

**Board Report**

File #: 2020-0820, **File Type:** Informational Report

Agenda Number: 46.

**EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
JANUARY 21, 2021**

SUBJECT: TRAFFIC REDUCTION STUDY UPDATE

ACTION: RECEIVE AND FILE

RECOMMENDATION

RECEIVE AND FILE status report on Traffic Reduction Study (formerly named the Congestion Pricing Feasibility Study) update.

ISSUE

Staff is providing a status update on the Traffic Reduction Study (formerly named the Congestion Pricing Feasibility Study), which supports the Board's bold and transformational initiatives for "The Re-Imagining of LA County", Motions 43.1 (Butts), 43.2 (Solis, Garcetti, Dupont-Walker, Butts, Hahn), and 32.3 (Garcetti, Kuehl, Butts, Solis, Hahn).

BACKGROUND

On February 28, 2019, the Board approved strategies to pursue the Transformational Initiatives central to "The Re-Imagining of LA County," which included a Congestion Pricing Feasibility Study. This has since been renamed the Traffic Reduction Study to focus on the desired outcome of reducing traffic congestion and improving mobility. These Transformational Initiatives address the widely shared desire to greatly reduce congestion, improve mobility and air quality, improve equity, and ultimately provide a more sustainable and resilient LA County for all.

Concurrently, the Board passed Motion 32.3 to direct staff to ensure the Study fully addresses and incorporates the parameters identified in the January 2019 Motions 43.1 (Butts) and 43.2 (Solis, Garcetti, Dupont-Walker, Butts, Hahn), which include, but are not limited to, a detailed implementation timeline, cost estimates, sources of funding, and an equity strategy execution plan.

On April 25, 2019, the Board approved the issuance of Requests for Proposals to procure services from qualified firms for 1) Technical Services and 2) Communications Plan and Public Engagement Services for the Study.

On September 26, 2019, the Board approved award of contracts to WSP USA, Inc., for technical services and Guidehouse LLP for communications and public engagement services for the Study.

DISCUSSION

The Traffic Reduction Study is exploring how to reduce traffic through a two-pronged approach: 1) managing travel demand through congestion pricing, and 2) providing more high-quality transportation options. In addition, the study is intended to support:

- Environmental and economic justice, by mitigating impacts and improving outcomes for low-income and vulnerable populations and reducing greenhouse gas emissions;
- Improving public health and safety, including supporting air quality improvements and roadway safety for users; and
- Supporting economic prosperity, including supporting businesses and goods movement, and improving access to opportunities.

Prior to the pandemic, the LA region was experiencing economic and population growth that created tremendous travel demand on our increasingly congested transportation network. While traffic during COVID-19 has declined substantially, over the longer term, it is likely that our economy and population will continue to grow and traffic will continue to get worse. Traffic congestion has many negative consequences to individuals and communities. The Traffic Reduction Study is about planning for the future. As LA County recovers from the pandemic, we aim to come back stronger with better mobility and less traffic congestion. If a pilot traffic reduction program is approved by the Metro Board in 2022, Metro and our partners would begin the anticipated multi-year process that would lead to an operational program anticipated by 2025.

Stakeholder and Public Engagement to Date

Between August - December 2020, the project team conducted the first round of stakeholder and public engagement to introduce the Study and the idea of congestion pricing, and listen to feedback:

- The project team participated in 100 meetings with individuals and groups representing local municipalities, public sector agencies, council of governments, advocacy organizations, non-profit organizations, business groups, Metro advisory groups, academia, congestion pricing experts, and other stakeholders.
- We also hosted an equity-focused conversation workshop with participants representing interests around transportation and mobility justice, disabilities and accessibility, the environment and environmental justice, gender, economic development, public health, racial justice, and faith-based interests.
- Four virtual public meetings with a telephone call-in option (3 in English, 1 in Spanish) were held between September 30 and October 6, 2020, with over 270 participants. Social media ads promoting these virtual meetings reached 84,257 people across LA County and generated 734 responses indicating interest in attending.
- Staff launched a project webpage and distributed a variety of educational and project-specific information, including blog posts on *The Source*, a frequently asked questions handout, and a project fact sheet. We worked with Professor Michael Manville, Associate Professor of Urban

Planning at UCLA and expert on congestion pricing, to produce an educational video in English and Spanish on congestion pricing. Through posting online and promoting on social media, the video has been viewed 62,832 times to-date. An ad featuring the video reached 176,840 people across LA County, with nearly 50 of them sharing it.

Key themes and takeaways that the project team heard during the first phase of stakeholder and public engagement are summarized in Attachment B. Although the Study is in the early stages of analysis, staff has identified the anticipated timeframe (see Column 2 of Attachment B) in which more information will be available to address these topics.

Stakeholder and public input will be critical to the work of this Study and the eventual proposed traffic reduction program pilot. There will be ongoing opportunities for community members to provide input throughout the process, including additional Metro-hosted discussions; conversations with organizations, businesses and cities; and more. Engagement with low-income and vulnerable communities and organizations will continue to be prioritized to ensure equity is at the center of the proposed pilot traffic reduction program. Stakeholder and public engagement will be qualitatively and quantitatively tracked and monitored to help the project team further improve the process, including the following metrics:

- Stakeholder and public: Type of engagement activity, number of participants, number of activities, content of input provided
- Community-based organizations: Type of engagement, number of participants, content of input provided
- General public survey with results available by race, income, gender, and geography

Identifying Concepts for Analysis

Since August 2020, the project team has been engaging a broad range of stakeholders across the region in conversations about their ideas, hopes, and concerns for a potential pilot program. Staff has been working with representatives from municipalities that are interested in exploring the use of congestion pricing to manage travel demand to identify initial concepts that will be explored further through analysis and additional stakeholder and public engagement. Staff will provide an update to the Board in February 2021 on the identified concepts. Each concept consists of:

- A location that has patterns and concentrations of congestion with Travel Time Index (TTI) of 1.5 or greater. TTI is a measure of travel delay that compares congested morning and evening peak-period travel conditions to “free-flow” conditions.
- Appropriate pricing model to achieve objectives.

Identification of these concepts include the following factors:

- Ability to respond to substantial congestion;
- Traffic reduction benefits that can be easily described and communicated to the public to facilitate ease of understanding;
- Areas that would not depend on infrastructure, services, or policies outside of Metro’s and our partners’ purview and timeline for implementation;
- Level of complication and needed infrastructure;

- Presence of potential municipalities interested in exploring congestion pricing as a way to manage travel demand and improve mobility;
- Potential for rich transit and mobility options through already planned improvements and additional future improvements that will be identified through the Study process. Planned improvements include projects and services that will be implemented by 2025 as part of the NextGen Bus Plan, Measure M, and other municipal transit operator or jurisdictional plans; and
- Anticipating and minimizing potential spillover traffic onto parallel roadways.

Lessons learned from successful deployment of congestion pricing strategies in Europe and Asia offer the following additional guidance for consideration:

- To the greatest extent possible, use natural or human-made structures as boundaries (e.g., water bodies, hills/mountains, highways/human-made structures);
- Focus on commercial locations in which trips and travel patterns can be influenced by pricing strategies;
- Avoid bisecting neighborhoods; and
- Consideration of areas with robust transit options.

Based on the factors and guidance mentioned above, the initial concepts will be the ones that best meet the factors and guidance outlined above.

Performance Evaluation Metrics

During the forthcoming technical analysis, the model forecasts will underpin a comparison of “Build” alternatives that assume the proposed pricing concept is in place, to a “No-Build” alternative that assumes no pricing. The project team has identified a preliminary set of metrics to evaluate the concepts in terms of benefits and burdens across multiple categories, including impacts on roadway congestion, access to opportunity, community health and environment, affordability, and financial impacts. The metrics will be reported for the “No Build” and “Build” scenarios to facilitate the evaluation of change resulting from the pricing concept as well as the expected outcome. Table 1 summarizes the preliminary set of performance evaluation metrics, which will be further refined through feedback from stakeholders. The appropriate additive transportation improvements will also be identified. In addition, stakeholder and public engagement will further inform evaluation of these concepts. Through this process, we hope to be able to recommend one or more areas for implementation.

Table 1. Preliminary Quantitative Performance Evaluation Metrics

Potential Outcome	Indicator	Metric
Mobility	Roadway congestion	Change in throughput ▪ Time period ▪ Highway segments
		Change in average speed ▪ Time period ▪ Highway segments
		Change in speed index [ratio of congested to free-flow speed] ▪ Time period ▪ Highway segments

		Change in automobile mode share ▪ Time period ▪ Representative origin-destinations
		Change in travel time ▪ Time period ▪ Representative origin-destinations ▪ Highway segments ▪ Mode (auto, transit, active transportation)
		Change in travel time index [ratio of congested travel time to free-flow travel time] ▪ Time period ▪ Representative origin-destinations ▪ Highway segments ▪ Mode (auto, transit, active transportation)
Access to opportunity	Travel time	Improvement in travel times to key destinations ▪ Time period ▪ Representative origin-destinations ▪ Mode (auto, transit, active transportation)
	Job accessibility	Number of jobs accessible within 30 minutes of travel time ▪ Mode (auto, transit, active transportation) ▪ Household income
	Diversion	Reduction in diverted trips through Equity Focus Community areas ▪ Alternative routes
	Transit ridership	Change in transit ridership (boardings) ▪ Route or line
	Transit mode share	Change in transit mode share ▪ Representative groups of origins and destinations
Community health and environment	Active transportation	Increase in trips via active transportation (bike and walk trips) ▪ Representative groups of origins and destinations
	Smart growth	Change in Vehicle Miles Traveled (SB-743 implementation)
	Climate change	Reduction in CO2 gas emissions per capita
	Air quality	Reduction in pollutants in Equity Focus Community Areas (CO, NOX, PM10, SOX, & VOC)
Affordability	Household budget burden	Household budget spent on transportation ▪ Household income
Financial impacts	Financial	Gross revenue
	Operations and maintenance	Planning-level cost estimates ▪ Capital costs (infrastructure and equipment) ▪ Tolling operation costs
	Net revenue	Net revenues for transportation improvements and re-investment into communities served/affected

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Funding for the Traffic Reduction Study is included in the FY21 budget. As these are multi-year contracts, the project manager and Chief Innovation Officer will be responsible for budgeting these costs in future years.

IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

The Traffic Reduction Study supports the Metro Vision 2028 Strategic Plan Goal #1, Initiative 1.3 to test and implement pricing strategies to reduce traffic congestion.

NEXT STEPS

Staff will continue to engage stakeholders and the public to seek feedback. We will provide an update to the Board in February 2021 on the initial concepts that will be further analyzed.

By summer of 2021, we anticipate bringing forward a recommended pilot concept for consideration by the Metro Board. This would be followed by the development of an implementation plan with input from the public. In Spring of 2022, a pilot concept and implementation plan will be brought to the Metro Board for approval. If the Board decides to proceed with implementation of a pilot program, there are still additional steps necessary. Getting to an actual operational pilot program will require federal and state approval, system design, and deployment, with a pilot program launch anticipated by 2025. Throughout that additional process, Metro and our partners will work together and with a broader set of stakeholders to further refine the pilot to ensure it responds to the evolving traffic and mobility challenges.

Staff will conduct ongoing dialogue with the Board at key milestones during the project development process. Key project milestones include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Second phase of stakeholder and public engagement
- Equity assessment and equity policy recommendations
- Summary of performance evaluation of concepts
- Recommendation of preferred pilot concept
- Proposed transportation improvements
- Summary of technology requirements
- Summary of findings for legislative and institutional requirements for implementing a pilot program
- Development of investment and financial plan
- Development of implementation plan

At the completion of the Study, the following milestones will require Board authorization to proceed:

- Go/No Go decision to implement pilot traffic reduction program
- Award a separate contract for system engineering for pilot program
- Exercise the Option on Contract No. PS62791000 for the Traffic Reduction Study Communications and Public Engagement Services contract.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A - Informational resources

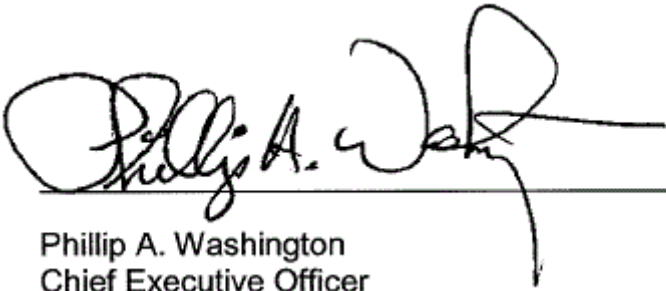
Attachment B - Summary of Key Themes and Takeaways from Phase 1 Stakeholder and public engagement

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