

Initiating Next Steps on the Rail to River Intermediate Active Transportation Corridor Project

Motion by Director Ridley-Thomas as Amended by Director Yaroslavsky

October 16, 2014

Metro has recently completed a comprehensive Intermediate Active Transportation Corridor Feasibility Study for the Harbor Subdivision Transit Corridor (Corridor), an approximately 26-mile-long Metro-owned right-of-way (ROW). The Corridor runs from south of downtown Los Angeles at Redondo Junction, southwest to Los Angeles International Airport (LAX), then turns southeast through the South Bay area before ending at Watson Yard in Wilmington.

Over the past decade, Metro has studied a variety of future transit uses for the Corridor; however, no immediate investment in the corridor is planned. As it currently stands, the right-of-way has become a major source of blight within the communities it intersects.

Metro staff was asked to look at intermediate uses for this right-of-way that would not preclude future transit uses. Of particular interest is the segment that connects the Los Angeles River to the West Boulevard Station of the Crenshaw/LAX Light Rail in the City of Inglewood. This segment travels through a number of communities and provides no public benefits. The 2012 Preliminary Assessment and the 2014 Feasibility Study cited an active transportation corridor as a potentially beneficial interim use.

A bike and pedestrian path along this segment would provide significant enhancements to the regional transportation network, while creating an innovative environmental, economic, and recreational benefit for the surrounding communities. Such a use would meaningfully facilitate first mile/last mile connections to our public transit system and is supported by Metro policies and programs, including the adopted 2009 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), and the 2014 Short Range Transportation Plan (SRTP), that encourage bicycling and walking as active and sustainable, emission-free transportation options.

The transformation of unused or abandoned rail right-of-ways into pedestrian access and bicycle routes has been done successfully throughout the country, perhaps most notably on the "High Line" in New York City. However there has also been successful implementation locally, including the Whittier Greenway Trails, and on other Metro funded projects such as the Metro Orange Line, the Bellflower Bike Trail, and the Chandler Bikeway in Burbank.

Development of an intermediate active transportation corridor within the right-of-way has been determined to be feasible. In proceeding, the following challenges need to be addressed:

- Metro's 2000 Rights-of-way Preservation Guidelines need to be reviewed and updated;
- Freight operation easement abandonment efforts need to be considered;
- Advanced design to incorporate the right-of-way restrictions and numerous street crossings is required; and
- Maintenance and operation licensing agreements with local jurisdictions are required.

However, the opportunities for corridor improvement and added public benefit include the following:

- Greater connectivity to transit;
- Improved countywide access to key destinations including the Los Angeles River;
- Enhanced safety and security across multiple communities;
- Reduction of blight and improvement to economic and community vitality; and
- Leveraging of State and Federal Active Transportation Funding.

The segment west of the Blue Line is ready to begin environmental and design work, while additional route alternatives should be studied to determine the preferred route for the connection east of the Blue Line to the Los Angeles River. These next steps should commence immediately, and potential funding sources for this work were identified in Section 4.4 of the Rail to River Intermediate Active Transportation Corridor Feasibility Study.

I Therefore Move that the Metro Board of Directors Direct the Chief Executive Officer to:

- A. Identify funding sources for full implementation of the project; and
- B. Amend the FY15 budget to include funding in an amount not to exceed \$2,850,000, potentially comprised of Proposition C 25%, Cap and Trade, and Planning activities such as Prop A/C/TDA and Measure R Planning and Admin funds to facilitate the environmental, design, and outreach efforts required for both Phase 1 and Phase 2 as outlined in the 2014 Feasibility Report which includes an alternatives analysis to determine the preferred route for Phase 2 Rail;
- C. Report back to the Board of Directors at the May 2015 Executive Management Committee Meeting.

Yaroslavsky Amendment: To seek funding available within the geographical area first.