



Board Report

File #: 2021-0211, **File Type:** Informational Report

Agenda Number: 13.

PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE MAY 19, 2021

SUBJECT: MARIACHI PLAZA

ACTION: RECEIVE AND FILE

RECOMMENDATION

RECEIVE AND FILE status report on Mariachi Plaza.

ISSUE

On December 3, 2020, at the Regular Board Meeting, Directors Solis and Dupont-Walker made a motion approved by the Board to direct the Chief Executive Officer to report back at the May 2021 Planning and Programming Committee meeting with:

- A. Recommendations to streamline the management of Mariachi Plaza as it relates to event programming and maintenance. Metro should collaborate with the City of Los Angeles and Boyle Heights stakeholders to identify potential management frameworks.
- B. A cultural preservation strategy for Mariachi Plaza developed in partnership with the City of Los Angeles and local Boyle Heights stakeholders. The strategy should consider data on the use of the plaza, including the number of artists and musicians that utilize the plaza for performances, in order to ensure that the history and cultural significance of Mariachi Plaza is preserved, celebrated and uplifted.

Concerns were also raised by the Metro Board about the maintenance and operations of Mariachi Plaza, part of which is located on Metro property with the remaining portion located in City of Los Angeles (COLA) right-of-way.

This receive and file report is to provide an update on staff progress in addressing the above opportunities.

BACKGROUND

Mariachi Plaza has been referenced as a historical landmark in the community of Boyle Heights at the cross streets of First Avenue and Boyle Street across from the old brick Boyle Hotel, which was recently renovated in 2013. Since the 1930s, Mariachi Plaza has remained the art and cultural center of the community and is where mariachi musicians have gathered for employment opportunities as a

solo, trio, or full band.

Metro's Mariachi Plaza is a seamless pedestrian plaza that connects the use of Metro's station, the plaza and kiosk (gazebo). Metro's light rail subway station at Mariachi Plaza opened in 2009, which includes escalators, elevators, and stairways that lead to the mezzanine level and platform level of the station. Metro's Plaza includes an open walking area, bench seating and a stage area where cultural events take place such as the annual Mariachi Festival and Celebration for Santa Cecilia in November. Other events include the annual poetry reading, "Noche de Serenata", numerous toy and food drives hosted by local schools, non-profits, churches, and public gatherings for both social and cultural programs throughout the year.

The kiosk in the plaza was donated to the COLA by the Mexican State of Jalisco, the birthplace of mariachi music, and resembles Plaza Garibaldi in Mexico City. The statue of Lucha Reyes was donated by the Mexican Consulate in Los Angeles and installed in the plaza across from the kiosk.

DISCUSSION

Maintenance

In October 2020, Metro's Facilities Maintenance completed full maintenance and repair of all light and electrical fixtures, painting of lamp posts, bollards and benches, and replacement of tree wells. Facilities Contracted Maintenance Services performed landscape maintenance and removal of graffiti. Within the station mezzanine and platform areas all art pieces were cleaned. Although not under Metro's ownership, a kiosk safety hazard issue was identified and corrected to prevent a fall or injury and the statue of Lucha Reyes was cleaned and polished. Power washing within the entire plaza is completed on a regular basis. Due to COVID-19, cleaning efforts have been enhanced on all touch point surfaces, at a minimum of once per day. Metro's Facilities Maintenance continues to maintain the plaza and station daily and immediately addresses any issues that are discovered or reported (Attachment A - Mariachi Plaza Station Improvement Photos).

Security

Metro Security was providing security services five days a week. In September 2020, security was increased to seven days a week at the platform and plaza area. Security is addressing the reported issue of skateboarders, which resulted in damages to the stage and plaza. New signage will be posted to assist in deterring skateboarding.

Permitting Special Events

Due to COVID-19 state and local restrictions, no permits have been granted for any events over the past year. Over the past five years, there were a total of 38 Metro-permitted events. The larger Metro permitted events included Santa Cecilia Mariachi Festival, Noche de Serenata Poetry Reading, farmers market and various city and cultural outreach and social services, local school and church fundraising events, protests and rallies.

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with City of Los Angeles

Metro Real Estate reviewed all prior agreements between Metro and COLA and noted overlaps and inconsistencies between them. Metro is currently working with the COLA Real Estate Department in the drafting of a new MOU for defined ownership, maintenance and repair responsibility. Part of the

issue is uncertainty about the property line between Metro and COLA. The plaza appears to be unified in ownership, and it should remain that way to the general public, but for legal, labor and liability reasons, the property boundary needs to be determined. Metro Real Estate is currently in the process of doing a field survey to confirm the location of the property line, locations of all easements and the fee vesting.

Outreach Survey and Special Event Planning Guidelines

Metro Real Estate, in coordination with Metro Communications, will be retaining a consultant to assist with an outreach survey. The objective of the survey is to perform an assessment and analysis of the community's needs to inform future decisions about how to best meet those needs. Specific objectives include but are not limited to:

- Understand the cultural significance of Mariachi Plaza in Boyle Heights;
- Understand the current and future needs of the mariachi musicians and other local artists as it relates to their use of the plaza as well as their housing needs; and
- Understand the community needs and uses of the plaza for special events

Among the deliverables will be a complete summarized report that includes:

- A summary of the findings, including the traits of the plaza that are important to the mariachis and the community; and
- Recommendations for preserving the culture at Mariachi Plaza, including the current and future needs of the mariachis and local artists, programming of plaza events, housing needs and potential uses of the future joint development space.

Assessment and analysis survey results should be completed and provided in summer 2021.

Management Framework

There is high demand for use of the plaza by mariachi bands and various community groups. The results of the above survey will help inform the potential future management framework for programming and plaza amenities. Although the management framework is still being considered, it is intended that it would consist of Metro, COLA and community stakeholders.

Proposed Joint Development

In March 2018, Metro entered into an Exclusive Negotiation Agreement (ENA) with East Los Angeles Community Corporation (ELACC) to plan and consider the development of Metro-owned vacant land adjacent to Mariachi Plaza. The proposed project includes sixty (60) units of affordable housing for families earning between 30% to 50% of the Area Median Income and housing for Transitional Aged Youth. The proposed project also includes associated parking, community garden, approximately 6,000 sq. ft. for ground floor retail and a mariachi community center. The development does not utilize the plaza; however, the developer is a stakeholder who will work collaboratively with Metro, COLA and other stakeholders to preserve the cultural significance of the plaza including mariachi culture. The development is currently in the planning and negotiation phase. Community engagement will continue to be part of the development and upon completion of entitlements, the project will be brought to the Metro Board to consider approval of a Joint Development Agreement and Ground Lease.

Considerations

There are no alternate considerations. This Board report serves as an update on staff's efforts to address the status, maintenance, and event programming at Mariachi Plaza.

Equity Platform

This addresses Metro's equity platform by inviting a diverse range of voices to participate in the improvement, management and organized use of Mariachi Plaza for the mariachi bands and local community. This also assists in engaging residents, businesses and transit customers in an improved relationships, partnerships, and actions to further aligning with Metro's Equity Platform.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no financial impact to Metro.

IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

This recommendation supports strategic plan Goal # 2, to provide outstanding trip experiences for all and Goal #3, to enhance community and lives through mobility and access through opportunities.

NEXT STEPS

Metro Real Estate will complete negotiations with COLA on an MOU with defined areas of responsibilities related to maintenance and repair of Mariachi Plaza. Staff will also provide an update to the Board in fall 2021 with the results of the outreach and special event programming survey and to provide recommendations to for future management framework and a cultural preservation strategy.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A - Mariachi Plaza Station Improvement Photos

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