



Environmental Subject Working Group

April 13, 2009

Commerce City Hall, Emergency Operations Center

MEETING SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

On Monday, April 13, 2009, the I-710 Project Team met with the Environmental Subject Working Group (ESWG) at Commerce City Hall. The meeting was held in response to a request by the group at the conclusion of the previous ESWG meeting (on March 31) to meet again before the April 16 meeting of the CAC.

The purpose of the meeting was to:

- Discuss the group's topics of interest within the EIR/EIS—an item that had been deferred from the March 31 agenda due to the depth of discussion on the Air Quality/Health Risk Assessment (AQ/HRA)
- Provide an opportunity for the ESWG to interface directly with Caltrans management over concerns related to Caltrans' processes for public involvement and defining significance thresholds for various studies in the EIR/EIS
- Provide a forum for meeting participants who had requested the opportunity to give a presentation on health impacts and Health Impact Analysis (HIA) to the ESWG and Caltrans
- Discuss the process for presenting ESWG comments to the CAC

These items were all included in the three-hour meeting agenda, along with a discussion of the Gateway Cities Council of Government's (GCCOG's) Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP).

The meeting was attended by 29 individuals, including five officially designated members of the ESWG, 11 interested members of the public, and 13 representatives of the I-710 Project Team.

ESWG members in attendance were Angelo Logan (Commerce LAC), Clara Solis (East LA LAC), Frances Keeler (Future Ports), David Randall (Montebello Unified School District), and Susan Ahn (Long Beach Unified School District). Other meeting attendees included Elina Green (UCLA Center for Occupational and Environmental Health), Andrea Hricko (USC School of Medicine), Liz Garcia (City of Commerce), Paul Simon (LA County Public Health), Jennifer



Metro



Lucky (Human Impact Partners), Jonathan Heller (Human Impact Partners), Ian MacMillan (Los Angeles Unified School District), Colleen Callahan (American Lung Association), Martha Cota (Long Beach Alliance for Children with Asthma) Karl Rodenbaugh, and Vanessa Rodriguez.

In attendance from the Project Team were Rob McCann and Jayna Goodman (LSA); Julia Lester (ENVIRON); Pat McLaughlin, Mark Sillings, and Jesse Froehlich (MIG); Jack Waldron (URS); Lynda Bybee, Devon Cichoski, and Adrian Alvarez (Metro); Jerry Wood (GCCOG); and Ron Kosinski and Brian Manor (Caltrans).

MIG facilitator Pat McLaughlin called the meeting to order at 6:10 pm, and thanked participants for attending. After a round of self-introductions, Ms. McLaughlin gave a brief recap of the previous ESWG meeting, and called attention to the synopsis of the group's comments to the AQ/HRA Review Draft Protocol, which had been submitted to Julia Lester on April 6 and would be shared with the CAC on April 16.

Ms. McLaughlin then reviewed the agenda for the evening, emphasizing the goal of clarifying what falls under the purview of the EIR/EIS, the AQ/HRA, and the AQAP, and how these and other studies relate to each other. She also reminded the group that the Project Committee would be making Subject Working Group appointments at their next meeting on April 30, and encouraged attendees to request appointment by writing a short letter or email to GCCOG. Devon Cichoski of Metro distributed a brief outline of the process for submitting the letter of interest.

INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATIONS BY HEALTH IMPACT PARTNERS, EAST YARD COMMUNITIES FOR ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE, AND LOS ANGELES COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Dr. Paul Simon of LA County Department of Public Health was introduced as the first resource speaker on health impacts. He gave a short PowerPoint presentation entitled *Assessing Health Impacts of the I-710 Project: A Public Health Perspective*. The presentation focused on the examples of motor vehicle crash injuries and the obesity epidemic, and how the I-710 Corridor Project can actually be framed as an opportunity to have a positive impact on these public health issues and others. After providing a snapshot of data related to motor vehicle crashes, Dr. Simon made the case that the EIR/EIS should address motor vehicle crash injury incidence and severity. He also pointed out the opportunity for the I-710 Corridor Project to consider how obesity rates—which tend to be particularly high in the communities along the corridor—would be affected by the I-710 project's impacts on green space, bicycle and pedestrian accessibility, traffic congestion, public transit, and economic conditions.

A second presentation was then given by ESWG member Angelo Logan, Executive Director of East Yard Communities for Environmental Justice, in partnership with Jennifer Lucky and Jonathan Heller of Human Impact Partners. Mr. Logan opened the presentation, entitled *710 Freeway: Need for a Comprehensive Health Analysis*, and outlined the Tier 2 Report priorities as follows:

1. Health: Air Quality
2. Jobs and Economic Development

3. Safety
4. Noise
5. Congestion and Mobility
6. Community Enhancements
7. Design Concepts
8. Environmental Justice

Ms. Lucky and Mr. Heller then elaborated on how various aspects of the I-710 Corridor Project such as noise and traffic volume could impact public health, and provided sample research questions related to these aspects. They then introduced Health Impact Assessment (HIA) as a tool for comprehensively addressing health impacts related to the I-710 Corridor Project.

In response to the presentations, members of the group emphasized the importance of going beyond a traditional EIR/EIS to really address the concerns outlined in the Tier 2 Report. They also noted that the I-710 Corridor Project should be seen as an opportunity for improvement, and, to this end, that community participation is imperative throughout the process. Mr. Logan recommended that an HIA be conducted as a way to ensure a comprehensive analysis that goes beyond a traditional EIR by fully addressing the health consequences of all the impacts originally identified in the Tier 2 Report.

AIR QUALITY ACTION PLAN – TOPICS AND TIMING

Jerry Wood introduced GCCOG's Air Quality Action Plan, which addresses health risk concerns at the sub-regional (corridor) level. The AQAP is scheduled to kick off in the summer of 2009 and to be drafted in parallel with the I-710 EIR/EIS. At the corridor scale, the AQAP will be able to address some things that cannot be studied in the project-specific EIR/EIS. Mr. Wood described the AQAP as a true plan of action that will directly impact and establish accountability for air quality improvement. The Plan includes an inventory of existing air quality improvement programs, greenhouse gas and climate change studies, and the establishment of additional air quality monitoring stations. Mr. Wood emphasized the opportunity for continual public involvement in the development of the AQAP.

One participant asked how to have studies from universities included in the AQAP. Mr. Wood encouraged participants to send him any studies they felt were relevant. Another participant asked whether the ten early actions (identified in the Tier 2 Report) that local cities could undertake to make air quality improvements would be included in the Scope of Work for the AQAP. Another question concerned how the AQAP will affect the I-710 project. Mr. Wood explained that something like this has never been done before, so it is not clear how all the pieces will finally fit together, but the primary goal is to have improved air quality along the I-710 corridor before mainline construction is underway.

CALTRANS' PROCESS AND SIGNIFICANCE THRESHOLDS

Ms. McLaughlin then introduced Ron Kosinski, Deputy District Director of Environmental Planning, Caltrans District 7, who gave an overview of Caltrans' decision making process and responded to the group's questions. Mr. Kosinski explained that Caltrans is working in

collaboration with many stakeholders and state and federal agencies on the I-710 EIR/EIS. In the case of this project, Caltrans is in fact managing the federal (NEPA) process as well as the State (CEQA) process. Mr. Kosinski thanked the group for their presentations, noting that they gave him a clear understanding that they see the I-710 as a community improvement project—not just a transportation project—and that health is a top priority issue of concern for the community. He then stated that Caltrans is in sync with this position and had identified air quality as a primary issue to address in the I-710 EIR/EIS, which is why they had decided to include the Air Quality/Health Risk Assessment (AQ/HRA) —something Caltrans had not done before at a quantitative level.

With regard to significance thresholds, Mr. Kosinski explained that by State policy, studies must be carried out before significance is determined because the studies themselves reveal what the levels of impact are in a given area. There was discussion between group members and Mr. Kosinski about this sequencing. Meeting participants that studies cannot yield meaningful results if a rationale for significance is not agreed upon by the community before studies are undertaken. Mr. Kosinski responded that it is critical not to make a premature decision on significance and that this procedure is a matter of policy and cannot be changed at this point.

Mr. Kosinski then clarified that Caltrans holds a neutral position on the alternatives, and defers to partner agencies, the alternatives screening report, and community preference as to which alternatives are studied in the EIR/EIS. He also reminded the group that Caltrans is over two years away from any decision, and that there is no funding for actual construction at this time. Any action under the EIR/EIS is contingent upon securing funding for the project, and right now the ‘No Build’ scenario (Alternative 1) is still a viable alternative, but community support for this project may help in securing funding for corridor improvements.

Questions and discussion points between the group and Mr. Kosinski included:

- Who are the ultimate decisionmakers at Caltrans?
 - Caltrans management, including Mr. Kosinski himself, in close consultation with the I-710 Funding Partners (Metro, GCCOG, the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach, SCAG and the I-5 JPA), other state and federal bodies and the communities along the I-710 corridor. A group of experts comprised of academics from UC Davis and and Caltrans/FHWA air quality experts play a key role in advising Caltrans on significance levels related to air quality to be included in the EIR/EIS
- How can the ESWG get new scientific information regarding health impacts to this group?
 - Mr. Kosinski stated that he shares information with this expert group. He encouraged participants to share presentations, handouts, and other technical information with him to pass along.
- One member voiced a concern that apparent lack of direct public access to this group serves to undermine transparency of action and public trust in the process.
 - Mr. Kosinski stated that the expert group's discussion related to significance thresholds would be held in the open and ongoing.

- If not before the study, at what point is significance determined for each study?
 - Preliminary studies reveal the intensity of various impacts, and then Caltrans consults with federal partners, academics, and expert agencies to determine significance. Compromises are often required between and among experts and government agencies that hold different positions on significance thresholds for various factors. Significance can also vary from community to community depending on community-specific context.
- Will the Subject Working Groups or the CAC be able to influence significance thresholds?
 - Caltrans will present a discussion on significance thresholds to the SWGs and CAC for their information and request their input before making final decisions.
- Given the extensive estimated duration of construction on the I-710 corridor, how will construction mitigation be addressed? It was pointed out that given how this community has already suffered, it will be important to deploy innovative mitigation measures that go beyond standard techniques.
 - Mr. Kosinski stated that while the Project Team cannot quantitatively model all of the impacts of construction at this time, community demands will have a tremendous influence on the mitigation measures that will be required once project parameters are agreed upon.

EIR/EIS ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS REVIEW

Rob McCann of LSA briefly reviewed the content of the EIR/EIS, referring the group to a handout illustrating the various topic areas covered in the EIR/EIS, and the studies that support each of these. He pointed out the Noise Study, Community Impact Assessment (which informs a variety of topic areas in the EIR/EIS), water quality issues, land use concerns, environmental justice, the Los Angeles River, and other natural resources as examples of EIR/EIS studies and topic areas, and encouraged the group to inform him of which topics are of most interest for more information. He then reviewed a rough project timeline, which includes studies, development of mitigation measures, and periods of public input leading up to the scheduled circulation of the draft EIR/EIS in summer 2010. The process for the EIR/EIS is to define areas of interest, then to evaluate existing conditions in the study area, assess project impacts (short term, long term, and cumulative), and finally to develop measures to avoid, minimize, and/or mitigate these impacts.

Questions and group feedback related to the EIR/EIS included:

- Can the ESWG get information on the scope of each study?
 - LSA can present study-specific information at the group's request, either directly, or by arranging for a presentation by the appropriate experts.
- How will individual community needs be addressed in the studies?
 - The group's concerns can still influence what is included in individual studies and/or the EIR/EIS. The group can also provide input on methodology, and mitigation measures to be included, especially given that only baseline conditions have been established and no alternatives have yet been selected.

- Meeting participants urged that studies be conducted in such a way as to assess *health* impacts related to each topic area (beyond just air quality, which has been a focus of discussion thus far in relation to health measures.) One member again requested that the Project Team consider an HIA as a tool for assessing health impacts.
- An ESWG member suggested that a topic area be added to the EIR/EIS to address construction impacts.
- Another meeting participant requested that the Noise Study truly reflect Tier 2 concerns to adequate levels of significance.
- Members of the group expressed that information provided by the community should be included in the EIR/EIS, and requested that the Project Team come back with a list of what will and won't be studied. Mr. McCann indicated that the Project Team would review this with Caltrans and report back to the ESWG.

Other Points, Comments, and Concerns

- Safety is addressed in the overall project framework, not just in the EIR/EIS.
- Agencies, like Caltrans or Metro, are charged with assessing construction impacts in the communities. Contractors must provide special provisions to meet local requirements.
- The question was raised as to whether it is possible to bifurcate the CEQA and NEPA processes. It was explained that, for this study, they must be included together.
- The group encouraged the Project Team to consider precedents outside of Caltrans.

REPORT OF ESWG COMMENTS TO THE CAC

Ms. McLaughlin reminded the group that they would have an opportunity to report comments to the CAC on Thursday, April 16, and asked the group for key points they would like to share at Thursday's meeting. The following points were agreed upon:

- To request an opportunity to give the same presentation regarding health impacts and Health Impact Analysis (HIA) to the CAC and the Project Committee
- That health risk should be studied with regard to topics beyond air quality
- That criteria pollutants from stationary sources should be evaluated in addition to mobile sources
- That CAC members should re-read the Tier 2 report to ensure their recommendations address Tier 2 concerns

NEXT STEPS

Of the topics addressed in the EIR/EIS and the studies that support these topics, the ESWG expressed the most interest in the Community Impact Assessment, which includes analysis of environmental justice, land use, growth-related effects, farmlands, community character and cohesion, economics, and community facilities and services. The group agreed that the primary agenda item for their next meeting would be a more in-depth introduction to and discussion of the Community Impact Assessment.

The date and location of the next meeting of the Environmental Subject Working Group was left for later determination.

Ms. McLaughlin adjourned the meeting at 8:53 p.m.