

**Board Report**

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**File #:** 2019-0430, **File Type:** Agreement**Agenda Number:** 28.

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**PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE  
JUNE 19, 2019****SUBJECT: LONE HILL TO WHITE DOUBLE TRACK****ACTION: APPROVE ENVIRONMENTAL RECOMMENDATIONS****RECOMMENDATION**

CONSIDER:

- A. DETERMINING that the Lone Hill to White Double Track Project is Statutorily Exempt, pursuant to California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines Section 15275 (a) and (b); and,
- B. DIRECTING staff to file a CEQA Notice of Exemption for the LHW Double Track Project with the Los Angeles County Clerk.

**ISSUE**

Metro completed environmental review and 30% design for the Lone Hill to White (LHW) Double Track Project in August 2017. The Southern California Regional Rail Authority (also known as Metrolink) and the cities of San Dimas and La Verne have requested that the LHW Double Track Project proceed to final design. Staff is requesting Board approval to determine that the LHW Double Track Project is Statutorily Exempt from California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and to formally file the CEQA Notice of Exemption (NOE) with the Los Angeles County Clerk.

**DISCUSSION**

The LHW Double Track Project is located along the Metrolink San Bernardino Line (SBL), in the cities of San Dimas and La Verne (Attachment A). The Metrolink SBL is the busiest commuter rail line, averaging 11,000 weekday boardings on 38 trains per weekday. The rail infrastructure on the Metrolink SBL is comprised of 65 percent single track which is analogous to two way directional traffic on a single lane. As such, there are many single track bottleneck and capacity constraints which impact the service reliability and on-time performance on the SBL.

Completion of the LHW Double Track Project will provide an additional 3.9 miles of continuous double track to further reduce a single train bottleneck. The LHW Double Track Project will improve travel time and efficiency for trains on the Metrolink SBL, reduce delays due to trains waiting on a siding for another train to pass, and provide operational flexibility to recover from delays.

The main components of the project include the following:

- 3.9 miles of second mainline track between Lone Hill Avenue and Control Point (CP) White
- Extension of the existing platform at the Pomona Fairgrounds Station to provide more platform capacity for seasonal and special event service.
- Relocation of one industrial track and modification to one industrial track
- Ten new railroad turnouts
- New control point at Lone Hill Avenue with a new train control signal and communication infrastructure to support the LHW Double Track Project configuration
- Twelve at-grade crossings to be modified, all with Quiet Zone Improvements
- Relocated Utilities and drainage improvements
- Fencing at select locations to improve security along the right-of-way (ROW)

#### Quiet Zone

In addition to the 3.9 miles of new mainline track, 12 at-grade street crossings will include Quiet Zone ready improvements that will no longer require trains passing through these 12 at-grade street crossings to blow their horns which will improve the quality of life for residents along the right-of-way. The Federal Railroad Administration regulation requires that train locomotive horns begin sounding 15-20 seconds before entering public highway-rail grade crossings, no more than one-quarter mile in advance. Only a public authority or government entity such as a city, responsible for traffic control or law enforcement at the street crossing is permitted to create quiet zones. A quiet zone is a section of a rail line that contains at-grade street crossings at which train locomotives are not routinely sounded when trains are approaching the crossings. Because the absence of a routine train horn sounding increases the risk of a crossing collision, a public authority that desires to establish a quiet zone is required to include additional safety improvements such as active warning devices, flashing lights, quad gates, etc. that enhances pedestrian safety.

As part of the preliminary engineering, five at-grade crossings in the City of San Dimas and seven in the City of La Verne were designed to the latest SCRRRA design standards, which are consistent with FRA Quiet Zone Train Horn Rule Quiet Zone Notice of Intent (NOI) requirements. Diagnostic meetings were held with California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) staff and calculations were made to ensure that the improvements would qualify for FRA approval of a future Quiet Zone, should the two cities wish to file the NOI for Quiet Zones.

Both the cities of San Dimas and La Verne were consulted regarding Quiet Zones. Both cities provided letters of support for the LHW Double Track Project advancing to final design (See Attachment C and D).

#### CEQA Determination

CEQA provides for Statutory Exemptions for certain activities and specified actions. According to CEQA Guidelines Section 15275, CEQA does not apply to the following mass transit projects: 15275 (a) "The institution or increase of passenger or commuter service on rail lines or high-occupancy vehicle lanes already in use..."; and 15275 (b) "Facility extensions not to exceed four miles in length

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which are required for transfer of passengers from or to exclusive public mass transit guideway or busway public transit services.” Upon approval of the staff recommendations, the CEQA Notice of Exemption will be filed with the Los Angeles County Clerk (refer to Attachment B).

### Community Meetings

During the preliminary engineering phase, community meetings were held with the cities of San Dimas and La Verne in November 2016 and May 2017. Approximately 200 people attended the four combined meetings. A wide range of comments and insightful suggestions about the LHW Double Track Project were received. The LHW Double Track Project was generally well received, with 64 neutral or positive comments towards the project and 13 expressing concerns having to do with noise and vibration, and/or the desire to implement Quiet Zones.

### Metrolink SCORE

In 2018 SCRRA received \$876 million in funding from the State for the first phase of its Southern California Optimized Rail Expansion (SCORE) program. When fully built out, the \$10 billion SCORE program will provide 15 to 30 minute bi-directional service and a major expansion of service by 2028. In SCRRA’s application to the State for SCORE funding, the LHW Double Track Project was identified as a key early completion project, to provide reliability and capacity, leading to 30 minute bi-directional service along the San Bernardino Line.

Metrolink anticipates heavy utilization of the Metrolink San Bernardino line for the 2028 Olympics. Mountain biking events will be hosted in San Dimas near the Metrolink San Bernardino Line station in Pomona. Additionally, the San Bernardino Line will be an important feeder line to enable people in the San Gabriel Valley to easily get to downtown Los Angeles to access the many Olympic venues in the greater Los Angeles area. The LHW Double Track Project will provide important additional capacity that will enable the San Bernardino Line to maintain reliable on-time performance, and add future service, subject to funding availability, consistent with demand and regional planning documents.

### **DETERMINATION OF SAFETY IMPACT**

Once constructed, the LHW Double Track Project will reduce the risk of train-on-train collisions. Safety improvements at the 12 crossings will benefit cars, trucks, pedestrians, communities and Metrolink riders. Extension of the Pomona Fairground Station platform will prevent Metrolink trains from blocking Arrow Highway.

### **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

There is no financial impact should the Board approve Recommendation A, to determine that the LHW Double Track Project is Statutorily Exempt, pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15275 (a) and (b). There is also no financial impact should the Board approve Recommendation B, to direct staff to file a CEQA NOE for the LHW Double Track Project with the Los Angeles County Clerk.

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

Staff’s recommendations A and B support strategic plan goals 1, 3 and 4. These actions support

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Metro's partnership with other rail operators to improve service reliability and mobility, provide better transit connections throughout the network and serves to implement the following specific strategic plan goals:

- Goal 1.2: Improve LA County's overall transit network and assets;
- Goal 3.3: Genuine public and community engagement to achieve better mobility outcomes for the people of LA County; and
- Goal 4.1: Metro will work with partners to build trust and make decisions that support the goals of the Strategic Plan.

### **ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED**

The alternative would be for the Board to not approve the CEQA Statutory Exemption for the LHW Double Track Project. This is not recommended since environmental review and preliminary engineering have been completed and the LHW Double Track Project qualifies for a CEQA Statutory Exemption. Additionally, the LHW Double Track Project is identified as an early investment project as part of SCRRA's SCORE Program. Finally, the region would lose an opportunity to advance an important capacity project which provides reliability and on-time performance benefits, and enhanced safety and community benefit, with the advancement of 12 Quiet Zone ready crossings.

### **NEXT STEPS**

With Board approval of the staff recommendations, staff will file the CEQA NOE with both the Los Angeles County Clerk and the State Clearinghouse. Staff will return to the Board by September 2019 to request programming of funds to continue the preliminary engineering design to final design to enable a shovel ready project.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment A - Map of LHW Double Track Project Corridor

Attachment B - CEQA Statutory Exemption

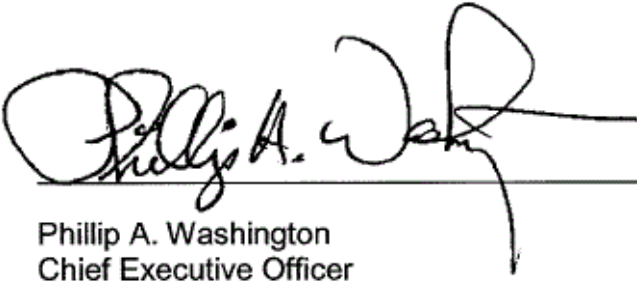
Attachment C - Letter of Support from City of San Dimas

Attachment D - Letter of Support from City of La Verne

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