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Westside/Central Governance Council
Agenda Item 3
March 3, 2005

SUBJECT: West Los Angeles Transportation Center

ACTION: Recommend that the Metro Board of Directors approve the Final Environmental Impact Report for the West Los Angeles Transportation Center and approve the West Los Angeles Transportation Center as the Project; and

Communicate this position to the Metro Board of Directors.

BACKGROUND

Beginning in April 2004, and at subsequent meetings, sector staff has been keeping the Governance Council informed of work to develop a new location and facility for Venice Division 6. The Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) for the project was released on October 21, 2004 and the public comment period closed 60 days later on December 21, 2004.

Metro staff is currently completing work on the Final EIR (FEIR) and plans to ask the Metro Board of Directors for approval at their meeting on March 24, 2005.

DISCUSSION

The three Westside/Central operating divisions are all at or beyond their design capacity for buses creating inefficient and sometimes unsafe conditions at those divisions. Furthermore, the sector is under pressure to expand service to meet increased service demands.

The existing Division 6 facility in Venice is Metro's smallest and oldest operating division and has not met the agency's needs for many years. The facility is too small, cannot be expanded, cannot accommodate CNG fueling systems, is poorly located outside of the central service area, and has severe and costly operating restrictions. These issues result in operating inefficiencies costing the agency approximately \$4.2 million per year in deadhead hours. Numerous attempts over the past 25 years to locate and develop a replacement facility have not been successful, primarily due to the inability of Metro to acquire a suitable site in the densely developed Central and West Los Angeles area.

In September 2003, Metro entered into an agreement with RAD Jefferson, LLC (the developer) to build a new operating facility for Metro in exchange for the property in Venice and a cash payment. At that time, work also began on the environmental review of the proposed new facility, as well as the developer's proposal for the Venice property.

The proposed West Los Angeles Transportation Facility Project site is located on 4.66 acres on Jefferson Boulevard between National Boulevard and Rodeo Road. This site is surrounded by other light industrial and commercial businesses including See's Candy manufacturing, Target, Spraylat industrial paint manufacturing, and others. The nearest residences, located at Cameo Woods, are over 750 feet away.

The new facility would consist of a state-of-the-art transportation center from which to maintain and operate a fleet of up to 175 CNG-powered buses and provide improved public transit service in the Central/Westside Sector. Relocation of existing operations from the Venice property to this new location would allow Metro to improve service from a more centralized location in response to growing ridership, and to alleviate costly operating restrictions and inefficiencies at the current Venice facility.

Development of the transportation facility on the 4.66-acre site would provide Metro with new administration and maintenance facilities. These facilities would include a primary administration/maintenance building with up to 14 bays for maintenance, repair and inspection, as well as office, storage, shop and staff support uses. In addition, there would be several auxiliary facilities including a bus washing and fueling area, inspection bay, chassis wash area, facilities maintenance area and trash/recycling area. The facility would also provide up to 240 employee parking spaces on a grade separated parking deck. All ingress and egress from the project site would be from Jefferson Boulevard, and the highest volumes of traffic in and out of the proposed facility will occur during off-peak traffic hours.

The developer's proposed Sunset Avenue Project would be developed after the existing Division 6 facility is vacated by Metro. The existing structures would be removed and any potential contamination associated with the site's previous use remediated and legally disposed.

Per previous direction by the Metro Board of Directors, traffic in and out of the facility will be restricted from certain portions of La Cienega and Rodeo during peak hours unless the buses are in service, ambient noise levels will be maintained in the overnight hours, staff has worked with a Community Design Review Committee (CDRC), and the facility has been designed to meet Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design (LEED) certification.

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

On the basis of the data and analyses contained in the Final EIR, no potential adverse environmental effects from the proposed West Los Angeles Transportation Facility were identified. For each of the environmental categories identified, the FEIR shows that either the impacts would not be potentially significant or the mitigation measures incorporated in the FEIR would reduce impacts to less than significant.

Traffic: The EIR found that there were no significant impacts to traffic at intersections near the Jefferson site. This is mostly because the bulk of the traffic in and out of the facility would occur outside of peak traffic periods. However, the EIR is recommending modifications to the intersection of Jefferson & La Cienega to better facilitate the turn from southbound La Cienega to westbound Jefferson.

Noise: The EIR found that there would be no significant noise impacts from the facility due largely to the distances from the facility and the noise being blocked by the facility itself and the use of noise reducing materials.

VISUAL/AESTHETIC

Metro staff, the developer, and the project architects worked with a Community Design Review Committee comprised of representatives from each of the closest residential areas – Baldwin Hills Gardens, Blair Hills, Cameo Woods, and East Culver City – and two business representatives. With this input, the facility has a modern design that fits in with many of the newer buildings that have been built in the area. It incorporates several architectural elements including setbacks, landscaping, color, and modern noise reducing materials. It also incorporates several features intended to improve the energy efficiency and environmental friendliness of the facility including solar panels and a green roof. These are intended to ensure that the facility receives LEED certification. Renderings of the design for the facility are included in Attachment A.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Metro has conducted extensive community outreach efforts continuously since spring 2003. Initially, these began with one-on-one meetings with key individuals in the community and area businesses. Over time, Metro has met with homeowner & resident's associations, neighborhood councils, area businesses, business and community organizations and others. At each phase of the project, Metro has returned, or offered to return to provide additional updates and information about how to provide input. Metro has released fact sheets to the community, held a community fair, and took members of the community on a tour of a modern operating facility in Long Beach.

BENEFITS

Metro staff believes that there are numerous benefits to this project including:

The facility will provide Metro with a new, modern division that is more centrally located, will accommodate compressed natural gas buses, and reduce operating expenses;

The facility is fully within an industrial area, compatible with nearby land uses, and over 750 feet from the nearest residences;

Heaviest traffic to and from the facility avoids rush hour thereby minimizing impacts on surrounding streets and intersections;

The unique land swap arrangement with the developer is financially prudent as it allows Metro to leverage the value of our asset in Venice and maintains operations without disruption until the new facility is finished;

Metro is also in discussions with the Los Angeles Urban League about partnering with their Automotive Training Facility on Crenshaw Boulevard to provide training for students interested in additional mechanical training related to Compressed Natural Gas engines;

The developer is partnering with the Greater Los Angeles African American Chamber of Commerce that has agreed to operate as a clearinghouse for local contractors and construction workers to give them the opportunity to bid on construction sub-contracts and work.

NEXT STEPS & COMBINED EIR

Metro staff will present the Final EIR to the Board of Directors in March. Metro Board action will be limited to findings, impacts and mitigations regarding the facility proposed for Jefferson. Metro is the co-lead agency for the EIR with the City of Los Angeles. Sometime after the March meeting of the Metro Board of Directors, the City of Los Angeles will also consider the EIR and take action regarding findings, impacts and mitigations regarding development proposed for the Venice site after Metro ceases operations at that site.

Additional information is contained in Attachment B regarding project need, points of the deal with the developer, design of the facility, and community outreach.

Pictures of New Division 6 renderings:

[-Elevations-small](#)

[-Site02-small](#)

**WEST LOS ANGELES TRANSPORTATION FACILITY
PROJECT SUMMARY AS OF MARCH 2005**

PROJECT NEED

- Metro's Division 6 facility in Venice is over 100 years old and has a maximum capacity of only 79 40-foot diesel buses.
- The facility is located on the far western edge of the Westside/Central service area and does not have good street access to routes within the service area.
- The current site results in a high-level of operating inefficiencies due to severe operating restrictions and limited service hours including no operation of late night or weekend service, no nighttime maintenance activities, limited use of compressed air tools, and restricted times for pull-outs and pull-ins.
- These restrictions cost Metro approximately \$4.2 million annually in deadhead hours.
- Metro will complete conversion of the fleet to all CNG by approximately 2013, and it is not feasible to expand or bring CNG fueling to the Venice site.
- Once diesel buses are phased out of the fleet, operating costs of fueling CNG buses off site for Division 6 are expected to increase by \$2.5 million annually.
- Relocation to a new, larger, better-situated site, capable of 24-hour operation and CNG fueling, is the most effective and efficient use of resources to reduce the deadhead costs and inefficiencies.
- Over the last approximately 25 years, Metro has made numerous attempts to locate alternative sites to replace the current Venice division. Several dozen locations were investigated and, for numerous reasons, were not further evaluated.
- The proposed replacement site is in the City of Los Angeles and is located south of the Santa Monica Freeway (I-10), in an industrial area on Jefferson Boulevard between National And Rodeo. The site has been sitting vacant for several years, and neighboring businesses are primarily industrial and commercial, including the See's Candy manufacturing facility, industrial paint manufacturing, and a

Target store. The nearest residential area, Cameo Woods, is located over 750 feet from the property's southern edge. The site is of sufficient size, shape, and location to meet Metro's criteria for development as a bus operating facility.

DEAL POINTS

The following presents a summary of the basic framework of the land exchange agreement between RAD Jefferson LLC and Metro:

- Metro is not liable for payment of any funds to the Developer until acceptance of the new facility by Metro.
- The Developer has acquired a 4.66-acre site in West Los Angeles and will design and construct a new and larger maintenance facility to accommodate a mixed fleet of 40-foot standard and 60-foot articulated transit vehicles. The facility will be exchanged with Metro's Venice Division 6 and an "equalizing payment" upon completion and acceptance by Metro.
- The total project value is \$20.9 million, which includes an "equalizing payment" of \$8 million plus Metro's Venice property that is valued at \$12.9 million. This value does not include costs associated with CNG installation and Metro requested change orders.
- The CNG system will be provided by the Developer at a cost not to exceed \$6,450,000 for capital equipment and \$1,860,000 for a two-year service contract (to be negotiated). As with the equalizing payment, no payment on the CNG system will be made until closing.
- The Venice property value is \$12.9 million based on two appraisals. \$8 million is the difference between the Venice site and new facility.
- The transaction is contingent on CEQA environmental clearance, and the Developer's successful completion of milestones such as start and end of the CEQA process, and start and end of construction. The agreement also contains provisions for damages and recovery of staff expense if developer defaults on agreements.
- Metro is responsible for the cost of remediating any potentially contaminated soil on the Venice site.
- Metro obtained two independent cost estimates for the new facility, both of which confirm fair value for the Metro site and its payment.

- This deal structure allows Metro to maximize the value of our asset in Venice while also maintaining operations for our customers until the new facility is operational.

FACILITY DESIGN

- As required by the Development Agreement, the Developer has submitted Schematic, 30%, and 60% Progress Design Submittals which were subsequently approved by Metro. As of this date, the Developer is preparing the 90% Progress Design Submittal for Metro review and approval. When the 90% drawings are approved, the Developer will prepare 100% drawings and construction documents.
- Although the EIR has studied a maximum fleet capacity of 175 buses, the facility is currently designed to maintain and operate between 133 and 150 CNG-fueled buses, dependent on the fleet mix of 60-foot articulated and 40-foot standard transit vehicles. A second level parking deck will be constructed to accommodate 240 employee and non-revenue vehicles. Diesel buses will not be operated out of the facility, and the facility will only be outfitted with CNG fueling facilities.
- Per Supervisor Burke's motion prior to approval of the Development Agreement, Metro staff assembled and convened the Community Design Review Committee to provide input as to the external appearance of the facility. As required, the Committee is comprised of a representative from each of the four closest residential areas, and two business representatives. The Committee has convened five times and the Committee's suggestions determined to be feasible are being incorporated into the facility design.
- Per Mayor Hahn and former Metro Director Villaraigosa's motion, the new facility will be designed and constructed utilizing sustainable construction technologies such as solar panels, energy efficient materials, day lighting, recycled materials, storm water retention, and numerous other technologies. In compliance with the motion, this is intended to achieve United States Green Building Council (USGBC) Leadership in Environmental & Energy Design (LEED) certification for the facility.
- Providing that the Developer continues to stay on schedule with the remaining design milestones, and that the Metro Board approves the Final EIR, construction is scheduled to begin in Summer 2005 and be complete by Summer 2006.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

- Community outreach activities began in Spring 2003 and have continued throughout the development process. Initially, one-on-one meetings took place with key individuals from the closest residential areas and with nearby businesses. As this number grew, it also expanded over time to include meetings or briefings for residential/homeowner associations, neighborhood councils, and business associations.

- Since approval of the development agreement, staff has returned to formally brief homeowners associations in Cameo Woods, Blair Hills, Baldwin Hills Gardens and East Culver City. Presentations or briefings have also been provided to a variety of other groups including the Baldwin Hills Village Community Action Group, West Adams Neighborhood Council, 100 Black Men of Los Angeles, Los Angeles Urban League, and Greater Los Angeles African American Chamber of Commerce, NAACP, Empowerment Congress West Neighborhood Council, and the Culver City Council.
- In addition to area businesses, staff made early and special efforts to meet with representatives from businesses adjacent to the Jefferson site including See's Candy, Target, Klabin Properties, and Samitaur. As with all area contacts, these businesses have been kept informed of the project, as it has progressed.
- Staff has also produced four fact sheets to keep the community informed of progress on the proposed project. These fact sheets are widely distributed to the growing database that staff maintains.
- In Spring 2004, Metro also sponsored a community fair that was held in the parking lot of the adjacent Target Store. New and vintage Metro buses and service vehicles were available for the public to see, as well as information about this project, the Exposition LRT, Metro job and contracting opportunities, and other Metro information. The Los Angeles Urban League also participated with a booth and the LAUSD's bicycle safety program ran a bike safety clinic throughout the day. Target and McDonalds donated prizes that were given away.
- Informal contact has taken place on an ongoing basis to keep community leaders informed of specific issues of interest to them.
- In the Fall of 2004, Metro took several area representatives on a tour of a facility operated by Long Beach Transit. The purpose of this field trip was to show the appearance of a newer, modern operating division. Representatives from each of the closest residential associations were invited, along with members of the Community Design Review Committee, leaders of neighborhood councils, and members of the Westside/Central Governance Council.
- Residents and businesses have expressed their appreciation of Metro's outreach efforts beginning at such an early stage, even prior to an EIR, and continuing on an ongoing basis. Questions and concerns have typically related to potential traffic and noise impacts from the new facility.