



**PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE
FEBRUARY 15, 2006**

**SUBJECT: MID-CITY/EXPOSITION LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT PROJECT;
ENVIRONMENTAL CLEARANCE FOR TWO ADDITIONAL OPTIONS**

ACTION: RECEIVE AND FILE

RECOMMENDATION

Receive and file this report on supplemental environmental clearance activities associated with the Mid-City/Exposition Light Rail Transit Project.

ISSUE

At its December 15, 2005 meeting the Board certified the Final Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (FEIS/FEIR) for the Mid-City/Exposition Light Rail Transit Project and approved a motion directing staff to identify and bring back to the Board the necessary steps to develop additional park and ride facilities and environmentally clear an underground station at USC/Exposition Park.

DISCUSSION

USC/EXPOSITION PARK OPTIONAL STATION (BELOW GROUND)

The project adopted by the Board at its meeting on December 15th included stations at Flower/Jefferson and Exposition/Vermont in the vicinity of USC/Exposition Park and an undercrossing that will extend for approximately 2,300 feet from just south of Jefferson Boulevard to just east of Trousdale Parkway.

Also at the December 15th meeting, the Board certified the FEIS/FEIR and provided environmental clearance for the baseline project and also environmentally cleared two design options in this area that are not part of the adopted project but could be added to the project in the future if additional funding is identified and the Board determines that such an action should be taken. These additional options are:

1. Extended Undercrossing Option – This option would extend the length of the adopted undercrossing from 2,300 feet to 3,400 feet, thereby extending the below ground segment from just east of Trousdale Parkway to the vicinity of Watt Way; and
2. USC/Exposition Park Optional Station – This option would add an at-grade station in the vicinity of the Rose Garden between Kinsey Drive and Trousdale Parkway.

Although both of the above options were environmentally cleared, these options are mutually exclusive so the Board could not adopt both as currently designed. The optional at-grade station could not be constructed at Exposition/Trousdale if the Extended Undercrossing is constructed, as it would relocate the LRT tracks below grade. A new design would need to be developed for a below-grade station that would be compatible with the Extended Undercrossing. Therefore, there would be a need for supplemental environmental clearance if the Board decides to incorporate an underground station as part of an extended undercrossing.

The type of clearance and the length of time that will be required to obtain environmental clearance for the underground station would depend upon whether the below grade station would result in significant environmental impacts that were not evaluated in the FEIS/FEIR.

- CEQA Clearance - If the below grade station will have more significant effects not discussed in the FEIS/FEIR, a Supplemental EIR should be prepared. Supplemental EIR's typically take 6-12 months to complete. Alternatively, if the below grade station does not create new or substantially more severe impacts, an Addendum will suffice. An Addendum to the existing FEIR could be prepared during a period of 3-4 months.
- NEPA Clearance – If the below grade station would result in significant environmental impacts not evaluated in the FEIS/FEIR, a Supplemental EIS will be needed. The time duration for environmental clearance under this scenario would be approximately 6-12 months if a Supplemental EIS is needed or 3-4 months if an Environmental Assessment would suffice.

Metro staff does not believe at this time that a Supplemental EIS/EIR will be needed because a below grade station will likely result in a lessening of environmental impacts without causing other significant environmental impacts. If this should be the case, NEPA clearance would be obtained through preparation of an Environmental Assessment followed by a request to the Federal Transit Administration for a determination that a Supplemental EIS is not necessary. CEQA clearance would be obtained through an EIR Addendum. The total time for both NEPA and CEQA environmental clearance would be 3-4 months following the completion of preliminary engineering for the below grade station, plus 1-2 months to obtain a revised Record of Decision from the Federal Transit Administration.

The construction of an underground station in conjunction with an extended undercrossing segment will require significant additional funding. At present, there is no indication that this additional funding will be available. If funding should be identified for the above

changes, staff would start work on the environmental clearance of the underground station using one of the above methods.

ADDITIONAL PARK AND RIDE FACILITIES

The project adopted by the Board on December 15th included park and ride facilities at three stations (Crenshaw Station-500 spaces, La Cienega Station-530 spaces and Venice/Robertson Station-600 spaces). At Crenshaw Station, Metro will develop a shared use parking facility in cooperation with the West Angeles Cathedral on land that is already being used for parking, but is generally underutilized and available during weekday hours when Metro transit parking demands are highest. West Angeles Cathedral has confirmed intent to enter into such an arrangement in a letter from the Chief Executive Officer, Lula B. Ballton, dated March 28, 2004. At La Cienega Station, Metro will work with the City of Los Angeles to develop a parking structure on the construction-staging site of the East Central Interceptor Sewer Project. At Venice/Robertson Station, Metro will develop parking on land that is already owned as a part of the railroad right of way.

No parking has been provided at other stations. Generally, around station sites there are not available vacant or underutilized sites for such parking. As such, land acquisition costs are likely to be high. Creation of parking facilities at these other stations could require land acquisition through condemnation. In all cases, the displacement and relocation of existing homes and businesses would be required.

The City of Los Angeles is currently initiating a study entitled “Mid-City/Exposition Light Rail Transit and Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension Station Area Planning Studies.” Plans will be developed around each of the future LRT Stations that will provide guidance on economic and community development opportunities. The study will form the framework for future transit-oriented development projects, joint development, and the appropriate locations for additional parking facilities.

Metro staff will work closely with the City during the development of these studies and will work to identify parking opportunities that are compatible with the station area development plans for each station. Funding plans can then be developed and the Board can direct staff on specific projects that should be environmentally cleared.

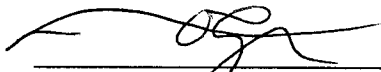
NEXT STEPS

If additional design and construction funding is identified, Metro staff would work with the City of Los Angeles and the Exposition Metro Line Construction Authority to environmentally clear the underground station and would work with the appropriate parties to develop and environmentally clear additional park and ride facilities.

Prepared by: David Mieger, Director
Westside Area Planning



Carol Inge
Interim Chief Planning Officer



Roger Snoble
Chief Executive Officer