



## Board Report

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**PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE  
JUNE 19, 2019**

**SUBJECT: NORTH SAN FERNANDO VALLEY BUS RAPID TRANSIT IMPROVEMENTS**

**ACTION: APPROVE RECOMMENDATIONS**

**RECOMMENDATION**

CONSIDER:

- A. RECEIVING AND FILING the North San Fernando Valley BRT Corridor Alternatives Analysis Study Report; and
- B. AUTHORIZING the CEO to initiate the Environmental Study based on the recommended project with design variations.

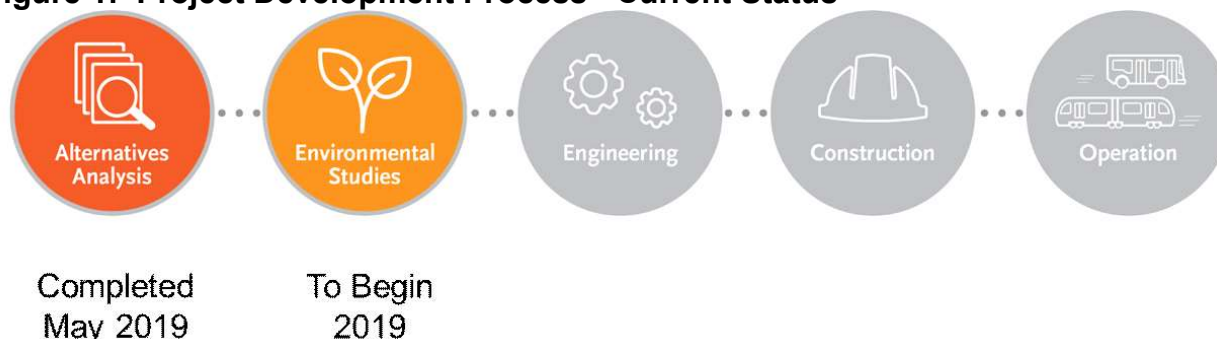
**ISSUE**

The North San Fernando Valley (SFV) Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Improvements Project is a Measure M project, with a projected opening date between FY 2023 and FY 2025. Currently \$180 million in Measure M funds is allocated for this project. This project is also included in the Twenty-Eight by '28 Initiative adopted by the Board in January 2018.

To meet the Measure M schedule, a Proposed Project for the corridor needs to be identified and environmentally cleared through an Alternative Analysis (AA) and environmental review study, respectively. This report includes the findings from the initial AA Phase and a recommendation for what to advance into environmental review.

Figure 1 shows where we are in the Project Development Process. Within the Planning Process, specifically, the project has completed the Alternatives Analysis and with this Board action would begin the Initial Study and Draft Environmental Clearance document. Final Environmental Clearance is the last step of the planning process.

**Figure 1: Project Development Process - Current Status**



**BACKGROUND**

Metro is building an extensive transit network to connect the San Fernando Valley to the greater Los Angeles Region. The North SFV BRT project will close a significant gap in Metro’s current transit network in the San Fernando Valley. The addition of a high-capacity, east-west transit service to provide access will enable people to spend less time traveling between key activity centers, including California State University Northridge (CSUN), Panorama City, and North Hollywood. The key challenge for the North SFV BRT is to design a premium transit service that offers outstanding trip experiences and improves regional connectivity while operating within existing right-of-way on local streets and roads.

The North SFV BRT Improvements Project Study Area (Attachment A) extends approximately 18 miles and includes the City of Los Angeles neighborhoods of Chatsworth, Northridge, North Hills, Panorama City, Sun Valley, Pacoima, Sylmar, North Hollywood and the City of San Fernando, with potential transit connections to the Chatsworth and Sylmar/San Fernando Metrolink Stations, Metro Orange Line, future East San Fernando Valley (ESFV) Rail line, future North Hollywood to Pasadena BRT line and the Metro Red Line at the North Hollywood Station. Significant land use changes are being contemplated by the City of Los Angeles within the project study area. Furthermore, significant development activity is also in the review and delivery pipeline.

The Metro Board of Directors gave approval to initiate a technical study preceding environmental review for the project back in March 2017. In September 2017, the North SFV BRT Environmental Framework Report was completed, which established a study area and identified three preliminary BRT concepts (Attachment B) for the purpose of framing the approach to the next more detailed study phase. These options all connect with Chatsworth on the west. One option goes north to Sylmar and the other two options connect to North Hollywood.

In May 2018, the Board authorized the CEO to award and execute Contract No. AE49337000 to IBI Group, to complete the Planning and Environmental Study (Legistar File No. 2018-0130) for the North SFV BRT Corridor. The purpose of this contract is to develop the North SFV BRT project from concept, through alternatives analysis, environmental clearance following the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) guidelines, with an optional task to complete advanced conceptual engineering or preliminary engineering of the preferred alternative.

**DISCUSSION**

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Since June 2018, work has been underway to establish the Purpose and Need of the project, reassess the three initial BRT concepts, conduct stakeholder briefings and public participation meetings to solicit input, and further develop the alignment options for the project. Three refined project options were presented to the community beginning in September 2018 and are shown in Attachment C. The public's input, along with more detailed planning and conceptual engineering resulted in refining the three alignment options to a total of seven possible alignment options for further evaluation of their comparative performance in the Alternatives Analysis assessment.

### Evaluation of Alternatives

With the refined alternatives identified, a set of evaluation criteria was then applied to each in order to determine the highest performing alternative(s) for advancement into environmental review. The evaluation criteria used included projected ridership, travel time and reliability, cost effectiveness, environmental benefits, land use connectivity, equity, economic development effects, public support and other measures detailed in the full AA report and summarized in the attached Executive Summary (Attachment D).

A key finding of the AA is that terminating in North Hollywood better meets the project purpose and need than terminating in Sylmar/San Fernando. This is because the future East San Fernando Valley light rail line will provide more frequent and faster service to Sylmar/San Fernando than what the North SFV BRT line could provide.

Based on the results of the analysis, the Nordhoff to North Hollywood option is the highest performing route that best meets the project purpose and need. This option is a hybrid of the Nordhoff and Roscoe alignment options, which enables the route to link activity centers along Nordhoff St. in the central and western portion of the study area with concentrated activity centers in the east, where the route transitions south to Roscoe Blvd. The analysis demonstrates it is the preferred project with respect to mobility, construction, environmental, economic development, cost effectiveness, and public acceptance. The ridership is projected to be between 27,461 and 28,652 daily boardings. These numbers are most valuable for distinguishing between the relative performance of the options studied in the AA and will continue to be refined through the environmental process. Several design variations have been identified for further review during the environmental phase. Key issues to address as the project advances include connections with other Metro Projects, interactions with the I-405 freeway ramps, and right-of-way constraints.

The success of the North SFV BRT project is interdependent with both the future ESFV Rail Transit Corridor project and the Metro Orange Line improvements project. Project teams are exchanging information and input on station and gating plans and working towards a seamless transfer at the potential Valley transit hub emerging at the future Roscoe Station in the Panorama City area.

See Attachment D, the AA Executive Summary, for more detail on the evaluation of alternatives, and Attachment E for a map of the proposed project with route variations.

### Stakeholder Outreach

Beginning in September 2018, staff initiated an outreach process that engaged and informed stakeholders through traditional and non-traditional outreach approaches with the goal to encourage input on the project. This process includes a wide range of opportunities for feedback that is

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designed to be transparent and inclusive. Since June 2018, the project team has met regularly with the local cities, key stakeholders, and the public within the project study area. By the conclusion of the initial outreach process in November 2018, Metro held a total of 18 stakeholder meetings and five community meetings, with the goal of informing the public about the proposed project, gathering input, and hearing community issues, concerns and suggestions.

Public and stakeholder engagement will continue during the environmental review phase to further inform and define the project. A series of meetings, including public scoping and public hearings as well as individual briefings with key stakeholders and elected officials, are planned during this next phase. The public scoping meetings are currently planned for August 2019.

#### Consistency with Measure M

This project will increase system connectivity in the North San Fernando Valley and the Metro Transit System, consistent with the Measure M Ordinance.

#### Consistency with Metro's Equity Platform Framework

The goal of the North San Fernando Valley BRT project is to provide a premium east-west transit service that fills a gap in the regional transit network and links key activity and employment centers including improved access to education and essential services. CSUN is the largest stakeholder and travel generator in the study area, and has the second highest number of students in the nation receiving need-based federal assistance. This project will look to lower existing transit travel time, increase service reliability, enhance mobility, and improve the customer experience for transit-dependent/low income individuals.

Community outreach efforts will continue to include innovative and comprehensive approaches that engage historically underserved communities with the intention of producing outcomes that promote and sustain opportunities and avoid increasing disparity. The project will strive to maintain consistency with Metro's Equity Platform Framework during each phase of project development.

#### **DETERMINATION OF SAFETY IMPACT**

Approval of this item will not impact the safety of Metro's customers or employees because this project is at the study phase and no capital or operational impacts results from this Board action.

#### **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

Funding of \$2.3 million is included in the FY20 proposed budget request in Cost Center 4360, Project 471403 (North San Fernando Valley BRT Corridor) to continue with the Environmental Study and on-going community outreach. Since this is a multiyear contract, the Cost Center Manager and Chief Planning Officer will be responsible for budgeting in future years through completion of the environmental studies.

#### Impact to Budget

The funding source for the North San Fernando Valley BRT Corridor project is Measure M 35% Transit Construction. These funds are earmarked for the North San Fernando Valley BRT project and are not eligible for Metro bus and rail capital and operating expenditures.

#### **IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS**

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The Project proposes transit improvements that support the following goals outlined in Metro's Vision 2028 Strategic Plan:

- Provide high-quality mobility options that enable people to spend less time traveling.

The introduction of bus rapid transit service will provide a high-quality mobility option that addresses a significant gap in the high-capacity transit network to enable people to spend less time traveling.

- Deliver outstanding trip experiences for all users of the transportation system.

Planned stations and amenities will offer protection from the elements and speed up boarding, improving trip experiences for Metro customers.

- Enhance communities and lives through mobility and access to opportunity.

The project will provide an opportunity for local jurisdictions to partner with Metro to advance first/last mile planning, green/sustainable infrastructure, active transportation, and urban design along the corridor.

Potential improvements include dedicated bus lanes, enhanced stations, transit signal priority, improved service frequency and reliability, reduced travel times, and zero-emission buses.

### **ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED**

The Board may decide not to approve advancing the Project to the next phase of environmental review. This is not recommended as this corridor is included and funded in Measure M and highlighted in the Twenty-Eight by '28 Initiative. Delaying the environmental analysis would jeopardize the ability to meet the Measure M opening date.

### **NEXT STEPS**

Should the Board choose to approve the recommendation, staff will continue with the next phase of environmental review, including public scoping meetings and preparation of the Initial Study and appropriate level of environmental document in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Staff will keep the Board apprised of the study and return to the Board at key project milestones.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment A - North San Fernando Valley BRT Project Study Area

Attachment B - Initial BRT Concepts September 2017

Attachment C - Refined Project Options September 2018

Attachment D - Alternatives Analysis Report Executive Summary

Attachment E - Proposed Project with Route Variations


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