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**PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE
NOVEMBER 16, 2005
EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT AND AUDIT COMMITTEE
NOVEMBER 17, 2005**

**SUBJECT: REGIONAL CONNECTOR THROUGH THE
CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT OF LOS ANGELES**

ACTION: RECEIVE AND FILE

RECOMMENDATION

Receive and File update on the study of the Regional Connector through the Central Business District of Los Angeles (CBD).

ISSUE

At its September 2005 Board Meeting the Board directed staff to:

Report back to the Board no later than November/December 2005 Board meeting on the following items utilizing existing resources with no fiscal impact or delay to other projects.

- A. Impact of the regional connector on current ridership for the Metro Blue Line, Red Line, and Gold Line and estimated ridership for the Expo Line and Eastside Extension; and
- B. Implementation timeline and costs for each phase of work related to an analysis of the options for a regional connector, including completion of the alternative(s) analysis, environmental work, design, preliminary engineering, final design, right-of-way acquisition and construction; and
- C. Possible sources of funding to complete a regional connector.

Metro staff initiated a technical feasibility assessment for a potential regional connector in early 2004 consistent with the discussions of the future need for a connector as far back as the 1992 Long Range Transportation Plan. More recently the 2003 Short Range Transportation Plan discussed exploring the feasibility of a connector. The 2004 study focused on conceptual methods to provide a regional connector and to alleviate potential operational constraints at the 7th Street/Metro Center Station. The 2004 study analyzed low to moderate cost alternatives including alignments that are predominantly "at-grade" and "street running". Since the study was limited to how additional capacity could be attained and how a connection could be made, no specific alignment was recommended. Instead, multiple opportunities were reviewed, each with advantages and disadvantages. The study focused on sixteen conceptual options including combinations of at-grade, partial sub-

surface and partial aerial alignments. Based on high subway construction costs added to the lack of available funding for a new subway, a fully underground alignment was not considered as practical in the alternatives. Metro has previously studied subway alternatives for this station and through the CBD. This Board Report utilizes the information from the 2004 and previous studies to respond to the Chairs' request for information.

DISCUSSION

Ridership Benefits

Per the Board request staff is modeling the ridership and operational consequences of a regional connector. Though the results of the modeling analysis are not completed at the time of this report, the results will be transmitted to the Board under a separate cover when they are completed.

Pending the review of the model run, a second potential system benefit would be that the regional connector would alleviate an operational constraint at the 7th Street/Metro Center Station (Flower Street). The current configuration of the Metro Center Station requires that all light rail trains entering this station be "turned back" for the return trip to either the Metro Blue or the future Exposition lines. The amount of time to "turn" a light rail train from the north bound track to the south bound side constrains the frequency (headway) of trains using this station.

One of the alternatives to alleviate this constraint is to take the light rail trains "through" the station instead of turning them back. Taking the trains through the station eliminates the time required to change from one track to the other and allows a free flow of trains through the station, thus increasing the capacity of the station and the rail system.

Implementation

The estimated time to plan, design and construct a regional connector similar to the alternatives within this study range from 7- to 9 years if funding is provided. One of the main issues regarding implementing the regional connector would be to obtain concurrence from the City of Los Angeles to accept running much or some of the line within the existing street right-of-way. A further breakdown of the implementation steps is as follows:

Task	Description
<p>Completion of the Alternatives Analysis (AA) including securing consultant, determining mode, general alignment and project cost estimates.</p> <p>After the AA and selection of a Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) a request for approval for PE can be submitted to FTA for 5309 New Starts funding.</p>	<p>20 months (\$1.5-2.5 million) –Cost might be reduced if Metro staff conducts the modeling of the alternatives.</p> <p>Result-Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) Finished in month 20</p>
<p>Draft Environmental Impact Study /Environmental Impact Report (EIS/EIR) and public hearings. Includes conceptual engineering.</p> <p>Plan and profile design is started concurrent with environmental work</p>	<p>12 months, (\$3-4 million) – Including plan and profile design.</p> <p>Result-Draft EIR/EIS Finished in month 32</p>
<p>Final EIS / EIR, including completing Preliminary Engineering (PE) to support environmental clearances and issuing Record of Decision</p>	<p>14 months, (\$6-9 million.)</p> <p>Result- Final approved EIR/EIS and Record of Decision and PE Finished month 46 (assumes 6 months for a Record of Decision (ROD))</p>
<p>Full Funding Grant Agreement (FFGA), if requested.</p>	<p>12 months added for FFGA (Cost included in construction cost) Subsequent to approval of the Final EIS/EIR and concurrent with completing Preliminary Engineering and following “Limited Notice to Proceed” from federal government.</p>
<p>Right-of-Way acquisition</p>	<p>Time frame will depend on the amount and location of right-of-way required. (Cost included in construction cost)</p> <p>After Record of Decision, right of way acquisition can take place.</p>
<p>Final Design Can be completed separately or as part of a design/build.</p>	<p>12 months if completed separately. Cost included in construction.</p>
<p>Construction – Costs would need to be escalated to the year of construction</p>	<p>24-48 months for design build- (\$120-250 million-2005 dollars) Finished month 82-112*</p>

* An approximately 12 or more month reduction in this overall schedule is possible if exclusively local funds are used to plan, design and construct this project.

Costs

The most recent 2004 study prepared rough-order-of-magnitude cost estimates for each of the alternatives based on a review of Metro's actual costs for similar components of the rail system. Costs were in 2005 dollars and ranged from approximately \$120 million to \$250 million. These numbers do not include escalation costs, which will increase the cost depending on the year of construction. The differences in costs largely relate to the amount of grade separations, minimization of traffic impacts, operational speeds and directness of the routes. An at-grade operation with a higher level of traffic impacts was obviously a less expensive alternative, while the higher speed with greater mitigation of traffic impacts was more expensive. All alternatives have some level of impact on traffic operations. Recent cost increases for construction of public works projects might also influence the ultimate cost estimate.

Possible Source of Funding

If the Board were to direct the staff to perform an Alternatives Analysis study, staff would start the procurement process for a consultant team. Funds would not be needed until budget year FY07 when the consultant team would be on board.

The annual planning budget historically includes adequate funds to conduct a multi-year transportation study similar in size to an Alternatives Analysis for this project. An Alternatives Analysis for this project could likely be included in the 2007 through 2008 budget years planning budget. This anticipates a 16 month Alternatives Analysis process (after completing the procurement) over two budget years. These efforts should not impact previously approved studies.

Funding at the levels required for an Environmental Impact Study and Environmental Impact Report (EIS/EIR) or preliminary engineering (PE) would have to be programmed by the Board. Future funding sources for new projects will be determined as part of the LRTP process. Generally, available funds for new projects from existing sources are mostly available in the second or third decade of the plan. However, new sources of revenue are possible during the plan period from such proposals as a new State of California transportation bond or from the full implementation of Proposition 42. If these funds are identified and become available, constrained LRTP projects could be accelerated and new projects could be added to the plan.

NEXT STEPS

Staff will analyze and consider the Regional Connector in the Long Range Transportation Plan update process along with other proposed projects and priorities. Continued study of the Regional Connector, including conducting an Alternatives Analysis study will require a Board directed action including the authorization of funding.

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