

CITY OF LOS ANGELES
INTERDEPARTMENTAL CORRESPONDENCE

Date: August 31, 2009

To: Honorable City Council
C/o City Clerk, Room 395, City Hall
Attention: Honorable Bill Rosendahl, Chair
Transportation Committee

From: 
Rita L. Robinson, General Manager
Department of Transportation

Subject: **WILSHIRE BOULEVARD BUS RAPID TRANSIT PROJECT –
COUNCIL FILE 08-2595**

On December 10, 2008, the Department of Transportation (DOT) provided a status report to the Transportation Committee on the Wilshire Boulevard Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Project. It has been determined that a full Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment (EIR/EA) is needed to environmentally clear this project rather than the initially proposed Initial Study/Environmental Assessment. On August 5, 2009, the City Council directed DOT, in conjunction with the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro), to report again on the project's status.

Recommendations

That the City Council, subject to the approval of the Mayor,

1. DIRECT DOT to work with Metro to prepare an EIR/EA for the Project.
2. DIRECT DOT to encumber \$210,000 in Proposition C Local Return funds as the City's share of the EIR/EA cost.
3. AUTHORIZE DOT to reimburse Metro for up to \$210,000 for the EIR/EA within 90 days of Council action.
4. DIRECT DOT to report back in 90 days on the progress of the Project.

Discussion

At the start of the environmental clearance work for this project, Metro and the City of Los Angeles agreed to share equally in its cost. In March 2008, Council directed DOT to transfer \$200,000 in Proposition C Local Return funds to Metro as the City's match for preparation of a joint CEQA/NEPA document consisting of an Environmental Assessment and Initial Study for the Wilshire Boulevard BRT Project. Consultants were retained by

Metro, and work began in the summer of 2008. Metro has coordinated this work in cooperation with DOT and the Bureaus of Engineering and Street Services.

The technical analysis for the environmental study is now complete after public outreach, transportation modeling and impact analyses were performed by the project team. The results indicate that a number of intersections along Wilshire Boulevard and parallel streets would experience traffic impacts that could not be mitigated to a level of insignificance. In addition, public outreach in November 2008 indicated both strong support throughout the corridor and strong opposition in several communities. Based on these findings, staff from Metro and DOT determined that an EIR should be prepared for CEQA clearance.

In moving forward with the EIR/EA, public scoping meetings will be scheduled for late September/early October 2009. A draft EIR/EA will be released by February 2010 for a 45-day public review period. The draft EIR/EA will identify any environmental impacts, including traffic impacts, and will determine whether those impacts can be mitigated to a level of insignificance. During the EIR/EA review period, public hearings will be scheduled to comment on the draft EIR/EA.

Project Alternatives for the EIR/EA will be finalized during the public scoping period in September and October. Metro and DOT have initially identified four Project Alternatives, including the original project as submitted to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) plus three additional Alternatives. Metro reports that FTA concurs with the proposed Alternatives but will not fund a project that doesn't include exclusive peak-period bus lanes along most of Wilshire Boulevard or meet other Very Small Starts program criteria.

Metro and DOT have established a budget and schedule for the EIR/EA. Metro is planning to use the existing consultant team to expedite the process. The goal is to complete the EIR/EA by June. The City's share of the cost for the EIR/EA is estimated to be \$210,000.

Fiscal Impact Statement

There is no impact to the General Fund.

Coordination

DOT has coordinated closely with Metro, the Bureaus of Engineering and Street Services, and the Mayor's Office. Metro has consulted with FTA on both a monthly and quarterly basis.