



## Board Report

File #: 2020-0174, File Type: Contract

Agenda Number: 16.

### PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE AUGUST 19, 2020

**SUBJECT: CRENSHAW NORTHERN EXTENSION**

**ACTION: APPROVE RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### RECOMMENDATION

CONSIDER:

- A. RECEIVING AND FILING the Crenshaw Northern Extension Advanced Alternatives Screening Study; and
- B. AUTHORIZING the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to award and execute a 30-month, firm fixed price Contract No. AE64930000 to Connect Los Angeles Partners, a joint venture between WSP USA, Inc. and AECOM Technical Services, Inc., for environmental analysis (CEQA) and advanced conceptual engineering (ACE) in the amount of \$50,367,851, subject to resolution of protests, if any. However, only the amount of \$2.19M is requested in the FY21 budget for Professional Services in Cost Center 4350 (Special Projects), Project 475558 (Crenshaw Northern Extension). Upon approval of this action, staff will ensure necessary funds are allocated to the project in coherence with the Continuing Resolution until the FY21 budget is adopted in September.

#### ISSUE

Work has been completed on the Crenshaw/LAX Northern Extension Advanced Alternatives Screening Study (Attachment A) in accordance with Board direction received in September 2018 (Item #50, Legistar File #2018-0589). The study included public outreach (Attachment B) and a review of preliminary project alternatives with recommendations for a refined set of alternatives to advance into environmental review.

On August 12, 2019 Metro issued a Request for Proposals (RFP No. PS63932) seeking a qualified contractor for environmental and engineering services for the Crenshaw Northern Extension Corridor Project. The principal goal is to make the project shovel-ready for any potential new sources of construction funding that could accelerate project delivery under the Measure M program.

The City of West Hollywood has been an active partner with Metro during the early feasibility and alternatives analysis studies and has prepared a Crenshaw/LAX Northern Extension Funding and

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Project Delivery Strategic Plan (Attachment C) in accordance with Metro's Early Project Delivery Policy. The City of Los Angeles has also participated.

Board approval is needed to award Contract No. AE64930000 to allow the contractor to begin work on the environmental clearance. In accordance with the CEO's Call to Action Financial Recovery Plan, funding included in the Draft FY21 budget has been reduced to \$2.1 million for this project to meet austerity targets established for the Countywide Planning and Development Department. Availability of additional funding to continue advancing the study will be considered in the FY21 mid-year budget and in future FY22 and FY23 budgets.

## **BACKGROUND**

The Crenshaw/LAX Northern Extension Project is a Measure M project with a groundbreaking date of FY 2041 and project completion date in FY 2047. Originally, \$2.24 billion in Measure M funds (\$2015) were allocated for this project.

### History

A northern extension was first identified as a part of planning studies for the Crenshaw/ LAX Line project in 2009. Studies at that time considered an extension of the Crenshaw/LAX Line north of the Metro Expo Line to the Metro Purple Line on Wilshire Boulevard, with the potential to ultimately extend farther north to the Metro Red Line in Hollywood. Funding for the extension was not identified at that time and therefore the northern terminus of the Crenshaw/LAX project was set at the Exposition/Crenshaw Station and further studies of the northern extension were deferred.

In February 2016, the Crenshaw Northern Extension project was included in Metro's "Operation Shovel Ready Initiative" list of projects for advancement through early stages of project planning. The Crenshaw Northern Extension Feasibility Study was initiated in May 2016. Following the passage of the Measure M in November 2016, it was further expanded to include an Alternatives Analysis.

The Feasibility/Alternatives Study defined and analyzed four potential alignment alternatives that could extend the Crenshaw/LAX Line northward from the Metro Expo Line to the Metro Purple Line on Wilshire Boulevard and onward to the Metro Red Line in Hollywood, as well as one alignment alternative that would extend from the Expo Line to the Red/Purple Line Wilshire/Vermont Station, with a connection to Hollywood via transfer to the existing Metro Red Line, but would not serve West Hollywood.

In July 2018, the Crenshaw Northern Extension Feasibility/Alternatives Analysis Study was completed and presented to the Metro Board as a Receive and File item. Metro staff were directed by the Board to meet with the cities of West Hollywood and Los Angeles to review next steps in the planning process and report back. Those meetings resulted in the following requests from both cities.

The City of West Hollywood's fundamental requests of Metro included:

- Find all reasonable and appropriate approaches to streamline the process to expedite bringing

the project to a state of readiness that would enable it to be delivered much earlier than scheduled, should the opportunity exist to do so;

- Move aggressively on the schedule to complete the work effort;
- Prepare a Project Environmental Impact Report (EIR), rather than a Program or Staged EIR, to reduce the potential for needing additional environmental clearance in the future and bolster efforts to accelerate delivery. Procure the environmental work as a joint National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) document, with an option for invoking the NEPA scope of services;
- Prepare additional studies to support subsequent NEPA review and clearance in the future, to streamline that transition, when appropriate and authorized by the Federal Transit Administration;
- Simplify the public engagement process by eliminating low-performing alternatives early, packaging similar alternatives and conducting latter outreach efforts with the benefit of additional technical information;
- Deliver the project as a single, complete phase, as early as possible.

The City of Los Angeles' input regarding the proposed, continued work on the Crenshaw Northern Extension project included:

- Public engagement should be adequate and address all alternatives;
- West Hollywood should consult with the City of Los Angeles on its Funding and Delivery Strategy;
- Study land use and demographics, which would inform an understanding of the process to winnow the alternatives.

Both cities agreed that Metro should set a threshold for deciding when to enter the procurement process for preliminary engineering (30 percent design), while understanding that Metro should only undertake this work when efforts to accelerate project delivery appear promising.

Based on the above input, in September 2018, the Board authorized the initiation of an Advanced Alternative Screening Study which has now been completed (Attachment A) with further engineering design, community outreach and the completion of a procurement process for environmental clearance.

## **DISCUSSION**

There has been a long-standing interest among West Hollywood local elected officials and stakeholders to accelerate the delivery of the Crenshaw Northern Extension project. Within the provisions allowed under Measure M, Metro staff committed to exploring a viable path forward to accelerate the project, consistent with adopted Board Early Project Delivery Strategy, led by the City of West Hollywood. A significant finding emerging out of the 2018 Feasibility/Alternatives Analysis Study was the fact that the cost of all five alternatives exceed Measure M funding allocations, some by approximately double. This funding gap is even greater, should even longer segments of the

routes require below-ground, subway construction than initially identified. Any potential acceleration strategy at this juncture would have to address that factor, either through mitigating cost, securing new revenue, or a hybrid of both.

### Advanced Alternatives Screening Study (2019-20)

To better support the City of West Hollywood in identifying project delivery options and a funding strategy in collaboration with Metro, this study has conducted broad public outreach and further technical study to narrow and refine the alternatives. This work effort has focused on more detailed design, a transit-oriented communities study, initial environmental screening and cost estimation to support public engagement and winnowing of the alternatives.

Two separate rounds of community meetings were conducted in early 2019 through spring 2020 throughout the study area to raise awareness about the Crenshaw Northern Extension Study and gather input on the alternatives.

The study has documented the corridor's existing conditions, conducted community outreach, and identified and screened potential alternatives by way of an Advanced Alternatives Screening Report. The study identified five main problems demonstrating that the study area needs high-capacity north-south transportation infrastructure based on the existing travel conditions, transportation infrastructure performance and travel demand.

- **Transit Network:** Transit options within the study area are limited to east-west rail services and buses that operate on congested roadways. North-south travel on the rail network requires transfer through downtown Los Angeles, thus decreasing network efficiency. The lack of high capacity roadways/highways in the study area, combined with existing congestion levels and the inability to expand the existing roadway network all negatively impact existing bus service. The addition of a north-south transit line in the study area has the potential to (1) effectively serve local population, employment, and activity centers within the study area, and (2) form part of a well-connected transit system for regional transit users travelling to or through the study area.
- **Congestion & Transit Reliability:** Commuters' willingness to use transit is negatively impacted by long and unpredictable travel times due to traffic congestion. The project must increase the efficiency and convenience of transit trips by providing faster, more reliable service in an exclusive guideway that is not affected by local roadway congestion.
- **Travel Demand:** High demand exists for trips within the study area as well as trips between the study area and surrounding region. Projected increased travel demand will place additional strain on an already overburdened system and further increase travel times. The project would provide a high-capacity, grade-separated transit service to meet growing travel demand.
- **Demand for High-Quality (Fast and Reliable) Transit Service:** The study area consists largely of transit-supportive land uses that attract a high volume of transit trips from within the study area and the entire region. Despite existing high levels of transit use, transit ridership is constrained by slow speeds, circuitous travel routes, high travel times, and unreliability due to congestion.
- **Transit Dependency:** The study area has a significant proportion of transit-dependent

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residents compared to the average of L.A. County. Transit-dependent residents are disproportionately impacted by long travel times and crowding on the existing transit system. The Project has the potential to address these mobility challenges by providing reliable, high-speed and high-capacity transit service that serves as a critical link in the regional transit network, enhancing mobility within the study area and the broader region, particularly to the north (San Fernando Valley/North County) and south (South LA, LAX, and South Bay). The study area's urban character and land use densities lead to both high transit ridership and a much higher percentage of people riding transit as compared to the rest of the region.

The Advanced Alternatives Analysis alternatives are projected to attract approximately 88,000 to 91,000 daily trips on the project over the no-build scenario based on the results of ridership projections from the Metro Regional Travel Demand Model. This projected ridership is at the same level as Metro's heavy rail lines and some heavily utilized rail lines in the nation (like MBTA Orange Line in Boston). The Crenshaw Northern Extension project closes a gap in the rail system and thereby greatly improves transit mobility from the San Fernando Valley to the South Bay and Gateway cities.

### Community and Stakeholder Outreach

Metro staff conducted an extensive community outreach effort (Attachment B), completing 32 community outreach meetings including neighborhood councils, neighborhood associations, Westside COG, C/LAX Community Leadership Council, major retail and employment centers, and public events such as Black History Month in Leimert Park and Ciclavia "Hollywood to West Hollywood", two online surveys and one informational video. Additionally, staff attended numerous briefings and attended various pop-up events. Through these efforts, staff obtained 171 emails, 224 in-person comments and 675 survey responses.

A majority of stakeholders and community members indicated a strong desire for the western alignments (San Vicente/Hybrid) because it included major destinations and job centers. There was also a smaller group that favored the La Brea alternative due to the direct connectivity through the region.

### Best Performing Alternatives

All alternatives studied in the Advance Alternatives Screening Analysis have high ridership projections and great potential in serving low-income riders. While the benefits are comparable among all alternatives, the issues of constructability (including engineering constraints) did result in notable differences in project costs and impacts.

Based on the findings described above related to ridership, costs, Transit Oriented Communities/First-Last Mile, and engineering constraints, the following recommendations are made (see Figure 1):

- San Vicente Alternative (Hybrid)
  - Hybrid Alignment- Modify the San Vicente Alignment by deletion of the section between Fairfax Avenue and Beverly Boulevard. Replace this segment with a new hybrid

alignment that would travel north on Fairfax between San Vicente and Beverly Boulevard where it would turn west to rejoin San Vicente Boulevard near the Cedars-Sinai Medical Center and the Beverly Center Shopping Center. The original San Vicente alignment included a poorly performing station at Wilshire Boulevard where a transfer connection to the Metro Purple Line D would require passengers to walk approximately 1,300 feet between San Vicente Boulevard and La Cienega Boulevard. Additionally, the alignment through the Carthay Circle community would have required an aerial configuration that would be incompatible with the Historic Preservation Overlay Zone (HPOZ) status. The Fairfax alignment between San Vicente and Beverly Boulevard would provide a significantly better connection to the Purple Line at Wilshire/Fairfax and much better land use connectivity to Museum Row, Farmers Market, the Grove and CBS Television City.

- Delete La Cienega Optional Segment- The optional alignment section along La Cienega between Beverly Boulevard and Santa Monica Boulevard is recommended for deletion in favor of the San Vicente Hybrid Alignment described above. This option would have required that the station serving Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, Beverly Center and the Beverly Connection would have required significant impacts to properties north and east of the intersection of Beverly/La Cienega in order to construct the cut and cover subway station. In order to avoid such impacts, the station would need to be constructed much farther east of the intersection of Beverly/La Cienega creating much fewer direct connections to the major land uses in the area.
- Hollywood Bowl Extension- Introduce an extension from Hollywood/ Highland Station to the Hollywood Bowl.
- Initial Operable Segments- Include further study of three initial operable segments: 1) Crenshaw/Expo Station to Wilshire/Fairfax Station; 2) Crenshaw/Expo Station to San Vicente/Santa Monica Station; 3) Crenshaw/Expo Station to Hollywood/Highland-Hollywood Bowl Station.
- Fairfax Alternative
  - Retain this alternative for further study.
  - Initial Operable Segments- Include further study of three initial operable segments: 1) Crenshaw/Expo Station to Wilshire/Fairfax Station; 2) Crenshaw/ Expo Station to Fairfax/Santa Monica Station; 3) Crenshaw/ Expo Station to Hollywood/Highland-Hollywood Bowl Station.
  - Hollywood Bowl Extension- Introduce an extension from Hollywood/ Highland Station to the Hollywood Bowl.
- La Brea Alternative
  - Retain this alternative for further study
  - Dismiss Aerial Segment- Dismiss further consideration of an aerial configuration due to community opposition, roadway and property impacts, and the potential for substantial

visual and aesthetic effects. Retain an underground configuration in the La Brea corridor due to high cost effectiveness and the high level of regional connectivity provided by the alternative.

- Initial Operable Segments- Include further study of three initial operable segments: 1) Crenshaw/Expo Station to Wilshire/La Brea Station; 2) Crenshaw/Expo Station to Hollywood/Highland-Hollywood Bowl Station.
- Hollywood Bowl Extension- Introduce an extension from Hollywood/ Highland Station to the Hollywood Bowl.
- Vermont Alternative
  - Dismiss this alternative from further consideration. The Vermont Alternative does not meet several key goals of the project. Other alignments under consideration provide much greater travel time savings for trips to, from and between major study area activity centers/ destinations, offering a speedier connection to Line D (Purple Line) and significantly less travel times to points further north throughout Central Los Angeles and the San Fernando Valley, and west.
  - In addition, action by the Metro Board calls for a separate transit study that would extend south along the Vermont corridor instead of this alignment that would divert Vermont trains off of Vermont south of Wilshire Boulevard. Separate studies indicate that the Vermont Corridor is the heaviest used bus corridor in the Metro system and should be served by a separate, high-capacity transit line that stays on the Vermont Corridor.

Figure 1: Recommended Screening of Alternatives



## Environmental Review

Initiating the Draft EIR will allow Metro to continue to study, analyze, and seek additional community input on these alternatives pursuant to CEQA. Federal funds have not been identified for this project. Environmental review pursuant to NEPA would occur only if federal funds were applied to this project. Staff propose to initiate the CEQA analysis first in order to identify a Locally Preferred Alternative, thoroughly analyze and document potential impacts, and advance the design of the alternatives in order to streamline the NEPA analysis should federal funds become available.

## Equity Platform



The study area has a significant proportion of transit-dependent residents compared to the average of L.A. County. Transit-dependent residents are disproportionately impacted by long travel times and crowding on the existing transit system. The project has the potential to address these mobility challenges by providing reliable, high-speed and high-capacity transit service that serves as a critical link in the regional transit network, enhancing mobility within the study area and the broader region, particularly to the north (San Fernando Valley/North County) and south (South LA, LAX, and South Bay). The study area's urban character and land use densities lead to both high transit ridership and a much higher percentage of people riding transit as compared to the rest of the region.

Metro will continue to engage the community in order to plan, design a project that improves access to opportunities and reflects the needs of the communities and the overall region.

### **DETERMINATION OF SAFETY IMPACT**

These actions will not have any impact on the safety of Metro customers and/or employees because this project is in the planning process phase and no capital or operational impacts result from this Board action.

### **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

The amount of \$2.19M is requested in the FY21 budget for Professional Services in Cost Center 4350 (Special Projects), Project 475558 (Crenshaw Northern Extension). Upon approval of this action, staff will ensure necessary funds are allocated to the project in coherence with the Continuing Resolution until the FY21 budget is adopted in September. Project will also be reassessed during the FY22 and FY23 budget process. Since this is a multi-year program, the Cost Center manager and Chief Planning Officer will be responsible for budgeting in future years.

### **Impact to Budget**

The funding source for the project is Measure M 35%. These funds are earmarked for the Crenshaw Northern Extension project and are not eligible for Metro bus and rail capital and operating expenditures.

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

The project will support the goals of the strategic plan by enhancing communities and lives through mobility and access to opportunity by adding a new high-quality mobility option, closing a gap in the rail network that provides outstanding trip experiences and enhances communities and lives through mobility and access to opportunity.

### **ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED**

The Metro Board could decide not to take action. This alternative is not recommended, as this would impact commencing the project's environmental clearance process and risk delay in the delivery of the Project through Metro's Early Project Delivery Strategy.

## **NEXT STEPS**

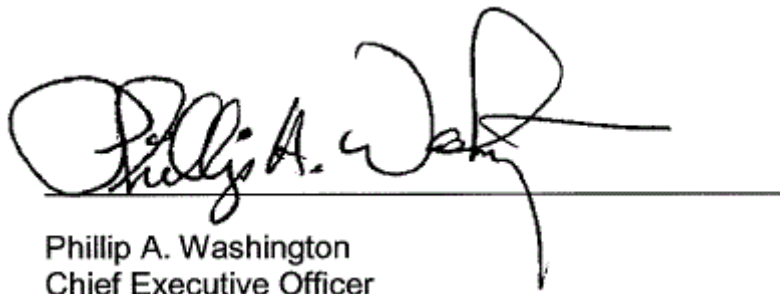
Upon Board approval, staff will execute Contract No. AE64930000 with Connect Los Angeles and initiate the Draft Environmental Impact Report/Advanced Conceptual Engineering and community engagement.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment A - Crenshaw Northern Extension Advanced Alternatives Screening Study  
Attachment B - Community Outreach & Meeting Report  
Attachment C - Crenshaw/LAX Northern Extension Funding and Project Delivery Strategic Plan  
Attachment D - Procurement Summary  
Attachment E - DEOD Summary

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