a response to a June 2021 Board Motion 51 (Attachment A) to provide a report back on certain elements of the proposed Los Angeles Aerial Rapid Transit Project ("LA ART" or "Project"), for which Metro is serving as the CEQA Lead Agency.

BACKGROUND OR DISCUSSION

Aerial Rapid Transit Technologies, LLC ("ARTT"), a private company, submitted an Unsolicited Proposal to Metro's Office of Extraordinary Innovation in April 2018 to finance, design, construct, operate, and maintain an aerial rapid transit gondola system. A Memorandum of Agreement ("MOA") between ARTT and Metro was executed in April 2019. In accordance with the MOA, Metro will act as the CEQA Lead Agency for the Project's environmental clearance, with staff time spent on the Project reimbursed by ARTT. The Project is currently underway with the Draft Environmental Impact Report (Draft EIR), planned to be released in early 2022. This is the first time Metro has served as the Lead Agency for a privately initiated and funded project.

Below are the responses to the specific items requested in the Board motion.

- A. Analysis of Metro's duties and available authority to impose conditions when acting as the lead agency for non-Metro projects with regards to environmental clearance**

Metro is the Lead Agency for the proposed Project in accordance with Sections 15050 and 15367 of the CEQA Guidelines. While LA ART is the first private project in which Metro will act as Lead Agency, it is common practice for other agencies, such as the County and City of Los Angeles. Consistent with those agencies, Metro is requiring LA ART to reimburse Metro for all staff time associated with the environmental review and Metro approval of the Project.

Under CEQA Section 21082.1(c) and CEQA Guidelines Section 15084(e), the Lead Agency is responsible for the Draft EIR's adequacy and objectivity and must independently review and analyze the Draft EIR before releasing it to the public. After the public review process ends, the Lead Agency must consider and respond to the comments received and prepare the Final EIR. Before the Lead Agency approves a proposed project, it must certify that the EIR for the proposed project complies with CEQA; require adoption of mitigation measures that will become conditions; make certain findings regarding alternatives, mitigation measures, and significant unavoidable impacts; and adopt a monitoring or reporting program for the mitigation measures.

The CEQA process will inform decision makers and the public about the potential environmental impacts and proposed mitigations of the proposed project. Metro is committed to ensuring the process is thorough, comprehensive, and transparent so that an informed decision can be made.

B. Recommendations for community benefits developed in collaboration with the project be included as part of the project scope

The Motion noted that recommendations should consider, but not be limited to: mitigations for potential parking impacts; local job creation; workforce training; small business support and partnerships; affordable housing; and housing/business preservation.

In addition to considering the community benefits identified in the Motion, LA ART has committed to improved air quality, and accessible and affordable fares to residents and employees of businesses in the communities. LA ART is also looking at several pedestrian improvements along the route to enhance pedestrian safety and provide active transportation connectivity. Many of these concepts result from community engagement and comment process that has occurred in advance of the release of the Draft EIR.

The Draft EIR is still in preparation and, as such, it is anticipated that the environmental review process and planned stakeholder engagement will continue to help define potential community benefits with a more comprehensive list to be brought to the Board after further progress.

C. Any completed studies that can be made publicly available as part of the LA ART project, including any preliminary traffic analyses and demand modelling that estimate how many car trips will be taken off the street as a result of the project

Traffic analysis and ridership forecast technical studies are ongoing and are being prepared in accordance with CEQA and the City of Los Angeles' Transportation Assessment Guidelines (TAG). The scope of the transportation studies has been developed in coordination with Metro and the City of Los Angeles Department of Transportation. The studies will be made available to the public once the Draft EIR is completed and released for public comment. The ongoing transportation analyses will be summarized in two separate reports:

- The *Draft Environmental Impact Report Transportation Impact Section* (and associated appendices) will include the ridership forecasts and analysis of the Project's potential for transportation impacts under CEQA and the City of Los Angeles TAG. This will include an evaluation of the Project's consistency with Plans, Programs, Ordinances or Policies, an evaluation of the Project's effect on Vehicle Miles Travelled, the evaluation of the Project's potential for impacts related to Geometric Hazards, and an evaluation of the Project's potential for impacts related to emergency response.
- A separate *Project Access, Circulation and Construction Transportation Study* will be prepared in accordance with the non-CEQA analyses required in the City of Los Angeles TAG. This separate technical report will be prepared outside of the CEQA process to be consistent with State law (Senate Bill 743) and will include an evaluation of the Project's potential effects on intersection level of service.

Although studies are ongoing, based on the technology being employed, LA ART is expected to have the capacity to carry up to 5,000 passengers per hour, or nearly 10,000 riders in the two-hour period before and after a game or event at Dodger Stadium. Based on the average vehicle occupancy for games at Dodger Stadium, this is the equivalent of up to 3,000 vehicles removed from the roads around Dodger Stadium.

D. List of public agencies that must provide approvals for the LA ART project as well as a map detailing right-of-way needs and properties owned by public agencies

Other public agencies involved with the proposed Project and that have discretionary approval under CEQA include, but are not limited to, the

California Department of Parks and Recreation, California Department of Transportation, and City of Los Angeles.

The Project would be designed so that the ropeway (and cabins) are primarily aligned above the City of Los Angeles public right-of-way. Encroachment above private property will be limited. Potential air rights are also being analyzed and coordinated with Metro, the Cal/OSHA Amusement Ride and Tramway Unit, and Los Angeles Fire Department.

While detailed right of way maps have not yet been developed, the Community Meeting Slide Deck from the June 3 and June 5 meetings located on the Project website at www.laart.la shows the proposed alignment, and locations and footprints for stations, junctions and towers.

NEXT STEPS

The Draft EIR is expected to be released in early 2022. Staff will continue to oversee the CEQA process and will report back to the Board at key milestones, including the release of the Draft EIR.

ATTACHMENT

Attachment A – Board Motion 51



Board Report

File #: 2021-0456, File Type: Motion / Motion Response

Agenda Number: 51.

REGULAR BOARD MEETING JUNE 24, 2021

Motion by:

DIRECTORS SOLIS, KUEHL, MITCHELL, BUTTS, SANDOVAL, AND GARCETTI

LA Aerial Rapid Transit Project

The proposed LA Aerial Rapid Transit Project (LA ART) will connect Union Station and Dodger Stadium with the intent of taking car trips off nearby roadways during game days. However, there are important concerns that should be addressed prior to moving the project forward. The LA ART travels through several neighborhoods whose residents been deeply impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. These are neighborhoods that were already experiencing displacement and economic instability even before the onset of the pandemic. Affordable housing, access to healthy foods, cultural preservation, workforce opportunities and economic development initiatives focused on small business growth are sorely needed in order to support the communities along the Project alignment. Any major infrastructure investments that Metro is involved in near these neighborhoods should consider what community benefits are being brought to the table as part of those investments. Additionally, much of the on-street parking near the Chinatown LA ART station is not metered, and the surrounding community may see spillover parking impacts caused by patrons traveling between the Chinatown LA ART station and Dodger Stadium. These unintended consequences should be addressed as part of the larger project.

SUBJECT: LA AERIAL RAPID TRANSIT PROJECT

RECOMMENDATION

APPROVE Motion by Directors Solis, Kuehl, Mitchell, Butts, Sandoval, and Garcetti that the Board of Directors direct the Chief Executive Officer to report back in July 2021 with an update via Board Box and again in August 2021 with a final report that includes the following:

- A. Analysis of Metro's duties and available authority to impose conditions when acting as the lead agency for non-Metro projects with regards to environmental clearance;
- B. Recommendations for community benefits developed in collaboration with the project owner to be included as part of the project scope. Recommendations should consider, but not be limited to:
 - Mitigations for potential parking impacts

- Local job creation
 - Workforce training
 - Small business support and partnerships
 - Affordable housing, and
 - Housing/business preservation.
- C. Any completed studies that can be made publicly available as part of the LA ART Project, including any preliminary traffic analyses and demand modeling that estimate how many car trips will be taken off the street as a result of the Project; and
- D. List of all public agencies that must provide approvals for the LA ART Project as well as a map detailing right-of-way needs and properties owned by public agencies.