



Board Report

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PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE APRIL 14, 2021

SUBJECT: COUNTYWIDE PLANNING MAJOR PROJECT STATUS REPORT

ACTION: RECEIVE AND FILE

RECOMMENDATION

RECEIVE AND FILE monthly report on the Major Capital Projects in the environmental planning phase by the Chief Planning Officer.

DISCUSSION

- **West Santa Ana Branch Corridor**

The West Santa Ana Branch (WSAB) project team submitted the second Administrative Draft of the Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (Draft EIS/EIR) to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) on March 16, and March 30, 2021, in two batches. Following FTA's review, staff will incorporate responses to comments and submit one more time. FTA is currently expected to authorize public circulation of the Draft EIS/EIR in either June or July 2021.

In the coming months, staff is planning to re-engage with key stakeholders while using this opportunity to introduce the project to new stakeholders in the 19-mile corridor. Staff will highlight the project purpose, alternatives, and environmental process, and provide opportunity for public involvement and participation. The following activities are proposed:

- Phase 1 (Public Engagement, April - June 2021): Activities will ensure that stakeholders in the study area are well informed of the project and aware of the imminent release of the Draft EIS/EIR in June or July 2021. This phase will be crucial for stakeholders to understand the process and for staff to prepare for the comment period and public hearings. The team will reconvene the Stakeholder Working Groups (SWG) to continue providing a community-based perspective and to share challenges, opportunities, and best approaches to effective community outreach.

The Metro team is working on the approach and timeline for a Community-Based Organization (CBO) Partnership Strategy that aims to leverage the local expertise and reach of organizations in traditionally hard-to-reach communities. This collaborative approach is more vital than ever as the evolving COVID-19 pandemic has made it more challenging to

meaningfully engage with the hard-to-reach audiences, including those with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) as well as environmental justice (EJ) communities. The approach will be developed in spring and is slightly different than the current approach for SWG members. In this approach, CBOs will have a more direct role in the project with a compensation structure while also aligning with Metro's Equity Platform Framework.

- Phase 2 (Release of Draft EIS/EIR, June - August 2021): Focus and activities during this phase will be on the release of the Draft EIS/EIR, with a comment period of 45 days and public hearings.
- Phase 3 (Selection of LPA & First/Last Mile Workshops Fall 2021): Activities will focus on the selection of a Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA), anticipated in September or October 2021, and First/Last Mile Workshops.

In addition, the team will develop a story map to publish and promote a multi-media tool to inform the public of project updates, provide photography/videography, and interactive maps. The tool will be used beginning mid-April and will be promoted through a variety of ways to encourage stakeholders to seek project information (especially during the draft review period), to comment and to participate in public hearings.

The project team will seek Board approval this month for additional funding and a time extension to existing Funding Agreement (FA# 920000000FACGGC03) with the Gateway Cities Council of Governments (COG) for Third-Party Administration participation in the WSAB environmental clearance study

The project continues to advance field survey work and verification of existing utilities identified as part of the 15% design. Staff continues to coordinate with various third parties as necessary including Union Pacific Railroad, cities, Caltrans, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and various utility providers.

- **Green Line to Torrance LRT Extension**

The EIR scoping period, which started on January 29, concluded on March 29, 2021. Over 300 people attended the two virtual scoping meetings and over 700 comments have been received.

Comments received are being documented and evaluated as a part of the environmental process. Based on scoping comments, the project team will move forward with the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) and conceptual design of the alternatives under evaluation.

Community outreach will be ongoing and project updates will be shared as the environmental process progresses. Targeted stakeholder meetings will be scheduled to discuss community concerns and project opportunities throughout the study area. Coordination will continue, as well, with Caltrans and BNSF to understand current and future operational needs for both entities and alternatives under evaluation.

- **Eastside Corridor LRT Extension**

The Eastside Corridor Phase 2 project team along with Community Relations and Race and Equity Departments are developing a Community Based Organization (CBO) strategy for the project in collaboration with LA County Board of Supervisors Hilda L. Solis (First District) and Janice Hahn (Fourth District), and key stakeholders.

The Community Based Organization strategy will follow the guidance of the Equity Platform and the Draft CBO Partnering Strategy, as discussed earlier in this report. The CBO Strategy is anticipated to be complete in April, prior to commencing community engagement for the Eastside Corridor LRT Extension.

The environmental and engineering consultant teams are advancing the project per the Board's decisions to focus on the Washington Alternative and CEQA only. The engineering consultants continue to refine the Draft Advanced Conceptual Engineering based on comments and enhancements along the alignment.

The monthly meeting of the Washington Boulevard Coalition was held on April 1, 2021.

- **Sepulveda Transit Corridor**

On March 25, 2021, the Metro Board authorized Pre-Development Agreement (PDA) awards to two teams: (1) LA SkyRail Express, proposing monorail technology in the I-405 right of way, and (2) Sepulveda Transit Corridor Partners, proposing heavy rail technology in subway and aerial configurations. Metro staff is working to execute the Notice to Proceed (NTP) with both contractors.

Next actions include commencement of the environmental review process, which requires the consideration of a reasonable range of project alternatives that will be studied further for their environmental impacts. The alternatives will include those that were identified by the Sepulveda Transit Corridor Feasibility Study completed in 2019, and by the two concepts selected from the PDA teams. The alternatives will be analyzed for environmental impacts across their proposed modes, alignments, station locations, and above- or below-ground configurations. Through the course of the environmental process, these alternatives may be refined.

Metro Communications staff continues to conduct outreach and communications activities, and at this juncture of finalizing the NTP, is preparing to update the community on next steps. Planning staff will commence preparation for the environmental scoping period, during which time staff will present the Project alternatives, environmental topics to be studied, and criteria for evaluating Project alternatives. Staff will also solicit public input regarding the environmental analyses to be conducted.

- **NoHo to Pasadena Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)**

The NoHo to Pasadena BRT Draft EIR comment period began on October 26 and concluded on December 28. Staff received nearly 500 comments, the majority of which expressed general support for the project. Currently the most challenging issues include community concerns over parking loss along Olive Avenue in Burbank and other comments pertaining to the Eagle Rock section of the project.

In Eagle Rock, most comments favor routing the BRT along Colorado Boulevard rather than on the SR-134 freeway. However, community members have expressed concerns over impacts to the existing buffered bike lanes, medians, traffic, and parking. Many comments also expressed support for a new BRT proposal on Colorado Boulevard that was developed by a local community group.

Staff examined this community-developed proposal and incorporated many of its feasible elements into a refined BRT concept, which was presented to key Eagle Rock stakeholders via two virtual roundtable meetings on March 16, 2021. A third virtual roundtable meeting was held on March 26, 2021, for all Eagle Rock businesses along the boulevard. A total of 80 people participated in these meetings and the refinements made to the Project were generally well received.

Staff has since developed a recommended Proposed Project that (at the time of this report writing) will be presented to the public at a community meeting on April 1, 2021. During the community meeting, the public will have the opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback on the Proposed Project ahead of the Metro Board receiving the staff recommendation which is currently expected to be presented to the Metro Board in May 2021.

- **Countywide Planning Dashboard**

While this report focuses on the four Major Capital (“Pillar” Projects), there also are six other Measure M projects, five non-Measure M projects, and four Strategy & Policy initiatives. To provide an update on these other 15 projects, Attachment A to this report provides a Countywide Planning Dashboard with a listing and status for each.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A - Countywide Planning Monthly Major Projects - March 2021

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