



Board Report

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Agenda Number: 8.

PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE MARCH 16, 2022

SUBJECT: RESPONSE TO MOTION ON IMPROVED MOBILITY THROUGH HIGH- SPEED RAIL PROJECTS IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY

ACTION: RECEIVE AND FILE

RECOMMENDATION

RECEIVE AND FILE report on improved mobility through high-speed rail projects in Los Angeles County in response to Board Motion 46.

ISSUE

At the December 2, 2021, meeting the Metro Board of Directors adopted Motion 46 (Attachment A) presented by Directors Barger, Najarian, and Solis, identifying directives to staff regarding improved mobility through strategic high-speed rail investments. This report provides an update on the progress of the directives in the motion.

BACKGROUND

Motion 46 intends to better position Los Angeles County to compete for State surplus funds and Federal infrastructure funding for high-speed, inter-city and commuter rail projects, which will increase mobility options for residents of the greater Los Angeles region. This motion includes efforts to identify and prioritize key high-speed rail early action projects plus transformational and strategic projects to significantly increase speed, capacity, and reliability along the Metrolink commuter rail system.

DISCUSSION

Motion #46 identified the following directives (A-F):

A. Reaffirm the importance of the partnership with the California High Speed Rail Authority for the delivery of the Link Union Station (Link US) project and urge continued dialogue for release of the \$423 million in state funding.

Status: The Link US project will provide up to two platforms and four run-thru tracks at Los Angeles Union Station to enhance Metrolink and LOSSAN rail service. On April 21, 2020, the California High Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA) Board approved the funding plan for Phase A of the project, thus

authorizing the CHSRA CEO to negotiate a Project Management Funding Agreement (PMFA) with Metro. Staff is now working with CHSRA to complete the PMFA. The CHSRA is targeting their Board meeting in March 2022 for approval, pending staff-level agreement on the language. The release of \$423.335 million for the Link US Project, Phase A plus \$76.665 million for the Rosecrans/Marquardt Grade Separation will fulfill \$500 million in State legislative appropriations for high-speed rail in Los Angeles County.

B. Establish a new agency policy that prioritizes the early delivery of additional, strategic, California High Speed Rail (CHSR) capital projects in Los Angeles County rail corridors that currently serve and/or will one day serve regional and inter-city rail, consistent with the State Rail Plan, if and when new sources of state and federal funding become available, and so long as pursuit of those funding sources would not create competition with established Board transit priorities.

Status: Metro will collaborate with Metrolink to develop a process to apply evaluation criteria for the prioritization of CHSR capital projects in Los Angeles County. These criteria may include project readiness, safety, and mobility benefits, interoperability with commuter and inter-city rail corridors, designation in the Metrolink SCORE program, independent utility, equity, and other measures to be identified by the collaborating agencies. The objective is to develop and maintain a portfolio of prioritized projects that would be eligible and ready for consideration as different grant funding opportunities become available.

Staff has developed a preliminary draft of the Strategic LA County Rail Projects for Early Delivery (Attachment B) with input from Metrolink, CHSRA, and Amtrak. This list includes projects aligned with Metrolink and Amtrak objectives, the CHSRA project, the High Desert Corridor JPA, and Multimodal considerations.

C. Amend the Board's state legislative program to include advocacy and support for a new dedicated funding program for the early delivery of strategic CHSR capital projects in Los Angeles County that would help realize the goals of the State Rail Plan and Metrolink's SCORE program, facilitating improved efficiency, speed, frequency and safety for existing and future inter-city and regional rail service.

Status: Metro Government Relations have incorporated advocacy for commuter and high-speed rail projects into both the federal and state legislative programs. The Board approved the legislative program at its December 2021 meeting. Now that the federal infrastructure bill has passed, the focus of our advocacy turns to supporting the eventual grant applications submitted by our Planning Department. Government Relations coordinates closely with the Planning Department on all grant submissions to ensure our advocacy aligns with Planning efforts. In addition, the CEO has implemented a TIGER team to ensure that the agency is well-positioned to secure proportionate funding from federal grant opportunities.

D. Work with agencies who provided lists of projects in the May 2019 report back on the Board's Readiness for High-Speed Rail motion to update the status and estimated costs of those projects.

Status: In May 2019 staff provided to the Metro Board a list of 13 capital projects expected to significantly improve safety, speed, and reliability along the Metrolink Antelope Valley Line (AVL) and

provide capacity for more frequent AVL service. In October 2019 the North County Transit Coalition approved the use of \$113.8 million in Measure M Transit Connectivity funds as the local match for environmental, design, and construction of four AVL projects: 1) Brighton to Roxford Double Track (segment 1); 2) Balboa Double Track Extension; 3) Canyon Siding Extension, and 4) Lancaster Terminal Improvements.

This funding commitment supported Metro's successful State Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program application for the AVL, which in April 2020 was awarded the full \$107 million requested to complete the funding required to construct these four capital projects. In total, \$220.8 million has been programmed to complete the environmental, design, and construction of these four important capital projects on the Metrolink AVL which will lead to 30-minute service to Santa Clarita and hourly service to Palmdale. The remaining AVL projects from the May 2019 list are identified on the Strategic LA County Rail Projects for Early Delivery List (Attachment B). Metro has coordinated closely with SCRRA on the Metrolink projects, and the projects have received updated cost estimates (Attachment C).

E. Identify a strategic list of CHSR capital projects, including but not limited to the updates above, that would benefit regional and inter-city rail in L.A. County by realizing immediate and transformative efficiency, speed, frequency, and safety improvements and that are consistent with the State Rail Plan and Metrolink's SCORE Program.

Status: As discussed earlier, Attachment B represents the set of projects collectively identified by the four agencies (CHSR, SCRRA, LOSSAN, and Metro) for prioritization and future funding. The list includes CHSR projects in Los Angeles County, including the LAUS - Anaheim Segment. These projects will benefit the Metrolink commuter rail and Los Angeles - San Diego - San Luis Obispo (LOSSAN) inter-city (Amtrak) rail corridors. Metro has coordinated closely with CHSR staff to identify the independent utility and benefit of these projects, and cost estimates have been updated (Attachment C).

Staff developed a preliminary list of transformational projects (Attachment D) that could provide immediate and measurable improvements to the speed, safety, frequency, and reliability of Metrolink service throughout LA County along planned HSR corridors.

This list of Transformational LA County Rail Projects was selected based upon the projects' substantial improvement to future operating service scenarios for Metrolink, Amtrak and CAHSR that overlap on LA County's Regional Rail system. Also included in this list is Metro's LA County Transportation Technology Center of Excellence and Proving Ground, which provides a vital labor and educational dimension to LA County's overall investment strategy in its regional rail system.

The Transformational LA County Rail Project list comprises the following projects:

- Major Metrolink Upgrade Package to reach Service Scenario 4
 - Acton Downtown Double Track
 - Brighton to Roxford Double Track (Segments 2-4)
 - Via Princessa to Honby Double Track
 - Saugus to Hood Double Track
 - Vista Canyon Multimodal Maintenance Facility

- Burbank to Los Angeles Third Track
- Lone Hill to White Double Track
- Pioneer Boulevard Grade Separation
- Strategic / Value Engineered Tunneling (Palmdale - Santa Clarita)
- LA County Transportation Technology Center of Excellence and Proving Ground

F. Lead an advocacy effort with the L.A. County state legislative delegation and appropriate state and local agencies, to align with upcoming state budget deliberations, that includes:

1. Promotion of the strategic list of CHSR projects and the need for a new source of funds for these efforts, separate from Prop 1A, and not competitive with other statewide funding programs for transit.
2. A state commitment to rapidly fund advanced engineering and design of the Palmdale-to-Burbank, Burbank-to-LAUS, and LAUS-to-Anaheim CHSR segments, and inclusion therein of options for early implementation of the strategic CHSR projects list identified in response to this motion.

Status: At the State level, staff worked with the Board to submit the Golden Opportunity Package to the Los Angeles County Legislative Delegation. This bold and aggressive package recommends that the Legislature allocate \$16.5 billion of the budget surplus to transportation infrastructure. The package includes a recommendation that the State fund projects pursuant to the motion and create an ongoing funding program for these projects. The Golden Opportunity Package has also been endorsed by the Councils of Governments in Los Angeles County representing the 88 cities in Los Angeles County. Metro has been and will continue to coordinate with the COGs on advocacy efforts in Sacramento.

Staff has also been working with the Los Angeles County legislative delegation to support both the request for funding from the surplus and ongoing funding for these types of projects. As of the drafting of this report, we are working with members to support both the current year budget request and to author legislation creating an ongoing funding program.

An existing program, the State Rail Assistance Account could be an excellent candidate to allocate funds for the types of projects identified in this report. The program was established by SB 1 and is supported by commuter and intercity rail operators in California. The program is currently funded by 0.5% of the diesel sales tax that was approved by SB 1. As the state budget legislature continues to consider the state budget, we will continue to advocate for an allocation of surplus funds to this program consistent with the Golden Opportunity Package.

The motion also directs the agency to pursue an ongoing funding stream for these programs which does not compete with other public transit funds. This presents essentially two options. The first is to increase a tax to provide new revenue. The second is to transfer an existing funding source to this program. As mentioned above the current State Rail Assistance Program is funded with the 0.5% sales tax on diesel fuel. The Board could support an increase in that tax to pay for these projects.

Alternatively, the Board could support transferring another, non-transit, fund source. The range of options here is limited and inevitably involves taking funds away from another program. One possible source of funds is the portion of cap and trade funds which is currently not dedicated to

existing programs. These funds are subject to appropriation by the Legislature.

To further develop an ongoing funding program Metro Government Relations will explore possible funding sources for such a program and is reaching out to other rail agencies in the State to form a coalition of support for both the current year budget request and for the ongoing funding program.

EQUITY PLATFORM

Advancing the implementation of key railroad projects to improve Metrolink service speeds, reliability and connectivity will provide enhanced transit opportunities for members of Equity Focused Communities (EFCs) along Metrolink's Antelope Valley and San Bernardino Lines to access employment, education, healthcare, and recreation. Additionally, improved Metrolink service will provide greater opportunity for commuters to make the modal shift from driving through impacted communities to taking transit, thus improving safety, mobility, and air quality for residents in EFCs adjacent to freeway facilities.

The way these projects are designed and implemented will require community engagement to ensure that additional service levels on existing right-of-way, as well as potential construction impacts, are understood by local disadvantaged communities to help prevent disparities and provide benefits. The nature of regional rail investments creates dislocated benefits for more distant communities and impacts for communities along the corridor where projects and increased train volumes are felt.

Metro will seek opportunities to engage local communities to understand these equity issues prior as part of its process to work with local stakeholders in support of better transit opportunities for all LA County residents. Finally, as Metro prioritizes the capital projects, evaluation criteria will be developed which will include equity and benefits to disadvantaged communities.

IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

The staff recommendation supports strategic plan goals 1, 3, and 4. This report supports Metro's partnership with other rail operators to improve service reliability and mobility, provide better transit connections throughout the network, and implement the following specific strategic plan goals:

- Goal 1.2: Improve LA County's overall transit network and assets;
- Goal 3.3: Genuine public and community engagement to achieve better mobility outcomes for the people of LA County; and
- Goal 4.1: Metro will work with partners to build trust and make decisions that support the goals of the Strategic Plan.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The Board could consider not preparing a strategic early delivery and transformational list of Metrolink-related projects for LA County. Staff does not recommend this action as the influx of funding made available through state and federal sources may provide one-time funding opportunities for strategic projects that can improve service on LA County's Metrolink corridors.

NEXT STEPS

Upon receiving Board input staff will meet with Metrolink and necessary regional partners to finalize the strategic early delivery and transformational projects list and develop a more detailed advocacy strategy to identify and secure funding for these projects.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A - Metro Board Motion #46 - December 2021

Attachment B - List of Strategic LA County Rail Projects for Early Delivery

Attachment C - Strategic Early Delivery Project List Updated Cost Estimates

Attachment D - Transformational LA County Rail Projects

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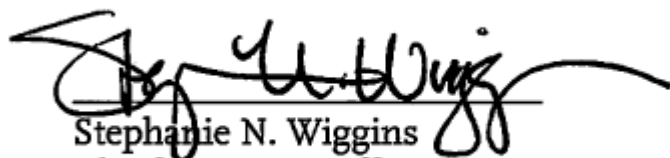
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