

Agenda Report

DATE: JULY 30, 2001
TO: CITY COUNCIL
FROM: CYNTHIA J. KURTZ, CITY MANAGER
SUBJECT: LOCATION OF ELECTRICAL FACILITY FOR BLUE LINE LIGHT RAIL SYSTEM

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Pasadena City Council support the relocation of a Los Angeles to Pasadena Metro Blue Line electrical facility to a location within the Blue Line right-of-way as far south of Green Street as possible to have the least impact on the Stathos property.

Relocation to a site north of Green Street within the right-of-way would be inconsistent with the Council adopted Old Pasadena Streetscape and Alley Walkways Plan. However, if the Council chooses to support relocation of the electrical facility to a location within the right-of-way north of Green Street, it should be subject to the ability to locate the facility in a manner that permits future development of Mercantile/Morgan Alley between Arroyo Parkway and Raymond Avenue.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

The CDC reviewed this item on July 26, 2001, and voted to recommend to City Council that the electrical facility be located in the right-of-way south of Green in a location that results in the least impact on the development of the Stathos property. In addition, the Committee recommended that the facility be located underground if feasible and not impede pedestrian activity.

OLD PASADENA BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

The Old Pasadena Business Improvement District Board reviewed this item on July 26, 2001. The Board voted to support the relocation of the electrical facility to the location north of Green Street in the right-of-way adjacent to Mercantile Alley in order to allow the unimpeded development of the Stathos property.

BACKGROUND:

As part of the Los Angeles to Pasadena Metro Blue Line construction, a large electrical facility is planned to be located within the rail line right-of-way approximately eighteen

feet south of Green Street. The electrical facility is roughly forty seven feet long, seventeen feet wide and twelve feet tall. The facility will house a variety of electrical transformers and panels all associated with the signaling equipment for the Blue Line's path through Pasadena. The rail line right-of-way is approximately thirty feet wide.

The Blue Line Construction Authority plans to install the electrical facility at-grade within the rail right-of-way and above the rail line's below-grade tunnel as it progresses northerly from the Del Mar rail station. The Stathatos family, owners of the adjacent private property, has asked the Construction Authority to relocate the facility to another location within the right-of-way north of Green Street. The Stathatos Family has proposed to develop a mixed-use project on their property and they propose to develop above the light rail line. Therefore, they do not want to have to "build around" the electrical facility. The Construction Authority is willing to consider locating the facility to another above ground location subject to the approval of each adjacent property owner and approval from the City of Pasadena by August 1, 2001.

The proposed location north of Green Street will be inconsistent with the Old Pasadena Streetscapes & Alley Walkways Plan. The Plan, adopted in 1995, set forth a goal to "create a pedestrian-oriented network of streetscapes and alley walkways which...creates and reinforces connections and linkages among and between Old Pasadena and parking, transit facilities and adjacent districts."

The Walkway Plan also addresses the desire for open space programming for activities and events. "In conjunction with planned Pasadena Blue Line Light Rail project cut-and-cover of the abandoned AT&SF tracks, a pedestrian "esplanade" should be developed to provide a major north-south pedestrian and bicycle way through Old Pasadena between the area just north of Del Mar Boulevard and Holly Street." Placement of the electrical facility in the block north of Green Street at grade will compromise the ability to achieve the goals as outlined in the Walkway Plan.

If the Council considers permitting the facility north of Green Street, the new location should not impede the future development of Mercantile/Morgan Alley. It is the desire of the City to create a physical connection (across the MTA right-of-way) between these two alleys to permit servicing of the building located along the alleys as well as emergency vehicles.

Currently vehicles servicing Mercantile/Morgan Alley drive forward into the alley. Given that Mercantile/Morgan Alley terminates at the MTA right-of-way, the vehicles must back onto Raymond Avenue and Arroyo Parkway (major arterials) to exit. With the City's proposed plans to increase the traffic on both Raymond and Arroyo Boulevard to reduce congestion in the southwest neighborhoods, this will create severe congestion and safety concerns. The proposed location which is above grade and at the end of Mercantile Alley would prevent any future connection.

From an urban design perspective, locating the electrical room north of Green Street is problematic. The location of the electrical facility within the right-of way will reduce the

amount of available open space within the right-of-way from approximately 30 feet to 14 feet. This reduction in open space will limit the ability of the space to function as an exciting pedestrian space in which business are encouraged to open second storefronts on the alleys and where restaurants use outdoor and deck areas within the intrablock Alley Walkway pedestrian network.

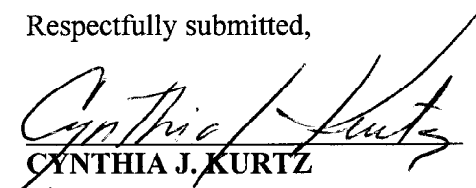
With a width of seventeen feet, the facility will occupy more than half of the right-of-way's width. The size and location of the facility will make it a visually prominent element, which will be difficult to hide or conceal with architectural elements, painting, and /or landscaping. The location of the electrical room will minimize the visual link between Colorado Boulevard and Green Street. This visual obstruction will limit the right-of way's ability to function as a pedestrian oriented walkway that is continuous and interesting due to active retail edges and creates and reinforces connections and linkages among and between Old Pasadena, parking and transit facilities, and adjacent districts.

This intrusion into the right of way will also have security impacts. The placement of the facility in this location will create a bottleneck because of the presence of existing buildings. A bottleneck can interfere with daily pedestrian traffic, impede emergency vehicles, and obstruct a clear view of the walkway necessary for patrol officers. These security concerns are addressed in the attached memo from Chief Melekian.

FISCAL IMPACT:

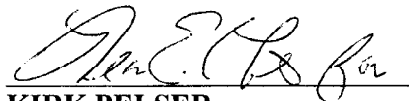
No fiscal impact is anticipated.

Respectfully submitted,



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Approved by:



RICHARD J. BRUCKNER
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Attachments