



Board Report

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PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE
September 20, 2017

**SUBJECT: EI MONTE, RIO HONDO, AND MONTEBELLO/COMMERCE METROLINK STATION
LOCATION FEASIBILITY STUDIES FINAL REPORT**

ACTION: RECEIVE AND FILE

RECOMMENDATION

RECEIVE AND FILE final report on the El Monte, Rio Hondo, and Montebello/Commerce Metrolink Station Location Feasibility Studies

ISSUE

At the May 2016 Board meeting, the Metro Board of Directors approved funding for feasibility studies to evaluate:

1. Relocating the El Monte Metrolink station to be closer to the El Monte Bus Transit Station to consolidate transit services in one location and create a multimodal hub;
2. Creating a new Metrolink station at the base of Rio Hondo College to serve the Whittier Narrows area;
3. Relocating the Montebello/Commerce station to be closer to the Citadel Outlets area due to expected growth in the area.

The feasibility studies have been completed, and the results are herein presented (Attachment A - Feasibility Studies Executive Summaries).

DISCUSSION

Staff engaged a consultant, Mott MacDonald, to conduct the Station Location Feasibility studies. The goal of the feasibility studies was to identify and analyze:

1. Potential sites for relocating the El Monte and Montebello/Commerce station, and potential sites for a new Rio Hondo College station
2. Opportunities to maximize rail-to-bus connectivity and improve First/Last mile connectivity
3. Potential ridership gains and potential cost estimates

El Monte Station

The existing El Monte Metrolink Station is located approximately one mile from the Metro El Monte Bus Transit Station with no direct connections between the rail and bus services. Improving connectivity between the Metrolink station and the El Monte Bus Transit Station could consolidate two major transit services and provide a multimodal transit station with connectivity to rail, bus, and bicycle facilities.

Two alternatives were analyzed for the El Monte Station as described below:

Alternative 1: Relocate the El Monte Metrolink Station to be closer to the El Monte Bus Transit Station

Several potential station sites were identified and screened down to two sites for further study

- a. Site 1A is located adjacent to the Rio Hondo Channel/Bikepath and the Gateway Development, and is a quarter mile northeast of the El Monte Bus Transit Station. Currently, the San Bernardino Metrolink line passes the El Monte Bus Transit Station on a single track aerial structure across the Rio Hondo Channel. Conversely, the current El Monte Metrolink station has two side platforms located in a double track segment which provides operational flexibility of bi-directional trains serving the station simultaneously. Relocating the station to Site 1A would require an elevated station with roughly a mile of double track, and a second aerial structure over the Rio Hondo Channel to maintain rail operational flexibility and travel times. Construction over the Rio Hondo Channel as a result of the second aerial structure would require coordination with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

In addition, property acquisition may be required for parking; or opportunity for shared parking with the El Monte Bus Transit Station or future development could be explored. In August 2017, Metro began implementation of paid parking program at the El Monte Bus Transit Station which could increase availability of parking spaces for transit use by pricing and retaining parking resource for transit users. The cost estimate for this location and related improvements is approximately \$270 million.

- b. Site 1B, located a quarter mile west of the El Monte Bus Transit Station, is a single track segment constrained by the El Monte Busway and therefore, can accommodate a single side platform with surface parking. A single side platform with a single track would reduce rail operational flexibility on the San Bernardino line. Property acquisition may be required to provide access to the station. The cost estimate for this location and related improvements is approximately \$45 million.

The Metrolink tracks at the current El Monte Metrolink station run parallel to the Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) Alhambra subdivision. The Southern California Regional Rail Authority (SCRRA) seeks to obtain rights to operate on the Union Pacific subdivision to increase flexibility and avoid the I-10 single track bottleneck. If the El Monte Metrolink station is relocated, SCRRA could lose the flexibility to potentially operate on the Alhambra subdivision.

A passenger survey was conducted to obtain input from existing Metrolink riders; over 51% of respondents support relocating the station, stating that moving the Metrolink station closer to the El

Monte Bus Transit Station would improve their commute. Metro's latest 2017 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) Travel Demand Model (TDM) was used for the development of ridership forecasts for horizon year 2040. A relocated station showed a potential growth of 669 additional average daily Metrolink boardings over existing conditions in 2040. However, the model also showed a potential decline in boardings at Union Station and other Metrolink stations possibly due to improved transfers between the El Monte Metrolink station and bus services such as the Metro Silver Line.

Alternative 2: Create a multimodal transit hub at the existing El Monte Metrolink station location

The existing Metrolink station is located near the El Monte Trolley Station and in close proximity to the City's downtown district. Alternative 2 looked at opportunities to upgrade the El Monte Metrolink station and to improve connectivity to the Bus Transit Station. Potential improvements include:

- a. Shuttles to meet all trains and transport passengers directly to and from the Transit Station. This could decrease wait times as well as travel times
- b. Station platform upgrades with more shade and signage technology to provide real time information on bus arrival times
- c. Sidewalks and bicycle path connecting between the two stations
- d. Way-finding signage
- e. Bicycle share hubs at both the Metrolink Station and the Transit Station connected with bike lanes per the City's Specific plan

The total preliminary rough order of magnitude cost is approximately \$7 million. A third (33%) of survey respondents support keeping the station at its current location. Ridership modeling forecasted approximately 87 additional average daily boardings by year 2040.

Recommendation

The City of El Monte owns, operates, and maintains the existing El Monte Metrolink station. Since the City has not indicated a formal position on carrying either alternative forward, and no funding is available for either alternative, staff recommends that neither alternative moves forward at this time.

Rio Hondo College Station

The stretch of the Metrolink Riverside Line in the Greater Whittier Narrows Area, through the Rio Hondo College is one of the longest stretches (nearly 20 miles) of Metrolink track without a station. The feasibility study looked at opportunities to improve transit connectivity to the Rio Hondo College area.

Two alternatives were analyzed as described below:

Alternative 1: Creation of a new Metrolink station

Several potential sites for a new station were identified and analyzed. Key findings include:

- a. The Rio Hondo College station would be located on the Riverside line, a major UPRR-owned and operated freight corridor in southern California. Metro's current shared-use agreement

with UPRR limits the number of stations on the Riverside line to five stations. UPRR may support the addition of this sixth station if another station were to be closed or if mitigations were provided to address potential delays to freight operations resulting from an additional station.

- b. The potential site identified for the station would require a license agreement with the property owner, Southern California Edison (SCE) to accommodate parking and transit/passenger drop-off areas. The SCE property is currently leased by the Los Angeles County Parks and Recreational Department for an equestrian trail and staging area. The equestrian trail and staging area, and SCE overhead lines would need to be relocated. SCE has indicated that the property would be subject to a 5-year, 30-day revocable lease limited to surface parking. Parking structures and overnight parking would be prohibited.

Rio Hondo College students, faculty, and staff as well as Metrolink Riverside Line riders, and residents and businesses within a half-mile radius of the College were surveyed to obtain public input related to the study. Fifty-three percent (53%) of respondents indicated they would very likely use a new station at Rio Hondo, if available. Ridership modeling forecasted approximately 609 average daily boardings by 2040. However, 90% indicated willingness to pay up to \$10 per round trip suggesting a preference for low-cost transit options.

The total preliminary rough order of magnitude cost is estimated \$125 million.

Alternative 2: Transit connectivity improvements to the Rio Hondo College Area

Alternative 2 identified transit connectivity improvements to the Rio Hondo College Area without addition of a new station. Potential improvements include the following with a total preliminary rough order of magnitude cost of approximately \$2 million:

- a. Currently, the Rio Hondo College area is served by bus routes that connect to other Metrolink stations: the Norwalk/Santa Fe Springs Metrolink Station on the Orange County Line and the Baldwin Park Metrolink Station on the San Bernardino Line. Improving headways of these bus services and introducing similar bus connections to the closest Riverside line stations (i.e. Industry and Montebello/Commerce) could improve transit connectivity and service to the Rio Hondo area.
- b. The Gold Line Eastside Phase 2 SR-60 alignment shows a potential station approximately a mile from the Rio Hondo College. Improving headways of existing bus services operating between the potential Gold Line station and the Rio Hondo College would provide more transit accessibility options to the College area.
- c. Rio Hondo College is currently developing a transit center, the Rio Plaza, to improve bus and active transportation amenities on Workman Mill Road. Sidewalks, bicycle

lanes and paths, and bike share hubs could be provided to connect the potential Gold Line station with the Rio Plaza.

A passenger survey was conducted to obtain input from existing Metrolink riders and the results showed that 54% of respondents would like to see more bus service in the area.

Recommendation

In the absence of funding for either alternative and UPRR agreement for Alternative 1, staff recommends that neither alternative is carried forward at this time.

Montebello/Commerce Station

The existing Montebello/Commerce station is on the UPRR-owned Riverside line, approximately 1.5 miles from the Citadel Outlets area or Commerce Resort. The Commerce Resort is comprised of the Citadel Outlets, the Commerce Casino, and surrounding hotels. Plans are under development to significantly expand the Commerce Resort and draw additional 40% more visitors per year. The feasibility study analyzed two alternatives to improve Metrolink connectivity to the Resort area as described below.

Alternative 1: Relocating the Montebello/Commerce Station to the Citadel area

The Gold Line Eastside Phase 2 Washington alignment shows a potential Citadel Gold Line station within a quarter mile of the potential relocated Metrolink station site. Providing a Metrolink station in close proximity to a light rail station creates an opportunity to provide a multimodal hub to serve the growing needs of the Citadel area. Approximately 50% of visits to the Citadel occur on weekends. However Metrolink currently does not operate weekend trains on the Riverside line. Metro's existing shared-use agreement with the UPRR for the Riverside line limits the number of trains to six round trips during weekdays. Any additional train service including weekend service would be subject to UPRR approval.

Relocation of the Montebello/Commerce station would require UPRR approval. UPRR has indicated that the potential station site is in close proximity to their intermodal terminal and impacting their operations. However, UPRR is open to evaluate the proposed station location to identify potential mitigations at the next phase. Additionally, UPRR noted that the relocated station would be subject to the hold-out rule where only one train can enter the station at a time. Additionally, more than likely pedestrian grade separated crossings may be required at the station.

The existing station has 411 average daily boardings per day. Metrolink riders were invited to participate in a survey to obtain feedback on the Study. Forty-seven percent (47%) of survey respondents said their commutes would not improve if the station was relocated closer to the Citadel area. Thirty-five percent (35%) of respondents said their commute would improve if the station was relocated closer to the Citadel area. Ridership modeling for a relocated station showed a potential growth of 129 additional average daily Metrolink boardings over existing conditions in horizon year 2040.

The existing Montebello/Commerce station serves as a multimodal station with a major bus layover facility for Metro and Montebello buses and shuttles. Relocating the Montebello/Commerce station to the Commerce Resort could impact bus operations due to traffic and right-of-way limitations in the Resort area that constraints the ability to accommodate a comparable bus facility. In addition, acquisition of AltaMed's overflow parking lot would be required to accommodate parking and bus/passenger drop -off areas for the station. AltaMed would require replacement in kind of parking spaces.

The preliminary rough order of magnitude cost for relocating the station is approximately \$80 million including repayment of approximately \$500,000 in grant funds obtained by the City of Montebello to upgrade the existing station in 2014.

Alternative 2: Improving connectivity to the existing Montebello/Commerce Station

Currently, there are no shuttle services that provide direct connection between the Montebello/Commerce station and the Commerce Resort. Providing a shuttle service to meet all trains could close the 1.5 mile distance between the existing station and the Resort. First/last mile connectivity improvements such as sidewalks, bicycle paths, and bike share hubs connecting to the Commerce Resort could be provided to improve active transportation connection between the two locations. Ridership modeling forecasted 47 additional daily boardings by year 2040. The preliminary rough order of magnitude cost for relocating the station is approximately cost estimate is \$5 million.

Recommendation

Since UPRR agreement has not been secured for Alternative 1 and funding is not available for either alternative, staff therefore recommends that neither alternative moves forward at this time.

Potential Funding Sources

Potential funding sources could include SB 821 Transportation Development Act funds, and SB 862 cap and trade and Low Carbon Transit Operations Program (LCTOP) funds. Metro-programmed funding sources are prioritized for implementation of Metro Board commitments which are adopted in the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) or Measure M Expenditure Plan. Potential local funding sources could include Propositions A and C, Measure R and M local return and the following Measure M fund categories: Active Transportation Program (ATP), Transit Multi-year Subregional Programs, and first/last mile complete streets funds.

None of these station alternatives are included in the (LRTP) or Measure M Expenditure Plan. Additionally, Local Return funds and Measure M subregional funds would require agreement from local jurisdictions and subregions. Staff recommends that no further action is taken at this time due to lack of funding, and lack of UPRR agreement for the Montebello/Commerce and Rio Hondo stations.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no financial impact at this time.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

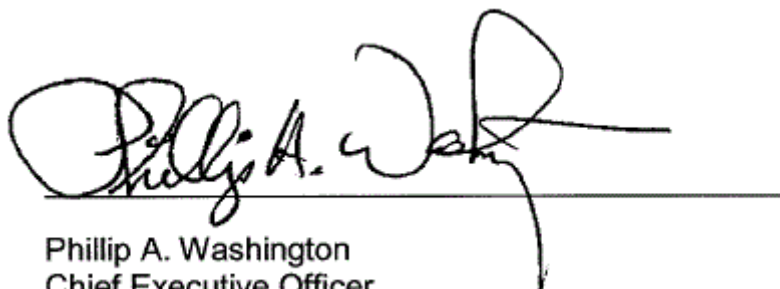
The alternative would be for the Board not to receive this report. This is not recommended as the feasibility studies were requested by the Board.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A - Feasibility Study Executive Summary

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