

Memorandum

To: Chairman and Commissioners

Date: June 22, 2001

From: Robert I. Remen

File No:
Book Item 2.2b
Action

Ref: Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Report on the Los Angeles Mid-City/Westside Transit Corridor Project

Issue:

Should the Commission comment on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (DEIS/DEIR) for the Wilshire Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) and Exposition Transitway project by the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA)?

Recommendation:

MTA states that it has the financial capacity to build and operate the Wilshire BRT alternative while continuing the operation and maintenance of the entire regional transit system. Beyond the Wilshire BRT alternative in the Mid-City/Westside Corridor, additional financial capacity (up to \$12 billion in unallocated funds is available according to MTA) exists to fund an ancillary corridor as part of the MTA's evaluation of alternatives that include a proposed Exposition BRT or Light Rail Transit (LRT).

The DEIS/DEIR states that MTA anticipates an operating deficit of \$151.2 million for the Fiscal Year (FY) 2004-FY 2010 period. Staff recommends that the Commission, as a responsible agency, make the following comment on the DEIS/DEIR:

- The MTA Board should ensure that the anticipated \$151.2 million operating shortfall is remedied by implementing necessary strategies developed by its Cost Reduction Team to eliminate the shortfall.

Background:

In February and March 2000, following the review of the findings of the Major Investment Study, the MTA Board of Directors considered and provided specific direction on alternatives to be evaluated in the DEIS/DEIR. The primary direction was to evaluate an exclusive lane for BRT along Wilshire Boulevard from Wilshire/Western to downtown Santa Monica. Additionally, the Board directed that BRT and LRT be evaluated along the MTA-owned Exposition right-of-way. The MTA Board was explicit in their direction that the Exposition route be considered as a support corridor only, such that Exposition would not supplant Wilshire Boulevard as the primary Westside transit route. Thus the Exposition BRT and LRT alternatives in the DEIS/DEIR document were considered in combination with the Wilshire BRT alternative.

Each alternative discussed below would require storage and maintenance facilities. The DEIS/DEIR identifies several sites that are under consideration, including one of which could serve as the maintenance facility for both BRT and LRT systems, if these alternatives were selected.

Wilshire BRT (Alternatives 1, 1a and 1b)

The Wilshire BRT would be 13.2 miles in length, providing service to 14 stations with 3-minute peak service and 6- to 7-minute off-peak service, and operate at-grade beginning at the Metro Red Line Wilshire/Western Station and extend westward along Wilshire Boulevard through the cities of Los Angeles, Beverly Hills and Santa Monica. Eighty foot

double-articulated buses would be needed, which would provide approximately 90 seats, with an over all capacity of about 135 passengers counting standees. Single-articulated (60-70 foot) buses, which would provide an average seating capacity of 65 passengers with space available for another 13 to 30 standees, may be able to accommodate demand in the beginning years of service. Operation of the Wilshire BRT could begin as soon as fiscal year 2005.

Wilshire BRT and Exposition BRT (Alternatives 2 and 2a)

The Exposition BRT alternative would provide an additional 16.7 route miles in conjunction with the 13.2 mile Wilshire BRT corridor, providing service to 20 stations with 3-minute peak service and 6 to 7-minute off-peak service. Sixty (60) to 80 foot articulated buses would be needed for the end-to-end Exposition BRT service with 40 foot standard buses continuing to manage the expected passenger loads from the other routes using the busway. The Minimum Operable Segment (MOS) alternative (2a) would only extend the project from downtown Los Angeles to Venice/Washington Station in Culver City over a distance of 8.8 miles, providing service to 12 stations.

Wilshire BRT and Exposition LRT (Alternatives 3 and 3a)

The Exposition LRT alternative would provide an additional 17.3 miles in conjunction with the 13.2 mile Wilshire BRT corridor, providing service to 17 stations with 5-minute peak service and 12-minute off-peak service. The Exposition LRT system would use light rail vehicles identical to those used on the Metro Blue Line. The MOS alternative (3a) would only extend the project from downtown Los Angeles to Venice/Washington Station in Culver City over a distance of 9.8 miles, providing service to 10 stations.

The Exposition BRT and LRT alternatives would travel mostly at-grade along an existing railroad right-of-way from the Long Beach Blue Line in downtown Los Angeles through Culver City to the City of Santa Monica.

The MTA Board also requested that a subway tunnel be considered along Exposition Boulevard between Figueroa Street and Vermont Avenue as a possible mitigation measure for project traffic impacts. During the environmental evaluation it was determined that the at-grade alignments of LRT and BRT running in mixed traffic flow along this segment would not result in impacts that would require a tunnel during normal peak period or mid-day conditions.

Estimated Project Cost: The capital construction and vehicle costs associated with each alternative are shown below in 1999 dollars. Further cost details on each alternative are provided in the attachment. The overall costs range from \$354 million for Alternative 1 (Wilshire BRT) to approximately \$1.0 billion for Alternative 3 (Wilshire BRT/Exposition LRT).

Capital and Operating Cost Estimates <i>(Costs in Millions – 1999 Dollars)</i>							
	Wilshire BRT			Wilshire BRT and Exposition BRT		Wilshire BRT and Exposition LRT	
<i>Cost Category</i>	<i>BRT Option 1</i>	<i>BRT Option 1a</i>	<i>BRT Option 1b</i>	<i>BRT Option 2*</i>	<i>BRT Option 2a*</i>	<i>BRT/LRT Option 3*</i>	<i>BRT/LRT Option 3a*</i>
Alignment Difference	Baseline median	Median adjacent	Curb adjacent	Full length	MOS	Full length	MOS
Capital Cost	304.6	304.6	313.7	<u>304.6 W</u> 209.9 E	<u>304.6 W</u> 128.9 E	<u>304.6 W</u> 554.9 E	<u>304.6 W</u> 252.9 E
Bus Vehicle Cost	49.4	49.94	49.4	58.4	47.4	26.6	35.6
LRT Vehicle Cost	-	-	-	-	-	117.8	55.8

Total Project Cost	354.0	354.0	363.1	653.9	480.9	1,003.9	648.9
Annual Operating Costs	6.9	6.9	6.9	17.4	14.7	27.5	24.0
<i>*Cost includes Wilshire BRT Baseline Median Option or Median Adjacent Option W – Wilshire BRT cost E – Exposition BRT or LRT cost</i>							

Environmental Impacts: Attached are the tables from the DEIS/DEIR Executive Summary that identify the significant impacts after mitigation for the proposed BRT and LRT alternatives. Under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the following unavoidable significant impacts are expected to occur for the alternatives considered after mitigation:

- Two traffic intersections will be impacted due to the conversion of two traffic lanes and thereby diverting traffic onto other streets - Alternative #1, 1a and 1b
- Five traffic intersections will be impacted where the dedicated bus line would leave the railroad right-of-way and require the reconfiguration of traffic lanes on city streets - Alternative #2 and 2a
- Three traffic intersections will be impacted where the light rail transitway would leave the railroad right-of-way and require the reconfiguration of traffic lanes on city streets - Alternative #3 and 3a
- Loss of on-street parking to residents and business in the project area - Alternative #1, 1a and 1b
- Removal and reconstruction of landscaped medians would result in an adverse visual impact - Alternative #1
- Increase in traffic volumes on the Santa Monica Freeway - Alternative #1, 1a and 1b (up to 1.25%) and Alternative #2 and 2a (up to 1.14%)
- Vibration will impact 31 single-family residents and three multi-family buildings - Alternative #3 and 3a
- Noise will impact 22 residences (Alternative 2 and 2a) and 15 residences (Alternative 3 and 3a) after construction of soundwalls
- Temporary impacts during construction are possible with regards to traffic lane closures and traffic patterns due to movement of general construction traffic - all alternatives

Historical and Financial Background: In 1994, MTA selected, as its preferred alternative for the Eastside Corridor, an extension of the Red Line heavy-rail subway. Construction started in 1997; it was suspended in 1998 due to a massive funding shortfall on the local level. The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the Commission expressed their concerns over MTA's ability to deliver their Red Line subway extensions to North Hollywood, Eastside, and Mid-City, as well as the Pasadena Blue Line light rail line. As a result, MTA met with its funding partners, FTA and the Commission, to discuss how it would accomplish its plans with the funding available. Ultimately, MTA was required to show that its revised capital plan would fund and complete the proposed projects within the agreed upon schedule and funding available. After MTA restructured its capital financing plan, it adopted in May 1998 its Restructuring Plan to complete the Red Line North Hollywood extension and the Pasadena Blue light rail line. MTA suspended its Eastside Corridor and Mid-City rail extensions. The Plan also called for studying viable and effective options in Los Angeles County for the corridors in which rail projects had been suspended.

In late 1998, MTA completed a Regional Transit Alternatives Analysis that reviewed all of the alternatives in previous environmental documents, proposed at public hearings, and suggested by interested parties. Alternatives considered included heavy subway rail, light rail, BRT, a combination heavy rail and BRT, a low-cost alternative (transportation systems management – TSM), and no project. (TSM and the no project alternative are always considered in an environmental document.)

The MTA's 20-year cash flow indicates that the MTA has the financial capacity to build and operate the Wilshire BRT alternative while continuing the operation and maintenance of the entire regional transit system. Anticipated sources for capital funds and the expected amount for the Wilshire BRT alternative includes \$78.6 million (23%) in federal New Start funding, \$258.5 million (76%) in state funds (\$256 million in TCRP funding and \$2.5 million in AB 1012 funding), and \$3.2 million (1%) in local Proposition C funds.

Beyond the Wilshire BRT alternative in the Mid-City/Westside Corridor, additional financial capacity exists to fund another project such as the Exposition alternatives. Such a project is anticipated to be partially funded with federal New Start funds. MTA's Section 5309 submittal establishes that an Exposition BRT or LRT alternative with a capital cost of \$300 million can be built from FY 2009 through FY 2013, and an additional operating cost of nearly \$18 million annually can be supported. These incremental capital and operating costs are adequate for the Exposition BRT (full length or MOS) alternative and the Exposition LRT MOS alternative.

The combined impacts of the San Fernando Valley, Mid-City/Westside and Eastside projects lead to a projected operating deficit of \$151.2 million for the FY 2004-FY 2010 period, if no further actions are taken to balance MTA's operating plan. The most challenging shortfalls are projected to occur in FY 2007-FY 2009. A Cost Reduction Team has been established by the MTA whose goal is to reduce bus and rail hourly operating costs. The strategies developed by the team will be phased-in beginning in FY 2005. The cost reduction plan will achieve the \$151.2 million system-wide savings needed to ensure a balanced operating plan with the three corridor projects.

Attachments

AG/trosnow/EIS-DIR Mid-City Westside Transit Corridor.DOC/07/05/2001