



Board Report

File #: 2019-0420, **File Type:** Project

Agenda Number: 26.

2nd REVISED
PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE
JUNE 19, 2019

SUBJECT: LINK UNION STATION PROJECT

ACTION: APPROVE RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION

CONSIDER:

- A. CERTIFYING the Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR);
- B. AUTHORIZING the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to file a Notice of Determination with the Los Angeles County Clerk and the State of California Clearinghouse;
- C. ADOPTING the:
 - 1. Findings of Fact and Statement of Overriding Considerations in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and
 - 2. Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan (MMRP).

ISSUE

The Link Union Station (Link US) Project will transform how the commuter and intercity rail operates in Southern California with run-through capability that provides one-seat rides from San Luis Obispo to San Diego. The Link US Draft EIR was available for 45 days of public review from January 17, 2019 through March 4, 2019. Staff received a total of 634 comments of which over 75% of the public comments opposed the above-grade concourse and indicated the preference for the new modified expanded passageway or at-grade passenger concourse. In consideration of the public comments received and in coordination with California High Speed Rail Authority, California State Transportation Agency and Southern California Regional Rail Authority (also known as Metrolink) and Amtrak/LOSSAN, staff recommends that the Final EIR include a modified expanded passageway without the above-grade concourse and a revised up to 10 run-through track alignment without a loop

track.

DISCUSSION

Background

In November 2018, the Board approved staff's recommendations to designate the CEQA "Proposed Project" in the Link US Draft EIR with shared lead tracks north of Los Angeles Union Station (LAUS), an above-grade passenger concourse with a new expanded at-grade passageway, and up to 10 run-through tracks including a loop track. In addition, the Draft EIR also includes an analysis of the Build Alternative, at an equal level of detail as the Proposed Project, with dedicated lead tracks north of LAUS, an at-grade passenger concourse and up to 10 run-through tracks including a loop track. The No Build Alternative was also analyzed in the Draft EIR. The Draft EIR was available for a 45 day public review period from January 17, 2019 through March 4, 2019.

Final EIR Project Recommendations

The recommended actions certify the Link US Final EIR with a filing of a Notice of Determination (NOD) with the Los Angeles County Clerk and the State of California Clearinghouse (Refer to Attachment A- NOD). The Link US Final EIR project includes a modified expanded passageway without the above-grade concourse and a revised up to 10 run-through track alignment without a loop track (Refer to Attachment B- Link US FEIR Project). The FEIR project was analyzed under all CEQA issue areas both for construction (temporary) and operation phases, and was determined to have no impacts, less than significant impacts, or less than significant impacts with mitigation measures in 9 out of 12 issue areas for both construction and operation phases, and significant and unavoidable impacts in 3 issue areas (Air Quality and Global Climate Change, Noise and Vibration and Cultural Resources).

Passenger Concourse- Staff received a total of 634 public comments. Over 75% of public comments received opposed the above-grade concourse and preferred the new modified expanded passageway or the at-grade concourse, citing the following main concerns with the above-grade concourse:

- Increased passenger transfer times
- Negatively affect passenger circulation and ADA accessibility
- The need for the elevated portion of the above-grade concourse with the proposed expanded passageway
- Potential impacts on the historical character of Los Angeles Union Station

Therefore, in response to these public comments, staff recommends that the Final EIR Project includes a modified expanded passageway with transit and retail amenities and elimination of the above-grade passenger concourse. The expanded passageway will be modified from a width of approximately 100 feet to 140 feet in the Final EIR to include additional space for waiting areas, restrooms, retail, and other passenger amenities, while providing sufficient pedestrian capacity to meet the ridership of 200,000 passengers at LAUS by 2040. The new modified expanded passageway will provide similar transfer times and travel convenience as the existing passageway with enhanced pedestrian access and ADA accessibility to the platforms by replacing the existing

ramps with elevators and escalators along with retail and passenger amenities attributable to a world class transit terminal station.

The Link US project with the modified expanded passageway option is estimated to cost approximately \$2.3 billion in 2018 (with a 3% escalation factor) compared with the above grade passenger concourse with expanded passageway option at \$2.8 billion. The at-grade passenger concourse option is estimated to cost approximately \$3.3 billion in 2018 (with a 3% escalation factor). Therefore, the modified expanded passageway option provides the best value with the lowest cost (refer to Attachment C-Cost Comparison of the Passenger Concourse Options). Given today's market conditions with changing landscape on tariffs, the cost of construction and escalation rate may be higher. Staff will provide an updated total project cost once the environmental studies and 35% preliminary engineering design has been completed. As part of the 35% design of the modified expanded passageway, staff will develop a detailed construction phasing plan including passenger circulation and work closely with the current rail operators (Metrolink, Amtrak and Metro Rail).

Run-Through Tracks Alignment- Staff has been coordinating closely with project funding partners consisting of California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA), California High Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA), and Southern California Regional Rail Authority (SCRRA), to reduce the overall project impacts and improve interoperability between regional rail trains and future High-Speed Rail trains south of LAUS. The project funding partners have agreed to move forward with a combined run-through track structure between LAUS and First Street and remove the loop track from the run-through track alignment. Therefore, the new run-through track structure over the US 101 will support up to 10 run-through tracks without the northern loop track and will be designed to ~~include aesthetic treatments~~ improve the visual quality of the US 101 run-through track bridge structure. Staff will ~~continue to coordinate with City of Los Angeles~~ to identify additional funding and/or savings in coordination with the City of Los Angeles to further enhance the aesthetic treatments of the US 101 run-through track bridge structure. (Refer to Attachment D Preliminary Draft Bridge Aesthetic Concepts) The elimination of the loop track will allow for improved interoperability between regional rail and future high-speed rail (HSR) with a common regional rail and HSR structure east of Center Street, resulting in six fewer property acquisitions, avoid the need to realign and lower Commercial Street and the need for permanent closure of Vignes Street at Commercial Street. Therefore, staff recommends that the Final EIR Project include modifications to the run-through track alignment with the elimination of the loop track which will reduce the project footprint and associated property impacts south of US-101 freeway.

Operations Planning - On November 26 and 27, 2018, CalSTA, CHSRA and Caltrans held two all day workshops at Metrolink's offices to go over the operations planning for the combined run-through track structure without the loop track. The State presented and discussed the initial operations planning model results of the combined run-through track structure without the loop track with Metrolink. On February 20, 2019, Metrolink issued a memorandum to memorialize Metrolink's position and concurrence with a total of five (5) conditions on specific design considerations for the Link US Project at its current stage of 10% conceptual design, specifically the removal of the loop track and the required number of run-through tracks. (Refer to Attachment G Memorandum from Metrolink regarding the Link US project). Four of the five conditions will be carried forward into the 35% preliminary engineering design and final design efforts for Link US project, where feasible. The State will work with Metrolink on the remaining condition that is outside the Link US Project. Staff will

prepare a detailed construction staging plan and continue to work with Metrolink to develop an operating plan that provides a satisfactory level of on time performance (OTP) during construction including engaging a third party to conduct an independent operational analysis and network planning, if needed.

Active Transportation Improvements - The Final EIR includes new Class II bicycle facility-bike lanes on Commercial Street between Alameda and Center Streets, which improves the active transportation network in the Union Station area by completing an east-west connection in the network, consisting of new active transportation corridors on Alameda Street from Cesar Chavez Avenue to 1st Street (to be constructed by Metro's Alameda Esplanade and 1st/Central Station Improvement Projects) and Ramirez/Center Street from Vignes Street to 1st Street (to be constructed by Metro's 1st/Central Station Improvement Projects). In addition, the active transportation elements on Commercial Street at the Center Street intersection and could facilitate a future potential connection to the Proposed LA River Path near at Center Street, which can be connected to the active transportation network being constructed on Center Street/Ramirez Street to Vignes Street to the LAUS East Portal being constructed by Metro's 1st/Central Station Improvement Project providing a neighborhood connectivity. In lieu of the at-grade improvements, if additional funding is identified, a dedicated bicycle/pedestrian bridge over the US 101 connecting Patsaouras Bus Plaza with Center Street is also included in the Final EIR. Staff has been coordinating closely with the LA River Path, Alameda Esplanade and Alameda/US 101/El Monte Busway Project Study Report project teams to ensure consistency across various planning efforts. Coupled with other Metro active transportation plans and projects in the Union Station area, the Link US improvements will complete the active transportation network that is integrated with the LA River Path.

Furthermore, to enhance neighborhood connectivity consistent with the Los Angeles River Revitalization Master Plan, RIO Overlay District guidelines, LAUS Sustainable Neighborhood Assessment, City of Los Angeles Mobility Plan, Connect US, and Metro's LA River Path Project, Metro, in coordination with the City of Los Angeles to obtain necessary approval on the Link Union Station plans providing a minimum lane width of 10 feet and removal of street parking on Commercial Street, Metro can implement a new Class IV bicycle facility along Commercial Street from Alameda Street to Center Street by pavement striping and bollards with no additional right-of-way acquisition and no raised median will be required, enhancing neighborhood connectivity south of US-101 subject to Caltrans approval where Commercial Street intersects the existing on- and off-ramps. Due to the funding constraints on the Link US project, this upgrade is only feasible if City of Los Angeles is agreeable to work with Metro to ensure that the cost increase due to the upgrade is kept at a minimal. If additional funding is identified, a dedicated bicycle/pedestrian bridge over US-101 could be constructed in addition to ~~place of~~ new bicycle facilities along Commercial Street.

Lastly, staff will continue to coordinate with City of Los Angeles in regards to replacement of the Cesar Chavez bridge that provides an opportunity to widen Cesar Chavez Avenue that is directly under the bridge to support the future addition of bike lanes on Cesar Chavez Avenue if the City is interested in leading the effort to add an active transportation corridor on Cesar Chavez Avenue between the LA River and Alameda Street or beyond. Cesar Chavez Avenue is a heavily-used bus

corridor between Alameda Street and Lyon Street with over 10 Metro Local and Rapid Bus routes, LADOT Dash Bus and other regional bus routes, and a Flix Bus terminal at the north-west corner of Cesar Chavez and Vignes. Refer to Attachment E for the proposed Link US active transportation elements in the Union Station area.

Construction Access and Laydown/Staging Areas- The First 5 LA building located at 750 North Alameda Street (near the terminus of El Monte Busway) is a key project stakeholder that expressed concerns regarding the proposed use of an internal access for construction as described in the Draft EIR. In response to these concerns, staff recommends that the use of the internal access road during construction be removed. The primary construction access to the rail yard would be changed to the other entrance points along Cesar Chavez Avenue and Vignes Street to the LAUS campus. There are two laydown and construction staging areas identified in the Draft EIR are also proposed to be removed in the Final EIR because the associated properties are no longer feasible or available.

Mitigation Measures

The Final EIR includes a total of 47 mitigation measures during construction and operation phases. Metro is the Lead Agency under CEQA in implementing and monitoring the mitigation measures. A full description of the mitigation measures is included in the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan (MMRP). Staff recommends adopting the MMRP for the Link US Project (Refer to Attachment E).

Significant and Unavoidable Impacts

Implementation of the Final EIR project would result in significant and unavoidable impacts in the following issue areas: Air Quality, Noise, and Cultural Resources.

Air Quality- During construction, emissions would exceed the SCAQMD's daily criteria pollutant and localized significant thresholds, even after proposed mitigation measures are implemented. The proposed mitigation measures during construction include AQ-1 (Fugitive Dust Control) and AQ-2 (Compliance with US EPA's Tier 4 Exhaust Emission Standards for Off-Road Equipment).

Noise- During construction, daytime and nighttime noise levels would exceed FTA's construction noise guidelines at William Mead Homes and Mozaic Apartments, even after proposed mitigation measures are implemented. The proposed mitigation measures during construction include NV-2 (Employ noise-reducing measures during construction) and NV-3 (Prepare a community notification plan for project construction).

Cultural Resources- During and after construction, the project would cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of the following historical resources: Los Angeles Union Station including the Vignes Street Undercrossing and the Friedman Bag Company Building (currently occupied by Life Storage), even after proposed mitigation measures are implemented. The proposed mitigation measures before, during and after construction include HIST-1a (LAUS City of Los Angeles CHC review and consultation), HIST-1b (LAUS HABS-like documentation: historic resource documentation), HIST-1c (LAUS Restoration of the Existing Passenger Concourse), HIST-1d (LAUS Educational Exhibit), HIST-2 (William Mead Homes Consultation), HIST 3 (Friedman Bag Company-City of Los Angeles OHR review and consultation and HABS-like documentation), HIST-4 (North Main Street Bridge City of Los Angeles CHC review and consultation), HIST-5 (Archaeological Site CA-LAN-1575/H) and HIST-6 (Development of a Public Participation or Outreach Plan).

Statement of Overriding Considerations and Findings of Facts

Staff recommends to the Board to adopt the Findings of Fact and Statement of Overriding Considerations in accordance with the CEQA. Pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21081(b) and State CEQA Guidelines Section 15093(a) and (b), the Metro Board is required to balance, as applicable, the economic, legal, social, technological, or other benefits, including region-wide or statewide environmental benefits, of a proposed project against its unavoidable environmental risks when determining whether to approve the project.

For the foregoing reasons, staff finds that the project's unavoidable significant environmental impacts are outweighed by these considerable benefits:

1. Improved intrastate, intercity, and local transit connectivity with Metrolink, Amtrak, and Metro Rail and future High-Speed Rail; Metro and municipal bus systems;
2. Improved regional connectivity with one seat rides from San Luis Obispo County to San Diego County;
3. Increased rail operational capacity by up to 63% to accommodate future demand and a new high speed rail system;
4. Reduced train idling times resulting in shorter wait times and fuel savings and emissions reductions per train with indirect contribution to cumulative benefits for the region, including a reduction of GHG emissions and Vehicle Miles Traveled in the region;
5. Enhanced passenger experience with new concourse, retail and other amenities and new expanded platforms that also accommodates passenger growth from current 100,000 passengers to 200,000 passengers a day along with enhanced mobility and accessibility;
6. Improved US-101 freeway and local roadways;
7. Generation of an estimated 4,500 temporary jobs per year over a 5-year construction period and an estimated 200 permanent jobs;
8. Enhancement of neighborhood connectivity with future connections from LAUS to the Los Angeles River;
9. Remediation of hazardous materials sites encountered during construction within the project area.

Outreach

During the Draft EIR 45-day public comment period, a total of 634 written comments were received from individuals, agencies, organizations and Native American tribes along with 16 verbal commenters received at the January 29, 2019 DEIR public hearing. The public comments generally are related to the following subject areas:

1. Passenger concourse
2. Construction impacts
3. Public art and amenities
4. Vignes Street permanent closure
5. Hazardous materials/contaminated soil uncovered during construction

Responses to comments were prepared and included in the Final EIR. The Link US project team has coordinated with other CEQA responsible agencies including City of Los Angeles, Caltrans, Southern California Regional Rail Authority and California High Speed Rail Authority during the preparation of the responses to comments. Written responses were provided to all commenting agencies in accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15088(b).

On June 5, 2019, staff presented the Final EIR project to the Metro Technical Advisory Committee including representatives from cities within the Los Angeles County. On June 6, 2019, staff hosted a Link US community event in the East Portal of Union Station featuring two (2) presentations as well as other project displays to allow the public to learn about and provide feedback on the proposed Final EIR project. Subsequently, staff received two support letters from the Little Tokyo community for the Final EIR Project (Refer to Attachment H).

DETERMINATION OF SAFETY IMPACT

The Link US project is being planned and designed in accordance with Metro and Metrolink standards, state and federal requirements. Approval of the Link US project will have no impact on safety.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Approval and adoption of the Link US project would have no financial impact to the agency.

Impact to Budget

The funds required for completing the preliminary engineering and environmental certification consist of previously approved and programmed Measure R Metrolink Commuter Rail Capital Improvements (3%) and CHSRA funds. These funds are not eligible for Metro bus or rail operating or capital expenditures.

IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

The Link US project supports Strategic Goal 1: Provide high-quality mobility options that enable people to spend less time traveling. The proposed run-through tracks would increase regional and intercity rail capacity and reduce train idling at Los Angeles Union Station (LAUS), enable one-seat rides from Santa Barbara County to San Diego County through LAUS, and accommodate a new high-quality transportation option such as High Speed Rail in Southern California. The project also supports Strategic Goal 2: Deliver outstanding trip experiences for all users of the transportation system. The proposed new passenger concourse and the new outdoor plaza (West Plaza) would improve customer experience and satisfaction by enhancing transit and retail amenities at LAUS, and improving access to train platforms with new escalators and elevators. Lastly, the project supports Strategic Goal 4: Transform LA County through regional collaboration and national leadership. The project requires close collaboration with many local, regional, State and Federal partners including City of Los Angeles, SCRRA, LOSSAN Authority, Caltrans, CHSRA, CalSTA, FRA and Amtrak.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The Board could delay action to certify the Final EIR, adopt the Findings of Fact and Statement of Overriding Considerations, as well as the MMRP. Deferral of these actions is not recommended as they would delay the project schedule including advancing preliminary design and meeting the

funding requirements.

The Board could decide to approve the Draft EIR Project and reject the staff recommended Final EIR Project. This is not recommended because the Final EIR Project changes were developed in response to the substantial public comments received regarding the above-grade passenger concourse, concerns regarding construction access, and the agreement among the project funding partners and rail operators to modify the run-through track alignment.

NEXT STEPS

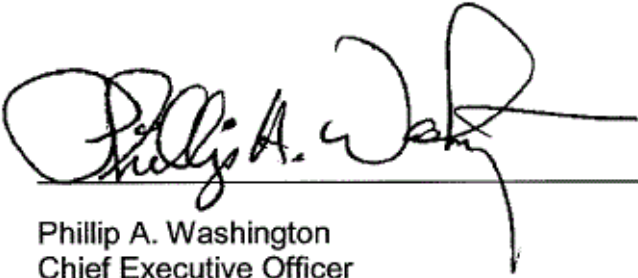
Staff will return to the Board in July 2019 for a contract modification to the preliminary engineering design based on the FEIR project, perform additional subsurface utility investigations and third-party costs. CHSRA has made a commitment to recommend to the CHSRA Board approval of a funding agreement with Metro in the amount of \$423.335 million for the Link US project by October 2019. Metro is working with Metrolink to shall execute an agreement with Metrolink defining roles and responsibilities between the two parties for the successful planning, design, and implementation of the Link US Project.

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment A - Notice of Determination
- Attachment B - Link US Final EIR Project
- Attachment C- Cost Comparison of the Passenger Concourse Options
- Attachment D - Preliminary Draft Bridge Aesthetic Concepts
- Attachment E - Link US Proposed Active Transportation Elements
- Attachment F - Link US Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan
- Attachment G - Memorandum from Metrolink regarding the Link US project
- Attachment H - Support Letters from the Little Tokyo Community

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