

**Board Report**

File #: 2015-0896, **File Type:** Informational Report**Agenda Number:** 19.

**PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE
JULY 15, 2015****SUBJECT: HIGH DESERT CORRIDOR (HDC) UPDATE****ACTION: RECEIVE AND FILE****RECOMMENDATION**

RECEIVE AND FILE this update on the **status of the HDC Project Approval/ Environmental Document.**

ISSUE

The HDC PA/ED is being prepared in partnership with California Department of Transportation (Caltrans). The purpose of this report is to update the Board on the current schedule and the selection of the Preferred Alternative (PA) for HDC.

DISCUSSION

In March 2011, Metro and Caltrans entered into a Measure R Program Funding Agreement for the development of the HDC PA/ED. The Project is a proposed 63-mile, east-west corridor linking State Route (SR) 14 in Los Angeles County and SR-18 in San Bernardino County. In March 2012 the HDC was identified by the Board as a strategic multi-purpose corridor. The project components include highway, bikeway, an energy production and/or transmission corridor along the freeway, and a high speed rail (HSR) feeder/connector service connecting a branch of the California High Speed Rail (CHSR) in north Los Angeles County to the proposed XpressWest high speed rail service to be constructed between the cities of Victorville in San Bernardino County and Las Vegas, Nevada. In October 2009 the HDC was also identified by the Board as a candidate project for Public-Private Partnership delivery method.

Caltrans serves as the lead agency responsible for compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the preparation of the Environmental Impact Report (EIR). Caltrans, under delegated authority by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) will also ensure compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the preparation of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

The purpose of the PA/ED is to identify possible alignments for the project and evaluate the benefits,

costs, and impacts of various alternatives considered. The alternatives include a No-Build, Freeway/Expressway, Freeway/Tollway, Freeway/Expressway with HSR Feeder/Connector Service and Freeway/Tollway with HSR Feeder/Connector Service. Additional elements of the four build alternatives would include a possible bikeway and a green energy generation corridor.

During the PA/ED process, the Project Development Team (PDT) conducted detailed evaluation of all alternatives considered, conducted the appropriate analysis for various options and variations under each alternative, and identified potential impacts of alternatives as well as avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures. Agency consultation and public participation were accomplished through PDT meetings, HDC Partners meetings, interagency coordination meetings, and an extensive public outreach program. The public participation plan established for HDC allowed public agencies and the general public to learn about the project and to provide suggestions on alternatives and the types of impacts to be evaluated.

The Draft EIS/EIR was released to the public on September 30, 2014 and the public hearings were held in November 2014. Four public hearings were held in Palmdale, Lake Los Angeles, Victorville and Apple Valley with a total of 375 participants, 291 in person and 84 online. The normally scheduled 45-day comment period was extended to 60 days for this project. The PDT (Metro, Caltrans, and the HDC Joint Powers Authority representing local Cities of the High Desert, and the Counties of Los Angeles and San Bernardino), with consideration of the results of the technical analysis of the various alternatives and the comments received during the comment period, has identified the PA. The selected PA consists of a Freeway/Tollway with HSR feeder/connector, bike lane, and a green energy generation corridor with the following details (Attachment A). The PA has been adopted by Caltrans in late June 2015 in order to meet the tight project schedule and release the Final EIS/EIR in spring 2016. In addition, comments received from both the general public and local agencies during the Draft EIR/EIS public review period showed positive support for the aforementioned multi-modal facility.

The proposed roadway will begin in Palmdale as a freeway, follow Avenue P-8 in Los Angeles County, run parallel to and south of El Mirage Road when entering San Bernardino County, turn east to Air Expressway Boulevard near I-15, transition to an expressway at Dale Evans Parkway, and end at SR-18/Bear Valley Road in the Town of Apple Valley. The following details will assist in further defining the project:

- Right-of-way to accommodate up to four lanes of travel in each direction will be protected. The number of lanes to be initially constructed will be determined by traffic analysis and funding capacity.
- The toll section, if adopted, would begin at 100th Street East in Palmdale and end at US-395 in Victorville.
- The HSR Feeder/Connector service will run between the Palmdale Transportation Center and the XpressWest HSR station in Victorville. The planned future passenger rail network would potentially connect San Francisco, Central Valley, Los Angeles, Las Vegas, and San Diego.

- HSR Option 1C to connect to the Palmdale Transportation Center was selected, which includes underground segments for both northbound and southbound wye connections to avoid conflicts with the Union Pacific Rail Road (UPRR) and Southern California Regional Rail Authority (SCRRA) tracks near Sierra Highway, Runway Protection Zones at the Plant 42 facility, and the St. Clair Parkway Section 4(f) open space property in Palmdale.

A series of variations were also analyzed and included throughout the environmental clearance process to avoid or minimize impacts to the community (Attachment B). Both the roadway and HSR service line will follow the PA alignment with variations listed below:

- Variation A in Palmdale did not meet the HSR alignment standards due to the presence of sharp horizontal curves. The main alignment was selected and would provide a horizontal tangent (strait line) section for approximately 4.5 miles.
- Variation D in Lake Los Angeles was selected as it will have fewer residential displacements and avoid an existing vineyard.
- Variation B1 in Adelanto will avoid impacts to several water wells owned by the Phelan Piñon Hills Community Services District.
- Variation E in Victorville would have cut through new residential areas and cause greater disruption to communities. The main alignment was selected, which will provide a more direct route and be more cost-effective because the tracks would stay within the HDC median longer and not require two separate additional crossings over the Mojave River.

Bike path between US-395 and 20th St. East in Palmdale

- Local residents supported a bicycle facility along the entire length of the HDC alignment. Analysis of bicycle facilities identified that community character and livability would be enhanced as a result of the proposed bike path.

Green energy production and/or transmission corridor

- A March 2012 Metro Board motion by Director Antonovich approved the project to assume a footprint that can accommodate an energy production and/or transmission facility along HDC. It was determined that this component would be recommended as part of this project.
- The green and renewable energy component would contribute to greenhouse gas and energy cost reductions.
- The green energy production and transmission facilities would be constructed within the study area footprint.

Attachment A, Draft High Desert Corridor Preferred Project /Alternative Decision Matrix, provides a detailed comparison of all alternatives considered.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The FY 2016 Budget identifies \$2 million in Measure R fund in Cost Center 0442, Highway Capital, High Desert Corridor. Since this is a multi-year project, the cost center manager and the Managing Executive Officer of the Highway Program will continue to be responsible for budgeting the cost in

future years.

Impact to Budget

The source of funds for this project is Measure R 20% Highway Capital Funds.

NEXT STEPS

Metro will continue to work with Caltrans toward completion of the PA/ED in early 2016. The PDT will also work towards completing the Financial Plan that may be required by FHWA as a condition of issuance of a Record of Decision (ROD).

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A - High Desert Corridor Preferred Project/Alternative Decision Matrix

Attachment B - High Desert Corridor Project Map

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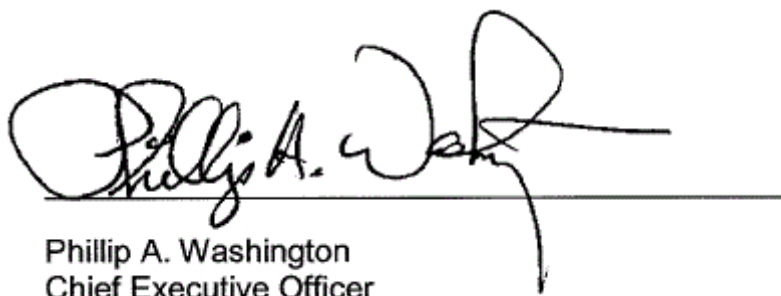
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