

Agenda Report

December 10, 2012

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council

FROM: Department of Transportation

SUBJECT: CONSIDERATION OF POTENTIAL CITY OF PASADENA POSITION RELATED TO SR710 EXTENSION ALTERNATIVES BEING CONSIDERED BY LOS ANGELES COUNTY METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY (METRO)

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended the City Council:

1. Find that the following proposed actions are exempt from review pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA"), pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15061 (b) (3); and
2. Consider the potential impacts of SR710 alternatives, limitations imposed by Measure A, and whether the City should adopt a formal position in support of either of the following as the City's preferred alternative:
 - A. Bus Rapid Transit line connecting from Alhambra to Pasadena generally along Fair Oaks Avenue, Colorado Boulevard, Hill/Lake Avenue and California Boulevard, provided realignment that resolves issues identified in Attachment A.
 - B. Light Rail Transit (LRT) line connecting from Alhambra to Pasadena in an underground route generally along Fair Oaks Avenue with an underground terminus near Fillmore Street/Arroyo Parkway without the proposed maintenance yard on South Fair Oaks Avenue in Pasadena.
3. Authorize the Mayor to send a letter to the Metro Board of Directors advising of the City's preferred alternative and concerns for adequate resolution of the issues listed in Attachment A; and
4. Direct staff to represent Pasadena as a Participating Agency for the SR710 EIS, continue to represent Pasadena on the Technical Advisory Committee for the SR710 EIR and return to City Council with further recommendations as information becomes available

BACKGROUND:

Metro is completing an Alternatives Analysis prior to preparing an Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS) that will ultimately result in the selection of a locally preferred alternative that will attain the project goal of reducing traffic congestion in the study area for the project, which is generally bordered by State Route 2 and Interstates 10, 210 and 605.

Metro's preparation of the Draft EIR/EIS is scheduled to begin in December 2012 and to be released for public comments in February 2014. City staff understands that Metro's current plans anticipate completing the Final Environmental Document in April 2015 with Metro adopting a Record of Decision (ROD) by May 2015.

Current Status of the Alternatives Under Study

On November 14, 2012, Metro reported to the Technical Advisory Committee that the following alternatives were under consideration for further study:

- No Build
 - Includes programmed/funded projects from the 2035 Regional Transportation Plan (no change from Alternatives Analysis)
- TSM/TDM
 - Expanded Transit Service (improvements to existing bus and rail service that increase transit service by 25% - same as in Alternatives Analysis); includes new Metro Rapid service on Colorado Boulevard east to Rosemead Boulevard and south to I-10.
 - Active Transportation Improvements (bike system improvements - same as in Alternatives Analysis)
 - Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) Improvements (being expanded over a larger portion of the affected study area)
 - Travel Demand Management (TDM - same as in Alternatives Analysis)
 - Intersection Hot Spot Improvements (being refined to reduce right of way requirements)
 - Local Street Improvements (being refined to reduce right of way requirements)
- BRT
 - Bus Rapid Transit line connecting from Alhambra to Pasadena generally along Fair Oaks Avenue, Colorado Boulevard, Hill/Lake Avenue and California Boulevard (BRT-6 alignment)
 - Includes TSM/TDM alternative components
 - Being refined to reduce impacts to on-street parking
 - Being refined to improve speed and reliability

- LRT
 - Light Rail Transit line connecting from Alhambra to Pasadena in an underground route generally along Fair Oaks Avenue with an underground terminus near Fillmore Street/Arroyo Parkway (LRT-4A alignment)
 - Includes TSM/TDM alternative components
 - Being refined to reduce right of way and construction impacts of at-grade segments in Alhambra/Los Angeles
 - Create/add bus feeder service to LRT stations
- Freeway
 - Eight-lane tunnel following F-7 alignment that would connect the existing freeway stubs in Pasadena and Alhambra
 - TSM/TDM operations elements being added to reduce traffic impacts near interchange ramp terminals
 - May include BRT service that would operate in the freeway tunnel and would extend the reach of the BRT on the north and south ends
 - Evaluate toll and non-toll alternatives
 - Evaluate with and without truck restrictions

Attachment A contains a partial list of issue areas that are not yet resolved regarding the above alternatives. The items listed in Attachment A are recommended for further study in the EIR/EIS to address Pasadena's concerns with each of the alternatives.

Role of SR710 Extension in Achieving Air Quality Conformity for the Region

The recently unanimously adopted 2035 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) uses the SR710 Extension as a major element for achieving conformity with the State Implementation Plan for air quality. In the RTP modeling, the SR710 Extension as a tolled eight-lane freeway tunnel is shown to provide substantial congestion relief to the north-south freeway corridors in the central portion of the region. Without the on-going level of freeway capacity that is anticipated by the SR710 Extension, the RTP would not be able to achieve conformity and therefore other proposals would be required.

Regions that do not achieve conformity with their RTPs are subject to sanctions from the federal government that restrict the use of federal funds. In non-conformity areas, Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) funds can only be spent on exempt projects, such as safety and certain public transportation projects, Transportation Control Measures from an approved State Implementation Plan, and project phases that were authorized by FHWA and FTA prior to the lapse in conformity.

Measure A and City Advocacy with Respect to the Alternatives Under Study

In 2001, Pasadena voters passed an uncodified initiative known as Measure A. Its only substantive provision declared:

"The policy of the City of Pasadena favors completion of the 710 Freeway between the I-210 Freeway and the I-10 Freeway" (Measure A, section 1)

The City has retained Fredric Woocher of the Strumwasser & Woocher law firm to provide legal advice regarding the issues involving Measure A and Mr. Woocher has assisted in the legal opinions expressed in this Agenda Report. Mr. Woocher has concluded that Measure A prohibits the City from taking a position against completion of all freeway proposals that would connect the I-10 and I-210 Freeways. However, Measure A does not limit City advocacy for or against alternative freeway routes other than between the I-10 and I-210 Freeways, as well as alternatives that do not involve construction of a "freeway," such as highway/arterial or transit alternatives.

Moreover, notwithstanding the limitations of Measure A, the City is free to comment upon (or even criticize) specific aspects of new freeway proposals, such as advocating against a toll road or in favor of certain mitigation measures relating to the F-7 tunnel route. In making such comments, the City should refrain from statements contrary to its official position under Measure A to support completing the SR-710 Freeway extension between the I-10 and I-210 Freeways.

Additionally, if the City wished to oppose all proposals for extending the SR710 Freeway between the I-10 and I-210 Freeways, including the F-7 tunnel route, the City Council could submit the question to the voters or could initiate legal action to seek a judicial determination as to whether Measure A constitutes a valid exercise of the people's initiative power and, therefore, whether the City is bound to comply with its restriction. The issues presented by such litigation are close ones and courts generally resolve doubts in favor of the people's exercise of the initiative – which, in this case, could operate to prevent the City from voicing complete opposition to the F-7 tunnel route.

COUNCIL POLICY CONSIDERATION:

The potential positions that the City Council may adopt are consistent with Council adopted Mobility Element objectives to promote a livable community and to protect neighborhoods by discouraging traffic from intruding into neighborhoods. Certain alternatives will likely have an impact (positively and negatively) on the City Council's Strategic Plan Goals to support and promote the quality of life and local economy, and increase conservation and sustainability.

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

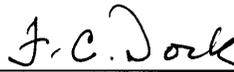
Metro and Caltrans are the lead agencies responsible for preparation of all environmental documents related to the SR710 Extension project. The City of Pasadena is one of several local jurisdictions who are commenting on the EIR/EIS that will be prepared for the project. Potential environmental impacts associated with the SR-710 project are currently being evaluated under separately required environmental analysis. The City Council can and should take a strong position in requesting that environmental impacts associated with any of the alternatives be thoroughly studied and mitigated as feasible. Attachment A lists some of the issues that the City Council should request Metro and Caltrans study in the EIR/EIS process.

The City Council's policy considerations with regard to this report will not result in any significant impacts on the environment and these actions are thereby exempt from CEQA pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15061 (b) (3). This exemption applies to activities where it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity in question may have a significant effect on the environment. The City Council's policy stance, whether for or against the project, will not result in a significant effect on the environment.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The potential positions that the City Council may adopt would have no fiscal impact for the City at this time. Fiscal impacts related to effects of potential alternatives on any properties may be identified in the Draft Environmental Impact Report/Draft Environmental Impact Study for this study.

Respectfully submitted,



FREDERICK C. DOCK

Director

Department of Transportation

Approved by:



MICHAEL J. BECK

City Manager

Attachments:

Attachment A - SR710 Unresolved Issues

Attachment A - Unresolved Issues for SR710 Alternatives

TSM/TDM Alternative

- The impact of the proposed increased in bus transit service on transit stops, crossings and sidewalks on Colorado Boulevard and Fair Oaks Avenue and other streets where the collective headway already is below 10 minutes because of overlapping transit service patterns.
- What is the source of funding for the operating costs for the enhanced transit service?
- Would the north SR710 stub remain or be removed?
- Disposition of state-owned properties south of Del Mar
- Relinquishment of State right-of-way on Pasadena Avenue and St. John Avenue to the City with Pasadena Avenue returned to its original cross section

BRT Alternative

- Loss of on-street parking on Fair Oaks, Colorado, Hill, Lake, California (not all Pasadena residences and businesses in these corridors have off-street parking options)
- Impacts on business/commercial districts from exclusive BRT lanes
- Impacts to Deemphasized Street (California Boulevard east of Lake) in Pasadena General Plan Mobility Element
- Impacts of bus signal priority on traffic flow on cross streets and surrounding intersections
- Would the north SR710 stub remain or be removed?
- Disposition of state-owned properties south of Del Mar
- Relinquishment of State right-of-way on Pasadena Avenue and St. John Avenue to the City with Pasadena Avenue returned to its original cross section

LRT Alternative

- Impact of maintenance yard on South Fair Oaks Specific Plan area in terms of being a non-conforming land use, loss of local street connectivity, rail and truck access to the yard
- Construction impacts from tunneling under South Fair Oaks Avenue
- Impacts to the Gold Line during station construction
- Would the north SR710 stub remain or be removed?
- Disposition of state-owned properties south of Del Mar
- Relinquishment of State right-of-way on Pasadena Avenue and St. John Avenue to the City with Pasadena Avenue returned to its original cross section

Freeway Tunnel Alternative

- Increased traffic impact on freeway access points remaining after the tunnel is constructed (SR 134 at San Rafael, Pasadena and St. John at Walnut, I-210 at Mountain and at Lake
- Specific impacts associated with truck traffic, should they be allowed
- Impact of extending St. John between Del Mar and California
- Disposition of air rights in cut/cover section south of Del Mar and north of California
- Disposition of state-owned properties south of Del Mar
- Relinquishment of State right-of-way on Pasadena Avenue and St. John Avenue to the City with Pasadena Avenue returned to its original cross section
- Details of the tunnel ventilation tower
- Potential to locate the tunnel ventilation tower in the I-210/SR 134 interchange area
- Impacts of the tunnel ventilation on air quality and visual aesthetics in Pasadena
- Noise and traffic impacts on I-210 north of SR 134