



Board Report

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Agenda Number: 37.

REGULAR BOARD MEETING
JUNE 27, 2024

SUBJECT: STATE ROUTE 71 (SR-71) GAP CLOSURE NORTH SEGMENT PROJECT (PHASE 2), DESIGN

ACTION: APPROVE RECOMMENDATION

RECOMMENDATION

CONSIDER:

- A. APPROVING adjustment of the FY25 Budget which currently has \$30 million for SR-71 South Segment Project to provide separate budget line items: \$10 million for the SR-71 North Segment Project and \$20 million for the SR-71 South Segment Project;
- B. APPROVING the programming of \$10 million in Measure M funds to support design activities for the SR-71 North Segment Project (Phase 2); and
- C. AUTHORIZING the Chief Executive Officer or their designee to execute and/or amend all necessary programming documents and project agreements for Phase 2 design activities.

(RECOMMENDATION B WAS CARRIED OVER FROM THE MAY REGULAR BOARD MEETING)

ISSUE

In November 2022, the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) suspended design work on Phase 2 because of a \$10,000,000 funding gap. To date, approximately 40% of the Phase 2 design work has been completed by Caltrans with Federal Repurposed Funds as the fund source. Closing the funding gap will allow Caltrans to resume final design work and complete the Plans, Specifications and Estimates (PS&E) for the construction of the last phase of work in Los Angeles County. Also, it is anticipated finalizing the Phase 2 design plans will demonstrate project readiness and make future Metro grant applications for construction funding more competitive.

Measure M funds were allocated to the SR-71 Gap (in its entirety) in the Measure M Expenditure Plan. Approval of the recommendations set forth in this Board report will allocate separate budgets for Phases 1 and 2 in FY25; and allow staff to program Measure M funds to Phase 2 for design activities. Funding for both SR-71 segments was originally part of the FY25 Proposed Budget that was brought to the Board for adoption in May 2024 under the line item for the South Segment (Phase

1); however, at the Board meeting, a separate budget request for the North Segment (Phase 2) was pulled from the budget proposal and is now being proposed in a standalone June Board report for clarity.

BACKGROUND

SR-71 is an essential regional highway facility (expressway) that crosses parts of Los Angeles, San Bernardino, and Riverside County, and connects to major east-west freight corridors (I-10 and SR-60) that serve as inland passageways for interregional travel and goods movement between San Diego and the eastern portion of Los Angeles County. SR-71 is a 4-lane expressway between Interstate 10 (I-10) and the Los Angeles/San Bernardino County (LA/SBC) line, in the City of Pomona.

The SR-71 Gap Closure Project is a Caltrans-led project that spans the length of SR-71 (Attachment A). According to Caltrans, SR-71 experiences collision rates that are higher than the state's average traffic collision rates, 1.48 collisions per million vehicle miles, as compared to 1.14 collisions per million vehicle miles countywide reported for a 3-year period. The fatal injury rate also exceeds the expected rate by 19%. Collisions are reported to occur throughout the day, with the majority (70%) of the collisions occurring during daylight hours. Also, the Caltrans collision summary data tables suggest the existing at-grade intersections appear to be the primary cause of the collisions; 71% of the collisions reported are rear-end and sideswipe incidents occurring during congested conditions.

For decades, planning efforts have been underway to upgrade SR-71 to a full access-controlled facility (freeway) and to provide multimodal options throughout the corridor, which are in alignment with [Modernizing the Metro Highway Program <https://boardagendas.metro.net/board-report/2021-0291/>](https://boardagendas.metro.net/board-report/2021-0291/) and [Metro Objectives for Multimodal Highway Investments <https://boardagendas.metro.net/board-report/2022-0302/>](https://boardagendas.metro.net/board-report/2022-0302/). With the planned improvements in San Bernardino County completed, it's imperative the remaining two phases of the SR-71 improvements in Los Angeles County also get implemented. Of note, the project's PA&ED was cleared in May 2013.

Once the last phase of improvements (Phase 2) in Los Angeles County are designed and constructed, system users traversing to and beyond Pomona will benefit from contiguous improvements, extending from the LA/SBC line, that include improved mobility and air quality; congestion relief; more multimodal options, access, and connectivity; more efficient goods movement; and enhanced safety. Stopping short of completing Phase 2 at this time would not be prudent given the safety needs and multimillion-dollar transportation investments that have already been made throughout the SR-71 corridor.

SR-71 Phases 1 & 2

SR-71 was identified for upgrades in the Measure M Expenditure Plan. In 2019, Caltrans and Metro agreed to split SR-71 into two phases to avoid lapsing previously programmed funds, which allowed Phase 1 (the southern segment) to compete for federal and state discretionary funds and provided additional time for coordination with Union Pacific Railroad for Phase 2 (the northern segment). After SR-71 was split into two phases, the project team acknowledged that \$10,000,000 was needed to complete the Phase 2 design work in addition to the previously programmed design funds.

Phase 1 adds one high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lane and an additional mixed-flow lane between Mission Boulevard and the LA/SBC line, for approximately 3.1 miles, to enhance safety, improve mobility, provide multimodal options, and correct operational deficiencies along SR-71. Phase 1 is under construction and expected to be completed in Fall 2025.

Phase 2 completes the final 2 miles of one high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lane and an additional mixed-flow lane (between I-10 and Mission Boulevard), connecting to the I-10 where HOV lanes are currently operational, to enhance safety, improve mobility, provide multimodal options, and correct operational deficiencies along SR-71. Adding the HOV lane will bridge a critical gap in the HOV lane system; enhance mobility and connectivity; promote greater carpool and vanpool usage; improve bus travel times and reduce delays for transit patrons. Also, Phase 2 includes the construction of a new Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-compliant pedestrian overcrossing (POC) south of Ninth Street to connect two communities in Pomona and replace the existing seismically deficient POC. The new POC will accommodate cyclists and pedestrians and provide greater multimodal accessibility and connectivity. Lastly, Phase 2 reconstructs two overhead railroad bridges with expanded spans and raised profiles to meet current standards, accommodate future track expansions, and enable increased use of double stacking of railroad cars to facilitate faster and seamless freight/goods movement; and adds a crash wall to prevent a direct impact from a derailed railroad car to reduce the potential for bridge collapse and other hazards. Not completing the remaining 2-mile segment would result in a severe bottleneck of a HOV and three mixed flow lanes converging into two mixed flow lanes and bridge structure, over a highly active rail corridor. Moreover, alleviating the bottlenecks is expected to reduce passenger delay by 1.89 million hours per year and save approximately 131,000 hours of truck travel time per year.

With only \$3,400,000 in Federal Repurposed Funds available to Caltrans for Phase 2 design work, staff is requesting Board approval to program \$10,000,000 in local Measure M funds to close the funding gap and restart the work.

DISCUSSION

Over the years, state and federal funds were secured for SR-71 to complement system upgrades that were implemented along the corridor in San Bernardino County. Local planning efforts in Los Angeles County were initiated in earnest after federal funding became available for project scoping.

During scoping and other outreach efforts, the community voiced several needs regarding the SR-71 corridor. For example, Caltrans received recommendations to convert the corridor to a freeway to reduce motorists using nearby residential streets to bypass congestion caused by the signalized intersections on SR-71. The public also commented on the need for a park-and-ride lot, traffic management plans, temporary bridge height clearances, and closure notifications, and inquired about potential impacts to six Foothill Transit bus lines. Other comments provided during the public hearing process included the desire to beautify the project area and concerns and questions about the number of collisions, funding and the schedule for the proposed improvements, the selection process for the locally preferred alternative, addressing existing traffic on Ninth Street, soundproofing, access to the Phillips Ranch area, property acquisitions, frontage road access,

construction detours, and keeping Phillips Drive open. Additional information about the community engagement process is included in the Equity Platform section of this Board report.

Also, in response to community concerns, Pomona passed a resolution on January 7, 2013, to adopt Alternative 3, the at-grade design (with no local street crossings between Mission Boulevard and Rio Rancho Road) as the Locally Preferred Alternative. Subsequently, Caltrans selected Alternative 3 as the Locally Preferred Alternative for SR-71.

Funding

Local funds in the amount of \$248,557,000 were allocated for the SR-71 Gap Closure Project (in its entirety) in the Measure M Expenditure Plan. At the November 2019 meeting, the Metro Board approved programming \$105,072,000 in Measure M funds for the construction of the [South Segment \(or Phase 1\)](https://boardagendas.metro.net/board-report/2019-0703/) <<https://boardagendas.metro.net/board-report/2019-0703/>>, leaving the remainder of funds (\$143,485,000) available for the delivery of Phase 2.

Caltrans supports restarting design work on Phase 2 given the safety and multimodal benefits the project would provide (ADA-compliant pedestrian overcrossing to reconnect neighborhoods in Pomona, improved bus travel times using the HOV lane, railroad bridges that accommodate double-stacked containers for freight efficiency, seismic structure upgrades, and a crash wall).

With the environmental phases for SR-71 completed, only Phase 2 design activities need to be completed. Upon completion of final design plans and right-of-way for Phase 2, staff anticipates Phase 2 construction activities could start in 2027, should construction funding become available. The total construction cost estimate for Phase 2 is \$259,000,000 in 2024 dollars. This cost estimate excludes Phase 2 pre-construction expenditures (i.e. environmental, design and right-of-way costs).

DETERMINATION OF SAFETY IMPACT

Approval of staff recommendations has no known adverse impact on the safety of Metro's patrons, employees, and/or users of the facility. Caltrans and local agency safety standards will be adhered to during the preparation of the PS&E package for the construction of Phase 2.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

If approved, this action provides separate budgets for Phases 1 and 2 in the adopted FY25 budget; and authorizes the programming of Measure M funds to Phase 2 for design activities.

Since Phase 2 is a multi-year project, the Project Manager, the Cost Center Manager, the Senior Executive Officer for Multimodal Integrated Planning, and the Chief Planning Officer will be responsible for budgeting the costs in future fiscal years.

Impact to Budget

This action will not impact the total approved FY25 budget. The budget for Phase 1 is decreased by \$10,000,000 to include a separate and new budget line item for Phase 2 design activities in FY25.

The source of funds for the staff recommendation is Measure M Highway Construction Capital (17%). These funds are not eligible for bus and rail operating and capital expenditures.

EQUITY PLATFORM

SR-71 is a Caltrans-led project in the City of Pomona that is identified as an Equity Focus Community. Pomona is reported to be a disadvantaged community with a median household income of \$67,549, which is 18% lower than the median annual income across the entire state.

Since the inception of the SR-71 Gap Closure Project, project teams and project partners have engaged Pomona and the surrounding communities to inform them of the project development process. Over the years, Caltrans, in coordination with the City of Pomona and neighboring jurisdictions, determined the appropriate community engagement processes needed for specific SR-71 improvements. Community needs were identified through various channels, including town hall and virtual meetings, public workshops, surveys, focus groups, and advisory committees. There were three (3) public hearings and eight (8) townhall and informational meetings. The meetings were attended by over 1000 residents from Pomona and neighboring communities; and over 200 comments were received regarding the proposed alternatives, project design elements and the schedule. Substantial community engagement resulted in the inclusion of the new multimodal, ADA compliant POC; as well as soundwalls and frontage roads to minimize potential project impacts; landscaping and the preservation of flora.

Other outreach for SR-71 included meetings with resource agencies (United States Environmental Protection Agency, South Coast Air Quality Management District, County of Los Angeles Department of Public Works, County of Los Angeles Fire Department), project stakeholders (the cities of Pomona, Chino, and Chino Hills and the Southern California Association of Governments), and other stakeholders (Cal Poly Pomona, Auto Club of Southern California). Caltrans provided notices in Spanish and Chinese newspapers about upcoming SR-71 community meetings; interpreters as well as special accommodations (sign language interpreter, accessible seating, project information in alternate formats, etc.) were available at the meetings, when requested, and the Caltrans and Metro websites were used to post SR-71 project information.

Phase 2 is anticipated to provide numerous benefits, noted earlier, for the communities currently burdened by unsafe highway conditions, traffic congestion, poor air quality and limited mobility options. The proposed improvements along the SR-71 corridor will improve travel speeds, reduce bottlenecks, queues, and vehicle idling, helping to decrease greenhouse gas emissions (carbon monoxide, PM10, PM2.5, NOx, VOC, and CO2) that will result in better air quality for residents of Pomona and surrounding communities. In addition, the proposed improvements will reduce circuitous trips through the neighborhoods and adjacent communities to bypass congestion and bottlenecks along the SR-71 corridor.

Projects administrated by Caltrans have federal aid and Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE)

commitment goals that are based on the contract bid amount for federal aid projects. There are two DBE subcontractors working on Phase 1.

Should funding become available for Phase 2 and construction initiated, community outreach efforts may be expanded to include social media platforms. In addition, Caltrans' Public Affairs department will provide timely responses to constituent inquiries.

As part of Phase 2 construction, Caltrans will provide continued access for local traffic when feasible, particularly for emergency service vehicles. A Traffic Management Plan (TMP) will be prepared to ensure continued access for emergency service vehicles, and copies of the TMP will be forwarded to the appropriate affected businesses and agencies.

IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

SR-71 supports the following Metro Vision 2028 Strategic Plan Goals:

1. Provide high-quality mobility options that enable people to spend less time traveling.
2. Transform LA County through regional collaboration.

Also, SR-71 supports the following Multimodal Highway Investment Objectives:

1. Advancing the mobility needs of people and goods within Los Angeles County by developing projects and programs that support traffic mobility and enhanced safety, economic vitality, equitable impacts, access to opportunity, regional sustainability; and resiliency for affected local communities and the region.
2. Ensure that local and regional investment in Los Angeles County's highway system - particularly the implementation of Measures R and M priorities - is considered within the context of a countywide multimodal, integrated planning vision that reflects a holistic approach to meeting the needs of local communities, reducing disparities, creating a safer and well-maintained transportation system, and fostering greater regional mobility and access to opportunities.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The Board may choose to defer or not program Measure M funds to Phase 2 for design activities; and not include a separate and new line item in the FY 25 budget for Phase 2. This alternative is not recommended because it would delay completing the implementation of the SR-71 Gap Closure Project (a Measure M project) and stop short of completing the last phase of the SR-71 corridor improvements in Los Angeles County.

NEXT STEPS

Upon approval of these recommendations, Caltrans will be notified of the Board's decision. Staff will work with Caltrans on updating the Phase 2 project schedule, programming documents, and agreements.

Caltrans will continue to provide quarterly updates on SR-71 Phase 1 and Phase 2 projects, and Metro and Caltrans will continue to seek construction funding for Phase 2.

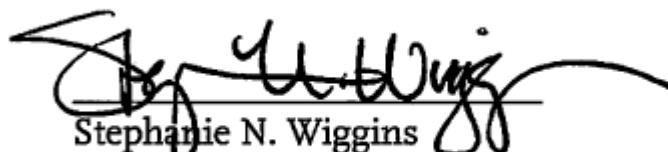
ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A - SR-71 Gap Closure Project Limits Map

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