



PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE
March 19, 2008

SUBJECT: CRENSHAW-PRAIRIE TRANSIT CORRIDOR PROJECT –
STATUS REPORT

ACTION: RECEIVE AND FILE

RECOMMENDATION

Receive and file this update on the initial screening of alternatives as part of the Alternatives Analysis (AA) for the Crenshaw-Prairie Transit Corridor. Screened alternatives will be analyzed in greater detail as part of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS)/Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR).

ISSUE

At its April 26, 2007 meeting, the Board approved professional services contracts with PB Americas, Inc. for the purposes of completing the AA, federal and state environmental clearance and conceptual engineering, and with the Lee Andrews Group, Inc. for conducting the public outreach and community participation component for the Project. The north-south oriented study area is centered around Crenshaw Boulevard and is bounded by Wilshire Boulevard to the north and El Segundo Boulevard to the south, a distance of 10.5 miles. This project is included in the 2008 draft Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) baseline.

This report updates the Board on the status of the AA and the alternatives to be analyzed and evaluated in the DEIS/DEIR.

DISCUSSION

Alternatives Analysis (AA), Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), Environmental Impact Report (EIR)

Over the past several months, the project team has been conducting the AA. The purpose of this effort is to identify a range of alternatives for environmental analysis for transit improvements in this corridor. The study area (Attachment A) includes portions of five jurisdictions: the Cities of Los Angeles, Inglewood, Hawthorne, El Segundo, as well as portions of the unincorporated County of Los Angeles, and covers 33 square miles.

A set of ten preliminary alternatives were identified for consideration during scoping, including a No-Build and a Transportation System Management (TSM) alternative. The

remaining eight alternatives were developed as “build” alternatives that include variations in transit modes, alignments or routes, and potential station locations.

Based on a review of a range of technologies, it was determined that Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) and Light Rail Transit (LRT) are the most practical transit modes for operation within the Crenshaw-Prairie Transit Corridor. These technologies are also compatible with other modes in existence, under construction, or being considered by other corridor studies, providing strong potential for integration with the Metro Green Line and the Exposition Light Rail Line currently under construction.

Community Participation

In September 2007, and as part of the initiation of a comprehensive community participation program, we mailed 99,400 invitations to all owners and occupants within one-half mile of the alternative alignments under consideration to request participation in public scoping meetings scheduled for October 2007. Additionally, we used other notification methods, including electronic mail to key stakeholders, advertisements on buses and in local print media, and flyers distributed to the offices of elected officials and community-based organizations throughout the corridor. A total of 116 Notice of Preparation mailings were distributed to agencies and organizations along the study corridor and to jurisdictions with an interest in the proposed project. The Notice of Intent was published in the Federal Register on October 2, 2007 and the Notice of Preparation was published with the State Clearinghouse in the State of California Office of Planning and Research on September 28, 2007.

A total of three public scoping meetings were held on October 15, 17, and 20, 2007, and one agency scoping meeting was held on October 16, 2007. Over the course of the public comment period (which ended on November 5, 2007), 365 comments were received. Most comments expressed the need for regional connectivity, the importance of connecting to the Metro Green Line or LAX, and requests to consider underground or aerial construction in sensitive sections of the corridor. Respondents voiced strong support for the LRT mode, with less support received for BRT. Several comments also suggested a potential alternative northern terminal at the intersection of Wilshire Boulevard and La Brea Avenue.

A second round of public meetings were held on February 20, 21, 23 and February 25, 2008 to provide the community with a Project update related to the screening of alternatives, to solicit input, and to answer questions. These meetings were advertised using the same outlets as in October 2007, including mailing approximately 107,000 invitations to owners and occupants along the alignments.

Post-Scoping Analysis

An expansive set of build alternative alignments (Attachment B) were considered for both BRT and LRT investment.

Alignment Alternatives Eliminated from Further Consideration

Based on technical analysis and stakeholder input, several alignments were eliminated from consideration and will not be analyzed further in the environmental documents. In the southern portion of the corridor, alignment segments following city streets (Crenshaw Boulevard south of the Harbor Subdivision, Century Boulevard, Prairie Avenue, and La Brea Avenue/Hawthorne Boulevard) were eliminated due to a combination of one or more of several factors: significant right-of-way and design constraints, potential impacts to adjacent property owners, likely requirements for expensive grade separation, and insufficient additional markets served when compared to the required capital and operating investment. In the northern portion of the corridor, between the Exposition right-of-way (ROW) and Wilshire Boulevard, build alternatives for LRT were eliminated from further environmental analysis due to the likelihood that alternatives in this area would require underground construction, resulting in lower cost effectiveness (for both the Wilshire/La Brea and Wilshire/Crenshaw alternatives). Although not carried forward into environmental analysis for immediate investment, the alternative to Wilshire/La Brea, including a design option that allows for further extension along San Vicente Boulevard, will be analyzed further in the context of a feasibility study, in order to document the potential of that alternative as part of a future investment related to an expanded regional transit network.

Alignment Alternatives for Further Analysis in the DEIS/DEIR

The following two build alternatives were selected to be carried forward into the DEIS/DEIR phase, in addition to the No-Build Alternative and the TSM Alternative (Attachment C). These build alternatives were selected based on comments received during scoping and on analysis of engineering, right-of-way, and land use constraints. The two build alternatives represent the application of two modes – BRT and LRT – along one general alignment.

- LRT from Exposition/Crenshaw to Metro Green Line via the Harbor Subdivision – This alternative operates from the Exposition LRT line (under construction) south along Crenshaw Boulevard toward the Harbor Subdivision. The alignment would turn west along the Harbor Subdivision and follows the ROW west and south toward LAX and a connection to the existing Metro Green Line near the Aviation Station. This connection would enable continuing service toward the Redondo Beach Station. Various design options involving segments of grade separation will be explored, specifically along Crenshaw Boulevard between Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard and Vernon Avenue and south of 60th Street and along the Harbor Subdivision at La Brea Avenue and at Manchester Boulevard.

- BRT from the Metro Purple Line Wilshire/Western to the Metro Green Line via the Harbor Subdivision – This alternative operates from Wilshire/Western west toward Crenshaw Boulevard where it turns south along Crenshaw Boulevard toward the Harbor Subdivision. The alignment would turn west along the Harbor Subdivision and follows the ROW west and south toward LAX and a connection to the existing Metro Green Line at the existing Aviation Station.

Implementation of BRT requires resolution of several issues. Implementation of dedicated lanes along Crenshaw Boulevard would require re-allocation of existing street space in three sections: north of Exposition Boulevard, between Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard and Vernon Avenue, and south of 60th Street. With respect to operations on the Harbor Subdivision ROW, the Bus Rapid Transit alternative requires that regulatory issues related to joint operation and safety treatments associated with bus transitways in active railroad corridors be resolved. These issues would have to be resolved in order to move forward with this alternative.

Harbor Subdivision

Both the BRT and LRT alternatives follow the Harbor Subdivision ROW for a portion of their respective alignments. LACMTA purchased the ROW from the Santa Fe Railroad in 1993 along with several other railroad corridors. The railroad (now Burlington Northern/Santa Fe (BNSF) Railway), maintains rights to operate freight service on the corridor. The agreement with BNSF allows for periodic review of these operating rights in order to allow us to invest in and operate transit service along the ROW. Staff has been reviewing the operating agreement and will be determining our rights as well as BNSF's. Meetings will be held with the railroad to discuss future plans for this active railroad corridor.

Preliminary Costs

During the environmental analysis, conceptual designs for the alternatives will be developed in greater detail. Costs will be developed based on these designs. The rough order of magnitude preliminary cost of the LRT alternative is estimated between \$1.0-1.6 billion. The higher end of the range represents designs with grade separations in constrained locations, upgrades at connections to existing rail infrastructure, and additional vehicles for operation on existing segments of the Metro Rail system. The cost of BRT alternatives is unknown at this time as resolution of the regulatory issues with regard to operating a BRT in an active freight railroad corridor (Harbor Subdivision) is necessary in order to determine cost.

NEXT STEPS

During the March Board cycle, staff will provide an update on the latest round of public meetings. Over the next year, the project team will prepare the AA, complete the DEIS/DEIR including the identification of a locally preferred alternative for the Board's consideration. Throughout this process, a comprehensive community participation and outreach effort will continue. Conceptual engineering will also be completed as part of this

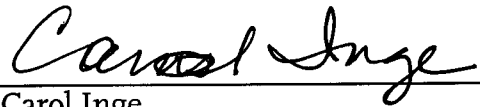
effort. At appropriate times, the Board will receive project updates. In addition, we are initiating discussions with BNSF to determine the parameters under which LRT and BRT could operate in the Harbor Subdivision right-of-way.

The City of Inglewood has requested that an alternative that more directly serves the Prairie Avenue corridor be further explored. Staff will work with the City of Inglewood to define such an alternative and to determine if it should be carried forward into the DEIS/DEIR. Staff will keep the Board apprised of any changes in the environmental analysis resulting from this work.

ATTACHMENTS

- A. Study Area Boundaries
- B. Alternatives Considered for Screening
- C. Alternatives for Further Analysis in the DEIS/DEIR

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