



Board Report

File #: 2024-0276, File Type: Program

Agenda Number: 15.

PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE JUNE 20, 2024

SUBJECT: STATE ROUTE (SR) 138 SEGMENT 13 SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS

ACTION: APPROVE RECOMMENDATION

RECOMMENDATION

CONSIDER:

- A. PROGRAMMING \$2,500,000 in Proposition C 25% or Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) for the SR-138 Segment 13; and
- B. AUTHORIZING the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or their designee to negotiate and execute all necessary agreements for the SR-138 Board-approved projects.

ISSUE

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) District 7 is the lead and implementing agency for SR-138 Segment 13 (the "Project"). In May 2023, Caltrans was in the process of reaching the 95 percent design phase milestone. The milestone prompted a reassessment of the engineer's cost estimate, which identified a cost increase that would almost double the capital cost, from \$45.5 million to \$85.5 million.

In order to maintain the Project's capital budget of \$45.5 million, Caltrans developed design options to reduce the Project scope while continuing to address the corridor's need for safety improvements. Caltrans will require \$2.5 million in support costs to update the engineering plans and permits based on the reduced Project scope and limits, described below. In tandem, Caltrans will seek approval at the June 2024 California Transportation Commission (CTC) meeting for an 18-month allocation time extension to avoid lapsing of the previously programmed funds.

BACKGROUND

In August 2001, the North County Combined Highway Corridor Study was initiated to develop a transportation plan to address and accommodate personal travel and goods movement in northern Los Angeles County. The study focused on SR-138 as a key bypass corridor to reduce congestion in the central region by routing traffic around congested Los Angeles freeways. The SR-138 corridor was divided into several segments in the study, each as a separate project. The limits for Segment 13 extend from 0.4 miles west of 187th Street East to 0.7 miles south of the SR-138/18 junction and SR-

18 from the SR-138/18 junction to 1.1 miles east of the junction, a total distance of 4.1 miles.

Various themes emerged during the development of the Purpose and Need for the North County Combined Highway Corridor Study, including the need for safety enhancements. SR-138 is a two-lane undivided corridor - sometimes referred to as “blood alley” - that experiences safety and operational deficiencies, such as passing over the centerline, which cause collisions that are double the statewide average.

During the initiation of the environmental clearance for SR-138, Caltrans conducted an extensive series of community meetings that focused on presenting various design alternatives and gathering information about the community’s concerns and needs. The following meetings were held:

- Public Scoping Meeting in Littlerock on August 26, 1998.
- Cultural meeting with the Big Pines Historical Society on July 15, 1999.
- Antelope Valley Transportation Summit meeting in Palmdale on January 28, 2000.
- Town Council meeting in Littlerock on March 20, 2000.
- Informational meeting with Pearblossom Chamber of Commerce on June 1, 2000.
- Antelope Valley Transportation Summit meeting in Palmdale on June 15, 2000.
- Informational meeting with Littlerock Town Council on June 22, 2000.
- Informational meeting with Littlerock Chamber of Commerce on July 19, 2000.
- Informational meeting with the City of Palmdale on August 2, 2000.
- Informational meeting with Llano Community Association on October 24, 2000.

The public hearing during the environmental phase was held on October 30, 2000, at Littlerock High School where surrounding communities attended. Notices were sent to all property owners (approximately 2,000 notices along the corridor) and were published in six local newspapers in English and Spanish. During the development of the various segments along SR-138, which took approximately 20 years, community engagement meetings were held to provide updates during the development phases and construction activities. The most recent community outreach meeting was held on August 25, 2020, conducted via WEBEX, and was attended by residents from Littlerock, Pearblossom, Llano, and unincorporated Los Angeles County for the development of SR-138 Segment 13.

Caltrans completed the environmental clearance in March 2001 for all 13 segments along the corridor. Most recently, Segment 13 completed an environmental revalidation in December 2023 and completed the final design phase in March 2024 (all necessary right-of-way has been acquired for the Project). The Project is contained in a four-segment agreement between Metro and Caltrans that also includes Segment 6 (completed construction in December 2022), Segment 9 (completed construction in February 2021), and Segment 4 (currently in the final design phase). All other project segments are complete, except for Segment 4, which is in final design as noted.

During the development of the SR-138 corridor projects, the Board approved the Modernizing the Metro Highway Program policy in June 2021, providing flexibility to use Measure R and Measure M Highway funds for active transportation projects and complete street improvements. To comply with the Board directives, projects undergoing the environmental clearance process were evaluated for

alignment with the new policy. Since the environmental clearance for the SR-138 corridor segments was completed before the Board's approval of this policy, no changes were made to the SR-138 project. However, in alignment with the policy, segments of SR-138 that have been completed have included sidewalk improvements since they were in closer proximity to the Little Rock and Pearblossom communities. The remainder of the corridor, including Segment 13, is characterized by land uses and long distances between destinations that are not conducive to walking and biking. Additionally, the Project is not subject to vehicle miles traveled analysis since the environmental phase was completed before the effective date of July 2020.

Project Description

The Project's purpose is to improve safety and accommodate travel demand resulting from regional growth. Over the years, Caltrans' monitoring of the corridor identified a pattern of cross-centerline fatal collisions with the Project limits. The existing two-lane undivided highway without a center median poses safety challenges due to improper passing and turning, resulting in head-on collisions, sideswipes, and broadside collisions. Data from Caltrans' Traffic Accident Surveillance and Analysis System (TASAS) identified that from July 2020 to June 2023, there were a total of 55 vehicular collisions, of which three were fatal collisions and 29 were injury collisions within the Project limits. The number of collisions causing injuries and fatalities on Segment 13 is double the statewide average.

Based on the Project's Traffic Study, adding an additional lane in each direction should significantly reduce the collision rate.

The Project as currently designed includes:

- Widening the conventional highway from two lanes to four lanes with standard-width shoulders.
- Adding a median lane.
- Constructing a direct connector (flyover structure) from eastbound SR-138 to eastbound SR-18,
- Adding an overhead sign.
- Improving drainage.
- Incorporating new pervious pollution-prevention infiltration areas to capture rainwater runoff.

In November 2023, Caltrans conducted a reassessment of the Engineer's cost estimate, which identified a capital cost increase of \$40 million, thereby increasing the cost to construct the Project as currently designed from \$45.5 million to \$85.5 million.

DISCUSSION

The Project's construction phase is funded by Metro's State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) funds, for a programmed amount of \$45.5 million. There is currently no additional programming capacity for STIP, and Metro requested that Caltrans provide design options that address the corridor's needs but maintain the budget within the current \$45.5 million programmed

amount. After Metro requested that Caltrans attempt to identify contributing funds to aid in the cost increase, Caltrans determined that the Project would be ineligible for State Highway Operational and Protection Program (SHOPP) funds per California Government Code and the SHOPP Guidelines, since the Project adds a new traffic lane. Caltrans further indicated there are no other eligible funding sources available to cover the cost increase at this time and the imperative next action is to seek approval from CTC for an 18-month allocation time extension to avoid lapsing of the previously programmed funds.

To address the Project's need and maintain the budget within the current programmed amount of \$45.5 million, Caltrans developed the following option to the original scope.

The option stays within the programmed amount but reduces the project limits from 4.1 miles to 2.5 miles (from 0.4 miles west of 190th Street East to 0.4 miles west of 213th Street East). The 2.5 miles will include the additional travel lane in each direction, median lane, standard-width shoulders, drainage improvements, and pollution-prevention infiltration areas. The remaining 1.6 miles will not include these improvements nor the direct connector from eastbound SR-138 to eastbound SR-18. However, thermoplastic striping would be updated to increase visibility and address safety within the 1.6-mile section of the corridor that is not widened. This option would not preclude the direct connector and other project elements from being constructed on the excluded 1.6-mile segment in the future should funding become available.

DETERMINATION OF SAFETY IMPACT

Approval of this item will address safety needs for the traveling public along this corridor. Caltrans and local safety standards will be adhered to during the implementation of the proposed improvements.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The budget of the SR-138 project, per Programming Agreement No. PA.P0008981, is \$193,003,000 and consists of State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) and Regional Surface Transportation Program (RSTP) funds (now referred to as "STBG"), which covers SR-138 Segments 4, 6, 9, and 13. The additional contribution of \$2,500,000 to the Project's engineering support cost will be limited to Proposition C 25% or STBG funds.

If approved by the Board, the Programming Agreement will be amended to reflect an additional \$2,500,000 of Proposition C 25% funding; however, staff will continue to seek funding from federal RSTP funds (also referred to as the Surface Transportation Block Grant Program) to fund the engineering support cost. .

Since this is a multi-year project, the Chief Planning Officer and Cost Center manager will be responsible for budgeting the project costs in future fiscal years.

Impact to Budget

This action will not impact the approved FY24 budget. Staff will reassess the approved FY25 budget

of \$5M for project 460330 (SR-138 Capacity Enhancements) as necessary to fund the identified priorities and revisit the budgetary needs using the quarterly and mid-year adjustment processes subject to the availability of funds.

The source of funds for the additional contribution to the Project are not eligible for transit capital and operations expenses.

EQUITY PLATFORM

There are no Metro Equity Focus Communities (EFC) within the Project limits. However, there are Metro EFCs within five miles of the Project limits that cover large portions of the Antelope Valley in north Los Angeles County. In addition, the Project limits are identified within the Metro Equity Need Index and are classified within the “Moderate Need”.

The SR-138 project was environmentally approved in 2001 and programmed in the 2018 RTIP as a highway widening project before the establishment of Metro’s Equity Platform. Caltrans conducted an extensive series of community meetings during the environmental clearance of the SR-138 corridor. The meetings were focused on the design alternatives and sought the community’s concerns and needs.

Due to the lack of public transportation services in the vicinity of Segment 13 and the high dependence by local residents on their personal vehicles for mobility, improvements to safety are a critical concern improvement to address safe access. During the design development of SR-138 Segment 13, Caltrans incorporated safety enhancements intended to reduce some of the most common types of crashes; head-ons, sideswipes, and broadsides.

IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

The recommendation supports the strategic plan goal:

“Goal 1: Provide high-quality mobility options that enable people to spend less time traveling.”

Goal 1.1. Approval of the multimodal highway subregional programs will expand the transportation system as responsibly and quickly as possible as approved in Measure R and M to strengthen and expand LA County’s transportation system.

“Goal 4: Transform LA County through regional collaboration”

Goal 4.1. Metro will work closely with municipalities, councils of governments, and Caltrans to implement holistic strategies for advancing mobility goals”

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The Board may choose not to accept staff’s recommendations. However, this alternative is not recommended as this would result in Caltrans not receiving the funds that are needed to repackage the Project for construction and would further delay the needed safety improvements along the SR-

138 corridor.

NEXT STEPS

To prevent the lapsing of STIP funds, Caltrans will seek an 18-month extension at the June 2024 CTC meeting to allow sufficient time to repackage the Project for the construction phase.

As part of the repackaging for the reduced scope for Segment 13, the environmental document will again be reevaluated before the Project is advertised for construction.

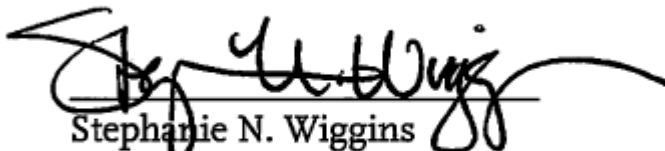
Staff will continue to work with Caltrans to execute any necessary funding agreement amendments, attain the revised final design package, permits, and certifications, and request allocation of the funds from the CTC by December 2025.

Prepared by:

Roberto Machuca, Deputy Executive Officer, Complete Streets and Highways, (213) 418-3467
Craig Hoshijima, Executive Officer, Strategic Financial Planning, (213) 547-4290
Michelle Smith, Executive Officer, Complete Streets and Highways, (213) 547-4368
Avital Barnea, Senior Executive Officer, Multimodal Integrated Planning, (213) 547-4317

Reviewed by:

Ray Sosa, Chief Planning Officer, (213) 547-4274



Stephanie N. Wiggins
Chief Executive Officer