



Exposition Metro Line
Construction Authority

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DATE: JANUARY 11, 2007

TO: BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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

**ACTION: CONSIDER ADOPTING THE PROPOSED URBAN DESIGN
POLICY**

RECOMMENDATION

Authorize the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to execute the proposed Urban Design Policy to allow 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. At the request of the Board, this item was continued from the December 2006 Board meeting.

SUMMARY

For the last six months, the Urban Design Committee (Committee) appointed by the Board, has met to provide input into the urban design elements for the Exposition Light Rail Transit Project (Project). The Committee achieved consensus on these urban design elements, which were presented in a series of meetings to the communities along the Exposition corridor. The communities provided positive feedback on these design elements. At the December 2006 Board meeting, the Board received a presentation on these conceptual designs and adopted these elements for the Project.

At the November 2006 Board meeting, the Board asked Authority staff to develop a policy that would allow alternative urban design options. This policy was also presented to the Board at the December 2006 Board meeting, but the Board deferred action on this item and asked that the item be carried over to the January 2007 agenda.

Over the last several months, the Exposition Metro Line Construction Authority (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 ideas should be considered by the Board.

DISCUSSION

For the last six months, the Committee appointed by the Board, has met at least monthly with Authority staff and the design-build contractor to provide input into the design and aesthetic elements of the Project. Working together, the Committee provided input and agreed on basic treatments and design principles for the Project, including a standardized canopy design along the entire Exposition corridor. The 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 Project a unified identity and treat each neighborhood equally. Furthermore, since this project will ultimately connect to Santa Monica, the community and the Committee wanted to ensure that Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the 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 voiced support for the work performed by the Committee and design-build contractor. These basic design principles and concepts were approved by the Board at the December 2006 Board meeting.

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. Since the design-build contractor has completed 60% designs for the majority of the Project, any deviation from the basic design concepts would need to be made as soon as possible. Thus, any policy decision by the Board to allow for a design change at a specific location, would need to be made in the next few months.

Design Principles

The FEIS/FEIR for the 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 and 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 standardized 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; and
- 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 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 of having different station designs, 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 November 2006 Board meeting, the Board asked staff to develop a policy to address the station design issue. The Authority evaluated the current stage of the design process, the input from the major stakeholders and the Committee, 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 for the Project already approved by the Board.

1. The Requestor(s) must ensure that the majority of stakeholders surrounding the station area should 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 alternative designs should be presented to the 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. Any 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 or urban 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 Project. Some of these criteria have been discussed with the 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, 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 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