



Board Report

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PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE SEPTEMBER 20, 2017

SUBJECT: METROLINK SAN BERNARDINO LINE STRATEGIC STUDY

ACTION: AUTHORIZE STUDY

RECOMMENDATION

AUTHORIZE the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to:

- A. CONDUCT a study to evaluate the Metrolink San Bernardino Line and future Metro Gold Line Phase 2B services to develop strategies that would enable the two rail services to complement each other; and
- B. PROGRAM \$750,000 in Measure R 3% funds for the study.

ISSUE

Since the opening of Metro Foothill Gold Line Extension Phase 2A from Pasadena to Azusa in March 2016, the Metrolink San Bernardino (SB) Line, especially at the Metrolink Covina Station, has experienced a substantial decline in ridership. The next phase of the Gold Line Extension (Phase 2B) from Glendora to Montclair is being planned to share the San Gabriel subdivision with Metrolink. Three Gold Line stations will be constructed immediately adjacent to the three existing Metrolink stations in the cities of Pomona, Claremont and Montclair (refer to Attachment A Foothill Gold Line Glendora to Montclair Segment). Upon opening of the Foothill Gold Line Phase 2B, ridership on the Metrolink SB Line is expected to further decline.

The purpose of this study is to perform a comprehensive evaluation of both the existing Metrolink commuter rail service and future Metro Gold Line light rail service to proactively develop a toolbox of strategies that would enable the two rail services to complement each other, and to adjust to changing demands from the introduction of the Metro Gold Line service further east.

DISCUSSION

The Metrolink San Bernardino (SB) Line runs from Los Angeles Union Station (LAUS) to San Bernardino including 13 stations in Los Angeles and San Bernardino Counties. With 38 trains on a typical weekday, the SB Line is the busiest line in the Metrolink system carrying on average about 9,400 daily boardings on weekdays (3.1 million boardings a year)..

As of third quarter of FY17 (January to March 2017), the average weekday boarding at the Metrolink Covina station has declined by 25% compared to third quarter of FY16 (January to March 2016). Overall the Metrolink SB Line has experience a 7.6% decline in ridership over the same time period. The presumption is that a significant number of Metrolink riders that previously used the Covina Station has switched to the Gold Line service, opened on March 5, 2016. Currently the closest Gold Line station to the Metrolink Covina station is the Azusa (APU/Citrus College) station and they are about 4 miles apart.

Foothill Gold Line Extension Phase 2B

The Foothill Gold Line Extension Phase 2B project will extend the Metro Gold Line 12.3 miles to the east and add stations in the cities of Glendora, San Dimas, La Verne, Pomona, Claremont, and Montclair. Ridership on the Metro Gold Line system is currently exceeding 54,000 weekday boardings (16.6 million boardings per year) and ridership is anticipated to increase by another 18,300 daily weekday boardings with the extension of the line to Montclair. The project is currently planned to be substantially completed by 2026. The conceptual engineering plans show three new Gold Line stations (Pomona, Claremont and Montclair) to be located immediately adjacent to the three existing Metrolink stations, as well as new and expanded parking facilities that will be shared by Gold Line and Metrolink riders. The future Gold Line station in City of Claremont, in particular, is planned to be located at the existing Claremont Metrolink station, therefore requiring the relocation and construction of a new Metrolink station. In general, the close proximity between Metrolink and future Gold Line stations facilitates convenient transfers between the two rail services. It also provides two options for rail service into Downtown Los Angeles and a new option for Metrolink SB Line riders to transfer to the Metro Gold Line to reach destinations such as Pasadena and Monrovia.

However, based on a Gold Line Phase 2A survey conducted in March 2016, 57% of new Gold Line riders boarding at the new stations were destined to Pasadena, while only 29% traveled to Downtown Los Angeles. These results indicate that the Gold Line and Metrolink SB Line may be competing for some customers, but also serve uniquely different demands. Therefore, a comprehensive market research and travel demand analysis will be included within this effort.

Study Objective

The objective of this study is to proactively develop a toolbox of strategies that would make the Metrolink SB Line and future Gold Line services complimentary with each other to adjust to changing demands as the Metro Gold Line service continues to expand eastward.

The study will not evaluate changes to the major elements of the Gold Line Phase 2B project including the alignment, track configuration, crossings, utilities, structures and station locations.

Below are some initial strategies that will be further explored in the study:

1. Metrolink Service Options:
 - a) New express, local and skip-stop service on SB Line between LAUS and Montclair,

- between Montclair and San Bernardino, or between LAUS and San Bernardino
 - b) Increased off-peak service frequency on SB Line
2. Metrolink Station Location Scenarios (Pomona, Claremont and Montclair)
 - a) Scenario A: Co-location(current plan by Gold Line Phase 2B)
 - b) Scenario B: Relocation
 - c) Scenario C: Elimination
 - d) Designation of transfer station(s) between the two rail services
 3. Evaluate the sensitivity of change in fares and parking pricing to transit ridership
 - a) The current Gold Line fare is \$1.75 to ride between Azusa to LAUS and the travel time is 48 to 49 minutes. The daily parking rate at the APU/Citrus College Gold Line station is \$3 for riders.
 - b) The current Metrolink fare is \$7.75 to ride between Covina and LAUS and the travel time is 39 to 44 minutes. The daily parking rate at the Covina Metrolink station is \$2 for riders.
 4. Marketing and promotional campaigns targeted to specific demands unique to Metrolink service

The study will include rail operations modeling to evaluate Metrolink service options and other strategies. The study will also consist of an inventory of ongoing and proposed capital projects and studies on infrastructure improvements along the SB Line corridor such as State of Good Repair projects, double-tracking projects, grade crossing and grade separation projects.

In addition, with the completion of the Mid-Valley Bus Rapid Transit Feasibility Study, two Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) options were identified along Ramona Blvd and Badillo St corridor. If built, these BRT services would provide alternatives to the congested I-10 freeway, operating between Highway 57 and El Monte Station. Omnitrans' sbX BRT provides north/south service along E St a short distance from the eastern terminus of the Metrolink SB Line in City of San Bernardino. Where applicable, these BRT services would be considered in this study as opportunities for coordination with the Metrolink SB Line.

The study will engage the public through market research to understand the public's sentiment on potential changes to service, parking fare structure, fare sensitivity, and other issues to help evaluate possible strategies including communication messages.

This study will develop a toolbox of strategies in collaboration with a new staff-level task force with representatives from San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments (SGVCOG), cities of Pomona and Claremont, Metro, Southern California Regional Rail Authority, Metro Foothill Gold Line Construction Authority, San Bernardino County Transportation Authority (SBCTA), Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG), and Foothill Transit. The objective of this staff-level task force is to offer recommendations that would allow for the efficient and cost effective operation of both Metrolink and Gold Line services to Montclair. Starting in October 2017, the task force will meet on a monthly basis or more frequently if needed.

Improvements on the Metrolink SB Line are being evaluated in two other planning studies led by other agencies:

SBCTA Diesel Multiple Unit (DMU) Planning Study

Metro and SBCTA have initiated a planning study of the feasibility and operating parameters for supplementing existing Metrolink Locomotive Hauled Coach (LHC) commuter rail service on the SB Line with DMU or Hybrid-rail service. The goals of the study include reviewing opportunities to optimize overall operating costs for rail service in the corridor while maintaining or improving the level of transit service. The study will review opportunities and identify the capital investments needed to operate traditional LHCs as express or skip stop service, while having the DMUs provide all-stop service along the corridor. This study is scheduled to be completed by end of 2017.

SCAG LA-SB Inter-County Transit Planning Study

SCAG, in cooperation with Metro and SBCTA, has been conducting a transit planning study for the corridor connecting the eastern San Gabriel Valley in Los Angeles County with the western San Bernardino Valley in San Bernardino County. The Inter-County Study is evaluating a range of transit options to provide the best mix of rail and bus service to connect travelers to, from and within the study area, as well as Ontario International Airport. The transit options include enhancements to Metrolink service, Hybrid-rail, Light Rail, and Bus Rapid Transit. This study is scheduled to be completed by end of 2017.

DETERMINATION OF SAFETY IMPACT

This study will not have an impact on safety standards for Metro. Any design concepts will be developed in coordination with Metrolink and in accordance with Metrolink standards. No safety impacts are expected.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Staff is requesting \$750,000 in Measure R 3% programming authority for this study. Funds are available in the FY18 budget in Cost Center 2415, Regional Rail. Approximately \$4.5 million has been budgeted in FY18 for the Brighton to Roxford Double Track Project. However, since the East San Fernando Valley Transit Corridor Project will be affecting approximately 2 miles of the alignment of the Brighton to Roxford Double Track Project beginning at the San Fernando Metrolink station, the Brighton to Roxford Double Track Project is on pause until Spring 2018 to allow the East San Fernando Valley Transit Corridor Project to catch up. Therefore, Regional Rail staff has identified sufficient funds in the FY18 budget to reprioritize \$750,000 from the Brighton to Roxford Double Track Project to fund this study. As a result there is no impact to the FY 18 budget.

Impact to Budget

A. Source of funds: \$750,000 in Measure R 3% funds

Measure R 3% funds are for Metrolink commuter rail planning, engineering, and capital projects in

Los Angeles County. They are not eligible to be used for Metro bus or rail operations or capital expenses.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

An alternative to this study is to not perform the study. This is not recommended since the decline in Metrolink SB Line ridership is anticipated to continue with the opening of Gold Line Phase 2B without any modifications to the current service. In addition, the study has the potential of identifying cost efficiencies in the service delivery of the Foothill Gold Line Phase 2B Project as well as the operation of Metrolink commuter rail service in the future.

NEXT STEPS

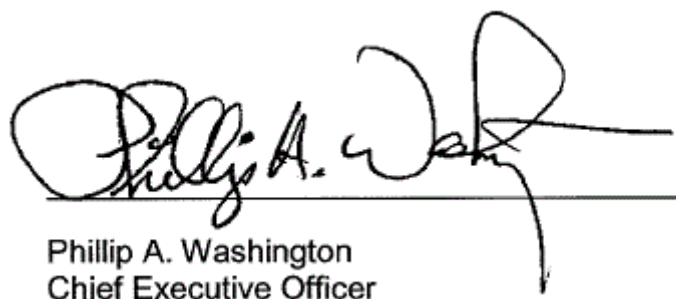
With the Board's approval, Metro Regional Rail staff will develop a Request for Proposals to seek a qualified consultant from the Regional Rail Engineering and Planning Bench and begin the procurement process. Staff is planning to begin the study in early 2018.

ATTACHMENTS

A - Foothill Gold Line Glendora to Montclair Segment

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