

Memorandum

To: Chair and Commissioners

Date: February 23, 2009

From: JOHN F. BARNA, JR.

File: Book Item 2.2b (4)
Action

Ref: Draft Environmental Impact Report – The Exposition Corridor Transit Project Phase II

ISSUE: Should the Commission, as a Responsible Agency, provide comments to the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) prepared for the Exposition Corridor Transit Phase II Project (Project)?

RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends that the Commission make no comments relative to the alternatives or environmental impacts addressed in the DEIR. However, since alternatives 3 and 4 are not fully programmed, staff recommends that a letter be sent recommending that, once an alternative is selected, the Authority should identify and secure additional funds if necessary to fully fund the project.

BACKGROUND: The Exposition Metro Line Construction Authority (Expo Authority) is the lead agency responsible for preparation of the DEIR to satisfy the requirements of CEQA. The Project, located in Los Angeles County, will extend transit service for a distance of approximately 7 to 8 miles within the Exposition corridor starting at the Phase 1 terminus currently under construction at the Venice/Robertson Station in Culver City, to a planned terminus near Colorado Boulevard and 4th Street in Santa Monica.

The following project alternatives were evaluated in the DEIR: No-Build, Transportation System Management (TSM), and four Light Rail Transit (LRT) alignment alternatives. The project would provide high capacity transit service in an area currently underserved and experiencing high levels of travel delay and congestion.

Implementation of the proposed project would result in potentially significant impacts in nine resource areas: traffic, circulation, and parking; visual quality; cultural resources; paleontological resources; noise and vibration; parks and community facilities; safety and security; water resources; and construction. Incorporation of mitigation measures would reduce these impacts to a less than significant level except in three areas: traffic, circulation and parking; visual quality; and construction. Depending on the alternative selected, it is anticipated that CEQA Findings, Statements of Overriding Considerations, and a program for monitoring and reporting on mitigation measures would be prepared before the Expo Authority would approve the project.

According to the Expo Authority, depending on the alternative selected, implementation of the alternatives range from \$1.3 billion to \$1.9 billion (escalated). The project is funded with mostly local funds, as well as state STIP and Prop 1B bond funds. Construction is estimated to begin in 2010.

Attachments - Project Alternatives and Project Location

Exposition Corridor Transit Project – Phase II Project Alternatives

The list below identifies the alternatives considered in the Exposition Corridor Transit Phase II Project Draft Environmental Impact Report:

- The No-Build Alternative consists of the existing transit services as well as improvements explicitly committed to be constructed by the year 2030 as defined in the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) Regional Transportation Plan (RTP).
- The Transportation Systems Management (TSM) Alternative identifies transit improvements above and beyond the No-Build Alternative with the goal of improving transit services as much as possible without making major capital investment in new infrastructure, and specifically without constructing the Expo Phase 2 project. The TSM Alternative would involve three basic components: addition of a rapid bus route connecting downtown Culver City with downtown Santa Monica; associated service improvements on selected north/south routes to feed stations along the new rapid bus route; and service improvements on selected routes connecting Westside communities to the Expo Phase 1 terminus.
- Light Rail Transit (LRT) Alternatives begin at the terminus of Expo Phase 1 in Culver City and would terminate in downtown Santa Monica in the vicinity of the intersection of 4th Street and Colorado Avenue (refer to Appendix H for a fold out exhibit). Depending upon the alternative, the alignments between these two points would vary as identified below. Given the relative impacts associated with the various alternatives, LRT Alternatives 1 or 2 are considered to be the environmentally superior alternatives.
 - LRT Alternative 1 (Expo ROW–Olympic Alternative) (LRT 1) would utilize approximately 5 miles of the existing Exposition ROW from the Expo Phase 1 terminus until reaching the intersection with Olympic Boulevard in Santa Monica. From that point, the alignment would follow Olympic Boulevard to the proposed terminus station.
 - LRT Alternative 2 (Expo ROW–Colorado Alternative) (LRT 2) would also utilize the existing Exposition ROW from the Expo Phase 1 terminus until reaching the intersection with Olympic Boulevard in Santa Monica. From that point, the alignment would continue within the Exposition ROW to west of 19th Street, then diverge from the Exposition ROW and enter onto Colorado Avenue east of 17th Street and follow the center of Colorado Avenue to the proposed terminus.
 - LRT Alternative 3 (Venice/Sepulveda–Olympic Alternative) (LRT 3) would divert from the Exposition ROW at the Expo Phase 1 terminus and follow Venice and Sepulveda Boulevards until reaching the intersection with the Exposition ROW. The alignment would then continue westward along the Exposition ROW and Olympic Boulevard identical to LRT 1.
 - LRT Alternative 4 (Venice/Sepulveda–Colorado Alternative) (LRT 4) would divert from the Exposition ROW at the Expo Phase 1 terminus and follow Venice and Sepulveda Boulevards until reaching the intersection with the Exposition ROW. The alignment would then continue westward along the Exposition ROW and Colorado Avenue identical to LRT 2.

Expo Phase 2 Alignment Alternatives

- Expo Phase 1
(under construction)
- Expo Phase 2 LRT
Alternative Alignments
- Phase 1 Station
- Phase 2 Stations (proposed)
- P Phase 2 Parking (proposed)

