



Board Report

File #: 2021-0024, File Type: Program

Agenda Number: 47.

EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE JUNE 17, 2021

SUBJECT: LOS ANGELES AERIAL RAPID TRANSIT PROJECT UPDATE

ACTION: RECEIVE AND FILE

RECOMMENDATION

RECEIVE AND FILE status report on the Los Angeles Aerial Rapid Transit project.

ISSUE

This Board report updates the Board of Directors on the status of the Los Angeles Aerial Rapid Transit project ("Project"). Metro is serving as the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) lead agency for the Project, which is completely funded by Aerial Rapid Transit Technologies LLC (ARTT), including Metro staff time. Project status updates to the Board have been presented twice in the past two years, in April 2019 and September 2020.

BACKGROUND

ARTT, a private company, submitted an Unsolicited Proposal to Metro in April 2018 to fund/finance, design, construct, operate, and maintain the Los Angeles Aerial Rapid Transit gondola connecting Union Station and Dodger Stadium. After reviewing the Phase 1 submittal, Metro requested a Phase II of ARTT's Unsolicited Proposal for the Project. In December 2018, Metro formally concluded the Unsolicited Proposal process and began exclusive negotiations with ARTT. The Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between ARTT and Metro was executed in April 2019. In accordance with the MOA, Metro will act as the lead agency for the Project's environmental clearance.

CEQA lead agency as defined under CEQA is the public agency which has the principal responsibility for carrying out or approving a project which may have a significant effect upon the environment. Cities and counties are frequently CEQA lead agencies for real estate developments, but this is the first time Metro is serving as the CEQA lead agency for a privately initiated and funded project.

DISCUSSION

Alignment

The Project would connect Union Station and the Dodger Stadium via an aerial gondola system. The Project will be generally located in the public right-of-way with stations, towers, and a junction at

various points along the alignment. The Notice of Preparation included two alignment alternatives, referred to as the Broadway Alignment and Spring Street Alignment. Based on stakeholder comments, ARTT is now focusing on the Broadway Alignment as the preferred alignment. Commencing at Union Station, the alignment follows Alameda Street and then continues along Spring Street in a northeast direction through the community of Chinatown to the southernmost corner of the Los Angeles State Historic Park. The alignment would then continue northeast over the western edge of the Los Angeles State Historic Park and the Metro L Line (Gold) to the intersection of North Broadway and Bishops Road. At this intersection, the proposed Project alignment would turn and continue northwest following Bishops Road toward its terminus at Dodger Station. The terminus stations are proposed above Alameda Street adjacent to Union Station and El Pueblo and at Dodger Stadium.

On May 19, 2021, ARTT announced the decision to select its preferred route as the Broadway Alignment, which proposes an intermediate Chinatown / State Park Station at the southern entrance to the Los Angeles State Historic Park. The Chinatown / State Park Station will offer convenient transfers to the Metro L Line (Gold) Chinatown Station. The Station would enhance access to the Los Angeles State Historic Park, identified in Metro's "Transit to Parks Strategic Plan," and include enhancements and additions to the Park's current facilities. The Project also proposes pedestrian improvements between the L Line (Gold) Chinatown Station and the Chinatown / State Park Station.

The Project includes a non-passenger junction at the intersection of North Broadway and Bishops Road and three towers to support the cables and cabins, two along Alameda Street and one on the Dodger Stadium property. Included as Attachment A is the Broadway Alignment with station locations.

Fares

Fares for the Project are still being determined, however ARTT has committed to incorporating equity principles into the community outreach plan, such as providing affordable fares to residents and employees of businesses in adjacent communities (see Attachment B).

Community Engagement

Per the MOA between ARTT and Metro, ARTT bears responsibility for all costs associated with community outreach and public coordination. ARTT established a community outreach plan to garner meaningful engagement and feedback which occurred in four phases. The first phase consisted of the project's kick-off (pre-scoping) period, which included preparation of the community outreach plan. The outreach plan, in accordance with CEQA requirements, was approved by Metro staff in December 2019. The second phase consisted of the Notice of Preparation (NOP) and scoping meetings. The third phase will be the release of the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR). The fourth and final phase will be the approval of the Environmental Impact Report.

The NOP was released in October 2020, followed by the public scoping period that lasted through mid-November 2020. In connection with the NOP and public scoping period, Metro mailed 1,312 NOP postcards and ARTT mailed 1,312 mailers to owners and occupants within 500 feet of the alignment, with additional printed advertisements in the Los Angeles Times, the Chinese Daily, and La Opinion. ARTT sent five email blasts, with approximately 3,250 total (cumulative) emails sent, including five Instagram posts and six Twitter posts. The Project's website via Metro or the Project

website was accessed by 4,617 users.

Due to the pandemic and stay-at-home orders, the scoping meeting was held virtually and had 75 attendees. Comments during the public scoping period were accepted through the virtual open house, email, and mail. Over 300 comments were received during the NOP public scoping process. The virtual open house was open for the entire scoping period and had 741 visitors (Attachment C).

ARTT launched a robust online social media approach in March 2021 and began a neighborhood walk program in April 2021 that includes multilingual walkers and language-specific flyers. As of May 24, 2021, ARTT's walkers had knocked on over 2,500 doors and directly connected with over 1,500 households. ARTT plans to continue its neighborhood walk efforts over the coming months. In May 2021, ARTT commenced a business engagement program, also including multilingual walkers and language-specific flyers.

ARTT held additional local community outreach meetings on June 3, 2021, at 6:00 p.m. and June 5 at 10:00 a.m. to ensure the surrounding communities and stakeholders remain informed with the most up to date information. The meeting notice was advertised on the Project website, Metro's website, via email, text messages, social media, as well as added notice from local elected officials in the area.

Metro/ARTT coordination

Among other items, Metro and ARTT are having an ongoing dialogue regarding the use of Union Station (during and after construction) and potential parking and Transportation Network Company impacts. Metro and ARTT will continue to coordinate schedules for future Forecourt, Link US, West Santa Ana Branch and Alameda Street improvements.

Equity Platform

Metro is the CEQA oversight agency, and that role includes defining impacts on the surrounding communities and addressing mitigations for any adverse impacts. ARTT has voluntarily agreed to adopt Metro's Equity Platform and Metro staff will provide its oversight and review through the parameters of the Equity Platform.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no financial impact to Metro for the CEQA process as all costs will be paid for by ARTT. The MOA between ARTT and Metro provides that no Metro funds will be used in the design, construction, or operation of the Project and all of Metro's staff and consultant time will be paid by ARTT.

Impact to Budget

There is no impact to the budget.

IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

The proposed Project aligns with Strategic Plan Goal 1: Provide high-quality mobility options that enable people to spend less time traveling. The Project has the potential to provide an efficient mobility alternative for people to travel to Dodger Stadium car-free.

NEXT STEPS

The DEIR is expected to be released during fall 2021. Staff will continue to oversee the CEQA process and will report back to the Board at key milestones, including the release of the DEIR and certification of the Final EIR prior to approving the Project.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A - Broadway Alignment with Station Locations

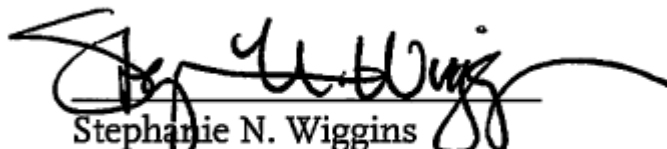
Attachment B - Fare Letter to Metro from ARTT

Attachment C - Community Outreach During NOP Scoping Period

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