

Environmental Subject Working Group

July 15, 2009

Dominguez Community Center, Carson

MEETING SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

On Wednesday, July 15, 2009, the I-710 Project Team met with the Environmental Subject Working Group (ESWG) at the Dominguez Community Center in the City of Carson. The purpose of the meeting was to:

- Update the group on project happenings since the last meeting of the ESWG on June 4, including outcomes of the June 18 Corridor Advisory Committee (CAC) meeting
- Give an update on environmental studies, including progress and timeline
- Provide clarification as to how construction impacts will be analyzed in the EIR/EIS—an issue the CAC had deferred to the ESWG
- Introduce the Environmental Justice Analysis and review methodology with the group.

ESWG members in attendance were Angelo Logan (Commerce LAC), David Randall (Montebello Unified School District), Paul Simon (LA County Public Health), Elina Green (UCLA Center for Occupational and Environmental Health); Susan Nakamura (SCAQMD); and Andrea Hricko (USC, Keck School of Medicine). Other meeting attendees included Ian MacMillan (Los Angeles Unified School District), Martha Cota and Elena Rodriguez (Long Beach Alliance for Children with Asthma), Bahram Fazeli (Communities for a Better Environment), Adrian Martinez (NRDC), Lou Baglietto (Butterfield Communications), and Erin Huffer.

In attendance from the Project Team were Rob McCann, Jayna Goodman, and Megan Mettee (LSA); Nancy Pfeffer (Network Public Affairs); Pat McLaughlin and Jesse Froehlich (MIG); Jack Waldron (URS); Devon Cichoski (Metro); Jerry Wood (GCCOG); and Brian Manor and Garrett Damrath (Caltrans).

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION UPDATES AND MEETING RECAPS

MIG facilitator Pat McLaughlin called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m. and briefly reviewed the agenda for the evening. She noted that the ESWG and CAC have been the most active groups



throughout the summer. The Transportation SWG is working on scheduling a meeting in August, and the Community Design & Local Economy SWG is awaiting a status update from the design team before scheduling their next meeting. The LACs have taken a summer recess, but will have an active fall reviewing community profiles and geometric plans, beginning in September and October.

Ms. McLaughlin briefly reviewed the June 18 CAC meeting, at which the Committee heard detailed presentations on public health impacts by ESWG Member Dr. Paul Simon, and on Health Impact Assessment (HIA) by Human Impact Partners (HIP). The Committee also engaged in extensive discussion on the AQ/HRA protocols and significance thresholds. Ms. McLaughlin asked ESWG Member Angelo Logan—also a member of the CAC—to report the recommendations that the CAC had delivered to the Project Committee, which were as follows:

- Consider locating air quality monitoring stations at schools
- Fund the effort to implement HIA tools, especially related to the health pathways that HIP had presented
- Hear expert legal opinions from others (for example, AQMD) that are counter to Caltrans' legal stance on determining significance thresholds
- Use the most current up-to-date studies to inform the EIR/EIS

Mr. Logan also noted that the CAC had requested that the ESWG discuss construction impacts, and was surprised to see that this item was listed on the agenda under the project update as opposed to a stand-alone agenda topic. Rob McCann of LSA responded that the Project Team's intention was to review the basics of how construction impacts will be addressed in the EIR/EIS at this evening's meeting, and to determine which specifics (such as near-source modeling) the group may be interested in discussing further so that the appropriate expert could be invited to a future meeting.

Mr. Logan requested clarification as to meeting timelines, inquiring specifically as to how ESWG meetings could be timed so that the group could give valuable feedback to the CAC. He noted the importance of scheduling meetings such that the group would have adequate time to prepare recommendations and supporting materials for the CAC, while also having the opportunity to review meeting summaries between the various Group and Committee meetings. Ms. McLaughlin noted that the next CAC meeting is tentatively scheduled for August 20, so the ESWG may want to meet again during the second week of August.

ENVIRONMENTAL UPDATE

Mr. McCann referred the group to printed handouts outlining the technical studies that inform the EIR/EIS, and a timeline demonstrating when the team expects to be able to share preliminary findings of each study with the ESWG. The timeline depicts estimated windows based on the expected completion of the initial geometric plans and traffic operations analysis, and is subject to change based on project schedule changes. He noted that the group will need to specify which studies are of interest to them in terms of reviewing preliminary findings.

The engineering team is working on developing initial geometrics for each of the segments along the corridor, based on the traffic operations analysis, which analyzes the performance each of the four project alternatives. Outcomes of these engineering efforts are fed incrementally into the environmental analyses that are currently underway.

Mr. McCann noted that the environmental team has initiated all the studies, and is currently focused on collecting baseline data. He acknowledged the materials that Dr. Simon had distributed to the Project Team and ESWG the day before. Upon preliminary review of the list of studies, Mr. McCann felt that these studies will be of most help to the team in establishing baseline conditions, and linking findings of the environmental studies to the understanding of health outcomes.

In terms of specific studies, the hazardous waste team has reviewed existing records and is looking at impacts such as contaminated soils and groundwater, both during and after construction. The current focus for the Community Impact Assessment (CIA) is the development of community profiles and baseline data. Fieldwork is underway for biological and cultural resources studies.

The following questions were raised related to the environmental update:

- How does the Environmental Justice (EJ) Analysis fit into the environmental studies?
 - The EJ Analysis is part of the CIA. (This issue was further clarified as the primary agenda topic for the evening.)
- Will the traffic modeling report be released to the public?
 - Once the summary of preliminary findings have been reviewed by the TAC, and the report has been reviewed and approved by the I-710 Funding Partners, findings can be released to the public.
- Will there be analysis of interim years leading up to the 2035 planning horizon year?
 - ESWG Member Susan Nakamura recommended that the Project Team analyze peak daily data within determined peak months.
 - Rob McCann stated he would check with ENVIRON to see if interim years are being analyzed.

CONSTRUCTION IMPACTS

Mr. McCann then gave an overview of how construction impacts are addressed in the EIR/EIS, referring meeting participants to printed handouts on the topic. He explained that both CEQA and NEPA require analysis of permanent and temporary project impacts, the latter of which refers to construction. Because of this requirement, construction impacts will be analyzed in the I-710 EIR/EIS. As had been explained by Ron Kosinski, Deputy Director of Caltrans District 7 at the June 18 CAC meeting, a construction phasing plan cannot be developed for the I-710 Corridor Project until an alternative is selected and funding sources determined. However, certain impacts can be expected, and the following categories (and potentially others) will be analyzed in terms of construction impacts in the I-710 EIR/EIS: air quality; noise and vibration; access and circulation; visual and aesthetics; community; water quality; use of or exposure to

hazardous waste and materials; energy consumption; and the natural environment (impacts to plants and animals).

The following questions and comments arose during the discussion of construction impacts:

- ESWG Member Susan Nakamura asked whether Caltrans will be able to quantify construction impacts in the EIR/EIS, given the lack of a construction phasing plan.
 - Yes, construction impacts will be quantified as outlined in the AQ/HRA protocols. ENVIRON can provide more detail on this matter.
- Mr. Logan urged that construction impacts be revisited in greater detail at the next ESWG meeting, and further, that the ESWG help to develop the approach to construction impacts analysis.
 - Ms. McLaughlin encouraged the group to be very specific as to what kinds of impacts, beyond air quality, they would like to discuss.
- Ms. Nakamura noted that there are two primary outstanding issues of concern: (1) How to quantify construction impacts; (2) The lack of pre-determined significance thresholds.
 - Ms. McLaughlin noted that these issues have also been discussed by the CAC, and Mr. Kosinski had noted Caltrans' policy to not set a statewide precedent by predetermining significance thresholds at a district/local level, and also the uncertainty regarding phasing.
 - Mr. McCann added that these are long standing policy issues. It will be difficult to make changes to the regulatory framework within the timeframe of the EIR/EIS.
- Ms. Nakamura reminded the group that the I-710 Corridor falls completely within the South Coast air basin. She applauded Caltrans for including quantification and dispersion modeling of mobile source air toxics in the AQ/HRA. She encouraged the aspect of setting new precedents, however, and recommended that Caltrans adopt SCAQMD significance thresholds for the I-710 Corridor Project.
 - Mr. McCann reminded the group of Mr. Kosinski's statement to the CAC that this project would not be built if it is not shown to improve air quality.
- ESWG Member Andrea Hricko reminded the group of Mr. Kosinski's mention at a previous ESWG meeting of a team of expert policy advisors from Sacramento and UC Davis that provides guidance on air quality. She inquired as to whether it would be possible to interface with these experts, expressing concern over the apparent lack of transparency in the policy oversight process.
- Related to transparency of process, Mr. Logan inquired as to how the ESWG and other groups can be assured that their feedback is in fact filtering up to the Project Committee. He recommended that the ESWG's outstanding concerns be brought to the Funding Partners, noting that these issues will not go away until they are resolved.
- ESWG Member Elina Green urged the Project Team to leverage the expertise of the group and truly get into detail with the group's topics of interest. The group expressed general frustration with the "broad brush" presentation of issues, and the consistent deferral of greater detail to future meetings, or to other committees. Ms. Green also expressed

frustration regarding the cancellation of the Project Committee meeting due to a lack of “substantive issues.” The ESWG feels that the establishment of air quality significance threshold is a very substantive issue and should have been reason enough for the Project Committee to meet.

- Ms. McLaughlin noted that it is helpful when group members collaborate to prepare materials that clearly outline their position and how they would like to see issues framed. She mentioned that the “Public Health Considerations” document that some group members had prepared prior to this meeting was an example of how group members could work together to ensure that issues, opportunities and solutions were clearly documented and shared with the Project Team and advisory group members.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ANALYSIS

Mr. McCann introduced Nancy Pfeffer of Network Public Affairs, the team’s Environmental Justice (EJ) consultant. Ms. Pfeffer referred group members to a series of handouts on Environmental Justice, including the draft proposed methodology, and a series of maps showing the distribution of minority and low-income communities in the corridor for both existing conditions (2008) and horizon year (2035). She then led the group through a PowerPoint presentation outlining key terminology and methodology, engaging group questions throughout.

Ms. Pfeffer emphasized that the EJ Analysis will add to the information that is available to the public, rather than substituting or replacing other elements of the EIR/EIS. The Analysis takes findings from applicable environmental studies, and analyzes them to determine whether adverse impacts will be suffered disproportionately by minority (defined as non-white) and low income communities as a result of the Build Alternatives 5a, 6a, and 6b, as compared to the 2008 and the 2035 No Build (Alternative 1) baselines. The EJ Analysis will be included in the CIA and in the community impact section of the EIR/EIS.

Ms. Pfeffer explained that Federal Executive Order 12898 requires federal agencies to identify and address disproportionate adverse impacts to minority and low-income communities. Although there is no state requirement for an Environmental Justice Analysis, the I-710 EJ Analysis will analyze both the CEQA and NEPA baselines (2008 and the 2035 No Build alternative, respectively). Though both quantitative and qualitative (GIS-based) analyses will be carried out, the EJ Analysis for the I-710 Corridor Project EIR/EIS will include more quantitative analysis than is typical, relying on SCAG demographic data.

The following questions and comments were raised during the discussion on the Environmental Justice Analysis:

- Dr. Simon asked what the smallest demographic unit of analysis is for the EJ study.
 - The study unit is a Transportation Analysis Zone (TAZ), which is generally similar to a census tract, although some are larger and some smaller.
- Mr. Logan asked how to interpret non-residential TAZs on the map handouts, as these TAZs seem to display as high-percentage minority/low-income.
 - Ms. Pfeffer indicated that the team needs to seek clarification this issue.

- Ms. Green inquired as to how the study area noted on the maps was determined.
 - Mr. McCann answered that the study boundaries date back to the Major Corridor Study, and were designed to encompass the corridor communities and not just the freeway. The traffic studies modeling area is actually a much larger area.
- Dr. Simon asked whether children under 5 years of age can be broken out in the analysis, as this is a critical developmental stage and children are especially vulnerable to impacts. It is fairly standard to study this age group.
 - Ms. Pfeffer noted that data for the under-18 age group is included. If under-5 data is available at the TAZ level, it can certainly be incorporated.
- Ms. Hricko suggested that NO₂ be included in the EJ air quality analysis, since NO₂ impacts generally parallel impacts of ultrafines and are a more effective measure than PM_{2.5} of issues related to proximity to the freeway.
 - Ms. Pfeffer and Mr. McCann noted that this should be possible.
- Mr. Logan suggested that conditions be analyzed based on distance from the freeway, as relevant income discrepancies appear to be lost at the TAZ level.
 - The group suggested USEPA and the Lusk Center as potential data sources.
- Ms. Green inquired as to what is included under health impacts other than cancer.
 - In addition to cancer, non-cancer impacts can also be included (as indicated by Hazard Index).
- Dr. Simon asked how the economic analysis is carried out related to the alternatives.
 - Mr. McCann explained that the process is to translate relocations into revenue losses from sales tax and property tax. Employment opportunities and property values are more difficult to assess because there are so many factors that affect these, some of them indirect or intangible.
- Mr. Logan noted the limitations of the study area, pointing out that it is necessary not only to analyze discrepancies at a finer scale than TAZs, but also at a broader scale. The benefits of the project will be enjoyed nationwide because of the goods movement component, whereas the impacts will be concentrated in the corridor communities.
 - Other group members echoed the need to compare impacts suffered within the study area to those suffered outside of it.
 - Mr. McCann noted that this could be addressed as a qualitative discussion. Some of SCAG's regional studies may begin to get at some of these complex issues.
- Ms. Nakamura noted the concern that baseline impact levels in the corridor are so significantly elevated. She urged the team to consider actual on-the-ground conditions rather than just improvements measured against the baseline, as measured improvements in a highly impacted area may still render sub-standard conditions.

- Mr. McCann reminded the group of the limitations of scope, timeline, and budget. He also noted that the inclusion of the 2035 future No Build baseline will address this issue to some degree.
- Ms. Green suggested using health indicators as a measure, comparing baseline conditions to desired outcomes.
- Ms. Pfeffer noted that she would work with Mr. McCann to determine the degree to which this would be possible as related to analysis of the project alternatives.
- Ms. Hricko urged the team to consider impacts very close to the freeway, considering community members who will be right up against the freeway after expansion.
 - Ms. Pfeffer noted this may be possible, but most likely only with 2000 data, and not 2008 data. The issue is using data at a geographic level smaller than TAZ. SCAG does not project the ethnic or income breakdown for 2008 or 2035 at geographic levels smaller than a TAZ.
- Ms. Green requested clarification as to how the homogeneity of the corridor communities along the lines of EJ criteria would be accounted for. If all of the communities in the corridor are minority and/or low income, how is the study relevant without comparing impacts suffered within the corridor to higher income demographic units outside of the corridor?
 - Ms. Pfeffer explained that as of now, the plan is to compare TAZs within the corridor, and also within LA County as a whole.
 - The group stressed the importance of defining the study area and demographic comparison units for the EJ Analysis based on their ability to expose relevant discrepancies.
 - Ms. Pfeffer emphasized that the full range of impacts to all the income groups in the study area will be reported to decision-makers and made available to the public. The question of “what is disproportionate” will continue to be debated. It’s not always a simple yes or no.
- Ms. Hricko noted that potential resources for advising on recent relevant criticism of EJ Analyses by Caltrans are M. Lakin and D. Jordan at USEPA District 9, and that Caltrans and the Project Team should work to make sure these issues are rectified and dealt with in the I-710 EJ analysis process.
- A member of the audience asked whether the EJ Analysis will include construction impacts.
 - Yes, to the full extent that the EIR/EIS includes them.
- Mr. Logan asked how the traffic impact analyses would be interpreted given that access changes, for example, may be perceived as positive by some, and as negative by others.
 - The traffic impact analyses don’t assign positive or negative value to the impacts.

LAST POINTS AND NEXT STEPS

Ms. McLaughlin requested that the group clarify follow-up items based on the evening's discussion. Mr. McCann noted that the Project Team needs some time to develop a response to some of the issues raised at the meeting. Because of the time required to review proposed changes to the methodologies with the Funding Partner agencies, a response to all items may not be ready in August.

The group agreed that the level of detail Ms. Pfeffer presented on the EJ Analysis is what they are looking for in terms of depth of discussion. Mr. Logan noted that he would like the group to get into sufficient depth to be able to develop solid recommendations.

Ms. Green requested clarification as to what is included in Alternative 6b, as she recalls it has been described differently in different presentations. (A specific discrepancy was noted between the presentations posted on the project website for meetings that took place on April 15 and 16.) Jack Waldron of URS explained that electric trucks had been added to the study of alternative technologies after some feasibility issues came up with automated fixed guideway systems. Ms. McLaughlin suggested that the next meeting begin with a brief update on and clarification of the alternatives.

There was some concern that not all meetings are posted on the project website, and that materials have been presented to the Board (for example, the presentation to the Planning and Programming Committee on alternative technology developments) that have not been made available to the public. Devon Cichoski of Metro noted that in the future, Metro can send advance notice of Board presentations to all the I-710 community groups via email blast.

The meeting ended with a discussion of topics to be addressed at the next ESWG meeting. Mr. Logan requested in-depth discussions of construction impacts, near source impacts, and significance thresholds. Ian MacMillan, an audience member awaiting approval of his appointment to the ESWG, requested that the group also discuss water-related issues in a future meeting at some point.

The group worked to clarify how to allocate sufficient time to address each topic to the desired level of detail. Members advocated that the discussion should be focused on elements not recommended for inclusion in the AQ/HRA protocol, related to construction impacts. Near source modeling is a separate but related air quality topic. Mr. Logan suggested that all three items be included on the agenda, and that if the group ran out of time to address some items, these could be tabled for future meetings. Mr. Logan's desired outcome for the next meeting is for the group to come up with a recommendation, regardless of whether the Project Team is in agreement of that recommendation. Given the requested topics of discussion, Mr. McCann will be sure that Julia Lester of ENVIRON is available for the next meeting.

Ms. McLaughlin adjourned the meeting at 8:30 p.m.