



## Board Report

File #: 2022-0129, File Type: Project

Agenda Number: 9.

**REVISED**  
**PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE**  
**AUGUST 17, 2022**

**SUBJECT: RAIL TO RIVER ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION CORRIDOR - SEGMENT B**

**ACTION: APPROVE RECOMMENDATIONS**

**RECOMMENDATION**

CONSIDER:

- A. RECEIVING the Rail to River Segment B Supplemental Alternative Analysis Study Findings; and
- B. APPROVING the recommendation to maintain Randolph Street as the preferred alignment and continue coordination with Corridor Cities and Related Projects.

**DUTRA AMENDMENT: Return to the Board in October 2022 with a funding plan to further develop "Rail to River" Segment B, including environmental clearance, design, and construction.**

**ISSUE**

In early 2017, the Board adopted Randolph Street as the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) for Segment B of the Rail to Rail/River Active Transportation Corridor (Legistar File #2017-0089). The Rail to River Segment B extends approximately 4.3 miles from the Metro A (Blue) Line Slauson Station to the Los Angeles River. It was proposed to share a segment (approximately 2.3 miles) of the median/railroad right-of-way (ROW) with both the Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) and the future West Santa Ana Branch (WSAB) Light Rail Transit Project (Attachment A).

Subsequent to Board adoption and after further study of the WSAB project, it was determined that the existing railroad ROW along this shared segment could not accommodate both rail lines and the Rail to River Segment B Project without extending the project footprint into the public street ROW. Therefore, a Supplemental Alternatives Analysis (SAA) was initiated to re-evaluate Randolph Street and potentially identify additional alternatives for this regionally significant active transportation corridor. The SAA Executive Summary is included as Attachment B.

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## **BACKGROUND**

Rail to River Segment B is the eastern part of the longer Rail to Rail/River Active Transportation Corridor (Attachment C). The western segment, or Segment A, is referred to as “Rail to Rail” since it connects the future Metro K (Crenshaw) Line Fairview Heights Station to the existing Metro A (Blue) Line Slauson Station. Segment A includes approximately six (6) miles of active transportation facilities in the City of Los Angeles, but primarily within railroad ROW owned by Metro. For Segment A, Metro is responsible for constructing and maintaining the facilities and Segment A is in the pre-construction stage, at the writing of this report.

Rail to River Segment B is a 4.3-mile extension of Segment A that connects to the existing Los Angeles River bicycle path, closing a critical gap in the regional active transportation network. The corridor traverses a small area of unincorporated Los Angeles County (Florence-Graham), as well as the cities of Huntington Park, Vernon, Maywood, and Bell. It is important to note that unlike the Rail to Rail Segment A, which is within Metro’s own ROW, Segment B is completely within the public ROW. It is also expected to be constructed and maintained by the local jurisdictions.

The combination of Segment A (Rail to Rail) and Segment B (Rail to River) would provide a regional Active Transportation Corridor approximately 10 miles long and include much needed active transportation infrastructure and multimodal connections for historically underserved communities in South and Southeast Los Angeles.

In early 2017, Metro completed an Alternatives Analysis (AA) for Segment B which identified and evaluated four potential alternatives, including: Malabar Corridor (B-1 in Attachment D); Utility Corridor (B-2); Slauson Avenue (B-3); and Randolph Street (B-4). The Board adopted Randolph Street as the LPA since it ranked the highest of the four alternatives and provided the most direct connection between the Slauson A Line and the LA River Path through an existing access point on Randolph Street. The Board also approved advancing the project into the next phases of environmental clearance and preliminary engineering (30% design), envisioning a proposed shared-use bike and pedestrian path (Class I) within the existing UPRR rail ROW in the center median of Randolph Street.

Although Randolph Street was adopted as the LPA, the AA identified and acknowledged some challenges with the corridor, such as UPRR active rail operations, easements required from UPRR, coordination and cooperation from affected cities along the corridor, and cost.

After further study of the WSAB project, which identified some ROW constraints on Randolph Street, it was determined that additional technical analysis was needed. Therefore, in September 2019, staff informed the Board of the need to conduct an SAA to re-evaluate Randolph Street and potentially identify new alternatives for Segment B.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Study Approach**

The purpose of the SAA was to identify and evaluate alternatives that would provide a safe, comfortable, and continuous active transportation route between the Metro A (Blue) Line and the Los

Angeles River. Randolph Street currently consists of two travel lanes in each direction, along with curbside parking and a wide center median with freight rail tracks. The study area covered approximately 4.3 square-miles and was generally bounded by the Metro A (Blue) Line Slauson Station to the west, the Los Angeles River Path to the east, Slauson Avenue to the north, and Gage Avenue to the south (Attachment E). The SAA evaluated alternatives based on the following goals:

- Safety - Provides a safe and comfortable route
- Access - Provides access to community destinations and transit
- Sustainable Mobility - Reduces Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) by providing active transportation route options
- Equity - Supports community needs
- Viability - Is cost-effective and easy to implement and maintain

In addition to the five goals above, a feasibility/implementation screening factor was also used to compare the alternatives further.

#### Active Transportation Facilities Considered

Within the study area, the Randolph corridor and streets south of Slauson Avenue were analyzed to identify opportunities for Class I shared-use paths (for both bicyclists and pedestrians), Class II bike lanes (striped bike lanes on street), and Class IV separated bikeways (cycle-track or protected bike lanes). The study considered these as 'dedicated' bikeways as they offer roadway space specifically designated for bicycle travel. Class III bicycle routes with painted markings ('sharrows') or bicycle boulevards with traffic calming elements were also considered; these require cyclists to share the travel lanes with vehicles and were considered in areas where limited street widths preclude dedicated bikeways.

Pedestrian improvements were also identified to enhance the safety and comfort of pedestrians, including but not limited to, improvements to existing sidewalks, enhanced lighting, new pedestrian signals, curb ramps, curb extensions, enhanced crosswalks, addition of shade trees and landscaping, and benches and shade structures.

#### Alternatives Considered

After an initial screening of multiple streets/routes, a refined list of four (4) alternatives were identified for continued evaluation through the SAA (Attachment F). These included:

- Alternative 1 - Randolph St (same alignment as 2017 LPA)
- Alternative 2 - Slauson Ave/Belgrave Ave/Randolph St
- Alternative 3A - Holmes Ave/Gage Ave/Randolph St
- Alternative 3B - Holmes Ave/Gage Ave

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The two prominent streets that constitute the four alternatives are Randolph Street (Alternatives 1 & 2) and Gage Avenue (Alternatives 3A & 3B).

### Community/Stakeholder Outreach

Opportunities for community input and feedback were provided throughout the study and included:

- Three rounds of two virtual community meetings at varying times held between January and September 2021. All meetings and materials were provided in both English and Spanish.
- Two online community surveys to capture additional feedback.
- Three virtual Community Advisory Committee (CAC) meetings that included several community-based organizations.
- Three in-person community pop-up events in coordination with the WSAB project in September 2021.

Additionally, a Technical Working Group (TWG) consisting of local jurisdictions and Metro departments was established. Five TWG meetings, as well as several one-on-one meetings, were convened to solicit technical input and feedback. Staff also presented at three City Council meetings, including the cities of Huntington Park, Maywood, and Bell in late August/early September 2021. These collective efforts informed the evaluation process, the alternatives developed, and the eventual recommendations. More information on the outreach activities can be found in the SAA.

### Technical Analysis and Findings

Evaluation criteria were developed and applied to the four alternatives to determine how well each met the project goals and objectives. Each of the four alternatives have advantages and challenges. Although the Gage Avenue alternatives (3A and 3B) performed higher in Safety and Access due to the potential for dedicated bikeway facilities and greater access to community destinations, they performed lower in Sustainable Mobility and Viability because they provide a less direct route (adds approximately 0.5 to 0.75 miles to the route) and have greater impacts on parking and/or traffic. These alternatives would require a major reconfiguration of Gage Avenue, including the loss of a travel lane in each direction to create Class II bike lanes through the cities of Huntington Park and Bell.

The Randolph Street alternatives (1 and 2) offer the most direct and shortest routes. However, based on the future reconfiguration of the street for the WSAB project, the ability to have a dedicated bikeway along Randolph Street where the two projects overlap would have significant impacts on parking in the City of Huntington Park. Therefore, Alternative 1 proposes a Class III bike route or bike boulevard for approximately 1.6 to 1.8 miles of the total 4.3 miles of Segment B. Alternative 2 is a slight variation of Alternative 1 using Belgrave Avenue, a lesser traveled street adjacent to Randolph Street, to avoid the shared segment with the WSAB project. This alternative results in a somewhat longer route than Alternative 1. The remaining 2.5 to 2.7 miles in the City of Bell is proposed to

include a Class IV separated bikeway.

While the SAA found that all four alternatives were viable, staff recommends maintaining Alternative 1 - Randolph Street as the preferred alignment for the following reasons:

- Randolph Street performed best for the Viability and Sustainable Mobility goals. It provides a direct connection to an existing LA River bicycle facility, serves appropriate levels of population densities, and aligns most closely with existing planning efforts.
- This alternative would have fewer impacts on existing traffic since it does not require a major lane reconfiguration and follows the same alignment as the Randolph Street LPA adopted by the Board in 2017. Based on the proposed improvements, the Randolph alignment would cost less to construct than the Gage Avenue alternatives and is expected to have lower on-going operations and maintenance costs.
- The alignment would also provide a first-last mile connection to the future Pacific/Randolph WSAB station.
- Importantly, this alternative is strongly supported by the jurisdictions that have permitting authority for the design and construction of the project (Attachment G). The cities also strongly oppose the Gage Avenue alternatives, expressing concerns over the potential impacts to traffic and loss of parking. Additionally, the jurisdictions believe that Alternative 1 is safer than the other alternative(s), given lower traffic volumes on Randolph Street.
- This alternative's proposed designs and intended purpose align closely with other future plans along Randolph Street, such as the forthcoming First/Last Mile planning for future WSAB stations, as well as existing active transportation planning and grant funding with the cities of Commerce, Bell and Huntington Park.

### Project Delivery and Funding

As previously mentioned, unlike Rail to Rail Segment A, which is within Metro's own ROW, the proposed Randolph Street alignment for Segment B is completely within the public ROW and under the jurisdiction of delivery by the Cities of Huntington Park, Bell and Commerce. However, Metro may continue to be engaged and play a role in helping to deliver this project.

Specifically, the recommended alignment serves the existing Slauson A Line and future Pacific/Randolph station of the WSAB as adopted by the Board (Legistar file #2021-0724). Metro will conduct first/last Mile planning to identify improvements along important pathways for biking, walking, or rolling around these and other WSAB stations; this effort is anticipated to begin later this year and offers an opportunity to include the project elements as identified in the SAA.

Staff also has identified a strategy to provide near-term active transportation improvements in the western part of the Segment B corridor (roughly between Holmes Avenue and State Street), that eventually will share ROW with the future WSAB project. Given the construction timeline for the WSAB project, staff recommends interim Class II bike lanes be implemented before the WSAB project is constructed (Attachment H). These improvements likely will be modified during the

construction of the WSAB project but would provide access to high quality active transportation infrastructure sooner. As the WSAB project evolves, Metro will ensure the LRT designs accommodate a continued active transportation facility in some form, based on design feasibility and community engagement.

In the eastern half of the Randolph Street corridor (which does not share ROW with the WSAB project), Metro staff recommends permanent Class IV separated bikeways for approximately 2.5 miles between State Street and the Los Angeles River (see Attachment H). One important opportunity to deliver premium active transportation facilities in this segment will be the coordination of Metro's SAA findings with recent Metro Active Transportation (MAT) grant funding, awarded in January 2021 (Legistar file #2020-0562) as follows:

- Slauson First/Last Mile - \$4,509,998 awarded to LA County Department of Public Works (LACDPW)
- Randolph Corridor - \$6,703,891 awarded to the City of Commerce (lead sponsor) in partnership with LACDPW and the cities of Huntington Park and Bell

The MAT Program was established through Measure M as a competitive discretionary funding program available to Los Angeles County municipalities for projects that improve and grow the active transportation network and expand the reach of transit.

Although these awarded projects are separate, stand-alone projects from Rail to River Segment B, they share similar goals and objectives, scope, and project limits, including plans for active transportation improvements on Randolph Street. Of note, the cities of Huntington Park, Bell and Commerce have expressed their support of the Randolph Street alignment and proposed elements (Attachment G). As such, Metro will provide technical support as needed, and may coordinate elements identified in the SAA into these related city projects. Metro currently is in the process of executing funding agreements for the the two MAT projects and will continue to work with the grantees to achieve shared goals and objectives for the corridor.

## **DETERMINATION OF SAFETY IMPACT**

The recommended actions will not have any impact on the safety of Metro customers and/or employees because this project is in the planning phase and no capital or operational impacts result from this Board action.

## **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

Approval and adoption of the study findings and recommendations would have no financial impact to the agency at this time. Since the initial planning phase is complete, there are no funds budgeted in Cost Center 4240 for professional or technical services in FY23. Further development of Segment B (including environmental clearance, design, and construction) is expected to be managed by the local jurisdictions who have authority over the public ROW. The SAA identifies several potential funding sources that Metro could assist the cities in pursuing as efforts continue in the development of active

transportation facilities along Randolph Street.

The staff's recommendations for Segment B are consistent with local preferences, as expressed by the cities of Huntington Park, Bell and Commerce (Attachment G). Implementation of Segment B will require coordination with the MAT grant funding and with Metro's West Santa Ana Branch Project. Metro staff time and funds for these related projects are accounted for in the FY23 budget in their respective cost centers. Since these are multi-year projects, the cost center managers and the Chief Planning Officer will be responsible for budgeting in future years.

### **EQUITY PLATFORM**

The recommendations help accelerate the investments and advancement of active transportation projects in historically underserved, low-income communities of color. Based on the Equity Focus Community (EFC) criteria and thresholds, the majority (85%) of the study area qualifies as an EFC. The surrounding study areas are represented by 98% communities of color, compared to 73.5% for Los Angeles County. The low-income population within the study area is at 28.3%, compared to 17% for Los Angeles County.

Single weekday afternoon counts for people walking and biking in the study area are 3,139 and 412, respectively, for a combined total of 3,560 walk and bike trips. Adopting the recommendations would facilitate and advance connections with Rail to Rail and the existing LA River Path, enabling regionally significant active transportation networks to grow more walk/bike trips in the future.

The Rail to River Segment B study sought to identify high quality, dedicated bikeway options. However, some of these alternatives required road reconfiguration (converting two travel lanes in each direction to one lane) or removing parking that the cities did not support. These challenges and alternatives were presented to the community, key stakeholders, and cities during the community engagement process. Formal letters submitted by the cities of Huntington Park and Bell, and the MAT Randolph project sponsors have been received, expressing strong support for Alternative 1 - Randolph Street. As documented through the outreach efforts conducted for the SAA, the previous AA, and other studies conducted by the local jurisdictions, the community (including project area residents, community-based organizations, interested stakeholders, and the general public) has also consistently expressed their preference for active transportation improvements along Randolph.

### **IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS**

The SAA for the Rail to River Segment B identifies and recommends steps to achieve bike and pedestrian improvements, connect to transit, and grow and expand active transportation in South LA and Southeast LA County. The recommendations in this report support the following goals outlined in the Metro Vision 2028 Strategic Plan:

- Strategic Goal #1: Provide high-quality mobility options that enable people to spend less time traveling;
- Strategic Goal #2: Enhance communities and lives through mobility and access to opportunity; and

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- Strategic Goal #3: Provide responsive, accountable, and trustworthy governance within the Metro organization

### **ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED**

The Board could decide not to approve staff's recommendation. However, doing so would delay opportunities to coordinate Rail to River Segment B with other related projects currently underway.

### **NEXT STEPS**

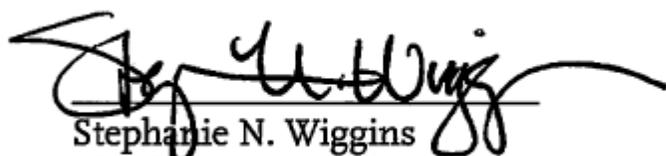
This project represents a critical gap closure for regional network of active transportation facilities, including the Rail to Rail Segment A and the LA River Path. It also connects active transportation with major transit investments (existing and planned) such as the Metro Blue Line and the WSAB LRT line. Given the projects' similarities and geographic overlap between the proposed Randolph Street alignment and several MAT-funded projects, Metro staff will provide technical support and coordination services to MAT grantees, as we have mutual goals and objectives in this area to create a premium regional active transportation corridor.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

- Attachment A - Map of Segment B and WSAB Overlay
- Attachment B - SAA Executive Summary
- Attachment C - Map of Rail to Rail/River Active Transportation Corridor
- Attachment D - Map of 2016 Segment B Alternatives Studied
- Attachment E - Map of Study Area
- Attachment F - Map of Four Alternatives Studied in SAA
- Attachment G - Letters of Support
- Attachment H - SAA Recommended Randolph Improvements

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