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**AD HOC CONGESTION PRICING COMMITTEE
JUNE 18, 2014**

**SUBJECT: FEASIBILITY OF CONSTRUCTING A NEW BUS STATION AT HARBOR
GATEWAY TRANSIT CENTER**

ACTION: RECEIVE AND FILE

RECOMMENDATION

Receive and file this staff report addressing the feasibility of constructing a new bus station at Harbor Gateway Transit Center, similar in size and scope to the new El Monte Station opened in 2013.

BACKGROUND

This report is a response to a motion by Director Ridley-Thomas in the October 2013 Ad Hoc Congestion Pricing Committee.

Harbor Gateway Transit Center

The Harbor Gateway Transit Center (HGTC) is located at the southern terminus of the Silver Line, near the intersection of the 110 and 91 freeways in the City of Los Angeles. The property is approximately 10 acres, and is bordered by the 91 Freeway/Artesia to the north, the Dominguez Channel to the west, a Home Depot to the south, and the 110 freeway to the east. The property is currently developed with a parking lot for 900 cars, 12 bus bays with passenger waiting areas, a public restroom building, and a Sheriff's substation and operator relief building. The HGTC serves bus lines operated by Metro, Gardena BusLines, Torrance Transit, and the Carson Shuttle.

The HGTC was constructed by Caltrans and opened for operations in 1996 as part of the Harbor Freeway Transit Corridor. The property is owned by Caltrans, and negotiations are currently underway for Metro to acquire the property. Since 2011, Metro has expended approximately \$4 million in improvements to the station, including construction of a sheriff substation, CCTV system, lighting improvements, public art, landscaping, installation of a public restroom, variable message signs at bus bays, and signage/wayfinding improvements. Additional signage and passenger platform

improvements are underway and will be completed in Summer 2015. The property is currently maintained and operated by Metro.

The latest ridership data from April 2014 indicate that daily boardings and alightings currently stand at approximately 8,600 riders per weekday, which is almost triple the ridership numbers before the Silver Line was implemented. Parking lot utilization is approximately 75% of capacity. The Silver Line is operating from HGTC on 5-minute headways and ridership on the Silver Line appears to be at its peak, so large ridership increases like those seen since the launch of the Silver Line may not continue. That said, should ridership continue to increase due to additional service or increased municipal operator usage, the station could reach capacity in terms of bus bays, bus layover bays, and customer parking spots. For example, if daily ridership of 10,000 customers per day were to be reached, Metro would need to consider expanding the station by adding bus bays, bus layovers, and parking spaces at minimum.

El Monte Station

The El Monte Station is located at the eastern terminus of the Silver Line near the intersection of Santa Anita Avenue and the 10 freeway in El Monte, adjacent to Metro's Division 9 bus operations and maintenance facility. The station property, including passenger parking lots, is situated on approximately 20 acres primarily owned by Caltrans. Unlike the much newer HGTC, the original El Monte Station and parking facilities were constructed in 1973, 40 years ago, as part of the I-10 busway project.

Given the age and capacity constraint, Metro completed a reconstruction of the El Monte Station in 2013, replacing the dilapidated and undersized 40-year old structure with a new multi-level facility that tripled the size and capacity of the station. The new El Monte Station was constructed as part of the ExpressLanes program at a total cost of \$60 million, and has been certified as LEED Gold by the U.S. Green Building Council. The station is connected directly with the I-10 busway, and is developed with 30 bus bays on two levels, a public plaza, public art, approximately 2,000 parking spaces (structured and lots), a transit store occupied by Foothill Transit, ExpressLanes, and Greyhound, and a retail building that will contain a bike station and retail/food store (in development). The station was designed and constructed to be compatible with the City of El Monte's proposed transit village development, a multi-use residential and commercial transit-oriented development on City owned property adjacent to the new station.

The El Monte Station serves express and local transit lines operated by Metro and Foothill Transit, as well as Greyhound long distance service. The latest ridership data from April 2014 indicate that daily boardings and alightings currently stand at approximately 22,000 riders per weekday. Parking lot utilization is approximately 75% of capacity. The station was constructed to allow for a doubling of ridership in the future; however, if this were to occur Metro would need to add additional customer parking spaces.

DISCUSSION

As discussed above, the HGTC is currently functioning slightly under capacity; however, sustained ridership increases over time could cause the station to reach capacity in terms of bus bays and parking spaces. In addition, the station has been improved significantly since 2011 with Metro investing approximately \$4 million in improvements such as customer restrooms, new signage and wayfinding, landscaping, lighting, public art, and technology improvements.

The October 2013 motion by Director Ridley-Thomas inquired on the feasibility of constructing a new station at HGTC, similar in size and scope to the new El Monte Station. A new station and facilities could undoubtedly be a tool to increase ridership, and would allow for excess station capacity should sustained ridership increases be realized in the future. Although the land-locked nature of the station property would suggest that joint development or transit-oriented development would be challenging, the station could be planned and designed with future development opportunities in mind.

In summary, designing and constructing new station facilities at HGTC is certainly feasible; however, there are significant challenges that would need to be addressed prior to this pursuit. These challenges include:

- **Acquisition of the HGTC property from Caltrans** - Negotiations for acquisition of the property from Caltrans are currently ongoing. While not necessarily a condition of building a new station, completing the acquisition of the station property would simplify the design and construction of the new station.
- **Environmental Issues with former land fill usage** – The subject property has a history of being used as a landfill, and is currently covered with a “cap” and methane mitigation system. Any disturbance to this cap, such as new construction, would require oversight by the State of California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC). While not necessarily impacting the physical feasibility of constructing a new station, this cap and DTSC oversight would add engineering complexity and project costs for soil contamination and methane mitigation.
- **Service/Phasing Challenges** – Due to the relatively high ridership of the HGTC, service would need to continue being provided during construction. This was accommodated for the El Monte Station project by building and operating a temporary terminal during construction. The same would need to be accommodated at HGTC; however it could prove a bit more challenging as there is not as much available property at HGTC.
- **Funding Challenges** – There is currently no funding allocated to study, plan, design, or construct a new station at HGTC. Funding would need to be allocated for a new station project to move forward.

Without addressing and studying the challenges listed above, and engaging in initial planning, environmental studies, and preliminary engineering, it is very difficult to forecast the approximate cost of a new station at HGTC. The El Monte Station was constructed in 2013 at a cost of \$60 million; however, that station was constructed to accommodate a future ridership of 40,000 passengers, required construction of an underground level, and is probably bigger in size than a new HGTC would likely be. In addition, although El Monte Station had environmental issues of its own, the environmental issues related to the former landfill usage of the property at HGTC would be much more extensive.

With all the above taken into account, should Metro desire to construct a new HGTC station similar to El Monte Station, with all the features of a modern bus transit station, the cost range for this project would most likely range between \$25-50 million.

Should the goal be to achieve increase ridership and enhanced mobility in the South Bay, other strategies can also be explored in addition to improvements at HGTC. As part of the ExpressLanes project, Metro focused on improving safety and security along the Harbor Transitway, including at the HGTC, based on market research conducted by USC. Specifically, Metro constructed sound barriers at 37th Street Station, direct connections with local service, enhanced lighting at Slauson and Manchester Stations, new signage and wayfinding, a new sheriff substation at HGTC, and CCTV and technology improvements along the corridor. New buses were purchased and service levels were greatly enhanced to make the service more attractive, and also to reduce the wait time at the stations. As a result, ridership has increased significantly. Additional strategies can be explored to improve the overall corridor's mobility and attractiveness in advance of constructing a new HGTC.

NEXT STEPS

If funding for a new station at HGTC were to be allocated, concept planning, environmental clearance, and preliminary engineering would need to be completed, followed by final engineering and construction. In terms of schedule, it would take a minimum of three years to plan, design, and build a new HGTC station.

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