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Metro Study Supports Tunnel Alternative for 710 Freeway Gap

- Public workshops set for Pasadena, neighboring towns

By RICK JAGER

(June 14, 2006) Metro will conduct a public workshop in Pasadena, June 22, to discuss a just-released study concluding that it would be feasible to construct a 4.5-mile tunnel extending the Long Beach (710) Freeway to the I-210 Freeway in Pasadena.

Noting that the closure of the 710 Freeway gap will relieve congestion in the area, the report said potential environmental impacts could be minimized, eliminated or mitigated and that there are no insurmountable environmental issues preventing further consideration of a tunnel.

The workshop set for Pasadena will be followed by similar presentations before city council meetings in Alhambra, La Canada Flintridge, Los Angeles, Pasadena, San Marino and South Pasadena and for the San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments.

During a briefing for local media, CEO Roger Snoble and Caltrans District 7 Director Doug Failing stressed that the community must first reach consensus and form a partnership before additional studies are done or funding is sought.

The feasibility study, conducted by Parsons Brinckerhoff, considered several tunnel alternatives to extend the 710 freeway with construction costs ranging from approximately \$2.3 billion to \$3.6 billion in 2006 dollars.

Stacked and non-stacked

The possible tunnel configurations included stacked and non-stacked configurations with up to four lanes of traffic in each direction. Scenarios also included truck and non-truck movement through the tunnel extension.

The study found that both the tunnel boring machine (TBM) and sequential excavation method (SEM) methods were technically feasible options for constructing a tunnel in the area.

Over the past 40 years, many concepts have been proposed and evaluated to complete the 710 Freeway and close the 4.5-mile gap in the corridor. To date, none of those alternatives has been successful in satisfying the regional mobility needs and community and environmental concerns.

Alternatives have included traditional surface freeway links through the communities of Los Angeles, Pasadena and South Pasadena. Many members of the community were concerned with the impacts of those

surface roads and, consequently, opposed the extension of the 710 Freeway.

In response to this reaction from the community and to lessen the potential impact of completing the extension, tunneling was proposed as a potential option.

Caltrans, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), SCAG, and Metro support the completion of the 710 freeway to relieve regional and local traffic congestion and to enhance regional air quality.

The Metro staff will collect and summarize all community feedback resulting from the series of public meetings and will report to the Metro Board this fall.