



Expo

Exposition Metro Line
Construction Authority

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DATE: APRIL 2, 2009

TO: BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**FROM: RICHARD D. THORPE
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**

**ACTION: SELECT PREFERRED LIGHT RAIL ALIGNMENT FOR PHASE 2
OF THE EXPOSITION CORRIDOR TRANSIT PROJECT**

RECOMMENDATION

- A. Accept the Exposition Corridor Transit Project Phase 2 Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) transmitted under separate cover;
- B. Select Light Rail Transit Alternative 2, Expo ROW-Colorado (LRT 2), as the preferred alternative for the Exposition Corridor Transit Project Phase 2 for the limited purpose of identifying a preferred alternative in the Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) for subsequent consideration by the Board;
- C. Continue to work with cities and stakeholders during FEIR process on issues raised during DEIR; and
- D. Direct staff to prepare the FEIR for the Exposition Corridor Transit Project Phase 2 for subsequent consideration, certification of FEIR and consideration of project approval by the Board.

SUMMARY

The preparation of the DEIR for the Exposition Corridor Transit Project Phase 2 (Phase 2), together with the required circulation, public hearings, public participation and review, ensures that all significant transportation and environmental impacts are considered and analyzed. The DEIR was released for a 45 day public comment period starting January 28, 2009. At the request of the community, the public comment period was extended by 2 weeks and closed March 27, 2009.

There has been a comprehensive community outreach program conducted prior to and throughout the development of the DEIR. The Exposition Metro Line Construction Authority (Authority) conducted three formal Public Hearings that were attended by more than 525 people, and 174 people provided comments. During the public comment period, the Authority received over 3000 communications, including written and verbal comments. More than 150 meetings, briefings, and consultations were held during the preparation of the DEIR with stakeholders, businesses and residential groups. Attachment A provides an overview of public comments received during the public comment period.

Staff will next prepare a FEIR for the Phase 2 project for subsequent consideration by the Board for certification pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Staff recommends that the FEIR preliminarily identify LRT Alternative 2 (LRT 2) as the preferred alternative for the purpose of completing a FEIR for consideration for certification by the Board. The identification of LRT 2 for purposes of preparing the FEIR does not commit the Board to the certification of the FEIR or to the approval of the project.

A written response to the substantive public comments submitted to the Authority by March 27, 2009 will be incorporated in the FEIR as provided in the CEQA Guidelines. The staff will also prepare for the Board's consideration, Findings of Fact, Statement of Overriding Considerations, and a Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan (MMRP). If the Board certifies the FEIR and approves the project, the measures described in the MMRP will be implemented during final design and construction of the project.

Approval of the recommended action does not commit the Board to the certification of the FEIR, or to the approval of the project.

DISCUSSION

In November 2006, the Board authorized the CEO to execute and negotiate a contract for environmental consulting services for the Phase 2 project. Originally, Phase 2 was anticipated to be a federal project which would be funded with New Starts funding and other funding sources. However, with the passage of Measure R, Metro determined that Phase 2 would be funded as a state and local project. As a result, the environmental document was converted from a joint National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA)/CEQA document to a CEQA only document. This would enable the Board to consider approval of the project on a more expeditious schedule.

The project went through a Scoping and a Screening Process with an extensive public comment and input process. Nine alternatives were analyzed and screened down to four alternatives (No Build, Transportation Systems Management (TSM) and two light rail transit alignments). In addition, at the

request of the City of Santa Monica, the Authority conducted additional environmental analysis to determine whether a Colorado alignment in the City of Santa Monica was feasible. The DEIR includes a full evaluation of the Colorado alignment. This addition of a Colorado alignment increased the total number of LRT alignments analyzed in the DEIR to four. The DEIR analyzed the No Build, Transportation Systems Management (TSM) and four light rail alternatives.

- No-Build Alternative consists of the existing transit services, as well as improvements explicitly committed to be constructed by the year 2030 as defined in the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) Regional Transportation Plan (RTP).
- The TSM Alternative would involve three basic components beyond the No-Build: addition of a rapid bus route connecting downtown Culver City with downtown Santa Monica; associated service improvements on selected north/south routes to feed stations along the new rapid bus route; and service improvements on selected routes connecting Westside communities to the Expo Phase 1 terminus.

The four proposed LRT Alternatives would begin at the terminus of the Expo Phase 1 in Culver City and would terminate in downtown Santa Monica in the vicinity of the intersection of 4th Street and Colorado Avenue. Depending upon the alternative, the alignments would vary as follows:

- LRT 1 Expo ROW- Olympic Alternative would utilize approximately 5 miles of the existing Exposition ROW from the Expo Phase 1 terminus in Culver City to the intersection with Olympic Boulevard in Santa Monica. From that point, the alignment would follow Olympic Boulevard to the proposed terminus station.
- LRT 2 Expo ROW – Colorado Alternative would utilize the existing Exposition ROW from the Expo Phase 1 terminus in Culver City to its intersection with Olympic Boulevard in Santa Monica. From that point, the alignment would continue within the Exposition ROW to west of 19th Street, then diverge from the ROW and enter onto Colorado Avenue east of 17th Street and follow the center of Colorado Avenue to the proposed terminus.
- LRT 3 Venice/Sepulveda – Olympic Alternative would divert from the Exposition ROW at the Expo Phase 1 terminus and follow Venice Boulevard and Sepulveda Boulevard until reaching the intersection with the Exposition ROW. The alignment would then continue westward along the Exposition ROW and Olympic Boulevard identical to the LRT 1 Expo ROW – Olympic Alternative.
- LRT 4 Venice/Sepulveda – Colorado Alternative would divert from the Exposition ROW at the Expo Phase 1 terminus and follow Venice Boulevard and Sepulveda Boulevard until reaching the intersection with the Exposition ROW. The alignment would then continue westward along

the Exposition ROW and Colorado Avenue identical to the LRT 2 Expo ROW – Colorado Alternative.

According to the environmental analysis shown in the DEIR, Alternatives 1 and 2 are the environmentally superior alternatives. When cost and efficiency are added to the environmental characteristics, LRT 2 emerges as the best alternative. It provides high ridership estimates, a competitive travel time, less community disruption, the fewest relocations of residents at the most cost effective price. Many of the public comments received were in favor of using the ROW, as opposed to using Venice/Sepulveda. The Colorado option also received strong support from the Santa Monica City Council, as well as major stakeholders, residents and the community. Attachment B compares this information for the four light rail alternatives. Alternative C provides an overview of the station locations, park and ride facilities and grade crossing recommendations along the recommended alternative LRT 2.

Selection of a preferred alignment assists in the preparation of the FEIR. Further, it will enable staff to more fully develop engineering drawings and documentation that will be part of the design-build contractor specifications. These activities do not commit the Board to the certification of the FEIR or to the approval of any alternative or to the adoption of a project by the Board at a later time.

ISSUES

Several issues have been raised by stakeholders, cities and the community during the DEIR public comment process and will be addressed in the FEIR. Further, specific responses to all substantive comments received by March 27, 2009 will be developed and included in the FEIR document. The following is a list of issues that have been raised that may need additional analysis as part of the FEIR. Preliminary responses are provided to some of the issues below; however, these responses could change based on additional analysis and consultations conducted during development of the FEIR. The Authority will continue to work with interested parties, cities, agencies and stakeholders to address these issues.

Grade Crossings

The 2003 Metro Grade Crossing Policy was applied to the development and analysis of the Phase 2 project. All grade crossing determinations were made in accordance with this policy. Attachment C lists all of the grade crossings for LRT 2. However, several comments received by the City of Los Angeles Department of Transportation as well as members of the community and other stakeholders, have raised concerns about some of the grade crossing recommendations. Specifically, concerns have been raised about the recommendations for at-grade crossings at Overland, Westwood, Sepulveda, Barrington and Centinela. Concerns include parking removal impacts, traffic and queuing impacts as well

as safety issues. The Authority will continue to work with agencies and others to address these issues in the FEIR and prior to Board action on the FEIR.

Any changes to the grade crossing recommendations would be analyzed as part of the FEIR and reflected in the project budget.

Maintenance Facility

Another issue raised during the DEIR process was the location of the proposed light rail maintenance facility east of Stewart Street and north of Exposition Blvd. at a Verizon dispatching, parking and storage facility in the City of Santa Monica. The Santa Monica City Council, as well as several residents, raised concerns over the location of the facility. The Authority looked at over 20 possible maintenance facility locations within the Phase 2 study area over the course of the project; however, no other location met the criteria needed to develop the facility (i.e. size, configuration, property acquisition and other issues). As a result, the Verizon site was determined to be the best site that met the needs of the project. This area is currently zoned for Light Manufacturing and Studio Use; however, there are multifamily and single family residents to the south of the proposed facility, across Exposition Boulevard. Residents have raised objections to the site based on noise, visual and other concerns. The Authority will continue to work with the City of Santa Monica and residents to address their concerns regarding the location of the maintenance facility.

Bikeway

A bikeway was originally contemplated to be planned and environmentally cleared in association with the transit project. In previous Call for Projects, some funding for a bikeway was allocated to both the City of Santa Monica and City of Los Angeles. This funding was identified as Federal TEA funding and was supposed to be used for the planning, design, environmental clearance and construction of a bike facility. Because the transit project is being cleared through CEQA only, the bikeway could not be included in the project DEIR because it is being funded with federal funds and so needs to be cleared through both NEPA and CEQA. Clearing both the bikeway and transit project together would have required that the entire transit project be cleared through NEPA, which would have delayed the project. As a result, the bikeway was not included in the project document and the cities will be clearing the bikeway through NEPA separately.

The Authority has worked closely with the Cities of Santa Monica and Los Angeles and anticipates that both cities will be able to environmentally clear the bikeway under NEPA/CEQA in a timely manner. The Authority expects to continue to coordinate with both cities and to assist the cities where necessary to ensure that the bikeway stays on track. Further, the Authority has notified the City of Los Angeles of the funding gap in the area from Sepulveda to Centinela so that the City may apply for Call for Projects funding to fully fund that portion of

the bikeway. The Authority anticipates that if the bikeway is cleared and funding is identified, the Authority would be able to design and build the bikeway in conjunction with the light rail project. If the bikeway obtains the necessary approvals, the Authority supports construction of the bikeway and anticipates that having the cities closely coordinate with the Authority on the planning and design of the bikeway will allow the bikeway to move forward at the same time as the light rail.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Funding for the FEIR is being provided through funding that had been previously programmed by Metro. Funding for construction of the project is included in Metro's Long Range Transportation Plan and will be provided through a combination of state and local funding as those funds become available. The DEIR estimates the cost of LRT 2 at \$1.3 billion in escalated dollars. A separate board item for environmental consulting services to develop the FEIR and associated engineering will be brought to the Board next month for Board action.

NEXT STEPS

Authority staff will bring a separate item to the Board for environmental consulting services to prepare the FEIR for Phase 2 of the Expo project. The FEIR will come to the Board for evaluation and certification in the fall. The decision whether or not to approve the project cannot occur until the FEIR is completed and certified by the Expo Board. The Board will then decide whether to approve the project.

Staff will work with the environmental consultant to complete the FEIR and conduct additional engineering as may be appropriate to support the completion of the FEIR. Staff will also begin the procurement process for a design-build contractor so a contract can be awarded should the FEIR be certified and the Board adopts a project.

ATTACHMENT(S)

A: Overview of Public Comments

B: LRT Comparison

C: LRT 2 Stations, Parking and Grade Crossing Recommendations

Attachment A

Exposition Corridor Transit Project for Phase 2
 Overview of Public Comments

The official public comment period began on January 23, 2009 and closed on March 27, 2009. Three public hearings were held on the Exposition Corridor Transit Project Phase 2 (Phase 2) Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR). Meetings were held on the following dates and locations:

Wednesday, February 18, 2009 5:00 PM until 8:00 PM Santa Monica High School, Cafeteria 601 Pico Boulevard Santa Monica, CA 90405	Monday, February 23, 2009 5:00 PM until 8:00 PM Vista del Mar Child and Family Services, Gymnasium 3200 Motor Avenue Los Angeles, CA 90034	Wednesday, February 25, 2009 5:00 PM until 8:00 PM Webster Middle School 1330 W. Graham Place Los Angeles, CA 90064
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Over 525 people attended the public hearings and over 174 provided comments. Over 3000 communications were received, each one containing one to several individual comments. All substantive comments will be responded to in the Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR). A summary of the comments received is as follows:

<p>Overview of Major Comments</p>
<p>Support Expo Line Project</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides an alternative, convenient form of transportation Transit needed on Westside Waiting a long time for project Support cleaner air and less traffic Good economic investment Relief of traffic congestion Connect Eastside and Westside of Los Angeles
<p>Oppose Expo Line Project</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No money available to build it and no one will use it Adversely affect quality of life

Support Expo ROW Alternatives

Use of existing railroad ROW is practical and convenient
Faster travel time, less expensive, and higher ridership than Venice/Sepulveda Alternative
Less environmental impact, disruption and loss of private property than Venice/Sepulveda Alternative
Serves Westside Pavilion and other major destinations
Westwood station will provide access to major bus lines serving UCLA, Westwood and Century City

Oppose Expo ROW Alternatives

Disturb quiet neighborhood/community by increasing noise/vibration, and decreasing air quality, privacy and property values
Concern for school children's safety and disruption while in school
Disruption during construction and operation of project

Support Venice/Sepulveda Alternatives

More transit dependent users living in area
Less disruptive than ROW
More businesses located in area and employment density is higher
Opportunity for housing and business developments

Oppose Venice/Sepulveda Alternatives

More expensive than Expo ROW
Longer travel time and less ridership than Expo ROW
Disruption on Venice/Sepulveda during construction and operation of project
Project on Venice/Sepulveda would not be aesthetically pleasing

Support Olympic Alternatives

Busier street than Colorado, more industrial and more conducive for LRT
Colorado is too small for LRT and is near residential
Faster travel time than Colorado Alternative
Less impact to traffic circulation than Colorado Alternative

Support Colorado Alternatives

Keep the existing Coral trees and green space on Olympic
Concern for school children's safety and disruption while in school
Station at 17th/Olympic would create traffic problems during drop-off and pick-up hours
Elimination of parking along Olympic not good for school parents, students, school buses, adjacent park and businesses
Less expensive than Olympic Alternative
More shops and businesses on Colorado than Olympic

Grade Crossings

Grade separate certain crossings, mostly Overland and Sepulveda
Concern for children's safety when crossing the tracks thus requesting grade separation
At-grade crossings will result in negative impacts to traffic throughout the area
At-grade crossings increase transit time and decrease ridership
At-grade crossings will result in vehicles idling, thus negatively impacting air quality

Maintenance Facility

Do not support proposed location of Maintenance Facility due to concerns about safety, property values, hazardous materials, noise/vibration, proximity to residential neighborhood and light spillover
Do not support potential use of Bergamot Station as a Maintenance Facility

Attachment B

Exposition Corridor Transit Project—Phase 2
Comparison of LRT Alternatives and Map

	LRT 1 Expo ROW– Olympic	LRT 2 Expo ROW– Colorado	LRT 3 Venice/ Sepulveda– Olympic	LRT 4 Venice/ Sepulveda– Colorado
2030 Weekday Boardings (Phase 2 only)	36,653	36,412	35,880	35,849
2030 Weekday Boardings (Phase 1 and 2)	64,048	63,998	62,105	62,077
Transit Time in minutes (LA to Santa Monica)	44	46	49	50
Escalated Capital Costs (000's)	\$1,353,375	\$1,301,121	\$1,991,956	\$1,930,328
Estimated Property Acquisitions (Full and Partial acquisitions for Residential, Commercial, and Public)	62	83	194	215
Estimated Residential Displacements	5	3	256	254



Attachment C

Exposition Corridor Transit Project—Phase 2 Overview of Station and Parking Locations

LRT 2: Expo ROW Alignments	
Station Locations	Parking Spaces
1. Colorado/4th St	225
2. Colorado/17th St	70
3. Olympic/26th St	0
4. Expo/Bundy	250
5. Expo/Sepulveda	260
6. Expo/Westwood	170
7. National/Palms	0
Supplemental Pkg at Venice/Robertson	60
	Total: 1035

Attachment C

Exposition Corridor Transit Project—Phase 2
 Overview of Grade Crossing Configurations

LRT 2: EXPO ROW/COLORADO ALIGNMENT	
At-grade	Grade Separated
5th St./Colorado	Olympic
6th St./Colorado	Cloverfield/Olympic/Expo
7th St./Colorado	Bundy/Expo
Lincoln/Colorado	Pico/Gateway/Expo
11th St./Colorado	Sawtelle/Expo
14th St./Colorado	Motor/Expo (existing)
17th St./Colorado	National/Palms/Expo (existing)
19th St./Expo	Venice
20th St./Expo	
26th St./Olympic/Expo	
Stewart/Expo	
Centinela/Expo	
Barrington/Expo	
Sepulveda/Exposition/Expo	
Military/Expo	
Westwood/Expo	
Overland/Expo	
Bagley/Exposition/Expo	