

**Metro**

Metropolitan Transportation Authority

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metro.net**PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE
SEPTEMBER 19, 2012****SUBJECT: RANCHO VISTA GRADE SEPARATION AND REGIONAL RAIL UPDATE****ACTION: AMEND FY 2012-13 BUDGET AND EXECUTE MOU WITH THE CITY OF
PALMDALE FOR ENGINEERING****RECOMMENDATION**

- A. Amend the FY 2012-13 LACMTA Budget to add \$3,000,000 from Measure R 3% Commuter Rail funds for the Rancho Vista Grade Separation Project
- B. Authorize the CEO to Execute a MOU with the City of Palmdale for Preliminary and Final Engineering for the Rancho Vista Grade Separation Improvement Project
- C. Receive and File the Regional Rail Update thru August 2012

ISSUE

The Regional Rail group has been actively seeking to work with the communities to develop projects that benefit the communities as well as increase the safety along the railroad right-of-way. The Regional Rail Capital Program approved by the Board in July 2012 has set aside funds to advance grade separation projects in Los Angeles County.

Subsequent to the adoption of the LACMTA FY 2012-13 budget, the City of Palmdale has expressed a need to provide additional funding to advance this important project. LACMTA is proposing to provide \$3,000,000 for this project. The City was successful in obtaining a Federal earmark of \$539,500 that sunsets in December of 2012 if not obligated.

The City of Palmdale will enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with the LACMTA for funding of the engineering of this grade separation. The City of Palmdale will lead the effort with the LACMTA as a major stakeholder.

BACKGROUND

The Rancho Vista at-grade crossing has been the location of several vehicle vs. train accidents in recent years. The City of Palmdale has been actively pursuing a grade separation of Rancho Vista Boulevard with the railroad tracks operated by Metrolink and the Union Pacific Railroad. The railroad right-of-way is owned in part by LACMTA. This is also a segment of the proposed California High Speed Rail corridor.

The City has developed a Project Study Report Equivalent for the project that identifies a preferred alternative for a grade separation of the roadway from the railroad right-of-way. This would eliminate potential hazards related to at-grade crossings. In addition, the grade separation will increase mobility in the region and reduce pollution generate by cars waiting for passing trains behind crossing gates.

Working with Caltrans, the City has obtained environmental clearance for the project. The Final Environmental Assessment with Finding of No Significant Impact was issued in September 2011. With the completion of the Project Study Report Equivalent and the Final Environmental Assessment the project has adequate clearance to move forward.

The City was successful in obtaining a federal earmark to of \$539,500 to partially fund the project. Since then the City has been pursuing other funding, including Call for Projects funding. The estimated remaining engineering costs are approximately \$3,500,000. This will complete the engineering of the project and produce construction documents. The engineering is expected to take approximately two years. The advancement of the engineering of this project will create a shelf ready project that is attractive to additional federal and state funding. Furthermore, the advanced project will be eligible for funding associated with the California High Speed Rail Program.

DISCUSSION

Railroad – highway at-grade crossings carry significant risks. This project will eliminate the potential for motor vehicle versus train accidents and potential pedestrian incidents that currently exist at the at-grade crossing. Furthermore, the completed project will allow the free flow of roadway traffic over the railroad right-of-way that will increase the mobility for the region as well as reduce the pollution caused by vehicles waiting behind gates for passing trains.

DETERMINATION OF SAFETY IMPACT

The Rancho Vista project is a grade separation of railroad right-of-way. The construction of this grade separation will eliminate the possibility of collisions between vehicles and trains, thereby improving safety.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

With approval of Recommendation A, funding of \$ 3,000,000 in Measure R 3% funds will be approved for the Rancho Vista Grade Separation Project. This is in addition to the

\$18,000,000 in Measure R 3% funds approved by the Board in July 2012 for the Regional Rail Capital Funding Plan for FY 2012-13. Funding will be allocated to cost center 0444, Regional Rail, Project 460064. No other sources of funds were considered because Measure R 3% funds are designated for Metrolink related capital improvements within Los Angeles County. This activity will not impact ongoing operating costs because Measure R 3% funds are not eligible to be used for Metro Operations.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

One alternative is to not advance the funding at this time. However, this would delay the timeframe to achieve final design, thus reducing the competitiveness of the project to obtain funds for construction.

Another alternative solution to a grade separation would be to close the crossing. However, it was determined previously that this option is not a practical solution since it restricts mobility in the region.

REGIONAL RAIL UPDATE

- Metrolink Commuter Rail

Ridership and Revenue Update

Metrolink ridership for July 2011 thru June 2012 was 12 million boardings, and revenues were \$80 million. Although revenues were up 5% from the prior year, they were \$1.8 million (2%) less than budgeted for FY 2011-12. This reduced revenue to budget may be related to several factors including fare enforcement issues along selected lines, especially the Antelope Valley and San Bernardino lines. Staff is participating in a Metrolink board level ad-hoc task force which is working on strategies to improve fare revenue collection.

METROLINK FY 2011-12 YEAR-TO-DATE THRU 6//30/12						
	RIDERSHIP (Millions)			REVENUES (Millions)		
	FY 11	FY 12	CHANGE	FY 11	FY 12	CHANGE
TOTAL	11.1	12.0	+ 7%	\$ 76.1	\$ 80.0	+ 5%

Metrolink Capital Projects

- Positive Train Control (PTC) -- The development of this collision avoidance system is moving forward. There have been challenges in obtaining some equipment and radio spectrum but solutions have been developed to address these issues. Testing is continuing on rolling stock. Metrolink's PTC system is scheduled for revenue service in Sept. 2013; this is well ahead of the Federal mandate of December 2015.

→ The Federal Railroad Administration has testified before the U.S. Congress that while some properties will have successfully implemented PTC, the nationwide implementation of PTC by December of 2015 is improbable. This is primarily due to the development of technology and available radio spectrum.

- LACMTA Capital Projects

With the approval of the Regional Rail Capital Program, staff has been developing projects within Los Angeles County. In particular, the following projects are underway or in development.

Project	Status	Completion Date
Raymer to Bernson Double Track Project	Preliminary engineering and environmental stage	Environmental Clearance – June 2013
Van Nuys Second Platform	Preliminary engineering and environmental stage	Environmental Clearance – June 2013
Regional Rail Bench	Procurement	NTP Winter 2012
Doran Street Grade Separation	Procurement	NTP Winter 2012
LAUS Run-Through Tracks	Project development	NTP April 2013

- LOSSAN Intercity Rail (Amtrak Pacific Surfliner)

LOSSAN Governance

The LOSSAN agency CEOs continue to work on governance issues that will lead towards a strong local authority to better manage the state-supported intercity passenger rail service (Amtrak Pacific Surfliner). Local governance will provide for better coordination and integration of intercity, commuter and freight rail operations, and appropriate institutional and organizational structure for the future success of the LOSSAN corridor.

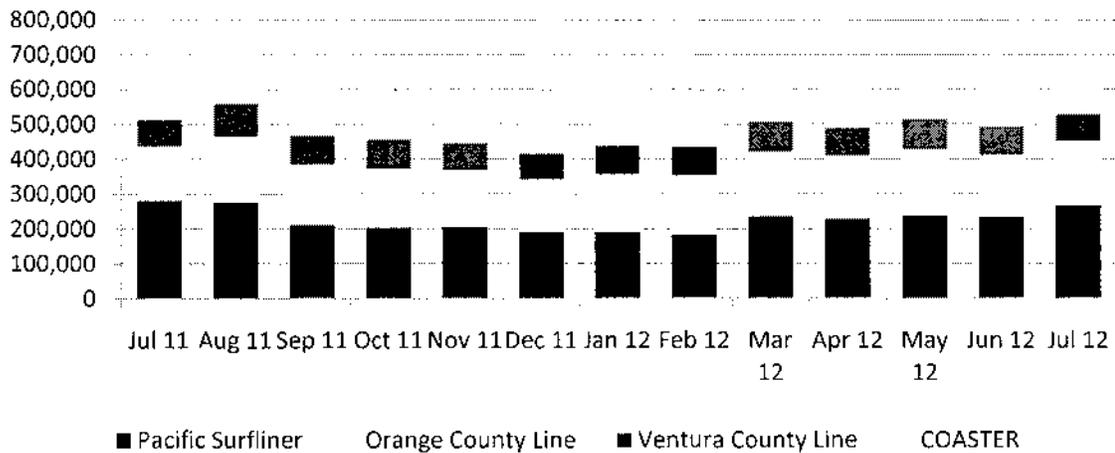
The Legislature has approved SB 1225 (Padilla) establishing a governance framework for greater local control of the LOSSAN corridor.

The member agencies of LOSSAN are developing the Bylaws and the Joint Powers Agreement that will be in place when the new agency is established. In addition, a Request for Proposals is being developed for the managing agency.

- Amtrak Pacific Surfliner Operating Statistics

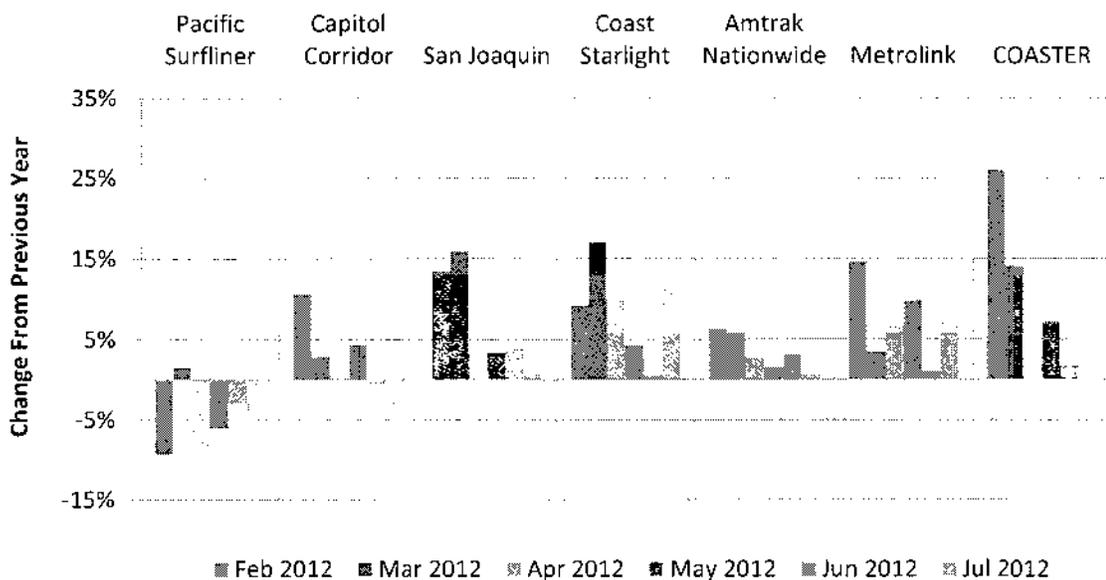
The LOSSAN corridor is the second busiest intercity rail corridor in the nation. Combined ridership in the corridor, including Amtrak plus the commuter services, continues to be strong, and averages over 600,000 boardings per month, or 7.4 million boardings annually.

Total LOSSAN Ridership



Although ridership in the LOSSAN corridor as a whole is strong, ridership on the Pacific Surfliner continues to be consistently down compared to the prior year. It is down nine of the last ten months, including 5% in July 2012. Some of the ridership loss is attributable to extraordinary trackwork, corresponding service disruptions, elimination of off-peak fares and a significant drop in Rail2Rail passengers. During the same time frame, ridership on Metrolink, Coaster and the other Amtrak services in California and nationwide is consistently up compared to the prior year. Staff is working closely with Amtrak to determine the root causes of the ridership loss.

Change In Passenger Rail Ridership



High Speed Rail (HSR)

The signing of legislation related to the funding of the California High Speed Rail Project provides overall funding for the project as well as the funding of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the California High Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA) and the southern California agencies. LACMTA has several projects on this list that are now eligible for funding. LACMTA is working with the CHSRA and the other southern California agencies to advance funding of the MOU projects.

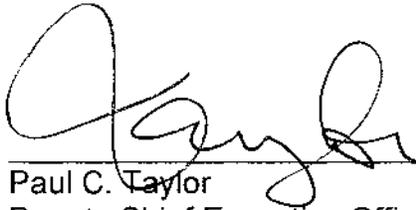
Staff is continuing to work with the CHSRA to develop the program as it reaches Los Angeles County. In particular, staff has been working with the CHSRA and other state agencies to determine and mitigate the impacts that the blended service and the Initial Operating Segment has on right-of-way owned by LACMTA.

Engineering alternatives have been developed for segments of the project in L.A. County. In particular, staff has requested additional engineering to reduce the impacts that the project may have on the communities along the right-of-way.

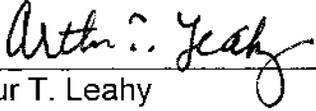
NEXT STEPS

- Staff will enter an MOU agreement with the City of Palmdale for Preliminary Engineering for the Rancho Vista Grade Separation Improvement Project.
- Continue to develop the capital program approved by the Board in July 2012.
- Release the Request For Qualifications/Request For Proposal for the Regional Rail Bench.
- Release the Request for Proposals for the Doran Street Grade Separation.

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