



## Board Report

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**Agenda Number:** 45.

### PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE SEPTEMBER 20, 2017

**SUBJECT: NORTHRIDGE METROLINK STATION FEASIBILITY STUDY FINAL REPORT**

**ACTION: RECEIVE AND FILE**

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

RECEIVE AND FILE final report on the Northridge Metrolink Station Feasibility Study

#### **ISSUE**

At the March 23, 2016 Board meeting, the Metro Board of Directors directed the CEO to study the feasibility of relocating the Northridge Metrolink Station to Reseda Boulevard (Attachment A - March 2016 Board Motion). The study should include:

- Identify and make recommendations on maximizing bus connectivity;
- Coordinate with California State University Northridge (CSUN) officials to improve connectivity to the university;
- Identify Transit Oriented Development (TOD) and other land-use opportunities to maximize the use of a station at Reseda Boulevard;
- Identify potential funding sources (including Measure R 3%) to support the relocation of the station;
- Create a working group which includes, but is not limited to, CSUN officials, local transit service providers, Metrolink, local businesses, community groups, San Fernando Valley Service Council for coordination purposes; and
- Report back on all the above during the May 2016 Board cycle.

The feasibility study was completed in September 2017 and the results are herein presented (Attachment B - Feasibility Study Executive Summary).

#### **DISCUSSION**

Staff engaged a consultant, Mott McDonald, to meet with the stakeholders and prepare a feasibility study that evaluated two alternatives:

- Alternative 1: Feasibility of relocating the existing Northridge Metrolink Station to Reseda Boulevard.
- Alternative 2: Creating a multi-modal transit hub at the existing Northridge Metrolink Station

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The City of Los Angeles owns, operates, and maintains the existing Northridge Metrolink station. Staff completed the feasibility study and the results are presented below.

Alternative 1: Feasibility of relocating station to Reseda Boulevard

The existing Northridge Metrolink station located on the Ventura County line at Wilbur Avenue is two-thirds of a mile from Reseda Boulevard, a major commercial corridor, and nearly two miles from CSUN, a major destination in the Northridge area. Relocating the Metrolink station to Reseda Boulevard could increase visibility of the station, and provide a closer connection to CSUN, local businesses, protected bicycle lanes, and bus connections.

Five potential station sites adjacent to Reseda Boulevard were identified and analyzed based on a preliminary evaluation of the location's transit accessibility, stakeholder preference, physical impacts, operational considerations, and potential costs. Based on the preliminary analysis, the property south of the railroad right-of-way and west of Reseda Boulevard was identified as the best potential site for a relocated station for the Study. The potential site is currently owned and occupied by the Northridge Lumber Company, a small family-owned business. The site can accommodate a station platform, a grade-separated pedestrian crossing, passenger and shuttle drop-off areas, real-time bus arrival signage technology, a bike hub, parking, and potential transit-oriented development.

Refer to Attachment C for Alternative 1 rendering concepts.

Key findings related to relocating the station in Alternative 1 are:

1. Provides a multi-modal train station in proximity to CSUN, local businesses, and transit facilities along Reseda Boulevard increasing visibility and accessibility of the station.
2. Allows for potential TOD opportunities such as mixed-use development with ground floor store fronts and upper floor residential units. However, the potential site is currently zoned for industrial use, and would require rezoning by the City of Los Angeles to accommodate TOD.
3. Station relocation would require property acquisition and impacts to a local family-owned business to accommodate the station platform and parking area. The Lumber Company has indicated they are open to discussing property acquisition given the right circumstances, timing and price.
4. Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) approval would be required to relocate the station as they own the northern 60 feet of railroad right-of-way on which the station would be located. UPRR does not currently support the relocation of the station for several reasons, including potential impacts to its customer, the Northridge Lumber Company.
5. The Northridge Metrolink station is owned by the City of Los Angeles. Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT) operates and maintains the existing station, and supports the station relocation if stakeholders agree that relocating the station would be beneficial to Metrolink commuters, constituents of Council District 12, and CSUN. Additionally, if the station is relocated, LADOT may consider re-purposing the existing station location in support of Transit Bureau services.
6. The station relocation to Reseda Boulevard could have traffic and circulation impacts

due to vehicle, bike and pedestrian ingress and egress from a station adjacent to a major commercial corridor.

7. The total preliminary rough order of magnitude estimated cost is approximately \$145 million not including TOD. Please note that no formal real estate appraisal has been performed in the feasibility study.

### Alternative 2: Create a multi-modal transit hub at the existing Northridge Station

Alternative 2 identified opportunities and potential improvements to transform the existing station into a multi-modal hub.

The existing Northridge Metrolink Station is bound by the Aliso Canyon Wash to the west, a flood basin and various industrial and commercial businesses to the north, a public storage facility to the northeast, a Los Angeles Department of Public Works transmission substation to the east, and a transmission line easement to the south between the station and Parthenia Street. The Greig Smith LAPD Devonshire Youth Center is owned by the City of Los Angeles and is currently located at the south end of the station site. Currently, there is limited bicycle infrastructure leading to and within the station area. Access to the Northridge Metrolink Station is only feasible via a circuitous route along Reseda Boulevard and Parthenia Street as there is no northern access to the station. However, the stretch of Reseda Boulevard leading to CSUN is one of Mayor Eric Garcetti's "Great Streets," and the City has made investments in a range of projects including protected bicycle lanes and upgraded bus shelters. Enhanced access between the Northridge station and Reseda Boulevard, especially via the north of the station, was explored for opportunities to create a more direct connection between the station and CSUN for cyclists and pedestrians. Refer to Attachment D1, Existing Northridge Station Location and Layout.

The City of Los Angeles is developing the Aliso Creek-Limekiln Creek Restoration project that will transform the flood basin to improve water quality while providing educational opportunities and wildlife habitats. The Restoration project along with a potential TOD opportunity at the station could activate the area by increasing destinations within walking distance of the existing station. The potential TOD could incorporate the youth center on the ground floor, residential uses on upper floors, and share parking with the station.

The current station is served by CSUN shuttles and LADOT DASH buses. The station is unable to accommodate larger buses due to the constrained bus turnaround facility; therefore, the bus turnaround facility could be widened to accommodate larger buses and real-time bus arrival signage technology could be provided. Additionally, bicycle facilities including bike share at the station, and bicycle lanes along Parthenia from Reseda Boulevard to the station area could be provided. Signage could be provided to increase station visibility and wayfinding.

Refer to Attachment D2 for Alternative 2 rendering concepts.

### Key findings related to creating a multi-modal hub at the existing station in Alternative 2 include:

1. Provides opportunities for redeveloping the station and improving transit and active transportation connectivity by adding a northern station access, bicycle facilities,

- improved wayfinding signage, larger bus turnaround facility and real-time bus arrival signage technology
2. Requires UPRR and City of Los Angeles approval for the northern station connection because UPRR owns the northern 60 feet of right-of-way; and the City owns the property north of the station
  3. Allows for TOD opportunities subject to the City of Los Angeles agreement because the station parking area is owned by the City. The station area is zoned for public facilities use therefore the City may undergo an entitlement process to permit residential use on transit property.
  4. LADOT supports upgrades to the station but noted that the existing station experiences graffiti tagging, vandalism, homeless encampments, and RVs in the parking lot on a regular basis.
  5. The total preliminary rough order of magnitude estimated cost is approximately \$26 million not including TOD.

### Community Engagement Strategy

The community outreach process for the Northridge Metrolink Station Relocation Feasibility Study was successful in engaging stakeholders and the Northridge community in a robust public information and participation process. In collaboration with Southern California Regional Rail Authority (SCRRA), Metro hosted the Northridge Metrolink Station Relocation Feasibility Study Community Meeting on May 4, 2017 to introduce the study and present results of the analysis of the two study alternatives. Extensive public notifications for the community meeting included direct mailings and door drops of a flyer with both English and Spanish text to more than 7000 local Northridge residents and businesses in the area surrounding the existing Metrolink Northridge Station and the surrounding area of Reseda Boulevard including the Sherwood Forest community. Partnerships with key stakeholders were critical to the notification efforts. SCRRA distributed 2300 flyers on its Ventura County line trains. CSUN shared the meeting notice with its 12,000 member Associated Students database and CSUN Metrolink riders in addition to broadcasting the community meeting via its social media channels as well. Local Neighborhood Councils posted the meeting on their websites and on Nextdoor. City of Los Angeles Councilmember Mitch Englander included the community meeting information in his weekly e-newsletter for two weeks preceding the Community Meeting.

The May 4 Community Meeting was well-attended by approximately 100 Northridge stakeholders who had the opportunity to meet and hear directly from Metro and SCRRA staff about the Feasibility Study and other transportation efforts in their community. Attendees had a chance to view informational boards related to the Feasibility Study, ask questions of the Study's technical team and Metro Regional Rail staff, and visit Metro and Metrolink tables with more general information. Following the meeting, the presentation was posted to the Metro Regional Rail website where the community could continue to review the materials for anyone who may have missed the meeting. Stakeholders were able to submit comments on the Study from May 5th through May 26th via an online form on the Regional Rail page or directly via email to Metro staff. A thank-you email with a link to the presentation was sent to all Community Meeting attendees who provided their contact information, and staff responded directly to emails from community members.

Metro received a total of 110 comments collected through comment cards at the Community Meeting,

the online comment form, and emails to Metro staff. The majority of comments reflected an understanding of the two alternatives presented in the Feasibility Study, demonstrating that the community was well-informed about these two options. Sixty-two percent (62%) of the comments expressed a preference for relocating the station, noting the opportunities to increase use of public transportation, expand active transportation, and allow for transit-oriented development. Thirty-eight percent (38%) of the comments opposed the relocation of the station, expressing concerns about the costs and expense of relocation and traffic impacts at Reseda Boulevard as well as impacts to the Northridge Lumber Company.

#### Recommendation

Since no funding is available for either alternative at this time, staff recommends that neither alternative moves forward.

#### Potential Funding Sources

Potential funding sources for either alternative could be through transit-oriented development opportunities, Local Return funds for Measures R and M, and federal and state grant programs. The active transportation component of either alternative could also be eligible under the active transportation program grant.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment A - March 2016 Board Motion

Attachment B - Feasibility Study Executive Summary

Attachment C - Alternative 1: Relocated Station Conceptual Renderings

Attachment D1 - Existing Northridge Station Location and Layout

Attachment D2 - Alternative 2: Existing Station Enhancements Conceptual Renderings

Prepared by:

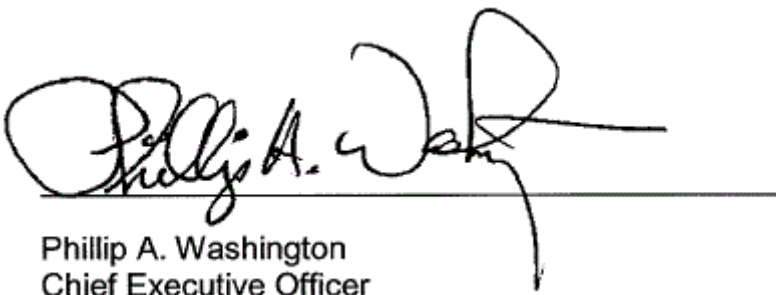
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