



## Board Report

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### PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE MAY 18, 2016

**SUBJECT: UPDATE ON MOTIONS 14.2 AND 39: METROLINK STATIONS EL MONTE, NORTHRIDGE, AND THE NEW RIO HONDO STATION**

**ACTION: PROGRAM FUNDS FOR STATION LOCATION STUDIES**

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

PROGRAM \$600,000 in **Measure R 3% Funds in the FY 17 budget for Metrolink Station Location Studies for the El Monte, Northridge and Rio Hondo Stations.**

#### **ISSUE**

In October 2015, Directors Solis, Antonovich, Najarian and Krekorian approved Motion 14.2 to examine the feasibility of relocating the El Monte Metrolink station near the Metro Transit Center and align it with Metro's Transit Oriented Community program.

Subsequently, Directors Solis, Najarian, Krekorian, Antonovich and DuBois approved Motion 39 in March 2016 to assess the feasibility for creating a new Metrolink station on the Metrolink Riverside Line at the base of Rio Hondo College and examine the potential for a multi-modal transit hub including evaluating the benefits and /or impacts to increasing transit ridership and reducing vehicular traffic on local streets, arterials and highways. Directors Garcetti, Krekorian, Dupont-Walker, Kuehl and Antonovich amended Motion 39 in March 2016 to include examining the feasibility of relocating the existing Northridge Metrolink Station at Wilbur Avenue to Reseda Boulevard to improve connectivity of Metro and local buses and other transit modes to the California State University Northridge.

#### **DISCUSSION**

In response to the Board Motions, staff gathered information, prepared preliminary conceptual studies and identified several challenges. Further planning and engineering studies are needed to ascertain the feasibility, benefits, constraints, costs, and potential alternative funding sources associated with these new proposed locations of the Metrolink stations. This Board action will allow staff to hire a consultant to provide three separate in-depth feasibility studies. Staff anticipates these studies will be begin in July 2016 will be completed in 6 to 8 months.

1. El Monte Metrolink Station Relocation Feasibility Study

The Metrolink El Monte Station is located on the Metrolink San Bernardino Line, the busiest line on the Metrolink system with over 11,000 daily riders. The El Monte Bus Transit Center station is the largest bus terminal west of Chicago with daily average boardings between 22,000 and 25,000 served by Foothill Transit, Metro buses, City of El Monte Commuter Shuttles, and the City of El Monte Trolley. The existing El Monte Metrolink Station is located approximately one mile from the Metro El Monte Transit Center with no direct connections between the rail and bus services since Metrolink train travels through an elevated aerial structure that passes the El Monte Transit Center to the Metrolink El Monte Station (refer to Attachment A).

Based on preliminary studies, staff concluded that relocation of the El Monte Metrolink Station could provide a direct connection between the rail and bus system with several challenges such as constrained right of way, construction of a tracks and platforms on aerial structures, issues related to adjacency to the Rio Hondo River viaduct, new bridge structure, construction impacts to adjacent residential developments, and acquisition of real estate property interests. Further discussions with Metrolink will be needed to address any engineering, construction and operational impacts and any differences in accessibility and serviceability.

2. New Metrolink Station on the Riverside Line at Rio Hondo College

The Greater Whittier Narrows area (Area) is home to several regional destinations including Rio Hondo Community College, Rio Hondo Police and Fire Academy, Whittier Narrows Recreation facilities, and Rose Hills Cemetery. The stretch of the Metrolink Riverside Line through the Area is one of the longest stretches of Metrolink track without a station - nearly 20 miles. The closest stations to Rio Hondo College are Montebello/Commerce to the west (approximately 7 miles), and Industry to the east (approximately 13 miles).

Creation of a station at Rio Hondo College, between the Industry and Montebello/Commerce Metrolink stations will provide a more accessible station for the Area, and may promote transit usage and reduce vehicle trips. However, preliminary discussions on the feasibility of creating a new Metrolink Station at Rio Hondo College revealed the following challenges (refer to Attachment B):

- Union Pacific (UP) ownership of the Riverside Line limits Metrolink service
- UP concerns related to locating a new station on their tracks and right-of-way.
- Operational impacts to existing service (how much travel times will be impacted by an additional station/stop)
- Funding constraints for capital improvements and Metrolink operations
- Acquisition of industrial properties would be required which could have negative economic impacts

Further coordination and discussions with Metrolink will be held to 1) assess the operational feasibility of a new station on the line, and 2) identify possible locations for the station. Additionally, a more in-depth assessment will be conducted as part of the Metrolink Stations Location Feasibility

Studies.

### 3. Northridge Metrolink Station Relocation

Metro staff conducted a high-level conceptual study on the relocation of the Northridge Metrolink Station from Wilbur Avenue to Reseda Boulevard. The study showed the feasibility of relocating the station approximately half a mile east to provide a closer connection with the California State University - Northridge (CSUN) (refer to Attachment C). However, several challenges were identified including the following:

- Major utilities within the railroad corridor
- Union Pacific (UP) ownership in portions of the right-of-way
- Property acquisition to accommodate relocated station and replacement parking
- Community considerations
- Funding constraints for capital improvements and Metrolink operations

The Reseda Boulevard corridor is served by Metro Local Line 240 and Rapid Line 744. Line 240 operates from Devonshire Street in Northridge to Universal City/ Studio City Red Line Station serving local stops along Reseda Boulevard and Ventura Boulevard operating every 20-30 minutes all day beginning at 5:00 AM and providing evening service past midnight. Metro Rapid Line 744 operates from Northridge to Pacoima serving Rapid stops along Reseda, Ventura Boulevard and Van Nuys Boulevard as well as serving the Cal State Northridge Transit Center operating at approximately 5:00 AM and runs till 9:00 PM with a frequency of twenty minutes all day. In June 2016, Rapid Line 744 will be improved by adding two additional trips in the evening. Both Lines provide seamless connections to the Metro Orange Line and at least fourteen other connecting transit lines. LADOT's DASH-Northridge also operates on a segment of Reseda Boulevard between Nordhoff Street and Sherman Way as part of its clock-wise route which includes operating through Wilbur Avenue, Parthenia Street and Nordhoff Street every fifteen minutes in the peak and every twenty minutes in the off-peak period from approximately 5:30 AM to 7:00 PM. The local shuttle-type service connects the Northridge Metrolink Station with Metro bus lines and nearby destinations alike.

An alternative to relocating the Northridge Station is to develop the existing station as a multimodal transit hub by improving bus services and active transportation access to the station. Currently, there is no direct access to the north of the station, requiring access to CSUN through a circuitous path south of the station. However, the stretch of Reseda Boulevard leading to CSUN is one of Mayor Garcetti's "Great Streets" which now includes a cycle track facility. Enhanced access between the Northridge station and Reseda Blvd, especially via the north of the station should be explored in order to create a more comfortable and direct connection between the station and CSUN for cyclists and pedestrians. Such a connection could close the gap between the Northridge station and the facilities already in place on Reseda Boulevard.

Staff will coordinate with Metrolink and CSUN officials to explore both the relocation and enhanced access alternatives. In addition, both alternatives will be further assessed in the Metrolink Stations Location Feasibility Studies.

### **DETERMINATION OF SAFETY IMPACT**

This is a study on the feasibility on the location of stations; therefore, no safety impacts are expected.

### **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

With Board approval of the Measure R 3% funds, \$600,000 will be funded in the FY 2016-17 programmed for the Station Locations Studies in cost center 2415, Regional Rail.

#### **Impact to Budget**

A. Source of funds: \$600,000 in Measure R 3% funds

Measure R 3% funds are designated for Metrolink commuter rail capital improvements in Los Angeles County. These funds are not eligible to be used for Metro bus/rail operating or capital budget expenses. This programming action has no impact to the Proposition A and C, TDA or Measure R administration budgets.

### **ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED**

An alternative will be not to approve the funding of the Study. This is not recommended as previous Board direction was to conduct feasibility studies for the stations.

### **NEXT STEPS**

After further preliminary assessments and discussions with stakeholders, staff will prepare the scope of work to solicit professional services from the Regional Rail bench, to conduct the Metrolink Stations Location Feasibility Study covering the three stations. The study is anticipated to begin in July 2016. Staff will report back to the Board with updates as part of the Regional Rail Quarterly Update.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

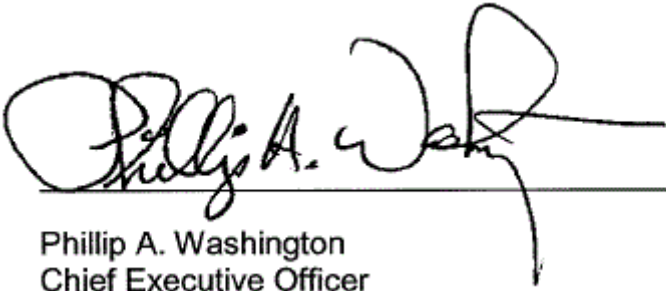
Attachment A- El Monte Station  
Attachment B - Rio Hondo Station  
Attachment C- Northridge Station

Prepared by: Marie Sullivan, Transportation Planning Manager, County-wide Planning  
(213) 922-5667

Jeanet Owens, P.E., Interim Executive Officer, Regional Rail  
(213) 922-6877

Reviewed By: Richard Clarke, Executive Director, Program Management  
(213) 922-7557

Nalini Ahuja, Executive Director, Finance & Budget  
(213) 922-3088



Phillip A. Washington  
Chief Executive Officer