



## Board Report

File #: 2016-0835, File Type: Project

Agenda Number: 9.

---

### PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE MARCH 15, 2017

**SUBJECT: BUS RAPID TRANSIT CORRIDOR STUDIES**

**ACTION: APPROVE STUDY FINDINGS AND APPROVE INITIATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL CLEARANCE**

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

CONSIDER:

- A. RECEIVING AND FILING update on **Vermont BRT Corridor Technical Study**;
- B. APPROVING the findings and recommendations from the **North Hollywood to Pasadena Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Technical Study**;
- C. APPROVING advancement of the **North Hollywood to Pasadena BRT corridor into environmental review**; and
- D. APPROVING initiation of a technical study for the **North San Fernando Valley BRT Improvements Project preceding environmental review**.

#### **ISSUE**

In July and October 2014, Board motions were passed (Attachments A and B) directing staff to begin technical analysis on the Vermont Avenue and the North Hollywood to Pasadena corridors, which were both identified in the Los Angeles County Bus Rapid Transit and Street Design Improvement Study (CBRT) as strong candidates for BRT implementation. This report provides an update on Phase I of the Vermont BRT Corridor Technical Study. This report also presents the findings and recommendations from the North Hollywood to Pasadena BRT Technical Study and recommends that the corridor be advanced into environmental review. It also recommends the initiation of the North San Fernando Valley BRT Improvements Project.

#### **DISCUSSION**

##### **Background**

In July 2015, BRT staff formally kicked off the technical studies for the Vermont Avenue and the North

---

Hollywood to Pasadena corridors. The scope included a detailed review of the corridor environment, transit market(s) analysis, development of potential BRT concepts and routes/stations, sketch planning-level conceptual design, evaluation of system performance, forecasting of system benefits, and identification of environmental issues.

### Vermont BRT Corridor

The Vermont Corridor, which extends approximately 12.5 miles from Hollywood Boulevard south to 120<sup>th</sup> Street, is the second busiest bus corridor in Los Angeles County, carrying over 45,000 weekday boardings. The bus service performs unevenly due primarily to challenges associated with operating in a congested, mixed traffic environment. The purpose of the study was to investigate opportunities to improve bus service through the implementation of BRT elements that have been proven in other settings to lower travel time, increase service reliability and enhance the customer experience. The study identified four initial BRT concepts, two of which appear to be promising in terms of improved passenger travel times, faster bus speeds, and increased ridership.

Vermont Corridor Outreach - A special Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) was established early in the study consisting of representatives from the City of Los Angeles' Department of Transportation (LADOT), Bureau of Engineering (LABOE), and Planning, and the County of Los Angeles Department of Public Works. The TAC met regularly to discuss project status, provide technical consultation, and receive feedback on concept definition, design issues, and potential resolutions.

Beginning in December 2015, staff initiated stakeholder outreach efforts through a briefing with elected officials and Board staff. Individual briefings were also offered and provided to representatives from the City of Los Angeles with jurisdiction over the Vermont Corridor. In January 2016, a round of stakeholder roundtable meetings were held on the corridor with invitees from local businesses, religious institutions, schools, hospitals, community/neighborhood groups, major cultural centers, neighborhood councils, and Chambers of Commerce. These briefings yielded valuable feedback that helped inform alternatives development and next steps.

In January and February 2017, staff held a final TAC meeting, elected officials and Board staff briefing, and an Open House for key targeted stakeholders to present and discuss the findings for the Vermont BRT study. Overall, there was strong agreement that BRT could greatly improve bus service along Vermont, but that it needed to consider future conversion to rail.

Measure M includes funding after FY 2067 for potential conversion to rail on the Vermont Corridor. In light of that circumstance, and coupled with the community's express interest to examine the potential for rail conversion, staff is proceeding with Phase II of the Vermont BRT Technical Study, which would evaluate how the BRT could be converted to rail in the future. Environmental review of the BRT would commence thereafter, informed by that effort. Phase II is expected to take approximately 12 months to complete; the Measure M expenditure plan lists the Vermont corridor with a groundbreaking date of 2024.

### North Hollywood to Pasadena BRT Corridor

The North Hollywood to Pasadena study area extends approximately 16 miles from the North

---

Hollywood Metro Red/Orange Line Station to the Metro Gold Line in Pasadena. Of the 700,000 daily trips entering the study area, the overwhelming mode share is single occupant auto trips. Transit currently accounts for just 2% of corridor trips, despite the presence of Metro Rail connections at both ends of the corridor. Transit has been unable to capture a larger share of this travel market for several reasons. First and foremost, there is not a large captive transit market. To attract this choice rider, transit must be more competitive with the automobile in terms of door-to-door travel time, good transit access and passenger comfort/convenience. The existing transit service lacks convenient access to key activity centers and does not offer competitive travel times.

In addition, the existing transit service has a largely east-west orientation with limited access to the study area's biggest activity centers and employers. As a result, market penetration for transit has been low and the overall transportation system is imbalanced. The key challenge for the North Hollywood to Pasadena corridor is to design a premium transit service that captures more of the choice rider market by offering competitive travel times, better transit access and enhanced passenger comfort/convenience. Regional connectivity is also a key element, especially given that this is among the region's largest commuter sheds without a premium transit service.

As described in Attachment C, the study started with ten BRT route concepts. Based on extensive feedback received from corridor cities - Burbank, Glendale, Los Angeles and Pasadena - staff narrowed down routing options to two promising concepts, a street running concept and freeway running concept. The street running concept, which could be a side or center running BRT, would provide improved transit access to major activity centers south of SR-134 and Metro Rail connections at both ends. In the West segment, the most promising alignment is along Olive Avenue, although other arterials like Alameda Street and Magnolia Avenue remain under consideration. In the Center segment, there are two potential routing options via Brand Boulevard or Central Avenue. In the East segment, the route would continue via Colorado Boulevard with a couplet option along Green Street/Union Street.

The freeway running concept would travel via the SR-134 with fewer stops and a slightly shorter route. Under the freeway concept, the BRT could operate along the shoulder or the existing HOV lane and have in-freeway BRT stops/shelters. Although it may provide a faster travel time between North Hollywood and Pasadena, it would provide fewer connections to major activity centers along the corridor. A variation of this option includes a freeway alignment that provides access to the Hollywood Burbank Airport via the SR-134/I-5 freeways.

Both the street and freeway running concepts have merit and are viable concepts that have the potential to address the unmet travel needs in the study area. Projected corridor ridership could range from approximately 10,000 to 18,000 daily riders by 2035 dependent on the final alignment selected. Capital costs range from approximately \$274 to \$448 million for the street running concept and \$123 to \$246 million for the freeway running concept. More technical work needs to be done to finalize routing, stop locations, design configuration and operations. Staff recommends advancing both concepts into the environmental phase.

North Hollywood to Pasadena Corridor Outreach - Similar to Vermont, a special TAC was established early in the study consisting of representatives from the Cities of Burbank, Glendale, Pasadena and Los Angeles, as well as other key stakeholders such as Caltrans and the Hollywood Burbank Airport.

Staff also met individually, as needed, with the Cities of Burbank, Glendale, and Pasadena.

Beginning in December 2015, staff initiated stakeholder outreach efforts through a briefing with elected officials and Board staff. Staff also provided updates on the North Hollywood to Pasadena Corridor to the Arroyo-Verdugo Subcommittee, the City of Pasadena's Municipal Services Committee, the Burbank City Council, and Eagle Rock business stakeholders.

In January 2016, a round of stakeholder roundtable meetings were held in the corridor with invitees from local businesses, religious institutions, schools, hospitals, community/neighborhood groups, major cultural centers, neighborhood councils, and Chambers of Commerce. In January and February 2017, staff held a final TAC meeting, elected officials and Board staff briefing, and an Open House for key targeted stakeholders to present and discuss the findings for the North Hollywood to Pasadena BRT study.

Because Measure M includes funding after FY 2067 for potential conversion to rail on the North Hollywood to Pasadena Corridor, the study team notes that one of the alternatives being advanced-- a freeway BRT alternative-- does not preclude future conversion to rail. Considerations for conversion can be incorporated into the environmental analysis scope. Overall, there was overwhelming support for advancing BRT into the next phase of study. Staff recommends moving forward with environmental review on the North Hollywood to Pasadena BRT Corridor. Immediately beginning the environmental review will help ensure that the Measure M schedule (groundbreaking date FY 2020) for this project is met.

#### North San Fernando Valley BRT Improvements

In June 2016, a Board motion was approved (Attachment D) directing staff to begin environmental planning work no later than six months after passage of Measure M. The purpose of this project is to provide a high-capacity east-west transit service in the North San Fernando Valley, especially service to California State University, Northridge (CSUN), ease traffic, meet the growing demand for transit in the San Fernando Valley, and contribute to the success of the countywide transit system by adding connectivity to a large population and significant trip generators, including CSUN and others. The environmental work will be preceded by a technical study exploring routing, stop locations and operations.

#### **DETERMINATION OF SAFETY IMPACT**

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

#### **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

The FY 2016-17 budget includes \$1,071,146 in Cost Center 4240 (Regional Transit Planning), Project 405403 (Countywide BRT Program) to initiate Phase II of the Vermont BRT Technical Study and the environmental phase for the North Hollywood to Pasadena BRT Corridor and the North San Fernando Valley BRT Improvements project. Since work on the three corridors would be multiyear, it will be the responsibility of the cost center manager and Chief Planning Officer to budget funds in future years.

### Impact to Budget

The source of funds for this recommendation is Proposition A, C and TDA Administration funds which is not eligible for bus and rail operating and capital expenditures.

### ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The Board may decide not to approve advancing the North Hollywood to Pasadena BRT Corridor and the North San Fernando Valley BRT Improvements project to the next level of environmental review. This is not recommended as both corridors are included and funded in Measure M. Delaying the environmental analysis would jeopardize the ability to meet the Measure M schedule for project groundbreaking and opening dates.

### NEXT STEPS

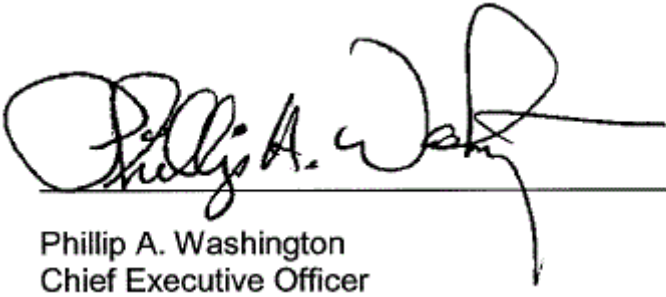
Should the Board choose to approve staff's recommendations, we will proceed immediately to procure consultant services for environmental reviews of the two corridors. Staff will keep the Board apprised of the three studies and return to the Board with final results. Staff will also move forward with staff recruitment requests, subject to necessary approvals in the FY18 budget, to accomplish the necessary development work on these three transit corridors.

Staff will also begin developing BRT branding and design guidelines/criteria to be considered when designing and implementing any type of BRT system. These guidelines/criteria will also include a methodology for evaluating the performance and benefits of a potential BRT corridor. The BRT system performance standards will assess how well a BRT corridor may be performing, identify actions for improving operating performance and efficiency, and highlight best practices and lessons learned. We anticipate this effort to take approximately nine months to complete.

### ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A - July 24, 2014 Board Motion  
Attachment B - October 16, 2014 Board Motion  
Attachment C - North Hollywood to Pasadena BRT PowerPoint  
Attachment D - June 23, 2016 Board Motion

Prepared by: Michael Richmai, Sr. Manager, Transportation Planning, (213) 922-2558  
Lauren Cencic, Sr. Manager, Transportation Planning, (213) 922-7417  
Martha Butler, Sr. Director, Countywide Planning & Development, (213) 922-7651  
Eugene Kim, Deputy Executive Officer, Countywide Planning & Development, (213) 922-3080  
David Mieger, Interim Senior Executive Officer, Countywide Planning & Development, (213) 922-3040  
Reviewed By: Therese McMillan, Chief Planning Officer, (213) 922-3088



Phillip A. Washington  
Chief Executive Officer