



Board Report

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PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE

MAY 20, 2020

EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

MAY 21, 2020

SUBJECT: CENTINELA GRADE SEPARATION

ACTION: APPROVE RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION

CONSIDER:

- A. RECEIVING AND FILING the Centinela Grade Separation Screening Analysis for Design Concepts/Engineering Design Report;
- B. APPROVING Project Definition as an Aerial Grade Separation at the Florence/Centinela Crossing of the Crenshaw/LAX Line supported by Bus Bridging during the Construction Period;
- C. FILING an environmental Statutory Exemption pursuant to CEQA;
- D. Authorizing staff to proceed with preliminary engineering and final design services on the Centinela Grade Separation. This is not a request for construction funding.

ISSUE

In December 2018 the Metro Board approved the initiation of an engineering and environmental study to support development of the Centinela Grade Separation (Item #2018-0245). The study has been conducted in cooperation with the City of Inglewood and has included the development of 15% design and a Funding and Delivery Strategy Plan for the project.

Board approval is needed to approve funding to advance engineering design to include the preparation of construction bid documents. Approval of a funding plan is needed to support final design and construction activities for the grade separation with minimal impacts to the construction, opening and operation of the Crenshaw/LAX (CLAX) LRT Project.

BACKGROUND

History

The Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (EIS/EIR) for CLAX was completed in 2011. Applying Metro's Grade Crossing Policy in 2011 resulted in a determination that an at-grade crossing application was appropriate. In 2013 the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) granted approval of the at-grade crossing pending inclusion of several supplemental measures intended to improve safety and increase queuing and traffic capacity. The final at-grade crossing is currently nearing completion in accordance with all the CPUC's supplemental requirements.

In 2015 the City of Inglewood approved the construction of a 72,000 seat NFL Stadium approximately 1.5 miles south of the Centinela/Florence crossing. Additional development adjacent to the stadium including a performance arts venue, residential units, retail and office space, hotel rooms, and 25 acres of new recreational park and amenities were also approved. 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 A includes a map of these projects and expected events.

All of the aforementioned developments were approved or proposed after the 2011 CLAX EIR/EIS certification and are anticipated to generate additional traffic which was not considered in the original Grade Crossing Policy analysis. To mitigate some of this anticipated increase in traffic, developers have funded the citywide installation of a traffic signal priority system and the City of Inglewood has developed special event traffic and access management plans for the venues under construction and future

IBEC. The City of Inglewood remains concerned about the potential increase in regional trips and the associated traffic impacts of having an at-grade crossing at Centinela/Florence. Metro Board action in 2017 directed staff to conduct grade separation feasibility studies to address these concerns. In November 2018 the Metro Board received the initial feasibility findings and directed staff to initiate an engineering design study and supportive environmental analysis to be funded in cooperation with the City of Inglewood.

DISCUSSION

The Centinela Grade Separation Screening Analysis/Engineering Design report (Attachment B) evaluated three alternatives to be considered for grade separation (LRT Aerial Grade Separation, LRT Below Grade Undercrossing, and LRT At Grade with Centinela and Florence lowered). The analysis has identified the LRT Above Grade-Aerial Grade Separation (Attachment C) which elevates the CLAX LRT on a bridge above the Centinela/Florence at-grade intersection to be the less impactful to the community and the operation of the CLAX LRT Line. The aerial grade separation will remove the required crossing gates and warning systems currently required for the at-grade crossing. It will not have permanent right-of-way or utility impacts as noted with the other alternatives under consideration. The aerial grade separation will allow the CLAX LRT to operate efficiently and add capacity to the intersection to accommodate the mobility needs of the planned regional sports/entertainment venues in the City of Inglewood.

The preliminary project costs ranged from \$185-\$241 million with the recommended design option

falling in the middle of this range. The recommended aerial grade separation includes the costs for a bus bridge to operate during the construction phase of the project. This cost is based on advanced conceptual design (15% level of engineering) and should be considered preliminary pending further refinement in the Preliminary Engineering (30% design) and Final Design (100% design) phases of project design.

Environmental Clearance

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. The grade separation at Centinela Avenue meets the criteria for Statutorily Exempt projects.

In order to further support the Statutory Exemption finding, community outreach efforts were conducted with adjacent property owners and stakeholders in the vicinity of the project. These included the City of Inglewood Councilmembers Dotson and Padilla, Mayor Butts, Westchester Rotary Club, St. John Chrysostom Church, St. Mary's Academy and the Inglewood Park Cemetery. Outreach will continue during the upcoming design and construction phases to incorporate community concerns.

Technical reports are under development on traffic, air quality, visual, noise, vibration, real estate and acquisition, parklands and community facilities, construction impacts and utilities. Initial analysis is indicating minimal environmental impacts with the proposed grade separation project which cannot be mitigated appropriately during project design, construction and operation. The project will have significant beneficial effects on traffic and circulation.

Equity Platform

The Project is consistent with the recently adopted Metro Equity Platform Framework and will bring new benefits of enhanced mobility and regional access to minority and/or low-income populations within the Project area. 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.

DETERMINATION OF SAFETY IMPACT

These actions will not have any impact on the safety of our customers and/or employees because this project is at the beginning of the design phase.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Funding for Design- The Board approved \$2,200,000 in the FY 2020 budget for Professional Services in Cost Center 4350, Project 405406 (Centinela Grade Separation). The sources of funds are Local Prop A, C and TDA Administrative funds. These funds are not eligible for bus and/or rail operating or capital expenses. Staff is currently working to identify additional funds for inclusion in the proposed FY 2021 budget to complete preliminary engineering and design services. Authorization for further work to proceed is subject to approval of funding in the FY 2021 budget. Since this is a multi-year project, the Cost Center Manager and Chief Planning Officer will be responsible for budgeting in future years.

Funding for Construction- Funding for the construction of the project is not included in the Metro Long Range Transportation Plan Financial Forecast or Measure R or Measure M Expenditure Plans and has not been approved by the Board. Should Metro pursue construction of this project, it will require a determination of payment responsibility and the identification of potential funding sources.

Metro staff is actively working with the South Bay Cities Council of Governments and the City of Inglewood to develop a funding plan for the project that considers the availability and eligibility of funding sources, and upon Board direction, attempt to secure the funds. Metro has not yet programmed any funding for the construction of the project, either directly or through the multi-year subregional programs (MSP), where projects are nominated by the subregion. The South Bay Cities COG has supported the use of \$130,000,000 for the project from one of the MSP for the subregion, the Subregional Equity Program (SEP). As construction is not a topic for discussion at present, the use of the SEP funds for funding of projects will be discussed in the June/July Board cycle. Metro has allocated funding for the SEP starting in FY 2043 in the Long Range Transportation Plan Financial Forecast and has not developed yet an administrative process to program SEP funds to the subregions.

IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

A grade separation at Centinela/Florence intersection would 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 choose not to approve any or all the recommendations. This is not recommended as this would further delay the construction of the project and not be in operation in time for the City of Inglewood to host the planned major events (i.e. FIFA World Cup and 2028 Olympics).

NEXT STEPS

Upon Board approval, staff will proceed with preliminary engineering and final design services and continue to work with the City of Inglewood and the South Bay Cities Council of Governments to secure the necessary construction funding for the project.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A - Map of Inglewood Projects

Attachment B - Centinela Grade Separation Screening Analysis for Design Concepts/Engineering Design Report

Attachment C - Rendering of Above-Ground Aerial Grade Separation

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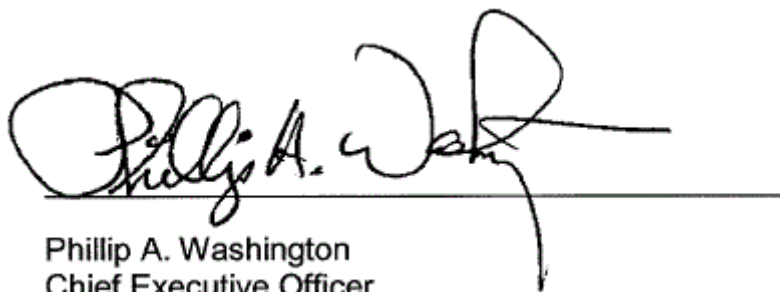
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