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JANUARY 17, 2023

TO: BOARD OF DIRECTORS

THROUGH: STEPHANIE N. WIGGINS *SW*
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

FROM: JAMES DE LA LOZA *JDL*
CHIEF PLANNING OFFICER

**SUBJECT: I-605 CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENT PROJECT - MOTION
42 RESPONSE UPDATE**

ISSUE

This is an update on progress as directed by the approved Board Motion 42 (Attachment A) regarding the I-605 Corridor Improvement Project (CIP) and recent coordination/outreach efforts.

BACKGROUND

The I-605 CIP project was initiated in October 2016 and encompasses a major segment of I-605 in both the Gateway Cities and San Gabriel Valley Subregions, including major freeway-to-freeway connections at the I-105, I-5, SR-60 and I-10. To increase the movement of people, ease congestion and improve mobility and safety, additional High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes and/or ExpressLanes are being considered as project alternatives on I-605.

On I-5, the continuation of the newly constructed HOV lanes (currently ending at Florence Ave in Norwalk) through the City of Downey is being evaluated. Improvements on SR-60 include the consideration of a general-purpose lane through the SR-60/605 interchange and HOV or ExpressLane Direct connectors at I-605/105 and I-605/10 interchanges.

Moreover, local multimodal improvements (e.g., pedestrian enhancements, bike lanes, transit stop improvements) are also being evaluated within the project's environmental impact area, inclusive of locally-prioritized complete streets improvements.

In October 2020, Motion 42 directed staff to pause the circulation of the I-605 CIP Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS) and to evaluate alternatives that minimize right-of-way impacts and are locally supported. Staff was also asked to review the project's purpose and need and its alignment with various state policies related to equity and climate change.

In early 2021, new design options were presented to the I-5 JPA Board, the 91/605/405 Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), and the 91/605/405 Corridor Cities Committee (CCC), comprising locally-elected officials from the corridors. These three bodies voted to include the design options in the Draft EIR/EIS and to circulate the environmental document for public review. While these efforts led to right-of-way requirement reductions, additional design work and other alternatives needed to be developed to appropriately respond to Motion 42.

Over the past four months, the Project Team held several meetings with local jurisdictions along the I-605 Corridor and with Caltrans District 7 staff and leadership. The local jurisdiction meetings included the participation of mayors, councilmembers and city executive staff. The meetings covered: a comprehensive update on the project status; review of current policy directives and regulatory requirements; review of previous project alternatives and discussion of refinements/modifications to those; understanding of local concerns; and support for the project.

DISCUSSION

Since the last Board Box update (July 2022), staff has worked with Caltrans staff to substantially reduce or avoid the right-of-way impacts previously anticipated for the project alternatives. These reductions can be achieved through the application of reduced standard design features, which required additional space, and by down-scoping the project alternatives to the extent possible without compromising traffic safety. These design changes maximize improvements to the freeway within the Caltrans right-of-way to the greatest extent possible. With these design changes, the number of potential property acquisitions/relocations that would be required for the project alternatives has been reduced significantly, or by several orders of magnitude. Additional engineering, coordination and reviews will be needed before these revised designs are finalized. Staff also met with Caltrans District 7 management to discuss how to address current State policies relating to vehicle miles traveled and sustainability in the environmental document.

After Caltrans' initial review of the design revisions, these updates were shared and discussed with the corridor cities in a series of one-on-one meetings. The meetings included participation from mayors, councilmembers, city managers, public works directors the two councils of governments (COGs) and I-5 JPA staff. The staff and elected officials that participated in the meetings generally voiced support to advance improvements on I-605, noting that improvements are needed to address long-standing traffic congestion and safety concerns (as

reflected in the Purpose and Need statement for the Project). City staff and elected officials understood that despite Metro staff's best efforts to reduce the right-of-way requirements of the project alternatives substantially, not all impacts may be avoided. Staff also highlighted the need to look at improving the movement of people through the corridor in a multimodal way. To this end, the scope of the project alternatives will be augmented to include additional bicycle, pedestrian and transit improvements. These additional improvements will be developed through consultation with multiple Metro departments (e.g., Service Planning, Active Transportation), city, county and COG staff, and feedback from upcoming community engagement. To that end, during the meetings with local jurisdictions, staff also requested recommendations for community groups or organizations for future project update meetings. This feedback will help staff prepare the community engagement strategy that will support the next steps in the development of the project.

NEXT STEPS

A community engagement strategy, including recommendations by city leadership and coordinated with Metro's Community Relations and the Office of Equity and Race, will be developed and implemented over the next six months. Staff aims to provide project updates to the corridor's communities, outline the new design approaches, and receive input and feedback on local mobility needs. Simultaneously staff will work with Caltrans on finalizing the design updates and reconstituting the project alternatives through the summer of 2023. Another update will be provided to the Board in March 2023.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A – Motion 42: I-605 Corridor Improvement Project



Board Report

File #: 2020-0733, File Type: Motion / Motion Response

Agenda Number: 42.

**REGULAR BOARD MEETING
OCTOBER 22, 2020**

Motion by:

DIRECTORS SOLIS, HAHN, GARCIA, FASANA, GARCETTI, AND BONIN

I-605 Corridor Improvement Project Build Alternatives

The I-605 Corridor Improvement Project seeks to modify and/or widen 16 miles of freeway including segments on the I-605, I-10, SR-60, I-5, and I-105 in the Gateway and San Gabriel Valley Subregions. The Project scope currently includes several alternatives that would build various combinations of additional auxiliary, general purpose, high-occupancy vehicle, and high-occupancy toll lanes along the corridor. Preliminary reports for the project suggest that hundreds of partial and full property acquisitions will be necessary in addition to hundreds of temporary and permanent easements, which would affect unincorporated communities as well as the cities of Baldwin Park, Industry, Pico Rivera, El Monte, South El Monte, Whittier, Downey, Norwalk, Santa Fe Springs. The Project alignment moves largely through disadvantaged communities experiencing housing and homelessness crises that have only been exacerbated by the ongoing pandemic.

On September 2, 2020, the Gateway Cities Council of Governments (GCCOG) sent a letter to Metro's Chief Executive Officer requesting to delay the release of the I-605 Corridor Improvement Project Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (EIS/EIR) and to incorporate a local option alternative that reflects the Guiding Principles adopted by the SR-91/I-605/I-405 Corridor Cities Committee in October 2007. The GCCOG's Guiding Principles include a provision that new freeway construction, including the addition of lanes, should be confined to existing State right-of-way in order to preserve and enhance local economies and environments. In response to this letter and to concerns raised by other stakeholders, Metro has agreed to delay the release of the EIS/EIR until early 2021. However, the impacts anticipated for the Project necessitate a fresh look at the scope of work and the alternatives proposed.

California's transportation sector currently accounts for more than 50 percent of the state's greenhouse gas emissions, and vehicle ownership rates have significantly increased in the region over the last 30 years. According to a 2018 study from the UCLA Institute of Transportation Studies, the six-county region covered by the Southern California Association of Governments (Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside San Bernardino, Ventura, and Imperial Counties) added 1.8 million people and 456,000 household vehicles between 1990 and 2000 with an average of 0.25 vehicles per new

resident. The These numbers exploded to 0.95 vehicles per new resident between 2000 and 2015 when the region saw 2.3 million people and 2.1 million household vehicles added. Despite Metro's efforts to rapidly expand its transit network, vehicle miles traveled per capita have steadily climbed upwards throughout the county since 2010, and transit ridership across the state has been declining since 2012. Metro has put forth several efforts to restore and increase transit ridership and reduce greenhouse gas emissions including the ongoing NextGen initiative and the advancement of Twenty-Eight by 28' Pillar Projects. Per a motion written by Director Bonin last year, Metro is also working to align its highway program with the Executive Order issued by Governor Newsom in September 2019 which directed the California State Transportation Agency to realign its portfolio of construction, operations and maintenance projects to help reverse trends of rising fuel consumption and greenhouse gas emissions from the transportation sector. However, Metro must also begin taking on a wholistic, equity-based examination of its projects' scopes to ensure investments do not increase induced demand or work against existing greenhouse gas emissions reduction goals.

SUBJECT: I-605 CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENT PROJECT BUILD ALTERNATIVES

RECOMMENDATION

APPROVE Motion by Directors Solis, Hahn, Garcia, Fasana, Garcetti, and Bonin that the Board direct the Chief Executive Officer to report back to the Planning and Programming Committee in January 2021 with a status update and in April 2021 with a final report on suggestions for other I-605 build alternatives that consider:

- A. An additional locally-supported alternative that minimizes right-of-way impacts and/or a stand-alone Transportation System/Demand Management (TSM/TDM) alternative similar to the TSM/TDM alternative put forth on the SR-710 North Project; and
- B. A review of the project's purpose and need and its alignment with various local and state policies and plans related to equity, greenhouse gas emissions and vehicle miles traveled.

WE FURTHER MOVE that staff, including the Executive Officer of Equity and Race, engage with the San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments, the Gateway Cities Council of Governments, the I-5 Joint Powers Authority, the County of Los Angeles, corridor cities, and community stakeholders to develop this report. The release of the EIS/EIR should be further delayed until after the final report is received by the Metro Board.