



CITY COUNCIL

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September 19, 2012

The Honorable Adam Schiff
U.S. Representative, 29th District
2411 Rayburn HOB
Washington D.C. 20515

Re: SR-710 Freeway Extension Project

Dear Congressman Schiff:

I am writing to share our City's deep concerns regarding the objectivity and rationality of the EIR study process relating to the SR-710 extension project. We recognize that you have expressed similar concerns in the past and greatly appreciate your continuing interest and involvement.

Our City has participated in the various committees created by Metro to purportedly seek input from the affected communities. From my personal experiences, I can tell you categorically that this process has been a sham and is nothing more than a *post hoc* attempt to justify the ill-conceived tunnel project (the so-called F-7 alternative). My view, however, is not unique. As we have seen in recent days, the opposition to the current study and its pre-ordained tunnel conclusion has reached epic proportions. With the ever-growing group of communities objecting to the F-7 tunnel, it should now be obvious to the Metro and Caltrans decision makers that this project should not proceed and that the precious taxpayer dollars that are being wasted on this charade should be applied to worthy transportation projects.

Below are just a couple of examples of how the current Metro process defies rationality:

To date, there is no substantiated statement of purpose of the study other than relief of traffic congestion in its most vague sense. At different times, we have been told conflicting stories of the need that the SR-710 extension project will address. At times, we have been told the need was to relieve through traffic using the regional freeway system. At the May 2012 Stakeholder Outreach Committee meeting, we were told that the need was to relieve congestion between the current 710 freeway terminus and the 210 freeway (i.e., the congestion in the "gap" area), and that Metro had already identified a number of alternative traffic solutions to include in the study. When committee members at the meeting inquired as to what was the source of the congestion in this area (e.g., local vehicle trips or through traffic, vehicles vs. trucks, etc.), Metro's traffic consultants admitted that they had neither studied nor determined the source of the congestion. When asked how Metro could have already identified alternative traffic solutions when the source of the congestion was not known, neither Metro nor its traffic consultants at the meeting could provide an explanation.

At other times, Metro has promoted the SR-710 tunnel option as an enhancement for goods movement from the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach. At that time, SCAG commissioned Iteris (a premier traffic consulting firm) to conduct the "SR-710 Missing Link Truck Study." At the request of the Arroyo Verdugo Subregion (the SCAG subregion consisting of Pasadena, Burbank, Glendale, South Pasadena and La Cañada Flintridge), the "SR-710 Missing Link Truck Study" was presented to the Arroyo Verdugo Subregion Steering Committee at the

meeting of June 17, 2009. The “SR-710 Missing Link Truck Study” showed alarming increases in traffic (both car and truck) for our City. In fact, one of the conclusions in the “SR-710 Missing Link Truck Study” was that the 210 Freeway would have to be widened by a lane on each side to accommodate the increased traffic. It also showed that the overall driving conditions would be made worse if the tunnel was built, along with the following:

If the Tunnel is completed, 75% of local surface streets (Pasadena, South Pasadena and La Cañada Flintridge) would still be gridlocked.

1. *Of the 80+ study segments that are currently operating over capacity (Level of Service (LOS) “F” – the lowest rating Caltrans can give and the point at which gridlock occurs, over 60 (75%) of these segments will remain over capacity after a tunnel is built.*
2. *Many believe that streets such as Fair Oaks Blvd., Fremont Avenue, Los Robles Avenue and Atlantic Boulevard would begin to improve once a tunnel was built. However, these streets will still operate over capacity with severe congestion.*
 - a. *At least 12 arterial streets...will experience higher traffic volumes solely due to the tunnel.*

The tunnel would cause significant detrimental traffic and truck impacts on the I-210 Freeway through the cities of Glendale, Pasadena, La Cañada Flintridge and the community of La Crescenta.

1. *If the tunnel is completed by 2030, the following is projected to occur:*
 - a. *More than a 25% increase in daily traffic volumes on I-210;*
 - b. *An additional 30,000 vehicles per day on I-210;*
 - c. *An additional 2,500 trucks per day on I-210;*
 - d. *850 additional trucks in the PM peak hour on I-210;*
 - e. *Truck percentage on I-210 will increase from 11% to over 20%; and*
 - f. *Since portions of the I-210 will operate at Level of Service (LOS) “F,” traffic will be forced onto local streets.*

The tunnel connection would make overall driving conditions worse regionally.

1. *The overall number of vehicle miles traveled would increase in the peak hour, bringing many environmental impacts;*
2. *The overall number of vehicle hours would increase (more delay, gas consumption and air pollution);*
3. *The system-wide, regional benefit would only be an increase in overall speed of .6 miles per hour; and*
4. *Motorists would be driving farther and spending more time on the road if the tunnel is built.*

The previous information is an analysis by the City of La Cañada Flintridge’s Traffic Engineer of the SCAG (So. Ca. Assn. of Gov’ts.) “SR-710 Missing Link Truck Study (Preliminary Draft Final Report),” conducted by Iteris, Inc., a consulting firm.

Remarkably, Metro has now told us that there will be no meaningful increase in truck traffic associated with the SR-710 tunnel project. When asked at the May 2012 Stakeholder Outreach Committee meeting about truck traffic and why no goods movement alternatives (e.g. freight to rail) to the SR-710 tunnel were being studied, Metro responded that since only 3% of the current truck traffic proceeds to the terminus of the SR-710 freeway, truck traffic is neither a factor nor a concern – a strange response in view of Metro’s admission at the meeting that it had not yet studied the source of the traffic congestion.

What was perhaps even more strange was Metro’s response to my question at that meeting asking how Metro could take that view in light of the “SR-710 Missing Link Truck Study” which predicted significant increases in truck traffic. Metro’s response to me was that Metro did not have to consider the

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findings of that study because it was never “finalized” (or words to that effect). As one of the public officials who witnessed the presentation on the “SR-710 Missing Link Truck Study” and who had our City’s traffic engineer review it for accuracy and completeness, I can assure you that the only reason the “SR-710 Missing Link Truck Study” was not “finalized” (if that is indeed the case) is because of its alarming conclusions.

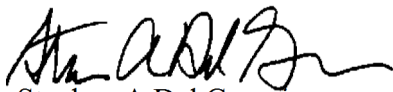
Having assumed away any detrimental increase in truck and vehicular traffic, Metro likely will give little or no consideration to the public health impacts of the SR-710 tunnel project or consideration to alternative projects.

From the beginning of the study, there has been a dearth of emphasis on developing reliable estimates of the cost of any of the potential alternatives. As you have observed, this is particularly true of the tunnel alternative. Cost guesstimates of the tunnel fluctuate wildly from time to time in multi-billion dollar amounts, while Metro simply avoids the question by deferring the determination of project cost. Absence of reliable cost estimates makes the alternative comparison process impossible. Absence of reliable cost estimates makes credible cost/benefit analyses impossible. Even if reliable cost estimates were available, there seems to be no way to use them in credible cost/benefit analysis, because information describing and validating the methodology of cost/benefit analysis has not been made available.

With the overwhelming negative response to the SR-710 tunnel project and its obvious lack of merit, it appears that now is the time to put an end to the senseless waste of taxpayer dollars “studying” it. We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to explore how the taxpayers’ dollars can be saved and put to better use. We will be contacting your staff to ascertain your availability for such a meeting.

Thank you very much for your help in this matter. We look forward to continuing to work with you, and I thank you for the productive and effective working relationship our City has enjoyed with you and your staff over the years.

Sincerely,



Stephen A Del Guercio
Mayor

cc: Honorable City Council Members, City of La Cañada Flintridge
Honorable Jerry Brown, Governor
Honorable Carol Liu, Senator
Honorable Anthony J. Portantino, Assembly Member
Honorable Mike Gatto, Assembly Member
Honorable Mayor and City Council Members, City of Glendale
Honorable Mayor and City Council Members, City of Los Angeles
Honorable Mayor and City Council Members, City of Pasadena
Honorable Mayor and City Council Members, City of South Pasadena
Mr. Joseph Tavaglione, Chair, California Transportation Commission