

City of Culver City, California
Joint City Council and Redevelopment Agency Agenda Item Report

Meeting Date: 03/09/09		Item Number: J-1	
AGENDA ITEM: JOINT ITEM - Adoption of a Resolution Transmitting the Official City and Agency Responses to the January 2009 Draft Environmental Impact Report for the Proposed Exposition Corridor Transit Project Phase 2.			
Contact Person/Dept.: Glenn Heald/CDD		Phone Number: (310) 253-5752	
Fiscal Impact: Yes ☐ No ☒		General Fund: Yes ☐ No ☐	
Public Hearing: ☐		Action Item: ☒	Attachments: ☒
Public Notification: Posted on Culver City web page 03/03/09; Master E-Mail Notification List (03/04/09).			
Department Approval: Sol Blumenfeld, CDD (03/04/09)		City Attorney Approval: Carol Schwab (by H. Baker) (03/04/09)	
Chief Financial Officer Approval: Jeff Muir (by N. Kimball) (03/04/09)		City Manager Approval: Jerry B. Fulwood (03/05/09)	

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends the City Council and the Redevelopment Agency adopt respective resolutions transmitting the official City and Agency responses to the January 2009 Draft Environmental Impact Report for the Proposed Exposition Corridor Transit Project Phase 2 (Attachments No. 1 and No. 2). Staff recommends the City and Agency request that the Exposition Corridor Transit Project Phase 2 utilize the existing Exposition Right-of-Way.

BACKGROUND:

The Exposition Metro Line Construction Authority (Expo Authority) has prepared and circulated a Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR), dated January 2009, to assess potential environmental impacts associated with a proposed extension of the Expo Phase 1 project beyond the terminus at Washington and National Boulevards in Culver City.

The City received the DEIR on February 3rd and immediately distributed it to City Departments and the City Council for review. The County established a 45-day review and comment period that began on January 28th and ends on March 13th. Staff immediately commenced with preparing comments. Typically, a City Council meeting is held to discuss and seek early Council and community input while staff analyzes the DEIR and formulates detailed comments for Council consideration. The truncated review period for this DEIR does not allow for a preliminary meeting. Therefore, at tonight's meeting Council and the Agency are asked to consider staff's

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recommended comments, listen to public comment, and then accept or modify these comments for transmittal to the Expo Authority.

The City of Culver City, in a resolution adopted on June 11, 2001, stated that “the City of Culver City supports rapid transit on the Exposition right-of-way corridor, with an overriding priority for light rail” and “the City of Culver City categorically opposes any deviation off the existing right-of-way on to Venice and Sepulveda Boulevards” for the Phase 2 of the Exposition Light Rail Project.

The City Attorney and Agency Counsel will provide a final review and may provide additional comments prior to submission to the Expo Authority to deal with any outstanding legal issues.

In light of the short time frame for review of the draft document, Agency Counsel has also recommended that the Agency be listed as a responsible party whose review of the DEIR and project approval is required.

DISCUSSION:

The purpose of the DEIR is to assist decision-makers and the public in assessing the impacts associated with the implementation of the alternatives under consideration. Six alternatives are evaluated in the DEIR:

1. The No-Build Alternative consists of the existing transit services as well as improvements explicitly committed to be constructed by the year 2030 as defined in the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) Regional Transportation Plan (RTP).
2. The TSM Alternative would involve three basic components: addition of a rapid bus route connecting downtown Culver City with downtown Santa Monica; associated service improvements on selected north/south routes to feed stations along the new rapid bus route; and service improvements on selected routes connecting Westside communities to the Expo Phase 1 terminus.
3. LRT Alternative 1 - Expo ROW to Olympic Boulevard. This alternative would utilize approximately 5 miles of the existing Exposition ROW from the Expo Phase 1 terminus in Culver City to the intersection with Olympic Boulevard in Santa Monica, from which point the alignment would follow Olympic Boulevard to the proposed terminus station.
4. LRT Alternative 2 - Expo ROW to Colorado Avenue. This alternative would also utilize the existing Exposition ROW from the Expo Phase 1 terminus in Culver City to the intersection with Olympic Boulevard in Santa Monica, from which point the alignment would continue within the Exposition ROW to west of 19th Street, diverging from the ROW onto Colorado Avenue to the proposed terminus station.

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5. LRT Alternative 3 – Venice/Sepulveda to Olympic Boulevard. This alternative would divert from the Exposition ROW at the Expo Phase 1 terminus and follow Venice Boulevard and Sepulveda Boulevard until reaching the intersection with the Exposition ROW. The alignment would then continue westward along the Exposition ROW and Olympic Boulevard identical to LRT Alternative 1.
6. LRT Alternative 4 – Venice/Sepulveda to Colorado Avenue. This alternative would divert from the Exposition ROW at the Expo Phase 1 terminus and follow Venice Boulevard and Sepulveda Boulevard until reaching the intersection with the Exposition ROW. The alignment would then continue westward along the Exposition ROW and Colorado Avenue identical to LRT Alternative 2.

According to the DEIR, all of the LRT Alternatives have been identified as environmentally superior to the No-Build and TSM Alternatives. LRT Alternatives 1 and 2 do not result in any traffic or parking impacts that could not be mitigated. The other two LRT Alternatives 3 and 4 would result in significant impacts to one Venice Boulevard intersection (Girard Avenue/Midvale Avenue/Venice Boulevard) that could not be mitigated due to right of way constraints. The project would require the closure of some of the existing Venice Boulevard intersections. Also, in order to maintain the roadway capacity along Venice Boulevard, on-street parking will be eliminated and the roadway area used for the bike lane and a curbside through-lane. This will require buses to stop in the relocate bike lane and curb-side through-lane, possibly impeding traffic flow and increasing the potential for accidents.

As stated above, in addition to traffic impacts Alternatives 3 and 4 would eliminate most if not all on-street parking spaces along the length of Venice Boulevard. The project will also create new parking demands at the two proposed LRT Stations along Venice Boulevard at Venice/Sepulveda and Venice/Motor. Metro is not proposing to provide any parking at either of the Venice Boulevard stations. Replacement parking for the eliminated on-street parking is proposed but would be less than the total demand created by the combination of eliminated on-street parking and the new demand at the LRT Stations.

The Venice Boulevard Alignment (Alternatives 3 and 4) therefore has the potential to significantly increase spillover traffic and parking impacts in the surrounding areas. These potential impacts and appropriate mitigation measures are not adequately identified and discussed in the DEIR. Because of the significant impacts on traffic circulation and impacts to the residents and businesses of the City, Culver City should strongly oppose Alternatives 3 and 4.

As identified in the DEIR, the four Light Rail Transit options will result in impacts to Land Use and Circulation that without proper mitigation may result in a degradation of the surrounding environment and the physical division of an established community. The DEIR Executive Summary also states that LRT Alternative 1 (Expo

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ROW to Olympic) would “result in the least amount of traffic disruption during construction.”

The Draft EIR is divided into eight major sections that include the following:

1. Introduction
2. Project Alternatives
3. Environmental Analysis
4. Construction Impacts
5. Other CEQA Considerations
6. Financial Considerations
7. Comparison of Alternatives
8. Community participation and Public Engagement

Section 3 contains 18 subsections:

- 3.1. Introduction to the environmental Analysis
- 3.2. Transportation/Traffic
- 3.3. Aesthetics
- 3.4. Air Quality
- 3.5. Global Climate change
- 3.6. Biological Resources
- 3.7. Cultural Resources
- 3.8. Geology, Soils, and Seismicity
- 3.9. Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- 3.10. Hydrology/Water Quality
- 3.11. Land use/Planning
- 3.12. Noise and Vibration
- 3.13. Paleontological Resources
- 3.14. Parks and Community facilities
- 3.15. Safety and Security
- 3.16. Socioeconomics
- 3.17. Energy Resources
- 3.18. CEQA Impact Summary Table

The DEIR was circulated among various City departments to compile comments for the Council’s and Agency’s consideration. In the official City and Agency responses, Council and the Agency may add to, modify, or omit these comments. Staff comments are detailed in Exhibit A to Attachment No. 1.

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FISCAL IMPACT

There is no direct fiscal impact to the City or Agency from the No-Build Alternative, the TSM Alternative, or LRT Alternatives 1 or 2, and only negligible direct fiscal impact from LRT Alternatives 3 or 4.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Proposed Council and Agency Resolutions.
2. Public Draft Environmental Impact Report Exposition Corridor Transit Project Phase 2 Executive Summary, January 2009

Please note, the entire DEIR is comprised of several hundred pages. To conserve resources, the entire DEIR has been provided to the City Council/Agency Board prior to this meeting. A copy of the DEIR is available for public inspection at the Office of the City Clerk and the Office of the Agency Secretary. A copy of the DEIR is also available at the Culver City Library. A link to the Metro webpage has also been placed on the City's website to allow interested members of the public easy electronic access to the full DEIR.

MOTION:

That the City Council:

Adopt a Resolution Transmitting the Official City Response to the January 2009 Draft Environmental Impact Report for the Exposition Corridor Transit Project Phase 2.

That the Redevelopment Agency:

Adopt a Resolution Transmitting the Official Agency Response to the January 2009 Draft Environmental Impact Report for the Exposition Corridor Transit Project Phase 2.