

**Board Report**

File #: 2020-0861, **File Type:** Informational Report**Agenda Number:** 15.

**PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE
FEBRUARY 17, 2021****SUBJECT: EAST SAN FERNANDO VALLEY TRANSIT CORRIDOR: SUPPLEMENTAL STUDY
OF THE SAN FERNANDO SHARED RAILROAD RIGHT-OF-WAY IN SYLMAR,
PACOIMA AND THE CITY OF SAN FERNANDO****ACTION: RECEIVE AND FILE****RECOMMENDATION**

RECEIVE AND FILE the response to Board Motion 10.1 (Attachment A, Legistar File 2020-0024 Najarian, Kuehl) on the December 2020 Board report for the East San Fernando Valley Transit Corridor (ESFVTC) Final Environmental Impact Report (Legistar File 2020-0780). The Final EIS/EIR is available on the Project website at: www.metro.net/projects/east-sfv [.<http://www.metro.net/projects/east-sfv>](http://www.metro.net/projects/east-sfv).

ISSUE

The December staff report had recommended further study of the 2.5-mile shared railroad right-of-way along San Fernando Road. The motion additionally directed that “the CEO direct staff to develop a plan to complete the necessary studies as expeditiously as possible. The plan should include an analysis of data and a path forward for all parties, including Metrolink, with mitigative options, which may or may not include grade separations, be brought back to the Planning and Programming Committee in February 2021”.

BACKGROUND

At its December 3, 2020 meeting the Board certified in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) the Project’s Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR), which included an option to construct the Project in phases. At that meeting the Board was informed of concerns received from the Southern California Regional Rail Authority (SCRRA or Metrolink) and the City of San Fernando related to the shared railroad right-of-way portion of the ESFVTC alignment. The SCRRA and City of San Fernando pointed out that the FEIR assumed one shared Metrolink/Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) set of tracks and two sets of light rail transit (LRT) tracks would cross five signalized intersections in the cities of Los Angeles and San Fernando. They pointed out that there was renewed interest in adding a second set of tracks along the same shared rail right-of-way for the Metrolink and UPRR lines. If constructed, there would be four sets of tracks along the shared rail right-of-way, which would pose unique safety and traffic related challenges. Letters received from

Metrolink and the City of San Fernando are included in Attachment B.

In response, the Board instructed staff to move forward with the Project. This Board action will enable Metro staff to initiate right-of-way acquisition and utility relocation on the Van Nuys Blvd portion of the alignment while conducting further study on the shared railroad right-of-way portion of the alignment.

DISCUSSION

Since receiving the Board's December 3, 2020 motion, staff has prepared a draft scope of work (SOW) for the Supplemental Study in coordination with the SCRRA and the City of San Fernando. Staff will include SCRRA and City of San Fernando in all phases of the study and will include the City of Los Angeles with regard to segments of the track in the communities of Sylmar and Pacoima. Elements of the study include the following:

Task 1: Alternatives Definition: One of the purposes of the new study will be to identify additional alternatives for the 2.5-mile, railroad right-of-way that is owned by Metro but shared with Metrolink and UPRR. All three of the new alternatives to be considered would extend much needed mass transit service to the City of San Fernando which is consistent with past Board actions. The new alternatives to be evaluated for comparison to the locally preferred alternative (LPA) include:

1. **Full-Build:** Quadruple Track from Van Nuys Boulevard to Sylmar/San Fernando Metrolink Station (two tracks for LRT and two shared tracks for Metrolink and UPRR).
2. **ESFVTC Initial Operational Segment (IOS) With New Connection:** Build the IOS (Phase 1), create a new transfer connection station/hub at Van Nuys/San Fernando, and complete Metrolink/UPRR double track between Van Nuys and Sylmar/San Fernando to support increased frequencies on Metrolink in this segment to feed into Phase 1 of the IOS.
3. **Federal Railroad Administration (FRA)-Compliant Light Rail:** Build ESFVTC to FRA Tier-III Compliant standards for Light Rail, which at a minimum would make it easier and safer for the ESFVTC to share the shared corridor, and could open the door to shared tracks solutions that benefit both the ESFVTC and Antelope Valley Line (AVL) with more efficient, phased investment.

Task 2: Updated Vehicle Counts and Traffic Circulation Modifications

Metro shall work with the City of San Fernando and Los Angeles to determine locations for updated traffic counts. In the event that COVID-19 conditions do not allow reasonable forecasting, Metro shall work with the cities to devise a mutually agreeable method for forecasting existing counts and future traffic forecasts.

Task 3: Grade Crossing & Corridor Safety Analysis: For the above-listed Full-Build Alternative, Metro will complete a grade-crossing safety study for four sets of tracks that would cross the six signalized intersections along the 2.5-mile shared right-of-way. These crossings are located at Van Nuys Boulevard, Paxton, Jessie/Wolfskill, Brand, Maclay and Hubbard. The grade-crossing safety study will assess the safety and traffic impacts that may result from four sets of tracks on autos, bikes and

pedestrians and consider the merits and feasibility of grade separating one of more of the intersections.

Task 4: Constraints Analysis: Adjacent land uses and other constraints may limit project design options. Minimizing impacts to adjacent roadways and land uses shall be evaluated for each alternative.

Task 5: Alignment Design and Refinement: The current FEIS/FEIR design plans shall be updated to incorporate the new studies and alternatives. Any modifications to right-of-way requirements will be identified.

Task 6: Safety Assessment for Corridor Motorists, Bicycles and Pedestrians: In the City of San Fernando, because all alternatives would include at least one new set of tracks being constructed near the San Fernando Middle School and adjacent to the San Fernando Police Department (SFPD), updated traffic and pedestrian counts will be completed. These counts will be utilized to consider auto waiting times at signalized intersections, as well as potential safety impacts to the school and SFPD. For each of the newly assessed alternatives, the study will determine if there would be new real estate acquisition impacts and if so, would impacts be acceptable to the cities of San Fernando and Los Angeles. Similar analysis will be conducted along the City of Los Angeles portions of the alignment.

Task 7: Alternatives Analysis and Final Report: In cooperation with SCRRA and the cities of San Fernando and Los Angeles, the project alternatives will be refined and evaluated. Based on the evaluation, one recommended alternative shall be identified for public review and comment.

DETERMINATION OF SAFETY IMPACT

There are no safety impacts that will result from the study. The study has been written to assist Metro in identifying ways in which it can better address safety concerns raised by the SCRRA and the City of San Fernando.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The existing Project budget contains no funds for this study. Funds will need to be added to the FY 2021-22 budget in Cost Center 4350 (Systemwide Team 4) in order to award the consultant contract. Metro is reviewing the study's eligibility to utilize funding from an existing State of California grant, awarded to Metro under the 2018 Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program (TIRCP), for the purpose of studying passenger rail network integration. If this study is determined to be eligible for the State grant fund's then there would be no impact to the Project budget.

Impact to Budget

The study will have no impact on the FY 2020-21 budget. The Senior Executive Officer of Systemwide Planning in Countywide Planning and Development will be responsible for budgeting funds in FY 2021-22. The anticipated fund source to prepare the study is State TIRCP network integration grant funds. If local funding is determined to be needed, these funds will be identified

through the FY 2021-22 budget process.

IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

The Project is consistent with the Metro Vision 2028 Strategic Plan goals by addressing key transportation challenges in the Project area, including growing travel demand, travel times, traffic congestion and limited connections to the regional rail system.

- The Project is aligned with Vision 2028 Goal #1 - Provide High Quality Mobility Options That Will Enable People to Spend Less Time Traveling.
- The Project also supports Goal #3 - Enhance Communities through Mobility and Enhanced Access to Opportunity. It will connect communities in the San Fernando Valley to the regional Metro rail network. This Project will expand access to jobs, major activity centers, including educational and medical facilities, and recreational opportunities within the Project area and throughout the Los Angeles region.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

This is a Board-directed study so no options other than the study were considered. Staff considered requesting budget for the study but determined that accessing funds through the State TIRCP network integration grant funds would avoid utilizing ESFVTC project budget and may enable the project to move forward faster.

NEXT STEPS

Staff will negotiate a contract or task order with the consultant using the Regional Rail Planning and/or Engineering on-call services and initiate work on the study. It is anticipated that the study will take 12 to 18 months to complete. The Metro Board shall be appraised of the study progress at milestone points prior to recommendations for a preferred alternative and any subsequent environmental clearances and other approvals and procedural steps required.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A - Board Motion 2020-0780 (Najarian/Kuehl)

Attachment B - FEIR Comment Letters from City of San Fernando and SCRRA

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