



Board Report

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**PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE
FEBRUARY 14, 2018**

SUBJECT: WEST SANTA ANA BRANCH TRANSIT CORRIDOR

ACTION: APPROVE RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION

CONSIDER:

- A. EXPANDING the northern study options;
- B. RECEIVING AND FILING the:
 - 1. Update on Public Private Partnership procurement; and
 - 2. Status of Transit-Oriented Communities efforts.

ISSUE

In response to comments received during the scoping period and ongoing technical analysis, the project team has been exploring potential modifications to the northern alignment options and termini. Board action is needed to expand the northern study options in order to address the comments received and address ongoing technical analysis.

DISCUSSION

Background

The West Santa Ana Branch (WSAB) Transit Corridor Project is a proposed new 20-mile light rail transit line that would connect downtown Los Angeles (DTLA) to southeast Los Angeles County. The project has been identified in the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) and is also contained in both the Measure R and Measure M Expenditure Plans. In the Measure M Expenditure Plan, the project is scheduled for groundbreaking in FY 2022, with identified opening dates in FY 2028 and FY 2041. Recently, WSAB has also been included in the proposed “Twenty-Eight by ‘28” initiative as an aspirational project schedule to be completed early in time for the 2028 Olympic Games in Los Angeles.

Project History

In February 2013, Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) completed the Alternative Analysis (AA) Study for a 34-mile WSAB corridor from Los Angeles Union Station (LAUS) to the City of Santa Ana in Orange County. The Metro Board in January 2014 received the study's recommended two northern alignment alternatives for further consideration: 1) West Bank 3 along the west bank of the Los Angeles River, and 2) East Bank along the east bank of the Los Angeles River.

Based upon the West Bank 3 alternative, four new alignment options (Attachment A) were identified as part of Metro's Technical Refinement Study (TRS) completed in September 2015 and recommended for further analysis:

- 1) Pacific/Alameda
- 2) Pacific/Vignes
- 3) Alameda
- 4) Alameda/Vignes

In April 2017, the Board approved the four northern alignment options as part of the Northern Alignment Options Screening Report: 1) Pacific/Alameda, 2) Pacific/Vignes, 3) Alameda, and 4) Alameda/Vignes to be carried forward into environmental analysis. The Board also took action to drop from further consideration the East Bank and West Bank 3 northern alignment options previously recommended in the SCAG AA Study.

Scoping Process and Results

On June 6, 2017, Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and Metro formally initiated the Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (EIS/EIR) phase with an extended public scoping comment period held from June 6, 2017 through August 4, 2017. Four public scoping meetings were held during that period in the cities of Bellflower, Los Angeles, Huntington Park and South Gate. At the conclusion of the public scoping period, over 1,100 comments were received.

Approximately 400 comments were submitted by Little Tokyo stakeholders. Comments received expressed strong opposition to some or all of the northern alignment options and were particularly opposed to an elevated alignment along Alameda Street with concerns about the visual impacts. Comments from the Little Tokyo community also relayed a history of ongoing construction impacts experienced by the community related to the Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension and the Regional Connector projects, and concern with the prospect of future construction impacts brought on by a WSAB alignment through their community with an identified potential future station at Alameda Street, west of 1st Street.

Metro also received scoping letters from several agencies. In their scoping letters, Metrolink, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) and High Speed Rail (HSR) expressed concerns regarding the northern alignment options. Specifically, their comments focused on encouraging Metro to seek alternatives that do not limit the potential for additional regional railroad capacity at LAUS.

Potential Downtown Los Angeles Termini

In response to comments received during the scoping period and ongoing technical analysis, the project team has been exploring potential modifications to the northern alignment options (Attachment B), including the following:

Union Station via Alameda Street

This alignment option extends between Union Station and the Washington Station along Alameda Street and the Metro Blue Line right-of-way (ROW). It would provide three potential stations: Union Station, Little Tokyo, and 7th/Alameda. At Union Station, we are exploring three potential options including: underground west of Union Station; underground west of Metro Gold Line platform; and at-grade east of Metro Gold Line platform (via Center Street as opposed to Vignes Street, which was proposed during the scoping period). This alignment option was developed during the TRS and modified based upon scoping comments and ongoing technical analysis.

Union Station via Arts District Transfer Station

This alignment option extends between Union Station and the Washington Station along the Metro Blue Line ROW via the potential Division 20 Arts District Station at 6th Street. This alignment would provide a connection to Union Station via a transfer to either the red or purple line at a new Division 20 Arts District/6th Street Station. This alignment option was developed based upon scoping comments and ongoing technical analysis.

Downtown Transit Core

This alignment option extends between the Downtown Station and the Washington Station along the Metro Blue Line ROW. The terminus location within the Pershing Square, 7th Street/Metro and Regional Connector area will be studied. This alignment option could provide two to three potential stations between Washington Station and the terminus depending on the alignment to be determined. This alignment option was developed based upon scoping comments and ongoing technical analysis.

Over the next several months, staff will be conducting technical analyses and soliciting input from internal Metro departments for the northern alignments. Staff will return to the Board in spring 2018 with the updated screening report and recommendations for the northern alignments to be carried forward in the Draft EIS/EIR. The project milestone schedule is contained in Attachment C.

Public Private Partnership (P3) Procurement

P3 is being explored as the delivery method for the WSAB. In close coordination with the environmental document, staff is developing the basis for procurement of a P3 to include technical, financial and legal components. To achieve the best business case for Metro, staff is applying and integrating each of these components to evaluate the optimal procurement type such as Design/Build, Design/Build/Finance or Design/Build/Finance/Operate and Maintain. Completion of the evaluation will produce a recommended P3 Strategy and a scope and a schedule that supports procurement of a P3 Contractor through the Request for Proposal (RFP) process. Attachment D provides background regarding benefits of P3 delivery and Attachment E provides a structure for development of the business case.

Transit-Oriented Communities Implementation Strategy

Metro, in partnership with the City of South Gate and the Eco-Rapid Transit Joint Powers Authority (JPA), was awarded a grant application from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) for \$2 million from their Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Planning Pilot Program for the WSAB Transit Corridor TOD Strategic Implementation Plan (the Plan). The TOD grant will result in a Transit-oriented Communities vision and strategic implementation plan for the WSAB corridor.

Eco-Rapid Transit JPA submitted a letter to Metro requesting an amount of \$5 million to build upon work being carried out through the FTA grant that would help cities implement the Transit Oriented Communities (TOC) vision for the corridor through required policy and regulatory actions to be taken by local land use authorities. Additionally, the funds would support preparation of a programmatic Environmental Impact Report for the corridor to facilitate TOC implementation.

By pursuing TOC implementation work, it would greatly advance the likelihood of achieving TOC along the corridor. Additionally, by creating the land use policy and regulatory tools for WSAB, Metro will add value to its existing TOC toolkit with templates that assist local land use agencies countywide in complying with California land use law when partner agencies wish to achieve TOC. This streamlines the process for implementing and achieving TOC. Staff is continuing to develop the approach and scope of work to advance TOC implementation.

Outreach Activities

In anticipation of Board action regarding the northern alignments, staff has met with key project area stakeholders to update them on the results of the scope period, nature of comments received and staff's potential direction to respond to comments specific to the northern alignments.

In mid-January, Metro Local Government/External Affairs staff and the project outreach team began conducting key stakeholder briefings in Little Tokyo, the Arts District and DTLA to provide updates on the status of the project and discuss the new proposed northern alignment options. Briefings will continue along the project corridor this month, as well as continued coordination with Eco-Rapid Transit JPA and Gateway Cities Council of Governments, which included a presentation at their recent Board Meetings.

Community meetings will be held along the project corridor in March to provide updates and gather feedback from local residents, businesses and the general public. The outreach team will also continue participating in community-based events along the corridor to provide project information to interested stakeholders. When new scoping meetings are held after Board direction on the northern alignment options in spring 2018, one will be held in the DTLA area, with a second held in the southern segment of WSAB.

DETERMINATION OF SAFETY IMPACT

These actions will not have any impact on the safety of our customers and/or employees because this project is at the study phase and no capital or operational impacts results from this Board action.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The FY 2017-18 budget includes \$3,256,640 in Cost Center 4370, Project 460201 (WSAB Transit Corridor) for professional services. Since these are multi-year contracts, the Cost Center Manager and Chief Planning Officer will be responsible for budgeting in future years.

Impact to Budget

The funding for this project is from Measure R 35%. As these funds are earmarked for the WSAB Transit Corridor project, they are not eligible for Metro bus and rail capital and operating expenditures.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The Board could consider deferring further study on the expanded study area. This alternative is not recommended as this would impact the project's environmental clearance schedule and would not be responsive to comments received on the current alignments. This would also not be consistent with prior Board direction to advance the project.

NEXT STEPS

Upon Board approval, staff will conduct additional technical analysis including an updated screening evaluation process for the revised northern alignment options while continuing with the Draft EIS/EIR. Staff will return to the Board in spring 2018 with recommendations for carrying forward revised northern alignments into a rescoping process.

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment A - Original Northern Alignment Options Map
- Attachment B - Proposed Additional Northern Alignment Study Options
- Attachment C - WSAB Milestone Schedule
- Attachment D - Factors Considered Related to P3 Delivery
- Attachment E - Development of the Business Case

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