



Board Report

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Agenda Number: 21.

PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE

NOVEMBER 14, 2018

CONSTRUCTION COMMITTEE

NOVEMBER 15, 2018

**SUBJECT: CENTINELA/FLORENCE CRENSHAW/LAX LINE GRADE SEPARATION STUDY**

**ACTION: APPROVE RECOMMENDATIONS**

**RECOMMENDATION**

CONSIDER:

- A. RECEIVING AND FILING the Centinela/Florence Grade Separation Traffic Study; and
- B. AUTHORIZING the Chief Executive Officer to:
  - 1. Initiate engineering design study to be funded in cooperation with the City of Inglewood; and
  - 2. Work with the City of Inglewood to develop its Funding and Delivery Strategy Plan.

**ISSUE**

In January 2017, the Board adopted Motion 48 (Attachment A) providing direction to conduct a study and environmental clearance for a grade separation at the Centinela/Florence crossing on the Crenshaw/LAX Light Rail Transit Line (LRT) line in the City of Inglewood. In February 2017 (Legistar File #2017-0077), staff reported that a traffic study would be conducted as the first step prior to commencing environmental clearance. This report presents the results from the Centinela/Florence Grade Separation Traffic Study. Board authorization to proceed into the next project phase is needed to move the potential project to the next steps.

**BACKGROUND**

The Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (EIS/EIR) for the Crenshaw/LAX line was completed in 2011. Metro’s Grade Crossing Policy was used to determine which crossings on the Crenshaw line could operate as at-grade crossings, and which ones would need to be grade separated. Such policy-based analysis is conducted for all Metro’s planned light rail lines. The results of this analysis indicated that the intersection of Centinela/Florence Avenues could operate as an at-grade crossing, which is how the crossing is currently being constructed. In 2013, the California

Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) granted approval for the at-grade crossing but added certain design features, including additional traffic lanes at the intersection for additional queuing capacity and traffic signal improvements to provide better traffic capacity and safety. The final as-built at-grade crossing will include all the CPUC's additional requirements.

In early 2015, the City of Inglewood approved the construction of a 72,000 seat NFL Stadium to be located approximately 1 ½ miles south of the Centinela/Florence Avenues crossing. The NFL Stadium is the anticipated event venue for regional events in the City of Inglewood, including the 2022 Super Bowl, 2023 College Football National Championship, 2026 FIFA World Cup, and the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Additional development has also been approved that will significantly increase trips, including a performance arts venue with 6,000 seats, 2,500 units of residential, 890,000 square feet of retail, 780,000 square feet of office, a 300-room hotel, 25 acres of new recreational and park amenities. More recently, in February 2018, the City of Inglewood initiated the environmental clearance process for the proposed Inglewood Basketball and Entertainment Center (IBEC), which includes an 18,000-seat arena for the Los Angeles Clippers near the NFL Stadium. Attachment C maps these projects and describes expected events, as provided by the City of Inglewood.

These developments were approved or proposed after the certification of the 2011 EIS/EIR for the Crenshaw/LAX LRT and are anticipated to generate additional traffic, which was not considered in the initial grade crossing policy analysis for Centinela/Florence Avenues. To address some of the anticipated traffic growth, traffic mitigation measures have been funded by the developers that include a citywide installation of a modern traffic signal priority system and the City of Inglewood will prepare a special event traffic and access management plan for these venues. The City of Inglewood, however, remains concerned about the potential increases in regional trip-making and the impacts to traffic at the planned at-grade Florence/Centinela Avenues crossing. In response to these concerns, Metro Board actions in January and February 2017 (Attachments A and B) provided direction to staff to conduct a grade separation traffic analysis study for the Centinela/Florence Avenues crossing. In the intervening period, with progression of the land use decisions in the area as described above, the City of Inglewood staff requested sufficient time to coordinate City data and other information necessary to complete the Metro grade separation analysis. This input was received in July 2018. More about Inglewood's mobility planning efforts is available via <http://envisioninglewood.org/>.

## **DISCUSSION**

The grade separation traffic study analyzed both the typical weekday commute peak period traffic at Centinela/Florence Avenue, as well as the anticipated surge traffic for special events. This study relied on cumulative growth and special event traffic forecasts provided by the City of Inglewood.

No safety issues were identified due to traffic queuing, when no large special events were occurring. The peak hour traffic analysis indicated that without special large event traffic surge conditions, at-grade operation of the Crenshaw/LAX line is anticipated to be feasible at the Centinela/Florence Avenues intersection in opening year 2019 and future 2040 conditions.

The special event surge analysis indicated that the post-NFL game traffic (9pm-10pm) would meet the volume threshold for “Grade Separation Normally Required Category”, if the Metro Grade Crossing Policy were applied, although that policy only applies to future Metro rail projects undergoing planning and environmental review. The analysis found that post-event traffic may be twice as high as the normal background traffic at this location. Substantial post-event traffic impacts were generated during the approximately 22 large NFL games per year, which may occasionally be simultaneous with other events in Inglewood.

Summary results of the peak hour traffic analysis for the typical traffic conditions are summarized below. With grade separation, the intersection level of service conditions would be improved.

| Year                | LRT Operations      | Peak Hour Level of Service | Traffic Queuing (no special events) |
|---------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Existing (2017)     | No LRT              | C or better                | No significant queuing              |
| Opening Year (2019) | At Grade LRT        | F                          | 1 block of queuing                  |
| Year 2040           | At Grade LRT        | F                          | 1-2 blocks of queuing               |
| Year 2040           | Grade Separated LRT | E or better                | No significant queuing              |

Further engineering study, along with a funding and delivery strategy plan, is necessary to determine project design, cost for grade separating and how to fund it. In addition, staff will evaluate the value of potential safety improvements and delay reductions relative to the project costs of design and construction.

Coordination and Future Agreements with the City of Inglewood

Ongoing coordination with the City of Inglewood is proposed to include entering into a Funding Agreement to determine cost sharing responsibilities for the engineering and design work to advance the project. Staff proposes to also work with the City of Inglewood to develop a Funding and Delivery Strategy Plan for constructing this grade separation. The Funding and Delivery Strategy Plan is needed, as funding for a grade separation at Centinela/Florence intersection is not included in the Board adopted Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) nor in the Measure M Expenditure Plan, and therefore, is not currently funded. The agreement, among other items, will define cost allocations, sources of revenue, establish schedule and review commitments and specify the procedures which Metro and the City will follow in advancing the Project.

Policy Considerations

The traffic analysis for the Centinela/Florence Avenues grade crossing relied on Metro’s Grade Crossing Policy (Policy) as a baseline for understanding the potential need and feasibility of a grade separation arising from future growth and special event surge traffic. However, the Policy is intended for peak-hour analysis on new Metro projects or extensions. Metro does not currently have a policy for evaluating the effects of growth and land use changes at existing grade crossings. Similarly, the Policy does not address off-peak, special events. Therefore, Metro will need to consider how

decisions regarding this project are viewed relative to other related situations, where existing and planned growth may change traffic impacts at existing grade crossings. Considerations include the extent to which the circumstances of the Centinela/Florence Avenues grade crossing are unique to distinguish it from other similar grade crossings studied by Metro.

#### Environmental Analysis and Engineering Design Work

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) provides for Statutory Exemptions for certain activities and specified actions. According to CEQA Guidelines Section 15282 (g) "Any railroad grade separation project which eliminates an existing grade crossing, or which reconstructs an existing grade separation as set forth in Section 21080.13 of the Public Resources Code" is to be considered statutorily exempt from the analysis required under CEQA. Although it is anticipated that the proposed grade separation at Centinela Avenue would meet the criteria for Statutorily Exempt projects, Metro may still need to conduct additional assessment on air quality, noise, visual, and vibration issues related to the grade separation to reduce or eliminate potential new impacts during construction period.

#### Consistency with Metro's Equity Platform Framework

Should the Board advance the potential project for a grade separation at Centinela/Florence Avenues intersection, it will be approached and designed for consistency with Metro's Equity Platform Framework. In 2015, the City of Inglewood identified that 56.5 percent of its residents in Downtown Inglewood are African American and 35.7 percent are Hispanic (2015 City of Inglewood, Inglewood TOD Existing Conditions Report), while 20.7 percent of the residents in the City of Inglewood are classified as living in poverty (2017, American Community Survey). Additionally, Metro staff will work with the City of Inglewood to look to the Equity Platform Framework as the project outreach engages residents, stakeholders, elected representatives, resource agencies and community-based organizations in the project area.

### **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

The cost of the environmental analysis and engineering design study is not budgeted in FY2019 and may be covered in part through a potential funding agreement with the City of Inglewood. With Board approval, staff will pursue this funding agreement and, if necessary, Countywide Planning & Development will identify funding for this study. Since this is a multi-year project, it will be the responsibility of the cost center manager and Chief Planning Officer to budget funds in future years.

Funding for construction of the Project is not currently allocated in Metro's LRTP, which is Metro's mechanism for identifying and allocating revenues to Board-approved projects. As and should Metro pursue construction of this project, it will require a determination of payment responsibility and the identification of the availability of potential funding sources. As the project scope, cost and schedule are further developed and payment responsibility is determined, Metro staff will work closely with the City of Inglewood to develop a funding strategy plan for the project that considers the availability and eligibility of the potential funding sources, and upon Board direction, attempt to secure the funds.

#### Impact to Budget

The action may have an impact to the budget, pending a potential funding agreement with the City of Inglewood for the cost of the design study.

## **IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS**

A grade separation of Crenshaw/LAX LRT crossing at Centinela/Florence intersection could support the goals outlined in the Metro Vision 2028 Strategic Plan by addressing the mobility challenges in the project area including increasing travel demand, travel times, and roadway congestion. Specifically, the Project meets Vision 2028 Goal #4, *Transform LA County through regional collaboration and national leadership*, as this project will be advanced through a close partnership with the City of Inglewood to solve a regional challenge, as the special events at the NFL Stadium and other event venues in and around the Entertainment District at Hollywood Park are expected to attract attendees from throughout the region.

## **ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED**

The Board could decide not to authorize the procurement of design study for the Centinela/Florence Avenues grade-separation, initiation of the environmental process and development of the relevant funding agreements with the City of Inglewood. The Board could also direct staff to wait for the completion of the City of Inglewood's event traffic management plan and Metro's First/Last Mile study for the Downtown Inglewood Station before proceeding. The Board may also decide to only Receive and File this report and take no action. These alternatives would delay or not advance this potential project.

## **NEXT STEPS**

Upon Board authorization, staff will initiate engineering design study to be funded in cooperation with the City of Inglewood. Staff will also proceed in supporting and developing a Funding and Delivery Strategy Plan for construction costs by the City of Inglewood. Staff will return to the Board for approval of a finding that the project is Statutorily Exempt pursuant to CEQA.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

- Attachment A - January 26, 2017 Board Motion
- Attachment B - February 23, 2017 Board Action
- Attachment C - Map of Inglewood Projects
- Attachment D - Centinela Avenue Grade Separation Traffic Study
- Attachment E - Presentation

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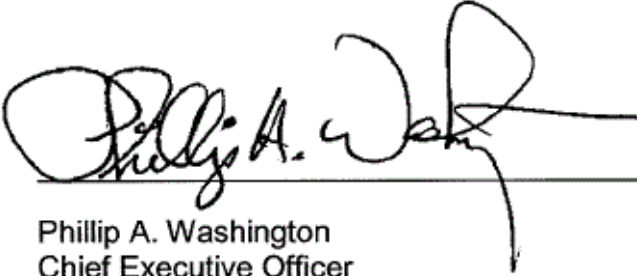
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