



Board Report

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PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE SEPTEMBER 15, 2021

SUBJECT: FIRST/LAST MILE PLAN FOR PURPLE (D LINE) EXTENSION TRANSIT PROJECT - SECTION 1

ACTION: APPROVE RECOMMENDATION

RECOMMENDATION

ADOPT First/Last Mile Plan (Plan) for Purple (D Line) Extension Transit Project Section 1 (Attachment A).

ISSUE

Metro Board authorized the preparation of a first/last mile (FLM) plan for the Purple (D Line) Extension Transit Project, Section 1, in January 2020. The Plan was completed and includes FLM improvements around three future D Line stations: Wilshire/La Brea, Wilshire/Fairfax, and Wilshire/La Cienega. Adoption of the Plan by the Metro Board better positions FLM improvements for funding and implementation, including the pursuit of potential grant funding.

BACKGROUND

The Plan includes pedestrian and bicycle projects that improve safety, comfort, and access to the three future D Line stations. Pedestrian projects are identified within the ½-mile radius around each station, and bicycle projects are identified within the 3-mile radius around each station.

The Metro FLM methodology, described in the 2014 First Last Mile Strategic Plan, was used as the basis for plan development. A summary of planning steps are as follows:

- Review and analysis of existing conditions and relevant plans
- Walk audits of station areas
- Community engagement
- Draft and final plans with pathway networks and FLM projects
- Ongoing coordination with local jurisdictions

The consultant team included Los Angeles Walks, a community-based organization dedicated to promoting walking and pedestrian infrastructure in Los Angeles. Its efforts were deployed in the development and implementation of a community engagement strategy. As planning took place

during the COVID-19 pandemic, community outreach and engagement were conducted to accommodate safety mandates and protocol.

The Plan includes the following core planning products:

- Pathway Maps with FLM projects
- Project lists, that correspond to the Pathway Maps
- Cost estimation for FLM projects

The Plan also includes supporting documents that detail the planning process in a series of memos. The full Plan is available in Attachment A.

DISCUSSION

Plan Summary and Key Findings

The Plan presents project ideas to improve safety, connectivity, and station accessibility for pedestrians and people who use bicycles (or other modes of non-motorized wheeled transportation). Broadly, improvements include, but are not limited to, new or improved sidewalks and crosswalks, bus stop improvements, pedestrian lighting, landscaping and shade, and various types of bicycle facilities.

At the Wilshire/La Cienega station, the Plan recommends a suite of FLM improvements along the main arterials of Wilshire Blvd and La Cienega Blvd as these provide direct access to the future station entrance. The Plan aligns and coordinates with elements found in the City of Beverly Hills' Connect Beverly Hills streetscape project for these streets. Another major street - San Vicente Blvd - does not connect directly to the future station but is notable as the boundary between the City of Beverly Hills and the City of Los Angeles and its high volume of vehicular traffic. Improved bicycle facilities recommended on this corridor will help bicyclists connect safely to the station.

At the Wilshire/Fairfax station, the Plan recommends a variety of pedestrian amenities along the arterials of Wilshire Ave and Fairfax Ave. Project staff anticipates the need to safely connect future D Line riders to the many popular regional destinations in the area, including the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), the La Brea Tar Pits, and the Original Farmers Market and the Grove to the north, and Little Ethiopia to the south. The Plan supports the City of Los Angeles' proposed bike lane on Fairfax Ave and seeks to provide east-west connectivity through bike facilities along 6th St and 8th St/Del Valle Dr.

At the Wilshire/La Brea station, the main arterials of Wilshire Blvd and La Brea Ave support commercial activity and are surrounded by predominantly residential streets. Enhanced sidewalks and crosswalks, among other FLM improvements, would improve the experience of future pedestrians getting to and from the station. The Plan supports the City of Los Angeles' proposed bike lane on La Brea Ave along with bike boulevards that provide alternative routes on parallel streets. Bicyclists can take these north-south routes to connect to existing facilities on 4th St and proposed facilities on 8th St.

Process

The project team developed the Plan between February 2020 and July 2021 based on the methodology in the 2014 First/Last Mile Strategic Plan and experience with past FLM plans. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the project was placed on a temporary pause between May and October 2020. When the project resumed, adjustments were made to the planning process such that community engagement would be conducted to accommodate social-distancing and stay-at-home orders.

Community Engagement

Community members provided local knowledge and insight about pedestrian and bicyclist needs in the three station areas. Staff aimed to reach a diversity of street users, including residents in the study area and people from elsewhere in the county who may be using, or are likely to use, transit to reach these areas.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, activities were conducted virtually or in an individual, socially-distanced manner to adhere to safety protocol. As part of the consultant team, the community-based organization, Los Angeles Walks, helped develop, review, and implement community engagement activities throughout the planning process.

The project team pursued multiple avenues to collect feedback from community members. Engagement activities included stakeholder interviews (20 participants), an online map-based survey (891 responses), community walk audits (36 individuals trained, approximately 21 audits completed), and a virtual roundtable discussion (10 participants). The online survey was shared through multiple channels, including targeted social media. During these activities, community participants noted observations about the needs and challenges of the station areas for pedestrians and bicyclists. These observations resulted in a rich body of geolocated and descriptive data that informed the final Plan.

In addition to these planned community engagement activities, Metro staff led presentations before the survey launch to demonstrate how to take the online survey. When a draft Plan was ready, Metro staff led presentations to inform communities of its recommended FLM projects.

A community engagement and local coordination memo, in Attachment A, provides greater detail.

Coordination with Local Jurisdictions

FLM projects require close coordination with the local authorities that control the right-of-way around Metro stations. Metro held meetings with agency staff and elected offices from the City of Beverly Hills and the City of Los Angeles. Metro met with staff at the beginning of FLM planning to introduce activities, learn about FLM needs and challenges, and discuss community engagement approaches. Metro also communicated with them when the planning process was temporarily paused due to COVID-19 pandemic-related agency direction. At a later stage, Metro provided city agencies an opportunity to review and comment on drafts of the Plan.

A community engagement and local coordination memo, in Attachment A, provides greater detail.

DETERMINATION OF SAFETY IMPACT

The recommended action has no direct safety impact. This Plan presents project ideas that promote improved safety for people walking or using non-motorized wheeled transportation around future D Line stations.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Adoption of this Plan has no impact to the budget.

Local jurisdictions lead project implementation; Metro support in implementation may come in the form of grant writing assistance and priority in future Metro Active Transportation (MAT) cycles.

EQUITY PLATFORM

The Plan proposes projects that will improve safety, comfort, and accessibility for the most vulnerable users of our streets - pedestrians and bicyclists. According to Statewide Integrated Traffic Records System (SWITRS) data, between 2013-2017, there were 72 pedestrian and 66 bicycle collisions in the Wilshire/La Brea station area, 49 pedestrian and 34 bicycle collisions in the Wilshire/Fairfax station area, and 44 pedestrian and 22 bicycle collisions in the Wilshire/La Cienega station area. The Plan proposes projects that would improve the safety along many of the streets where these collisions happen. This includes improvements on corridors that have been identified as part of the City of Los Angeles' High Injury Network (HIN).

The Plan focuses on pedestrians and bicyclists getting to and from transit stations. By extrapolating from 2019 Metro On-Board Survey data for the existing D (Purple) line, the Plan will improve safety, comfort, and accessibility for a 62% transit dependent population, with 32.2% living below the poverty line and 77.5% identifying as non-white.

The Plan was developed with significant community feedback through the stakeholder interviews (20 participants), walk-audits (36 trainees; 21 audits), community roundtable discussions (10 participants), and map-based survey (891 responses). A partnership with the community-based organization, Los Angeles Walks, was established to help broaden the outreach effort and increase participation from communities that are generally underrepresented in public participation processes. The project team reached out to various institutions, including neighborhood councils, community organizations, religious institutions, businesses and business associations, schools, health centers, and cultural centers. Coordination with and presentations to the Metro Accessibility Advisory Committee were intended to increase participation from people living with disabilities. Materials and activities for community engagement were made available in English, Spanish, and Korean languages.

In the development of the Plan, the project team coordinated closely with the City of Los Angeles and City of Beverly Hills. Implementation of the Plan's recommendations is at their future discretion. As such, adoption of the Plan would not present any immediate burden. Were cities to advance this

concept-level Plan, additional research is encouraged during design and engineering, to understand and mitigate potential impacts to businesses and residents in the station area in the medium term (i.e., construction) and long-term. Specifically, cities should conduct additional community engagement and data collection to understand the needs of businesses that may be impacted by the implementation of FLM projects, particularly those that are minority and women-owned. As part of a broader assessment of transit project impact, inclusive of FLM improvements, cities should forecast the magnitude of displacement and consider neighborhood stabilization activities. These recommended activities will help further Metro Transit Oriented Communities (TOC) Policy goals, including stabilizing and enhancing communities surrounding transit, engaging organizations, jurisdictions, and the public, and distributing transit benefits to all.

IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

The recommended actions support two Strategic Plan goals:

- Deliver outstanding trip experiences (Goal #2): the FLM plan recognizes that trip experience includes time getting to and from transit stations. The Plan prepares projects that make trip experiences safer, more comfortable, and more accessible.
- Transform LA County through collaboration and leadership (Goal #4): Metro is uniquely situated to prepare FLM plans that span jurisdictional boundaries. In adopting this Plan, Metro is leading this area by preparing FLM projects at the Wilshire/La Cienega station for both the City of Beverly Hills and the City of Los Angeles.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The Board could decide not to approve the FLM Plan. This is not recommended for the following reasons:

1. Previous Board action (Motion 14.1, 2016) directs FLM projects to be incorporated into transit corridor project delivery; and
2. An adopted plan better positions the FLM projects for future grant funding opportunities.

NEXT STEPS

As described in the Board-approved First/Last Mile Guidelines, the adopted Plan will be provided to the City of Los Angeles and the City of Beverly Hills for implementation. Adoption of the Plan will qualify cities for Metro grant-writing assistance. The Guidelines specify that FLM credit toward the 3% local contribution is not available for this project.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A - First/Last Mile Plan for Purple (D Line) Extension Transit Project Section 1

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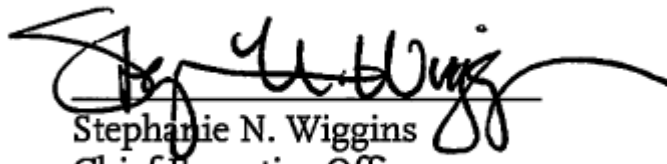
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