

**Board Report**

File #: 2017-0152, **File Type:** Project**Agenda Number:** 23.

**PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE
APRIL 19, 2017****SUBJECT: WEST SANTA ANA BRANCH TRANSIT CORRIDOR****ACTION: INITIATE DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL PROCESS****RECOMMENDATION**

AUTHORIZE the Chief Executive Officer to:

- A. APPROVE Project Definition for Environmental Scoping including four Northern Alignment Options; and
- B. RECEIVE AND FILE the **West Santa Ana Branch (WSAB) Transit Corridor Northern Alignment Options Screening Report**.

ISSUE

In February 2013, the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) approved the WSAB Alternative Analysis (AA) Study for the 34-mile corridor from the Los Angeles Union Station (LAUS) to the City of Santa Ana in Orange County. The Los Angeles County portion of the corridor extends 20 miles from the LAUS to the City of Artesia. The AA Study recommended Light Rail Transit (LRT) alignment as the preferred transit mode. The AA Study also recommended two northern alignment alternatives for further consideration: 1) West Bank 3 along the west bank of the Los Angeles (LA) River, and 2) East Bank along east bank of the LA River.

Based upon the West Bank 3 alternative, four new northern alignment options were identified as part of the Technical Refinement Study (TRS) that was completed and received by the Metro Board in September 2015. Prior to initiation of the Environmental Scoping, a screening evaluation was conducted to further refine the recommendations from the TRS and recommended four highest performing northern alignment options be carried into Environmental Scoping. Subsequently, the Northern Alignment Options Screening Report has been finalized. Attachment A contains the Executive Summary. The full report can be accessed at www.metro.net/wsab <<http://www.metro.net/wsab>>.

In addition to the four northern alignment options, the TRS also focused on the following key challenges identified by the SCAG AA Study: 1) Southern Terminus, 2) New Green Line Station; 3) Huntington Park Alignment & Stations; and 4) Access into LAUS. Since the TRS was only based

upon a 5% level of design, the findings from the TRS will form the basis of the Project Definition to be further analyzed and carried forward into Environmental Scoping. Based on public comments received during Scoping, additional options may also be included for further evaluation in the environmental study. Attachment B contains the WSAB Transit Corridor Project Definition map proposed for use in upcoming Scoping meetings.

DISCUSSION

Background

The WSAB Transit Corridor Study Area traverses densely populated, low-income and heavily transit dependent communities. The Study Area is approximately 98 square miles and covers 20 individual cities as well as portions of unincorporated Los Angeles County.

In September 2016, the Board awarded professional services contracts to complete the environmental clearance study for the WSAB Transit Corridor. The base contract is to complete the Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) pursuant to California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requirements. With the passage of Measure M, Metro is working to secure FTA approval to complete the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) pursuant to National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements concurrently with the EIR.

Project Definition

The WSAB Transit Corridor stretches 20 miles from LAUS to the City of Artesia. A single alignment has been identified south of the City of Huntington Park which follows the San Pedro Subdivision Branch (owned by Port of Los Angeles and Long Beach), to the eight-mile Metro owned abandoned Pacific Electric Right-of-Way (ROW) to the southern terminus in the City of Artesia. The Project Definition for Environmental Scoping includes the recommendations from the SCAG AA Study along with the refinement and findings described below from the TRS and further evaluation from the finalized Northern Alignment Options Screening Report, north of the City of Huntington Park.

New Southern Terminus Station in the City of Artesia

The SCAG AA Study originally included a station at Bloomfield Avenue in the City of Cerritos as the last station within Los Angeles County. At the City of Cerritos' request, SCAG removed this station from further consideration. The next station to the north was Pioneer Station in the City of Artesia which is accessed by way of traversing through the City of Cerritos. In the TRS, Pioneer Station was analyzed and deemed feasible as the new southern terminus.

In the event that the line should be extended to Orange County in the future, the environmental analysis will include evaluation of a potential station at Bloomfield for which the support of the City of Cerritos would be sought. Metro will continue to meet with staff from both the cities of Artesia and Cerritos regarding the terminus station in Artesia and future extension options.

New Metro Green Line Station

Analysis was conducted to determine the feasibility and challenges associated with a new Metro Green Line Station within the median of the I-105 Freeway east of the I-105/I-710 Interchange. This

station would provide a direct transfer to the WSAB project aerial station proposed immediately above it. Based on the conceptual plans, a new Metro Green Line station can feasibly be built within the existing I-105 Freeway and ROW. This station concept will be further advanced, including coordination with the ExpressLanes project and more detailed planning and design evaluations with Caltrans.

City of Huntington Park Station Locations

At the conclusion of the SCAG AA Study, the City of Huntington Park proposed alternate station locations to the ones proposed in the SCAG AA. The proposed alternate locations include a station on Randolph St. east of Pacific Blvd. and a station south of Florence Ave. in the center of Salt Lake Ave. Both alternate station locations were deemed feasible and can be carried forward to replace the previous locations identified in the SCAG AA study.

Northern Terminus at Los Angeles Union Station

Analysis was conducted to determine placement of a new light rail platform to serve as the northern terminus within LAUS. In coordination with other in-process projects such as the Union Station Master Plan, Link Union Station (Link US) and California High Speed Rail, the environmental analysis will evaluate station options above or adjacent to the existing Metro Gold Line station.

Northern Alignment Analysis

As part of the TRS, four new northern alignment options were developed and recommended for further analysis:

- 1) Pacific/Alameda
- 2) Pacific/Vignes
- 3) Alameda
- 4) Alameda/Vignes

The two Pacific Boulevard alignment options (1 & 2) use Pacific Boulevard in the Cities of Vernon and Huntington Park for the light rail tracks within the street, while the Alameda Street alignment options (3 & 4) utilizes the existing Metro Blue Line ROW for separate light rail tracks. All four alignment options have a northern terminus at LAUS.

Northern Alignment Options Screening Report

A screening evaluation process was conducted to further refine the recommendations in the TRS. Specifically, the six northern alignment options were evaluated to determine how well these met the goals and objectives of the project. Specifically, the five project goals included:

- Goal 1: Provide Mobility Improvements
- Goal 2: Support Local and Regional Land Use Plans and Policies
- Goal 3: Minimize Environmental Impacts
- Goal 4: Ensure Cost Effectiveness and Financial Feasibility
- Goal 5: Ensure Equity

For each goal, a list of evaluation criteria was established. Each of the six northern alignment options was assessed and a score was given based on its potential performance in meeting the

criteria. An overall rating of “high”, “medium”, or “low” was assigned based on each alignment option’s ability to achieve the objectives and criteria of the goals.

Based on the results of the screening analysis, the four northern alignment options: 1) Pacific/Alameda, 2) Pacific/Vignes, 3) Alameda, and 4) Alameda/Vignes were the highest performing and recommended to be carried forward into environmental analysis. All four provide a direct connection into Union Station, the greatest overall mobility improvement benefits, compatibility with existing land uses, environmental benefits for disadvantaged communities, cost-effectiveness with the fewest engineering challenges and support community needs. The East Bank and West Bank 3 northern alignment options previously recommended by SCAG AA Study do not meet the purpose and need of the project as effectively as the other four northern alignment options and are not recommended for advancement.

Metro Board Blue Line Motion

On February 23, 2017, the Metro Board approved a Motion (Item #37) which called for the study of several Metro Blue Line and Metro Expo Line improvements. An Amendment to the Motion (Garcetti) specifically called for the WSAB (Eco-Rapid Transit Line) to incorporate a potential Metro Blue Line Express train concept that could ultimately run directly to Union Station. This concept could potentially be feasible if one of the WSAB Northern Alignment options (Alameda Alignment or Alameda/Vignes Alignment) is selected as the preferred alternative. The WSAB project will evaluate the feasibility of interlining Metro Blue Line trains with WSAB trains as a part of the environmental study going forward.

Outreach

Since the award of the environmental clearance contracts, the WSAB Project Team has conducted numerous briefings and presentations to Eco-Rapid Transit JPA, corridor cities, area elected officials and key stakeholders throughout the study area to provide project background information and updates, as well as receive valuable input for use in the environmental study process. The Project Team also initiated a Technical Advisory Committee in March, and conducted a Legislative Update meeting with state and federal elected officials’ staff along the corridor in April.

Scoping Process

To initiate the Draft EIR process, Metro will be conducting five Scoping meetings - one agency Scoping meeting and four community meetings within the project area. The Scoping meetings are expected to be held between May - June 2017.

Metro will also post the Notice of Preparation (NOP) with the State Clearinghouse. Metro Community Relations Manager is also working with the outreach contractor on updating the project webpage, fact sheet and other materials in preparation for the Scoping meetings. Pending approval from FTA of a concurrent EIR/EIS process, Metro may also initiate the Notice of Intent (NOI) with the Federal Register.

DETERMINATION OF SAFETY IMPACT

These actions will not have any impact on the safety of our customers and/or employees.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The FY 2016-17 budget includes \$1,000,000 in Cost Center 4370, Project 460201 (WSAB Transit Corridor). Since these are multi-year contracts, the Cost Center Manager and Chief Planning Officer will be responsible for budgeting in future years.

Impact to Budget

The funding for this project is from Measure R 35%. As these funds are earmarked for the WSAB Transit Corridor project, they are not eligible for Metro bus and rail capital and operating expenditures.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The Board could consider deferring initiation of the Scoping period. This alternative is not recommended as this would impact the project schedule and would not be consistent with prior Board direction to advance completion of the project.

NEXT STEPS

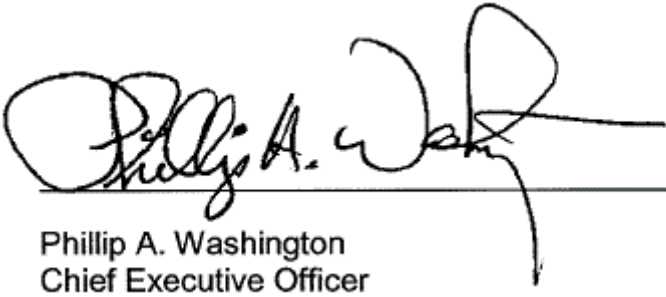
Upon Board approval, staff will initiate the Scoping period in late spring which will include Agency and Public Scoping Meetings along the corridor to present project information and gather inputs. At the completion of the Scoping Period, we will return to the Board later this year with the Scoping Summary Report.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A - Northern Alignment Options Screening Report Executive Summary
Attachment B - West Santa Ana Branch Transit Corridor Project Definition Map

Prepared by: Teresa Wong, Senior Manager, (213) 922-2854
Fanny Pan, Senior Director, (213) 922-3070
David Mieger, Interim Senior Executive Officer, (213) 922-3040

Reviewed by: Therese W. McMillan, Chief Planning Officer, (213) 922-7077



Phillip A. Washington
Chief Executive Officer