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Metropolitan Transportation
Authority
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Los Angeles, CA

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PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE
SEPTEMBER 14, 2016

SUBJECT: LOS ANGELES RIVER BIKE PATH GAP CLOSURE FEASIBILITY STUDY

ACTION: RECEIVE AND FILE FEASIBILITYSTUDY

RECOMMENDATIONS

RECEIVE AND FILE the **Los Angeles River Bike Path Gap Closure Feasibility Study** Report (Attachment A).

ISSUE

In response to the June 2014 Board motion (Attachment B) as well as a related motion by the Los Angeles City Council in the same month (Attachment C), staff took steps necessary to perform a feasibility study to close the 8-mile gap in the Los Angeles River Bike Path between Elysian Valley and the City of Vernon (Attachment D). This effort became known as the Los Angeles River Bike Path Gap Closure (Project). In September of 2014, staff returned to the Board with a recommendation to amend the budget to move forward with the feasibility study (Attachment E) and in May 2015, a contract was awarded to perform the study.

Staff is submitting the Los Angeles River Bike Path Gap Closure Feasibility Study Report which assessed the engineering feasibility, neighborhood connectivity, safety, environmental and permitting requirements, hydraulic impacts, real estate, maintenance and operations, and preliminary cost estimates of the Project. The study finds that the Project is feasible and would help serve the transportation needs of communities neighboring the project area as well as the region. Attachment A includes the Executive Summary of the report. The entire report is available upon request.

DISCUSSION

The City and County of Los Angeles have devoted significant time and resources in creating a Los Angeles River Revitalization Master Plan that would eventually revitalize all 51 miles of the river channel, and include bike and pedestrian facilities as a key element of accessibility and mobility. In June 2016, the Los Angeles City Council approved the US Army Corps of Engineers' (USACE) recommended plan, LA River Ecosystem Restoration Feasibility Study, to restore habitat, widen the

river, create wetlands, and provide pedestrian access points and bicycle paths along an 11-mile stretch of the Los Angeles River north of Griffith Park through Elysian Valley to downtown Los Angeles. The USACE recommended the Plan for approval in 2015 and is pending authorization by the US Congress. There is also significant interest and a long history of support for a bike path along all 51-miles of the river from non-profit groups. Most recently, RiverLA published its Greenway 2020 plan, including the goal of completing the bike path along the length of the river. The largest remaining, 8-mile gap in the Los Angeles River Bike Path, between Elysian Valley and the City of Vernon, requires a multi-jurisdictional effort and close coordination with rail operations along Metro-owned right-of-way. As the County's transportation agency and owner of the adjacent rail right-of-way, Metro is the best organization to take the Lead Agency role for this Project.

In May of 2015, staff began work on a feasibility study of the Project. A Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) was formed, consisting of representatives from the City of Los Angeles Bureau of Engineering (BOE), City of Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT), County of Los Angeles Department of Public Works (LADPW), City of Vernon Department of Public Works, the Federal Waters Partnership, Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority, River LA, Friends of the LA River, Los Angeles County Bicycle Coalition; and other key stakeholders and organizations. Staff convened the TAC at regular intervals throughout the study to evaluate alternatives and ensure that correct and whole information was gathered and vetted.

The study consisted of conducting an inventory of the Project area, including real estate and right-of-way ownership; conceptual engineering analyses of alternative alignments; hydraulic analysis of the most constraining alternative; and detailed study of the surrounding neighborhoods and the infrastructure for walking and bicycling in and through them. The study assumed a path along the west bank of the river, consistent with the existing paths at the Project's northern and southern termini.

The study demonstrates that although technical challenges and physical constraints exist, closing the 8 mile gap is feasible through various engineering solutions. The study included a high level assessment of needs in the project area. A full analysis of potential impacts and benefits for the various project alternatives will be performed in the next project phase. The project area is home to more than 200,000 people including some of the County's most disadvantaged communities. Approximately 34% of the project area population lives in poverty and more than 26% of the working age population does not use automobiles as a primary mode of transportation. The project area is not well served by infrastructure for walking and biking and as such, the Project would offer a backbone for a more complete active transportation network of separated and protected infrastructure. The largely industrial landscape of the project area holds many tens of thousands of jobs, with more than 50,000 people employed in the Project-adjacent City of Vernon alone. Closing the eight mile gap will result in a 32 mile contiguous regional bicycle corridor serving Los Angeles County.

This Project has been included in several plans, including the 2016 Metro Active Transportation Strategic Plan and the current Long Range Transportation Plan published in 2009, the Southern California Council of Governments 2016-2040 Regional Transportation Plan/ Sustainable Communities Strategy, as well as the City of Los Angeles Mobility Plan 2035 and 2010 Bicycle Plan.

The study considered top of bank and channel bottom alignments, as well as various other

treatments such as cantilevers to traverse obstructions along both alignment types, and access points at all 16 streets which cross the River. The various Project options range in construction cost from approximately $200 million to $320 million, including contingency, planning, engineering and permitting costs. Preliminary cost estimates for the range of alternatives considered in this study are consistent with the cost to build other parts of the Los Angeles River Bike Path with similar heavy civil construction needs. These costs will be further refined in the next project phase.

A summary of the challenges and opportunities are provided below:

Challenges

- The Project corridor along the top of bank of the river, where a path would normally be located, is physically constrained by many obstructions. Bridge overcrossings, electrical towers, and rail alignments are frequently located in the area along the western top of bank that would be the most logical place for a path.

- A channel-bottom alignment would need to traverse standing water in the northern part of the Project because the river will be flooded up to a depth of 8 feet by a seasonal dam as part of the upcoming Bending the River Back Into the City project by Lauren Bon and Metabolic Studio.

- Though preliminary engineering analysis shows that a channel-bottom alignment would not affect the flood control capacity of the river, such an alignment would potentially introduce significant flooding and safety risks to both path users and jurisdictions responsible for the operation of the path. It is anticipated that such an alignment would require more operational maintenance to clean and patrol the path during both wet and dry weather.

- A number of concurrent projects are in a similar phase of development, requiring close and constant coordination between multiple agencies including such projects as the Los Angeles River Revitalization Project, Connect US, Link US, and High Speed Rail. Additionally, some of the Gateway Cities including Vernon and Huntington Park have taken a keen interest in revitalization, and walking and biking infrastructure along the river. They are performing their own studies or creating plans incorporating complementary facilities.

Opportunities

- Findings indicate existing demographics within the study area consist of a population highly dependent on walking, biking, and transit. There are also many large employment centers in the Project area, indicating that the Project would serve an important role for connecting disadvantaged communities with mobility options and known connections to employment and regional surface transportation.

- The Project would connect these communities directly adjacent to the Project area as well as communities along the existing alignments of the path to Union Station, the regional hub for rail transportation, future High Speed Rail stop, and direct connection to Los Angeles International Airport.

- The Project area is largely industrial and in many places along the Project alignment, heavy truck traffic and rail crossings create an environment not suited to safe walking and biking. The Project would create a safe, comfortable environment for walking and biking through the Project area.

- Completing the Project would create a continuous 32-mile Class I bike path along the Los Angeles River. As is already evident by the plans created by the City of Los Angeles Mobility 2035, and in the works in Vernon, local cities will use the completed Los Angeles River Bike Path as a spine on which to build a network of walking and bicycling infrastructure. Similar to the highway system, a grade-separated bike path serves as the high quality, long-distance anchoring piece of infrastructure on which local infrastructure can be built. This increases mobility for people walking and biking throughout the region in addition to the local communities.

- Opportunities exist, as part of the next phase of project development, to work with local jurisdictions and residents, Metro departments, and consultants to coordinate many concurrent projects with complementary or shared goals for mobility in and around the Project area. By working together, the projects can achieve synergistic improvements to the mobility in the Project area and region.

DETERMINATION OF SAFETY IMPACT

The next phase of the Project (PA/ ED) will not have any adverse safety impacts on Metro employees and patrons.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The FY17 budget contains $250,000 to begin work on the PA/ED phase in cost center 4320, project number 405303, LA River Bike Path.

Since this is a multi- year contract, the cost center manager and Chief Planning Officer will be responsible for budgeting the cost in future years.

Impact to Budget

The source of funds for the Project are Propositions A and C and TDA Administration. These funds are not eligible for bus and rail capital or operating expenses.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The Board may choose to not authorize entering the Project into the PA/ED phase. This alternative is not recommended as doing so would be contrary to prior Board direction.

NEXT STEPS

Upon Board acceptance of this report, staff will develop a scope of work and begin procurement of a

consultant team to perform the work necessary for the next phase, Project Approval/ Environmental Documentation (PA/ED).

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A - Los Angeles River Bike Path Gap Closure Feasibility Executive Summary
Attachment B - Metro Board Motion 67
Attachment C - City of Los Angeles Council Motion 14-0711
Attachment D - Project Area Map
Attachment E - Metro Board Report Item 27

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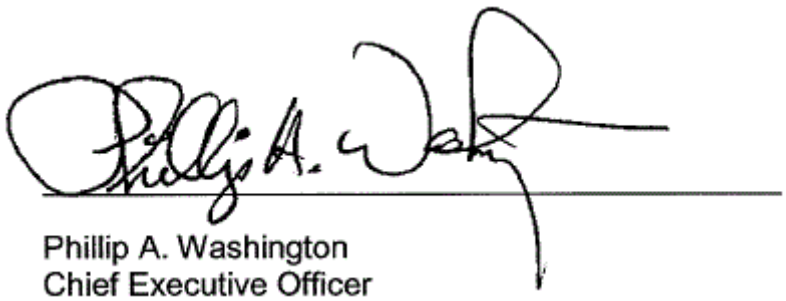

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