



Board Report

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PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE MAY 19, 2021

SUBJECT: COUNTYWIDE PLANNING MAJOR PROJECT STATUS REPORT

ACTION: RECEIVE AND FILE

RECOMMENDATION

RECEIVE AND FILE monthly report on the Major Capital Projects in the environmental planning phase by the Chief Planning Officer.

DISCUSSION

This month's Major Project Status Report provides the regular update for Metro's four Pillar Projects and the North Hollywood to Pasadena Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Project. This report also includes new updates on recent developments for three additional projects that have reached critical milestones: Arts District/6th Street Station, Crenshaw Northern Extension, and the Vermont Transit Corridor.

- **West Santa Ana Branch Corridor (WSAB)**

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) continues to review the WSAB second Administrative Draft of the Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (Draft EIS/EIR) which was submitted to them on March 16 and March 30, 2021 in two batches. In accordance with FTA's review, staff is working on incorporating responses to comments. FTA is currently expected to authorize public circulation of the Draft EIS/EIR in either late-June or mid-July 2021.

In the coming months, staff is planning to re-engage with key stakeholders while using this opportunity to introduce the project to new stakeholders in the 19-mile corridor. Staff will highlight the project purpose, alternatives, and environmental process, and provide opportunity for public involvement and participation. The Project team recently conducted two Stakeholder Working Group (SWG) meetings on April 21 and April 26, 2021, to share the latest details on the project alternatives, environmental process and next steps, including the anticipated release of the Draft EIS/EIR this summer. The SWG provides feedback from a community perspective and serves as a communication liaison/ambassador. The participants include business, community, education, environmental justice and faith-based organizations.

Public outreach will be conducted this spring and summer leading up to and during the release of the

Draft EIS/EIR, including the official 45-day comment period. To enhance project awareness and access to the latest updates, several multi-media tools will be launched to inform users about the project corridor and environmental process. The tools will include story maps, photography/videography, interactive maps, etc., in both English and Spanish, similar to the [Metro C Line Extension](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fr20.rs6.net%2Ftn.jsp%3Ff%3D001CUkWJqsR-94gRX3gzf1XA-7lvRm6d2jS7AClq5ptbqWlMcvJdP9lRj_Vr8pckufwy2TPYEd53SUOPWqM1YzzzkPBlegxTilsJlla6i6HLCrZl8fQAvyjEsKPaEBkWc5h7r66QU-ZTSfL0CUMMKp1kMUr4Cvii7qYeT1ClkclTUiy7ylXik_eX8hwctnrcMujdqN1PvGZExJMiH7A5kFOAA%3D%3D%26c%3DW5T6pe2Zy_e7kfsF1d5rO45vg6xCdLFbwhWTSXqidfS0AnyMNtHoVQ%3D%3D%26ch%3DeSzqIC_2Elk6b9wxjblmQoLUfXHD9VKxgh_O24odniuH1l3G-Qs13g%3D%3D&data=04%7C01%7Ckhannam%40metro.net%7C1f0b65fc63974fcbcf1308d90698b319%7Cab57129bdbfd4caca77fc74c40364af%7C0%7C1%7C637548075177889623%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWljoic4wLjAwMDAilCJlQljoiv2luMzliLCJBTil6lk1haWwiLCJXVCi6MnO%3D%7C3000&sdata=J8Txv8AtRrBTomKEXvFPvFggF9NDcY%2BD%2B46B3wXRnWU%3D&reserved=0) <https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fr20.rs6.net%2Ftn.jsp%3Ff%3D001CUkWJqsR-94gRX3gzf1XA-7lvRm6d2jS7AClq5ptbqWlMcvJdP9lRj_Vr8pckufwy2TPYEd53SUOPWqM1YzzzkPBlegxTilsJlla6i6HLCrZl8fQAvyjEsKPaEBkWc5h7r66QU-ZTSfL0CUMMKp1kMUr4Cvii7qYeT1ClkclTUiy7ylXik_eX8hwctnrcMujdqN1PvGZExJMiH7A5kFOAA%3D%3D%26c%3DW5T6pe2Zy_e7kfsF1d5rO45vg6xCdLFbwhWTSXqidfS0AnyMNtHoVQ%3D%3D%26ch%3DeSzqIC_2Elk6b9wxjblmQoLUfXHD9VKxgh_O24odniuH1l3G-Qs13g%3D%3D&data=04%7C01%7Ckhannam%40metro.net%7C1f0b65fc63974fcbcf1308d90698b319%7Cab57129bdbfd4caca77fc74c40364af%7C0%7C1%7C637548075177889623%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWljoic4wLjAwMDAilCJlQljoiv2luMzliLCJBTil6lk1haWwiLCJXVCi6MnO%3D%7C3000&sdata=J8Txv8AtRrBTomKEXvFPvFggF9NDcY%2BD%2B46B3wXRnWU%3D&reserved=0> interactive tool, which was demonstrated during the SWG meeting. A Communications Toolkit also will be shared with community leaders to support their engagement with constituents, and presentations and project updates are available by request. The tool will be used beginning mid-May and will be promoted through a variety of ways to encourage stakeholders to seek project information (especially during the draft review period), to comment and to participate in public hearings.

The project continues to advance field survey work and verification of existing utilities identified as part of the 15% design. Staff continues to coordinate with various third parties as necessary including Union Pacific Railroad, cities, Caltrans, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and various utility providers.

Response to Planning & Programming Committee Information Request

At its April 22, 2021 meeting, the Board approved additional funding and a time extension to existing Funding Agreement (FA# 920000000FACGGC03) with the Gateway Cities Council of Governments (COG) for Third-Party Administration participation in the WSAB environmental clearance study. The Committee requested that staff report back with more detail on this work and how the work would be monitored. Metro has worked closely with Eco-Rapid Transit and Gateway Cities COG staff to identify the following deliverables associated with the approved additional funding. Metro will review and validate payment requests for the following:

Eco-Rapid Transit (\$60,450)

- Continued coordination with the corridor cities on their review of the environmental document; and
- Additional review of the environmental document to:
 - o Ensure consistency with existing and planned corridor-wide plans and studies;
 - o Determine anticipated impacts to traffic and to multi-city Transit Oriented Communities (TOC) plans, etc.

Gateway Cities COG (\$60,000)

- General administrative oversight of the cities and Eco-Rapid's involvement in this effort, including the costs of invoice processing, accounting, and Executive and Administrative

Directors' time.

City of Artesia (\$72,000)

- Additional outreach with elected officials, key stakeholders, impacted neighborhoods and related community events;
- Additional environmental review/analysis to determine:
 - o Consistency with City plans (Capital Improvement Plans, Housing General Plan, etc.) and studies;
 - o Anticipated impacts to open space, urban greening, city facilities, properties, right-of-way (ROW) and traffic.

Additionally, the City of Artesia was designated as the fiscal agent (previously performed by Bellflower) responsible for the processing of Eco-Rapid Transit expenditures as part of this effort. Additional funds will be used for general administration in performance of this duty.

City of Downey (\$29,875)

- Additional outreach to impacted neighborhoods and related community events; and
- Additional environmental review/analysis to ensure consistency with City plans (Capital Improvement Plans, Housing General Plan, etc.) and studies, and to prepare responses to the draft environmental document.

City of South Gate (\$63,205)

- Additional outreach to impacted neighborhoods and related community events; and
- Additional environmental review/analysis to determine:
 - o Consistency with City plans (Capital Improvement Plans, Housing General Plan, etc.) and studies;
 - o Anticipated impacts to city facilities, properties and streets.

City of Paramount (\$20,000)

- Additional outreach to impacted neighborhoods and related community events; and
- Additional environmental review/analysis to determine:
 - o Consistency with City plans (Capital Improvement Plans, Housing General Plan, etc.) and studies;
 - o Anticipated impacts to city facilities, properties and streets.

City Manager TAC Meetings (\$48,000)

- Continued facilitation and participation by the consultant in support of the monthly WSAB City Manager TAC meetings.

Other Cities

Gateway Cities COG did not make a request on behalf of other Corridor Cities as they have not used majority or most of their original funding allocation. These include Cities

of Huntington Park, Vernon, Bell, Cudahy, Maywood, Lynwood, and Bell Gardens.

- **Green Line to Torrance LRT Extension**

The EIR scoping period lasted 59 days from January 29 to March 29, 2021. Over 300 people attended the two virtual scoping meetings and over 700 comments have been received. Comments received are being documented and evaluated as a part of the environmental process.

The majority of comments received were generally supportive of the project, however many included specific concerns regarding the two alternatives under consideration. These concerns included alignment configuration and potential impacts such as noise, vibration, property acquisition, safety, and changes to aesthetics/community character that need to be further evaluated. Based on scoping comments, the project team will move forward with the Draft EIR and conceptual design of the alternatives under evaluation.

The project team and BNSF Railroad are having on-going discussions to better understand their daily operations and accommodating an extension of the Green Line (C Line) under consideration. BNSF has certain requirements to maintain their existing and future needs along the ROW. The discussions are providing both teams with a better understanding of what is needed to accommodate BNSF's requirements and are being taken under consideration as the initial designs of the alternatives are being developed.

Initial Risk workshops for the project are scheduled to be conducted on May 3 and 5. The workshops will provide an opportunity to understand and monitor potential risks for the project across multiple disciplines; these risks are also monetized for project cost estimations. The workshops will be held on an on-going basis during the project development to address and minimize risks as the project progresses.

Community outreach will be ongoing and project updates will be shared as the environmental process progresses. Targeted stakeholder meetings will be scheduled to discuss community concerns and project opportunities throughout the study area. Coordination will continue as well with Caltrans and BNSF to understand current and future operational needs for both entities and alternatives under evaluation.

- **Eastside Transit Corridor Phase 2**

The Eastside Transit Corridor Phase 2 project team, along with Community Relations, and Race and Equity Departments continues to develop the Community Based Organization (CBO) strategy for the project in collaboration with LA County Board of Supervisors Hilda L. Solis (First District) and Janice Hahn (Fourth District), and key stakeholders. Metro staff met with key stakeholders, community groups, and the Washington Coalition to solicit preliminary input on the strategy and to assess the participatory level of interest.

Metro staff met with the following groups:

- o Leaders from the East Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce and the Whittier Boulevard

Merchants Association (March 30)

- o East Los Angeles Small Business Roundtable (March 31)
- o Washington Coalition (April 1st and May 6)
- o Health Innovation Community Partnership (April 2)

The CBO strategy will follow the guidance of the Equity Platform and the Draft CBO Partnering Strategy. The CBO Strategy is anticipated to be implemented by late spring, prior to commencing community engagement for the Eastside Transit Corridor Phase 2.

The environmental and engineering consultant teams are advancing the project per the Board's decisions to focus on the Washington Alternative and CEQA only. The engineering consultants continue to refine the Draft Advanced Conceptual Engineering based on comments and enhancements along the alignment. The Draft EIR is anticipated to be released in late spring 2022.

- **Sepulveda Transit Corridor**

Following the March 2021 Board action for authorization to award PDA contracts to two teams, on April 14, 2021 Metro staff notified the Board of the alternatives entering the environmental review process for the Sepulveda Transit Corridor Project. These five alternatives collectively represent the concepts advanced by the Sepulveda Transit Corridor Feasibility Study and the Pre-Development Agreement (PDA) process:

- o Alternative 1: Monorail alternative proposed through the PDA process.
- o Alternative 2: Monorail alternative similar to Alternative 1 that uses an underground alignment to connect to UCLA.
- o Alternative 3: Heavy rail alternative as proposed through the PDA process with an aerial section along Sepulveda Boulevard in the north.
- o Alternative 4: Heavy rail alternative similar to Alternative 3 that is underground, including along Sepulveda Boulevard in the north.
- o Alternative 5: Heavy rail alternative that is underground, including along Van Nuys Boulevard.

The alternatives will be analyzed for environmental impacts across their proposed modes, alignments, station locations, and above- or below-ground configurations. Through the course of the environmental process, these alternatives may be refined.

The Metro project team is preparing for the upcoming Notice to Proceed for the PDA contractor teams next month. Community Relations is preparing a virtual community meeting to discuss next steps on the project in advance of the scoping period this fall.

- **North Hollywood (NoHo) to Pasadena Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)**

The NoHo to Pasadena BRT Draft EIR comment period began on October 26 and concluded on December 28. Staff received nearly 500 comments, the majority of which expressed general support for the project. Currently the most challenging issues include community concerns over parking loss

along Olive Avenue in Burbank and other comments pertaining to the Eagle Rock section of the project.

In Eagle Rock, most comments favor routing the BRT along Colorado Boulevard rather than on the SR-134 freeway. However, community members have expressed concerns over impacts to the existing buffered bike lanes, medians, traffic, and parking. Many comments also expressed support for a new BRT proposal on Colorado Boulevard that was developed by a local community group.

Staff examined this community-developed proposal and incorporated many of its feasible elements into a refined BRT concept, which was presented to key Eagle Rock stakeholders via two virtual roundtable meetings on March 16, 2021. A third virtual roundtable meeting was held on March 26, 2021, for all Eagle Rock businesses along the boulevard. A total of 80 people participated in these meetings and the refinements made to the project were generally well received.

Staff has since developed a refined Proposed Project that was presented to the public at a community meeting held on April 1, 2021. A total of 369 people attended the meeting and were given the opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback on the Proposed Project. Most of the questions and comments pertained to the Eagle Rock segment of the project. Overall, the feedback received from participants leaned slightly in favor of the Proposed Project in Eagle Rock, with those opposed expressing concerns over traffic congestion and spillover onto adjacent neighborhood streets, resulting from the loss of travel lanes. Staff's recommended Proposed Project is being presented to the Metro Board in a separate board report.

- **Countywide Planning Dashboard**

While this report focuses on the four Major Capital ("Pillar") Projects, there are six other Measure M projects, five non-Measure M projects, and four Strategy & Policy initiatives. For an update on these other 15 projects, please refer to Attachment A of this report, which provides the Countywide Planning Dashboard.

Of note, the following three projects have reached important milestones this month:

- **Arts District/6th Street Station Project**

With funding support from the City of Los Angeles, Metro is preparing an EIR for the Arts District/6th Street Station Project. This Project proposes a new Metro B Line (Red) and/or D Line (Purple) station near 6th Street that would provide regional and local transit connections to and from the Arts District, Boyle Heights and surrounding communities. As part of the EIR process, Metro recently hosted two public virtual scoping meetings (April 14 and 17, 2021) to gather input on the scope of a Draft EIR. Over 90 people attended the scoping meetings and expressed general support for the project, as well as comments related to wayfinding signage, the desire for identifying funds for constructing the proposed station, station access, and more. The meeting recordings and presentations can be viewed on metro.net/artdist6thstation <<https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fmetro77073.lt.acemlnb.com%2F>>. The project's scoping comment period closed on May 12. The EIR is anticipated to be released in spring 2022.

○ **Crenshaw Northern Extension**

The Crenshaw Northern Extension project began scoping meetings this month, as part of the environmental review process. This study will evaluate three potential alignments to extend the Crenshaw/LAX line north from the E (Expo) Line with connections to the D (Purple) and B (Red) Lines and five of our busiest bus lines, with a potential terminus at the Hollywood Bowl. At the writing of this report, the first of three (virtual) scoping meetings was held Thursday, April 29, with two more meetings scheduled via Zoom on Thursday, May 6, and Saturday, May 8. Over 165 participants attended the first meeting, during which staff presented scoping and project objectives, walked participants through the environmental review process for the three alignments currently being studied, and received participants' input and feedback. After the scoping period, a Post-Scoping Alternatives Report will be prepared (anticipated in fall 2021) documenting all the comments heard; that information will be used to help further refine the alternatives.

○ **Vermont Transit Corridor**

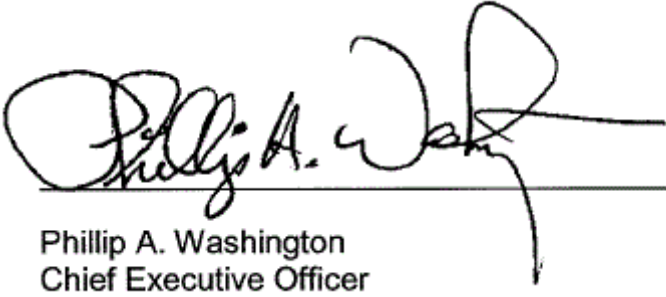
The contract for the Planning and Environmental Study will go to the Board in May 2021 for approval. The contract is for 48 months and includes CEQA clearance, Conceptual Engineering and the option to complete NEPA clearance for six build alternatives - three Bus Rapid Transit, one Light Rail, and two Heavy Rail alternatives. The Vermont Transit Corridor extends approximately 12 miles from Hollywood Boulevard in the north to 120th Street in the south. The Community Outreach activities will be managed through a separate contract procured through the Communications Bench. The Public Scoping Period for CEQA is expected to begin in fall 2021.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A - Countywide Planning Monthly Major Projects - May 2021

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