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**PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE
OCTOBER 17, 2007**

SUBJECT: EXPOSITION CONNECTOR RIGHT-OF-WAY

**ACTION: AMEND THE FY08 BUDGET TO INCLUDE FENCING, LANDSCAPING
AND SITE IMPROVEMENTS**

RECOMMENDATION

- A. Approve a program in an amount not to exceed \$300,000 over two years for fencing, landscaping, and basic improvements at strategic locations along the Exposition Connector Right-of-Way between Flower Street and Long Beach Boulevard; and
- B. Amend the FY08 Budget in the amount of \$200,000 from Right-of-Way Lease Revenues for initiation of the above improvements.

ISSUE

This recommendation is initiated in part because of the adjacent community's request for Metro to abandon and sell the Exposition Connector Right-of-Way between Flower Street and Long Beach Boulevard. The community request stems from stakeholder concerns about the property's physical condition and maintenance. These concerns were expressed in a series of community meetings. Residents link property conditions along the right-of-way (ROW) with blight and undesirable activity, including crime, graffiti, and dumping, and believe these conditions discourage investment in neighborhood revitalization. Enclosing portions of the ROW with iron fencing, clearing debris, and installing some shrubs and low-maintenance landscaping would improve the physical appearance and minimize the recurrence of unsightly conditions. Community representatives have concurred that these changes would satisfy most of the pressing community concerns about the properties.

The ROW is a former Southern Pacific freight railway segment approximately 2.2 miles in length. The ROW runs east to west between Metro's Blue Line and the Exposition Light Rail Line, which is now under construction near the University of Southern California and Exposition Park in South Los Angeles. Planning does not propose fencing and landscaping along the entire ROW; the improvements would be strategically located in residential and business districts, primarily in the .5-mile segment between Main and San Pedro Streets.

Stakeholders have expressed interest in using the ROW for a variety of non-transportation uses, including the development of workforce housing. A recent Metro consultant study concluded that the ROW holds potential as a future transit corridor and should be preserved. Community input during this study helped identify secondary uses for the ROW, including development of the air rights for affordable housing and other community-serving uses. These developments would preserve the potential of the ROW to be used as a future transit corridor. The ROW is not currently used for transportation purposes.

RATIONALE FOR BUDGET AMENDMENT

The proposed amendment reflects a “Good Neighbor” policy for Metro. Staff estimates that the requested amount will address the most pressing maintenance and appearance conditions while addressing the most critical community concerns about site conditions along the ROW. Installation of the proposed fencing would restrict public access to the ROW and thereby improve security, reduce ongoing maintenance costs and minimize Metro liability.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

Alternatives that were considered in addition to Staff’s recommended course include:

1. No action;
2. Use of a fencing type other than wrought iron;
3. Development and improvements on the ROW that preclude future transit and non-motorized transportation; and
4. Sell the ROW.

Alternative 1 responds neither to community concerns about the condition of Metro-owned property nor to the community desire for alternative land uses in the ROW. Alternative 2 may not meet the necessary fence quality to deter crime. Alternatives 3 and 4 preclude future use of the ROW for transportation improvements.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The recommended action would add \$200,000 to the FY08 Budget. Funding would come from Right-of-Way Lease Revenues. Since this is a multi-year project, the Cost Center Manager and Chief Planning Officer will be responsible for budgeting the remaining \$100,000 in FY09.

BACKGROUND

The ROW was evaluated as a non-revenue light rail connector in the *Mid-City/Westside Transit Corridor Draft EIS/EIR* (2001). This alternative was not pursued due to community opposition. In March 2005, Councilwoman Jan Perry (Ninth District) wrote to Metro's CEO to request consideration of the ROW in Metro's Long Range Transportation Plan and an evaluation of Metro's need to retain the ROW for transportation. Councilwoman Perry also requested near term improvements to "make the property more compatible with the community."

Following Councilwoman Perry's request, Staff commissioned a study on the Exposition Connector ROW corridor by STV Incorporated. The resulting report, the *Long Beach Blue Line and Exposition Line Connector Study* (December 2006) concludes that the ROW holds future potential as a light rail corridor and should be preserved for transportation. In addition, the study found that the ROW can accommodate near-term housing development while still preserving an easement for future possible rail transit use. These developments of the ROW's air rights would maintain a spatial envelope that allows for construction and operation of a potential future transit corridor. In summary, Metro can address the community's desires while preserving the ROW for transit. The full study report is available in Metro's Dorothy Peyton Gray Transportation Library.

The budget would be used for fencing and other site improvements, such as removal of substandard fencing and debris, painting, and landscaping in strategic locations. The landscaping would consist primarily of drought-tolerant and native shrubs that require little to no irrigation. Staff would present all improvement plans to community stakeholders for their review.

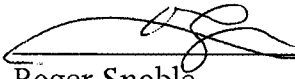
NEXT STEPS

- Meet with community stakeholders to refine options for fencing, landscaping, and basic improvements; and
- Procure fencing, landscaping, and improvements.

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