



Expo

Exposition Metro Line
Construction Authority

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DATE: DECEMBER 14, 2006

TO: BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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

**ACTION: APPROVE CONCEPTUAL DESIGN FOR EXPO LIGHT RAIL
PROJECT AND ADOPT THE PROPOSED POLICY FOR
ALTERNATIVE URBAN DESIGN ELEMENTS**

RECOMMENDATION

- A. Approve conceptual design elements for the Expo Light Rail Project, which have been developed with input by the Urban Design Committee and the community; and
- B. Consider adopting a policy for alternative urban design elements, including station design modifications consistent with the Exposition Transit Parkway planning principles specified in the Final Environmental Impact Statement/Report (FEIS/FEIR) for the project.

SUMMARY

For the last six months, the Urban Design Committee, appointed by the Board, has been meeting to provide input into the urban design elements for the Expo project. The Committee achieved consensus on these urban design elements, which were presented in a series of meetings to the communities along the Expo corridor. The communities provided positive feedback on these design elements. As the design-build contractor is nearing the 60% design submittal, it is important to approve these design concepts so that the designer can keep the design of the project on schedule and on budget.

However, after receiving input from stakeholders at the last Board meeting, the Board asked the Authority staff to develop a policy for considering alternative station design options. Over the last several months, the Authority has worked

with stakeholders on alternative station design ideas; however, there has been no agreement on any alternative station design. Any decision on an alternative station design must be made as soon as possible if the design schedule is to be maintained. Based on direction from the Board, the Authority has developed a policy with criteria to help decide when and if alternative urban design elements should be considered by the Board.

DISCUSSION

For the last six months, the Urban Design Committee appointed by the Board, has met at least monthly with the Authority staff and design-build contractor to provide input into the design and aesthetic elements of the Expo Light Rail Project. The Urban Design Committee has also been briefed by Metro Art on the public art opportunities for this project, the involvement of the Art Advisory Committees, and the vision of incorporating the unique character of the neighborhoods through the public arts process.

At their meetings, the Urban Design Committee discussed four main design elements of the project:

- Station canopy design
- Urban design enhancements within 300 feet of the stations
- Vertical treatments
- Landscaping

Working together, the Urban Design Committee provided input and agreed on basic treatments and design principles for the project, including a standardized canopy design along the entire Expo corridor. The Urban Design Committee felt strongly that a standardized station canopy design would uphold the principles outlined in the FEIS/FEIR, connect communities along the entire corridor, give the Expo project a unified identity, and treat each neighborhood equally. Furthermore, since this project will ultimately connect to Santa Monica, the community and Urban Design Committee wanted to ensure that Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the Expo project were seamless and that it appeared as one project with the same station elements, design and amenities.

These design principles were presented to the community at three community meetings held along the corridor. The community also voiced support for the work performed by the Urban Design Committee and design-build contractor and provided input into these design elements. The general concepts presented by the Urban Design Committee members and design-build contractor were well received by the community.

The design-build contractor has also met with major stakeholders on a regular basis. Some of these stakeholders have voiced concern with the uniform design of the stations and the design-build contractor has presented these stakeholders

with possible alternatives that would slightly alter the modern looking canopy design while maintaining the integrity of the overall station design.

The design-build contractor will be submitting its 60% designs this month which will include the four major design elements. Any deviation from these concepts will require changes to the design which could result in cost and schedule impacts to the project. As a result, any policy decision by the Board to change the overall design concepts would need to be made soon.

Design Principles

The FEIS/FEIR for the Exposition Light Rail Project included a detailed discussion on station design and aesthetics. This was done to reflect the involvement of three working groups, comprised of stakeholders, community members, businesses and others, who worked for several years to provide input into the project during the preliminary engineering stage. These working groups, together with a lead artist hired to develop aesthetic concepts for the project, came up with several design principles that are reflected in the FEIS/FEIR that was approved by the Metro Board.

The FEIS/FEIR specifically states that the stations will feature a contemporary design and that the layout and materials used will be designed to be consistent with the overall Exposition Transit Parkway planning principles. A typical station design which shows a modern canopy is also included in the environmental document.

The FEIS/FEIR calls for a station design which includes the following:

- An architecture based on a singular design language to provide continuity to the overall alignment while allowing for variation at each station
- Developing a kit-of-parts for the station architecture that can be combined in different ways to address a variety of needs along the station platform
- Developing an architecture expressive of movement and place
- Integrating sustainability into the design of the station architecture
- Providing architectural continuity while allowing for the unique character of neighborhoods along the Exposition Transit Parkway to be expressed.

In the spirit of these planning principles reflected in the FEIS/FEIR, the design-build contractor, in conjunction with the Urban Design Committee, agreed that continuity and consistency along the alignment were key to upholding the principles of the FEIS/FEIR and agreed that the station canopy design should be uniform along the alignment. In order to allow the unique character of neighborhoods to be expressed, public art opportunities would be available at each station to reflect the unique culture and history of the surrounding community. Further, the unique features of the surrounding communities would be reflected in the variation of landscaping around each station. Both of these

features would be able to capture the culture and history of the community by incorporating individual features into the public art and landscaping design.

Other Metro projects have been inconsistent in their treatment of station design. On some projects, station designs are different while on other projects, such as the Orange Line, stations are the same. In the case of the Orange Line, the public art component served as the vehicle for allowing the individual characteristics of the community to be reflected at each station. Because of the higher design, construction and maintenance costs, there has been some discussion at Metro in pursuing a more uniform station design for future projects. But there has been no specific policy or criteria adopted at Metro to address this issue.

Urban Design Policy

At the last Board meeting, Expo Board members asked staff to develop a policy to address the station design issue. The Authority evaluated the current stage of the design process, input from the major stakeholders and Urban Design Committee members, and the cost and schedule of the project in developing the following criteria. If an alternative Urban Design Policy is adopted by the Board, staff believes the following criteria should be considered when determining whether to grant approval to alternatives to the basic urban design elements that are being developed for the Expo line.

1. The Requestor(s) must ensure that all stakeholders surrounding the station area support the alternative station design or urban design elements and should make sure that support is communicated to Authority staff and to the Board.
2. Any alternatives designs should be presented to the Urban Design Committee to ensure consistency with the rest of the project.
3. Any cost differential in the design and construction of the alternative station or urban design elements should be completely borne by the Requestor.
4. Any cost differential in the maintenance of the station or other urban design elements should be completely borne by the Requestor and would need to be approved by Metro operations.
5. Any alternative design would have to complement the existing conceptual design for the stations along the rest of the alignment and the other design elements of the project.
6. An alternative station design or alternative urban design elements could only be considered if there were no schedule impacts to the project or if such impacts could be mitigated by the Requestor.

If the Board decides they will entertain alternative station design requests, this or similar criteria should serve as a guideline for the Authority and the Board in considering alternative urban design requests for the Expo project. Some of these criteria have been discussed with the Urban Design Committee and other elected officials during meetings and briefings. Some members were concerned with the proposal of allowing for the possibility of any alternative station designs at all, even if the requestor paid the differential, as this may foster inequity among communities along the corridor. Other elected officials have stated they would be willing to allow stakeholders to upgrade stations or landscaping if they were willing to pay the cost differential, as long as the general look and integrity of the project was maintained.

Since this is a major policy issue for the project, the Board should decide whether they will approve a consistent design for the entire project or whether they want to adopt criteria which allows for the possibility of alternative station designs. If a station design policy is adopted, staff would follow the criteria and discuss specific requests for alternatives as they are received.

NEXT STEPS

If the Board adopts a Station Design policy, and if stakeholders submit requests for alternative designs, the Authority will work with these stakeholders to ensure that they understand the criteria on any submittals regarding alternative urban design elements.

Any alternative design proposals that meet the criteria listed above, would be presented to the Board for final approval.

ATTACHMENT(S)

None