



Board Report

File #: 2023-0019, **File Type:** Motion / Motion Response**Agenda Number:**

**PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE
JUNE 14, 2023****SUBJECT: UPDATE ON THE LONG BEACH-EAST LA CORRIDOR TASK FORCE****ACTION: RECEIVE AND FILE****RECOMMENDATION**

RECEIVE AND FILE report on the Long Beach-East LA Corridor Task Force.

ISSUE

At its meeting on September 22, 2022, the Board approved the Vision, Guiding Principles, Goals, Pre-Investment Plan Opportunity candidate grant projects, and the new name for the Task Force (File #2022-0330). The Board also approved a motion by Directors Hahn, Solis, and Dutra (Attachment A) to provide funding to support grant applications for the Pre-Investment Plan Opportunity projects. This Receive and File report provides an update to the Board on the progress made by the Long Beach-East LA (LB-ELA) Task Force since the September 2022 meeting, including the approval of the Evaluation Framework and the result of various grant applications for corridor projects.

BACKGROUND

In response to communication from the US Environmental Protection Agency and then- Caltrans Director (and current California State Transportation Agency [CalSTA] Secretary) Toks Omishakin that the I-710 South Corridor Project EIR/EIS would not have a path forward to securing a Record of Decision for Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) 5C, the Board took a series of actions (Attachment B) in May 2021 to set an alternate path forward for staff to develop a new approach to developing an investment plan for the corridor.

To advance Board direction, Metro partnered with Caltrans District 7 to develop what was initially known as the 710 Task Force, comprising a wide range of stakeholders from the community to the regional level that would represent the important partners to help Metro shape, fund, and implement a new, multimodal, community-focused, and regionally significant investment plan for the I-710 South Corridor. This investment plan will focus on funding projects in the near term that can deliver immediate benefits for the LB-ELA Corridor and creating strategic approaches to developing or refining projects and programs that will further advance the goals and vision for the LB-ELA Corridor created by the Task Force and approved by the Board.

The Task Force launched in September 2021 and meets monthly. To support the Task Force, staff also developed the Community Leadership Committee (CLC) and Equity Working Group (EWG) to provide opportunities to engage and receive input from members of and advocates for impacted communities.

In May 2022 the Board directed staff (Attachment C) to return with three recommendations: (1) a new name for the corridor, (2) the Task Force's recommendation for its Vision, Goals, and Guiding Principles for board consideration, and (3) a set of early grant investment opportunities for the corridor. At the same meeting, the Board concurrently approved a new LPA for the I-710 South Corridor EIR/EIS - Alternative 1 (the "No Build" alternative) - to replace the previously adopted LPA (Alternative 5C) and received a report on how the Task Force's Investment Plan would take the place of the original project to program and leverage Measure R and M funds assigned for the I-710 South Corridor project (File# 2022-0100).

Staff returned to the Board in September 2022 with the new name (the Long Beach-East LA Corridor), a set of four projects composing a "Pre-Investment Plan Opportunity" (PIPO) for which staff would seek grant funding, and the Task Force's adopted Vision, Goals, and Guiding Principles (File #2022-0330). The Board approved these items and authorized funding to serve as a local match for the PIPO project grant applications (Attachment A).

Following the adoption of the Vision, Goals, and Guiding Principles, staff have completed the subsequent phase of the Task Force Investment Plan process - Developing Multimodal Strategies and Identifying Projects and Programs - and have made significant progress on the following phase - Evaluating and Refining Projects and Programs - for which the Task Force voted in May 2023 to approve the Evaluation Framework to be used to refine and prioritize projects for the Investment Plan. Staff will return to the Board in November 2023 with a draft Investment Plan for discussion and consideration.

DISCUSSION

Developing the List of Multimodal Strategies, Projects, and Programs

Following the Board's adoption of the Task Force's recommended Vision Statement, Guiding Principles, and Goals, staff initiated the next phase of the work plan: Developing Multimodal Strategies and Identifying Projects and Programs (Attachment D, Slide 2). The Task Force sought as inclusive a set of Multimodal Strategies, Projects, and Programs (MSPPs) as possible, using a broad outreach and engagement approach to receive input from corridor residents, community groups, interested stakeholders, partner agencies, and other parties.

Staff employed an extensive public engagement effort to develop the list of candidate MSPPs, with a particular focus on engagement with impacted communities supplemented by partnerships with community-based organizations (CBOs). This effort included an online survey and interactive map that provided an opportunity for residents, community leaders, and other stakeholders to give direct input into the process. Metro's outreach campaign engaged approximately 5,400 community members and stakeholders through 28 events hosted by 18 CBOs and 18 pop-up events hosted by

Metro. Additionally, Metro hosted four workshops in Spanish (with English translation) and two workshops in English (with Spanish translation). As a result, almost 3,000 responses to the survey and interactive mapping tool were submitted, generating new approaches to making improvements within the corridor by those residents most impacted within the corridor (Attachment D, Slides 3-7).

In addition to receiving input from residents, staff also reviewed a wide range of prior programs and initiatives from local, subregional, and regional agencies related to the LB-ELA Corridor. Staff included elements of the original I-710 South Corridor project, including envisioned “early action projects”, that involved neither displacement nor extensive right-of-way impacts for local communities. Staff also received a set of recommendations created by the Gateway Cities Council of Governments’ (COG’s) 710 Ad Hoc Committee and by community activists provided through the “Community Alternative 7” proposed in 2014. Staff also included projects from corridor cities, Caltrans, Metro’s Measure R and M expenditure plans and Long-Range Transportation Plan, and the Southern California Association of Governments’ Regional Transportation Plan / Sustainable Communities Strategy. Staff only included from these sources projects and programs that met the Board’s direction for the Task Force as reflected in the Vision, Goals, and Guiding Principles and other policies, such as the Multimodal Highway Investment Objectives (File #2022-0302), in developing the Investment Plan (Attachment D, Slide 8).

Over 300 projects and programs were identified through all these various efforts (Attachment E) and formed the Initial List of MSPPs. Staff organized these myriad projects into six categories, in alphabetical order:

- Active Transportation / Traffic Demand Management (TDM)
- Arterial Roadways
- Community Programs
- Freeway
- Goods Movement
- Transit

These categories reflect and align well with the Task Force’s adopted Vision, Goals, and Guiding Principles. Each category comprises four sub-categories that help to cover the broad range of the types of projects and programs that compose the Initial List of MSPPs. See Attachment F for a complete list of categories and sub-categories for projects and programs.

Staff also presented information on the Initial List of MSPPs to the CLC at seven meetings and the EWG at five meetings between August 18, 2022, and February 23, 2023. Input received from these groups was used to help refine the Initial List as well as provide feedback to the Task Force for consideration at its meetings. Some of the key questions and concerns centered on ensuring impacts on local communities, particularly safety and air quality, were drawn forth from the evaluation process.

The Task Force concluded the Developing Multimodal Strategies and Identifying Projects and Programs phase of the work plan at its February 13, 2023, meeting and supported moving the Initial List of MSPPs into the Evaluating and Refining Projects and Programs Phase (Attachment D, Slide 2).

Purpose of the Evaluation Criteria

The main driver of the Evaluating and Refining Projects and Programs Phase of the LB-ELA Corridor Investment Plan is the development of the evaluation criteria, which will be used to create summary findings for each project or program identified in the prior phase as it relates to the Board-approved Vision, Goals, and Guiding Principles. The 73 criteria (Attachment G) will allow the project team to evaluate each project or program in consideration of the following questions:

- How well does each project or program align with the LB-ELA Corridor Task Force Vision and Goals?
- Does the project or program advance the Guiding Principle of Equity in the Corridor?
- Does the project or program advance the Guiding Principle of Sustainability in the Corridor?
- What are the potential concerns and negative impacts that should be highlighted?

Each project or program will receive a rating for each evaluation criterion, ranging between “No Benefit” and “High Benefit”. Adverse impacts will also be identified through the “concerns” criteria, which will be expanded as necessary to capture a full picture of potential impacts. This approach was deemed necessary given the broad assortment of project and program types—each with a different level of development and refinement—to be considered in the multimodal, community-supportive, regionally significant, and strategic Investment Plan to be developed by the Task Force.

Additionally, staff will use “flags” as a method to highlight projects that do not perform well on equity and to capture additional considerations, positive or negative, for each project or program beyond the summary findings of the evaluation criteria. These “flags” will be carried through the rest of the process to further explore and identify specific project or program concerns or benefits that may not be fully captured by the evaluation criteria and methodology (Attachment D, Slides 10-11).

Incorporating Equity in the Evaluation Framework

A central hallmark of the LB-ELA Corridor Investment Plan is its focus on delivering equitable outcomes for the impacted residents within a corridor. To accomplish this vision the project team has included evaluation criteria specifically designed to reflect the role of Equity through every aspect of the project as a Guiding Principle

- an overarching lens that applies to project evaluation across multiple goal areas. Equity’s inclusion as a guiding principle, and the language of the guiding principle itself, were informed by early discussions with the EWG. The Equity evaluation criteria require the technical team to probe more deeply into the distribution of potential project benefits to populations of highest need, as defined through the EWG and Equity Planning and Evaluation Tool (EPET) process. Throughout the EWG process, staff has applied the EPET (Attachment D, Slide 12) to identify geographies and populations of highest need throughout the LB-ELA Corridor and develop Equity evaluation criteria that measure each project and program’s potential to benefit or burden these communities. Staff applied the EPET to *Analyze Data*, identifying the impacted geographic areas and demographics of these areas, existing disparities, and more equitable future outcomes. Staff simultaneously applied the EPET to

Engage the Community, discussing the historic context and root causes of current conditions and disparities, identifying community members most vulnerable to negative impacts, and considering who is most likely to benefit or be burdened from potential investments.

Through application of the EPET and discussions with the EWG, staff identified two ways to evaluate potential project and program outcomes for communities of highest need, and most vulnerable to potential impacts. The 'EFC-Lens' criteria use Metro's Equity Focus Communities geographic designation established through Metro's Equity Need Index (MENI) - see Attachment D, Slide 12 - to account for historically marginalized and transit-dependent populations regarding Race/Ethnicity, Income, and Vehicle Access. While the EFC designations were developed outside of the LB-ELA Corridor Task Force process, the EFC designations closely reflect areas facing a variety of other socioeconomic, health, and environmental justice burdens. These were studied in the initial analysis of existing conditions data, which were presented to the EWG for discussion and verification. Therefore, all evaluation criteria that include a quantitative geographic based analysis contribute to a supplementary 'EFC-lens' score. This score measures the level of benefit of a project or program to EFC communities relative to the level of benefit to non-EFC communities. The 'EQ-Qual' (Qualitative Equity) criteria account for the level of relative benefit to specific vulnerable communities that were elevated through EWG input and application of the EPET's Analyze Data and Engage the Community sections. Specifically, the EQ-Qual evaluation criteria account for those communities facing high pollution burden and asthma rates, areas lacking active transportation infrastructure and parks, non-driving populations, areas of low tree-canopy and extreme heat burden, unemployed and low-income workforce, and households or businesses at risk of displacement.

Developing the Evaluation Framework

At the March 13, 2023, Task Force meeting, the project team initiated the discussion on and presented an overview for the Evaluation Framework to be developed and used to ultimately refine MSPPs for consideration to be included in the draft LB-ELA Corridor Investment Plan. The project team also provided a presentation on modeling and evaluation tools to be used going forward in this phase.

Prior to the next Task Force meeting in April, staff presented draft Evaluation Criteria to the CLC on March 23 and March 27, 2023, for review and input, receiving general support for the thoroughness of the criteria but also questions and comments about the "flag" process the project team proposed to ensure equity and other concerns for any project could be noted and resolved in the evaluation process. On March 30, 2023, the project team introduced the Evaluation Framework and presented the equity evaluation criteria proposed for the framework to the EWG. Additionally, the project team discussed the EPET and addressed concerns raised about its application to the LB-ELA Corridor Investment Plan process.

At the April 10, 2023, Task Force meeting, the project team presented the Evaluation Framework and methods to be used as well as facilitated a discussion on the proposed evaluation criteria - these criteria provided approaches to evaluating projects across Goals, the Guiding Principles of Equity

and Sustainability, project mode and type, qualitative vs. quantitative means of analysis, and through an Equity Focus Community lens. The project team received input from Task Force members, including numerous questions or requests for additional information. An informal test for consensus found that 82% of the membership could either “Support” or “Live With” the criteria at that time, with only 18% expressing that they “Have Concerns”.

Following the discussion at the April Task Force meeting, staff then held several outreach meetings focused on presenting and discussing the draft Evaluative Criteria. On April 11 and April 19, 2023, staff presented to the Gateway Cities COG’s I-710 Technical Advisory Committee to gather feedback and suggestions for refining the criteria. On April 17, 2023, the project team then hosted a “Lunch and Learn” meeting to provide an open forum for Task Force and CLC members to raise additional questions and receive information in advance of the May Task Force meetings.

Following the “Lunch and Learn”, the project team then met with the CLC on April 20, 2023. One of the important points made by the CLC was to find ways to incorporate more detailed health metrics as evaluation criteria, which staff discussed and responded on the many ways public health would be included comprehensively within the evaluation framework. The CLC then took a vote to “Support the Evaluation Criteria” with 83% voting “Yes” and 17% voting “No”. The summary for this meeting can be found in Attachment D, Slide 13.

At the EWG meeting on April 27, 2023, staff spent a significant amount of time focusing on health as part of the Evaluation Framework, following the receipt of a letter (Attachment H) on April 10, 2023, from the Coalition of Environmental Health and Justice (CEHAJ), a coalition of organizations whose members also serve on the Task Force, that provided additional input on the inclusion of health outcomes in the Evaluation Framework. Staff affirmed that the Evaluation Framework is designed to measure the project outcomes that support the desired health-related community results. The project team provided information on how health issues have been considered at various stages of the development of the Investment Plan and what challenges exist that undermine the evaluation of a project’s direct effect on health outcomes, resulting in the standard practice using other indicators such as air quality to measure potential health benefits or negative health impacts of a project. Additional discussion on staff’s approach to health is provided in more detail in the following section of this report.

The Task Force then met on May 1 and May 8, 2023, to review input from the CLC and EWG and deliberate on the set of 73 Evaluation Criteria proposed by the project team and refined with public and community input (Attachment G). At this meeting additional discussion continued regarding potential health benefits and impacts included in the criteria, with several members expressing the desire to see additional health criteria. Following this discussion, the Task Force voted to move forward with the evaluation criteria (62% voted “Yes”, 33% voted “No”, and 5% abstained). Despite some of the concerns expressed about how best to incorporate health in the evaluation framework to develop the Investment Plan, staff believes the approach approved by the Task Force and presented over the prior months will address many of the concerns raised by the communities within the corridor.

Public Health and the Evaluation Criteria

Staff recognizes that communities within the LB-ELA Corridor face significant health disparities (such as high asthma and cardiovascular disease rates) and experience disproportionate pollution burdens (such as PM2.5 and Diesel PM emissions) compared with other communities in Los Angeles County. These findings have been documented through health and environmental justice screening tools such as CalEnviroScreen, CA Healthy Places Index, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Environmental Justice Index Explorer, and several studies related to vehicular pollution and health outcomes surrounding the I-710 Freeway and throughout the region. In addition to the high overall health burdens facing the LB-ELA Corridor communities relative to the county and state, health burdens within the corridor disproportionately impact people of color and low-income populations.

These health disparities have been consistently elevated by Task Force, EWG, CLC, and community members throughout the Task Force's planning process, guiding staff's technical work in conducting existing conditions research and developing the Initial List of MSPPs and Evaluation Criteria. Of the 73 Evaluative Criteria approved by the Task Force, 22 of them are health-related and will support staff's work to incorporate health as part of the Investment Plan process (see Attachment I, page 7)

Staff appreciates the continuous interest and dedication from Task Force and community members in addressing health as part of the work of the Task Force, as was communicated through a letter sent to Metro by CEHAJ on April 10, 2023 (Attachment H) providing feedback into the evaluative criteria, with a specific focus on health outcomes as a criterion to be used by staff to evaluate projects and develop recommendations for the draft Investment Plan. Staff have also received feedback that they should consider using a Health Impact Assessment (HIA) as part of their evaluation process.

Staff's overview of how health is being incorporated into the evaluation criteria and process is presented in Attachment I (pages 1-6). Staff appreciates the input received from Task Force stakeholders, continues to elevate health as a priority within the Task Force process, and commits to engaging in ongoing dialogue with stakeholders and incorporating health in future phases of the Investment Plan development and implementation.

Grant Awards and Activities for LB-ELA Corridor Projects

While the Task Force is developing the draft Investment Plan for Board consideration, staff have been working concurrently with local jurisdictions and partner agencies to support grant activities for projects within the LB-ELA Corridor to take advantage of the unprecedented levels of funding generated through the passage of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL)/Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) and the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) layered on top of existing, ongoing discretionary grant programs offered by the state through the Senate Bill 1 programs administered by the California Transportation Commission (CTC) and by other agencies focused on advancing zero emission energy and technology.

At the May 2022 Board meeting, the Metro Board, recognizing these funding opportunities could yield potential investment in the LB-ELA Corridor in 2022 and early 2023, approved Motion #9 by Directors Hahn, Solis, Mitchell, and Dutra (Attachment C) to initiate what ultimately became the Pre-Investment Plan Opportunity (PIPO) that was developed by staff through the Task Force process. Staff also worked with other LB-ELA Corridor agencies to support their grant applications submitted in the same

timeframe.

Since May 2022, thanks to the leadership of the Board and the many Task Force stakeholders, \$116.24 million has been awarded to projects within the LB-ELA Corridor. An additional \$202.344 million in a multimodal array of projects is recommended for funding by the CTC at its June 28-29, 2023, meeting. Included in these recommended awards are three PIPO projects, two of which were provided local funding by the Board through Motion #9 (Attachment C) and the third of which was provided technical and grant support by Metro staff. See Attachment J for more information on grant awards and activities for LB-ELA Corridor projects.

Staff will continue to evaluate opportunities to seek grant funding for projects that arise through the remainder of 2023, and report to the Board with such opportunities when timely.

Corridor Tours

On April 18, 2023, Metro supported Caltrans District 7 in hosting a corridor tour for CalSTA Secretary Toks Omishakin, Caltrans Director Tony Tavares, CTC Commissioners Joe Lyou and Michele Martinez, and interim CTC Executive Director Tanisha Taylor. Caltrans District 7 was represented by Executive Director Gloria Roberts and her staff, while Metro was represented by Director Fernando Dutra, Chief Planning Officer Jim de la Loza and his staff, and the Office of Equity and Race, led by Executive Officer KeAndra Cylear Dodds. Metro Operations provided the bus and drivers used for the tour. The tour included representatives from community groups, the Gateway Cities COG, and other agencies and stakeholders in the corridor.

The tour offered these state officials the opportunity to get an in-person view of the on-the-ground conditions and concerns that have been raised by community stakeholders regarding the interconnected issues of transportation, air quality, health, and opportunity. A full itinerary and roster of attendees can be found in Attachment K.

Metro plans to host two corridor tours this summer, on Saturday, June 24, 2023, and Wednesday, June 28, 2023. These tours will focus on providing Task Force and CLC members with a review of the corridor, including existing conditions and potential improvements that could be made. Metro will provide buses for these tours, which will run from 8:30am to 2:00pm and will cover the same route to provide all members the opportunity to pick between a weekday or weekend date. Staff will provide more information on these tours and the itineraries as details become finalized.

Update on “No Build” environmental document status

Following receipt of a letter from Caltrans requesting Metro replace the original LPA for the I-710 South Corridor EIR/EIS (Alternative 5C) with Alternative 1, the “No Build” alternative, the Board took action to make this change official (File# 2022-0100). Staff then initiated coordination with Caltrans District 7 staff to prepare the finalization of the environmental process for the new LPA to close out the original project. As the lead agency responsible for compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), Caltrans will certify the I-710

South Corridor Project to meet the requirements of NEPA and CEQA.

Caltrans anticipates completing their internal review of the document by October 2023, which would allow for a 30-day public availability period to commence leading to the approval of a Record of Decision and Notice of Determination by late fall/early winter 2023.

EQUITY PLATFORM

As demonstrated above, the LB-ELA Task Force strives to advance equity through its process and its ultimate outcome through the Investment Plan. In partnership with Metro's Office of Equity and Race, the technical team is piloting the EPET to support the Task Force's endeavors. Staff are engaging stakeholders, including those most likely to be impacted by potential improvements in the corridor, through the CLC and other avenues of public engagement to develop the LB-ELA Corridor Investment Plan.

Staff have also implemented a CBO Partnering Strategy with CBOs that are based in and work with the communities along the LB-ELA Corridor. Metro's goal is to engage these communities by working with CBOs and the people they serve to gather input and identify multi-modal strategies, projects, and programs that are needs and priorities for these impacted communities.

The LB-ELA Task Force and its attendant working groups and CLC will continue to promote community-driven conversations to ensure an equitable decision-making process as the Task Force develops multimodal strategies and identifies priority projects and programs for the LB-ELA Corridor to be brought to the Metro Board for consideration.

IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

Collaboration among the LB-ELA Corridor communities, impacted residents, Caltrans District 7, the Gateway Cities COG, and stakeholders through LB-ELA Corridor Task Force meetings and its attendant committees and public outreach forums will lead to the development of the multimodal, multiyear LB-ELA Investment Plan. The process and the outcome of the Task Force will help implement three key Metro Vision 2028 Strategic Plan Goals:

- Goal 1: Provide high-quality mobility options that enable people to spend less time traveling
- Goal 3: Enhance communities and lives through mobility and access to opportunity
- Goal 4: Transform LA County through regional collaboration and national leadership

NEXT STEPS

Staff will support the CTC staff award recommendations for LB-ELA Corridor projects to be considered by the CTC at its June 28-29, 2023, meeting.

The project team will complete technical analyses and evaluations of the various projects and programs using the evaluation framework approved by the Task Force in May 2023.

The project team will lead two tours of the LB-ELA Corridor, on Saturday, June 24, 2023, and Wednesday, June 28, 2023, to provide opportunities for members of the Task Force and CLC to view various potential project sites and existing conditions in the corridor to help inform future decisions regarding the Investment Plan. Staff will also work with stakeholders to develop additional outreach and advocacy opportunities to highlight the need for investment in the corridor, including a potential “710” day on July 10, 2023.

Staff will continue to work with Task Force and CLC members to review the potential for more opportunities to improve public health for corridor residents.

Staff will work with the Task Force and CLC to develop the draft LB-ELA Corridor Draft Investment Plan and will present this draft to the Board during the November/December 2023 board cycle.

Staff will also develop a qualifying Comprehensive Multimodal Corridor Plan for the LB-ELA Corridor based on the process and results of the Investment Plan.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

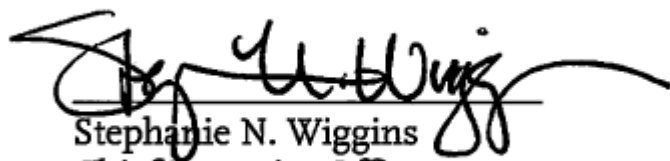
There is no financial impact to this action.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A - September 2022 Motion by Directors Hahn, Solis, and Dutra
Attachment B - May 2021 Board Motions
Attachment C - May 2022 Motion by Directors Hahn, Solis, Mitchell, and Dutra
Attachment D - LB-ELA Corridor Task Force Slide Deck
Attachment E - Initial List of Multimodal Strategies, Projects, and Programs
Attachment F - Categories and Sub-categories of Projects and Programs
Attachment G - Final Evaluation Criteria
Attachment H - Letter from CEJAH re: Health Criteria (April 10, 2023)
Attachment I - Summary of Health Considerations for Evaluative Criteria
Attachment J - Grant Awards and Activities for LB-ELA Corridor Projects
Attachment K - April 2023 I-710 Tour Information and Roster

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