



Board Report

File #: 2023-0409, File Type: Contract

Agenda Number: 17.

PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE SEPTEMBER 20, 2023

SUBJECT: VERMONT TRANSIT CORRIDOR

ACTION: APPROVE RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS

CONSIDER:

- A. AWARDING AND EXECUTING up to a 60-month, firm fixed price Contract No. AE97976000 to Vermont Corridor Partners Joint Venture, a joint venture between AECOM Technical Services, Inc., Terry A. Hayes Associates, Inc., and RAW International, Inc., in the amount of \$55,668,537, to prepare the Planning and Environmental Study for the Vermont Transit Corridor, subject to resolution of any properly submitted protest(s), if any, and;
- B. AUTHORIZING the CEO to execute individual Contract Modifications within the Board-approved Contract Modification Authority.

ISSUE

The Vermont Transit Corridor is a Measure M project with a projected opening date within Fiscal Years (FY) 2028 to 2030. Currently, there is \$425 million (2015\$) allocated for this project. To advance the project in accordance with the Measure M schedule, a Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) needs to be identified and environmentally cleared.

On February 6, 2023, Metro issued a Request for Proposal (RFP No. AE97976) seeking a qualified consultant for planning, environmental, and engineering services for the Vermont Transit Corridor Project (Project). Board approval is needed to award Contract No. AE97976000 to allow the consultant to begin work.

BACKGROUND

Vermont Avenue is the second busiest transit corridor in Los Angeles County with nearly 71,000 daily boardings (pre-Covid) served by Metro Local Line 204 and Metro Rapid Line 754, as well as the Metro B, D, E, and C rail lines. The corridor also connects some of the region's most economically and socially diverse communities. Between Hollywood Boulevard and 120th Street (Attachment A), 100% of the Vermont corridor is contained within Metro Equity-Focus Communities. The Vermont

Transit Corridor Project will not only improve mobility through better connections to the regional transit system but will also improve equity by bringing long-awaited transit improvements to these traditionally underserved communities.

In April 2019, staff presented the findings and recommendations from the Vermont Transit Corridor - Rail Conversion/Feasibility Study. Overall, the study found that: BRT continues to be feasible in the Vermont Corridor; BRT does not preclude conversion to rail transit in the future; BRT has the capacity to serve ridership demand at least until 2042; rail transit would maximize the mobility benefits along the corridor and in the region; and three rail alternatives were identified and determined feasible for future implementation. Additionally, at its April 2019 meeting, the Board approved a Motion 16.1 by Directors Garcetti, Dupont-Walker, Hahn, Solis and Butts (Attachment B) directing staff to advance three BRT alternatives and the three rail concepts identified in the study into the environmental review. The current Measure M ordinance includes the future potential conversion to rail on the Vermont Corridor after FY 2067 and based on passenger demand. The inclusion of rail alternatives in the environmental study provides an opportunity to deliver rail transit sooner should additional funding materialize.

In June 2021, Metro adopted its new Community Based Organization (CBO) Partnering Strategy that established consistent and equitable processes for Metro to utilize when engaging CBOs for professional services. As a result, in November 2021, Metro conducted a pre-environmental public outreach and Community Based Organization (CBO) engagement program to align with the goals of the Equity Platform Framework and ensure that the community's needs and concerns were identified early in the planning process to inform potential transit improvements for the Vermont corridor. The CBO engagement program included partnering with 20 CBOs and engaging over 6,000 stakeholders. Outreach activities were designed to engage and inform stakeholders through traditional and non-traditional approaches, including in-person and virtual meetings with flexible dates, times, and locations, surveys, and interactive and accessible information, providing community members the opportunity to offer input and help shape the next phase for the project.

At its August 25, 2022 meeting, the Board received a status report on the Vermont Transit Corridor Project's Community Based Partnership Program (CPP). The CPP provided stakeholders who live, work, play, study, and/or worship along Vermont with an opportunity to express their thoughts about possible transit improvements they envision for the corridor and ensured that Metro staff received comments from a diverse group of stakeholders who do not often participate in helping shape their communities. It also informed a planning approach supported by the communities along the corridor that includes near-term (quick build), medium-term (BRT), and long-term (rail) transit improvements.

At its September 2022 meeting, based on the community feedback received, the Board approved a motion by Directors Dupont-Walker, Najarian, Mitchell, Solis, and Butts, (Attachment C) directing staff to advance the Vermont Transit Corridor with a three-pronged approach, consisting of near-term bus service improvements, a medium-term BRT project, and a longer-term rail project subject to funding availability. This approach addresses the more immediate transit needs on the corridor while planning for the mid-term and longer-term improvements that will provide even greater community benefits and address future ridership demands.

DISCUSSION

In response to the Board motion, the contract for the planning and environmental work for the Vermont Transit Corridor will be executed in two parts. The base contract covers Part 1 which includes an Alternatives Analysis (AA), a California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) exemption under Senate Bill 922, and Advanced Conceptual Engineering (ACE) for BRT. Part 1 also includes an optional task for National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review should federal funding be pursued and subject to coordination with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA).

Part 2 includes the AA, ACE and CEQA environmental review of the rail alternatives and will commence following the CEQA clearance of BRT. The NEPA optional task, consistent with Board direction to develop a strategy for rail, including funding and delivery, will be authorized based on identifying additional funding and coordination with FTA.

Planned Outreach Efforts

Public and stakeholder engagement throughout the planning and environmental process will provide valuable feedback that will inform the environmental review process, including the evaluation of alternatives and the selection of the medium-term LPA by the Metro Board. A series of meetings will be conducted as part of the alternatives analysis and environmental review process. Individual briefings with key stakeholders and elected officials will also be conducted. All outreach activities will be managed through a separate contract issued under the Board-approved On-call Communications Bench. The selected planning and environmental firm will work collaboratively with the outreach contractor throughout the study period.

Status of Near Term Bus Service Improvements

One of the key outcomes from the CPP also included implementing near-term bus service improvements on the corridor. Metro Operations is leading this effort, which proposes peak period curb-running bus lanes between Sunset and Wilshire Boulevards and full-time curb-running bus lanes between Gage Avenue and the Vermont/Athens C Line Station. Staff will conduct briefings and presentations to interested stakeholders, community groups, and neighborhood councils, as well as outreach to businesses along Vermont. Community engagement is slated to begin in [Fall /Winter 2023](#), followed by design work in Spring 2024. Implementation of the bus lanes is anticipated for [Summer 2025](#). This project will be discussed further at the September 21, 2023, Operations, Safety, and Customer Experience Committee.

DETERMINATION OF SAFETY IMPACT

Approval of this item will not impact the safety of Metro's customers or employees.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The FY24 Budget includes \$4.9 million in Cost Center 4240 (Mobility Corridors Team 4), Project 471402 (Vermont Transit Corridor Project). Since this is a multi-year contract, the Cost Center Manager and Chief Planning Officer will be responsible for budgeting in future years for the balance of the remaining project budget.

Impact to Budget

The funding source for the Vermont Transit Corridor project is Measure M 35% Transit Construction. As these funds are earmarked for the Vermont Transit Corridor project, they are not eligible for Metro bus and rail capital and operating expenditures.

EQUITY PLATFORM

The Vermont Transit Corridor Planning and Environmental Review contract was solicited as an open solicitation and included a Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) goal of 27%. The solicitation was posted on Metro's Vendor Portal and in local publications with geographic and sociodemographic relevance to the project corridor. Evaluation of the proposals considered a number of criteria, including an understanding of local institutional issues, political dynamics, community concerns, and needs of the Vermont corridor. In addition, as part of the scope of work, the Contractor will conduct a comprehensive cultural needs assessment. The recommended firm exceeded the goal by making a 41.16% DBE commitment. The Vermont Transit Corridor is consistent with the Metro Equity Platform in that the alternatives help enhance accessibility and connectivity for residential and employment centers, support for transit-oriented communities' policies, support for first/last-mile connections, and investment in disadvantaged communities. The Vermont Transit Corridor is located entirely within Equity Focus Communities (EFCs). The Project will provide new benefits of enhanced mobility and improved regional access for transit-dependent and minority and/or low-income populations within the study area. Going forward, the Project will continue to use Metro's EFC definition along with other metrics (seniors, school-age students, single moms, low-income households, people with disabilities-all who are likely to be more transit-dependent), as appropriate, to guide analyses and to conduct robust and inclusive community engagement.

Throughout the planning and environmental review of this project, advancing transit equity will be a critical part in setting up project objectives in evaluating alternatives, developing design elements, and engaging the community and stakeholders. In addition, we will continue to partner with CBOs to support this work and advance equity in alignment with Metro's CBO Partnering Strategy.

IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

The project will support the goals of the strategic plan by enhancing communities and lives through improved mobility and access to opportunities through the addition of a new high-quality mobility option, closing a gap in the transit network and enhancing communities and lives through improved mobility and access to opportunity.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The Board could consider environmentally clearing the LPA for the corridor using in-house resources. This option is not recommended as there are insufficient in-house resources to conduct a study of this magnitude, placing the Measure M schedule at risk.

NEXT STEPS

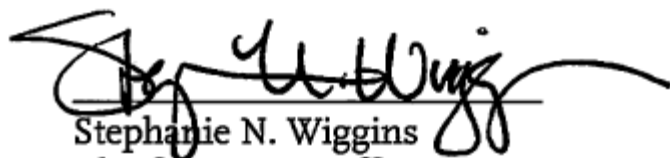
Upon Board approval, staff will execute Contract No. AE97976000 with Vermont Corridor Partners Joint Venture to initiate work on the planning, environmental, and design work needed for the Vermont Transit Corridor Project.

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment A - Vermont Transit Corridor Map
- Attachment B - Board Motion (April 17, 2019)
- Attachment C - Board Motion (September 22, 2022)
- Attachment D - Procurement Summary
- Attachment E - DEOD Summary

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