



Board Report

File #: 2019-0148, File Type: Project

Agenda Number:

PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE APRIL 17, 2019

SUBJECT: NORTH HOLLYWOOD TO PASADENA BUS RAPID TRANSIT (BRT) CORRIDOR

ACTION: APPROVE RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION

APPROVE:

- A. RECEIVING AND FILING the North Hollywood to Pasadena BRT Corridor Alternatives Analysis (AA) Study Report; and
- B. AUTHORIZING the CEO to initiate the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR).

ISSUE

The North Hollywood to Pasadena Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Corridor is a Measure M project with a projected opening date of Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 to FY 2024. Currently, \$267 million in Measure M funds are allocated for this project. This project is also included in the Twenty-Eight by '28 Initiative, adopted by the Board in January 2018. In order to meet the Measure M schedule, a Proposed Project for the corridor needs to be identified and environmentally cleared through an Alternatives Analysis (AA) and environmental review study, respectively. This report includes the findings from the initial AA phase and a recommendation to advance the Refined Street-Running Alternative with Route Options into environmental review.

BACKGROUND

The North Hollywood to Pasadena BRT Corridor study area (Attachment A) extends approximately 18 miles from the North Hollywood Metro Red/Orange Line Station to Pasadena City College and serves as a key regional connection between the San Fernando and San Gabriel Valleys. It traverses the communities of North Hollywood and Eagle Rock, in the City of Los Angeles, as well as the Cities of Burbank, Glendale, and Pasadena. It has a dense residential population with many cultural, entertainment, shopping, and employment areas distributed throughout.

Of the 700,000 daily trips entering the study area, the majority of trips are destined to locations within the corridor. Only a third of the trips are travelling through the corridor from one end to the other. In addition, 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. The key challenge for the North Hollywood to Pasadena corridor is to design a premium transit service that captures more of the travel market within the corridor 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.

In February 2017, the North Hollywood to Pasadena BRT Corridor Technical Study was completed, which explored the feasibility of implementing BRT, including dedicated bus lanes and other key BRT features. The study identified two promising BRT concepts, a street-running BRT (Attachment B) and a freeway-running BRT (Attachment C), with multiple route options throughout the corridor. At the March 23, 2017 Board Meeting, staff presented the findings and recommendations from the North Hollywood to Pasadena BRT Corridor Technical Study and the Board approved advancing the two BRT concepts into environmental review.

In May 2018, the Board authorized the CEO to award and execute Contract No. AE49369000 to Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc., to complete the Planning and Environmental Study (Legistar File No. 2018-0129) for the North Hollywood to Pasadena BRT Corridor. As a first phase of this study, an AA was included to evaluate the initial two BRT concepts further and identify a refined set of alternatives to advance into environmental review.

DISCUSSION

In July 2018, staff initiated work on the North Hollywood to Pasadena BRT Corridor Planning and Environmental Study. The Study began with an initial screening of the two earlier BRT concepts developed as part of the North Hollywood to Pasadena BRT Technical Study. Combined with feedback received from the various communities, several of the initial route options were eliminated from further consideration. A storyboard map (Attachment D) was then developed to show the refined route options and to illustrate how the project would serve the various communities along the corridor. Further analysis resulted in a refined list of three (3) distinct alternatives recommended to carry forward into the AA (Attachment E - Executive Summary). These alternatives include:

- 1) Street-Running
- 2) Freeway-Running
- 3) Hybrid Street/Freeway-Running

Each of the three alternatives is approximately 18 miles in length and would extend from the Metro Red/Orange Line Station in North Hollywood to Pasadena City College in Pasadena.

Street-Running Alternative

The Street-Running Alternative includes the greatest number of stations, maximizing ridership potential, service to disadvantaged communities, connectivity to local and regional transit service, and access to land uses along the corridor. Furthermore, it's the only alternative among the three that would provide connections to both the Burbank Media District and downtown Burbank, as well as serve most of Glendale's key activity centers. Projected ridership is up to 30,000 riders per day.

Freeway-Running Alternative

The Freeway-Running Alternative would have the fastest end-to-end travel time following primarily SR-134, with street-running segments in Pasadena, the Burbank Media District, and North Hollywood. It includes the fewest stations of the three alternatives and would be expected to attract the fewest riders due to bypassing downtown Burbank, the community of Eagle Rock, and most key destinations in Glendale. In addition, the Freeway-Running Alternative includes multiple stations located adjacent to the freeway, which are generally considered by transit users to be relatively undesirable locations for stations. Projected ridership is up to 23,000 riders per day.

Hybrid Street/Freeway-Running Alternative

The Hybrid Street/Freeway-Running Alternative was evaluated for the purpose of testing a blend of on-street and freeway operations. The end-to-end travel time would be faster than the Street-Running Alternative but with fewer stations and a freeway portion that bypasses the majority of destinations in Glendale and downtown Burbank. Projected ridership is up to 26,000 riders per day.

Evaluation of Alternatives

Once the alternatives were identified, a set of evaluation criteria was then applied to each in order to determine the highest performing alternative(s) for advancement into environmental review pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The evaluation criteria used included projected ridership, travel time and reliability, cost effectiveness, environmental benefits, land use connectivity, equity, economic development effects, and public support.

Based on the results of the analysis, it was determined that the Street-Running Alternative best met the project purpose and need. However, select high-performing segments of the other two alternatives were also recommended to be carried forward resulting in a Refined Street-Running Alternative with Route Options (Attachment F).

Recommendation

Given the importance of the North Hollywood to Pasadena BRT Corridor, including the need to improve the overall quality of transit service in the corridor, staff recommends advancing the Refined Street-Running Alternative with Route Options into CEQA environmental review, along with a No Project Alternative.

The Refined Street-Running Alternative with Route Options is the most promising alternative in terms of ridership potential, improved service reliability, opportunities for Transit Oriented Communities, and regional connectivity. Moving forward with this alternative allows us to easily transition into the environmental phase in order to meet the Measure M opening date and the Twenty-Eight by '28 Initiative.

Stakeholder Outreach

Beginning in August 2018, staff launched an extensive public outreach effort. This effort included five community meetings, as well as twenty-five individual project briefings to all the affected cities' elected officials and other community, business and neighborhood groups. In order to broaden the outreach efforts to reach historically underserved communities, staff also attended several neighborhood events such as street fairs, farmers markets, and music festivals and shared project information at the North Hollywood Transit Station. The public could also access project updates

and/or provide comments through the project website or the special e-mail and telephone number established for the project. Staff has also briefed the Burbank and Glendale City Councils, as well as the Pasadena Municipal Services Committee, which includes the City's Mayor and several of its Council Members.

The purpose of this initial outreach effort was to update the public on the project and to solicit feedback on the original BRT concepts developed during the earlier North Hollywood to Pasadena BRT Technical Study. This was necessary in order to narrow the number of potential alternatives to be further evaluated and analyzed as part of the AA. Staff received a total of 630 comments. In general, there was broad community support for BRT on the corridor. There was also a strong public preference for a street-running alternative over an alternative that would run primarily on the SR-134 freeway.

Public and stakeholder engagement will continue throughout the environmental review process to solicit valuable feedback that will further inform and define the project. A series of meetings, including public scoping and public hearings as well as individual briefings with key stakeholders and elected officials, are planned for the environmental review phase. The public scoping meetings are planned for May/June 2019.

Consistency with Metro's Equity Platform Framework

The North Hollywood to Pasadena BRT Corridor Project is a key regional connection between the San Fernando and San Gabriel Valleys. It has also been identified as one of the most heavily traveled corridors without a premium bus service. While one of the project's key challenges is to capture a larger share of the corridor's travel market, it is also important to create a competitive travel option for the approximately 4% of households within the study area that currently do not own an automobile. The lack of an automobile is one of several characteristics usually associated with transit dependency. This project will look at opportunities to provide a premium BRT service through the implementation of BRT elements to lower travel time, increase service reliability and enhance the customer experience for the corridor's transit-dependent/low income communities, as well as enhance mobility and improve regional access, particularly to the key employment centers within the project corridor.

Community outreach efforts will continue to include innovative and comprehensive approaches to engage historically underserved communities and project decisions will be made with the intention of producing outcomes that promote and sustain opportunities and avoid increasing disparity. The project will be approached and designed for consistency with Metro's recently adopted Equity Platform Framework.

DETERMINATION OF SAFETY IMPACT

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

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Funding of \$2.3 million is included in the FY20 budget request in Cost Center 4240, Project 471401 (North Hollywood to Pasadena BRT Corridor) to continue with the Planning and Environmental Study

and on-going community outreach. Since this is a multiyear contract, the Cost Center Manager and Chief Planning Officer will be responsible for budgeting in future years for the balance of the remaining project budget/contract.

Impact to Budget

The funding source for the North Hollywood to Pasadena BRT Corridor project is Measure M 35% Transit Construction. As these funds are earmarked for the North Hollywood to Pasadena BRT Corridor project, they are not eligible for Metro bus and rail capital and operating expenditures.

IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

The purpose of the North Hollywood to Pasadena BRT Corridor project is to identify and implement strategies for improving bus service along the corridor. These strategies include dedicated bus lanes, reducing passenger travel times, improving service reliability, and enhancing passenger comfort and security while on transit and at stations. As a BRT service, the North Hollywood to Pasadena BRT Corridor project supports the following Strategic Goals:

- #1: Provide high-quality mobility options that enable people to spend less time traveling.
- #2: Deliver outstanding trip experiences for all users of the transportation system.
- #3: Enhance communities and lives through mobility and access to opportunity.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The Board may decide not to approve advancing the North Hollywood to Pasadena BRT Corridor alternatives to the next phase of environmental review. This is not recommended as this corridor is included and funded in Measure M and highlighted in the Twenty-Eight by '28 Initiative. Delaying the environmental analysis would jeopardize the ability to meet the Measure M ground breaking and opening dates.

NEXT STEPS

Should the Board choose to approve the recommendation, staff will continue with the next phase of environmental review, including public scoping meetings and initiation of the Draft EIR in accordance with CEQA. Staff will keep the Board apprised of the study and return to the Board at key project milestones.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A - Map of North Hollywood to Pasadena BRT Corridor Study Area

Attachment B - Map of Initial BRT Option 1 - Primary Street Alignment

Attachment C - Map of Initial BRT Option 2 - Primary Freeway Alignment

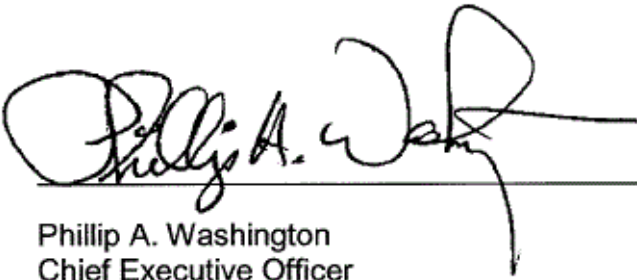
Attachment D - North Hollywood to Pasadena BRT Corridor Project Storyboard

Attachment E - Executive Summary - North Hollywood to Pasadena BRT Corridor Alternatives Analysis

Attachment F - Map of Refined Street-Running Alternative with Route Options

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