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TO: BOARD OF DIRECTORS

THROUGH: ARTHUR T. LEAHY *W*
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

FROM: DOUGLAS R. FAILING, P.E. *D*
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, HIGHWAY PROGRAM

**SUBJECT: STATE ROUTE 710 NORTH EIR/EIS - AGENCY ROLES AND
RESPONSIBILITIES**

ISSUE

The State Route 710 North EIR/EIS (SR-710 North) is being prepared in partnership with Caltrans. The purpose of this memo is to outline the roles and responsibilities between Metro and Caltrans given the heightened interest in the SR-710 North and the Measure R funding that has been allocated to address the mobility constraints within the corridor.

DISCUSSION

Metro is the contracting agency responsible for making the final decision to fund the preferred alternative identified in the SR-710 North environmental document. Caltrans is the lead agency responsible for compliance with National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

The Board does not have to fund Caltrans' preferred alternative, nor is Caltrans required to approve an alternative that the Metro Board has agreed to fund. Both of these scenarios could result in no project being advanced. Staff believes the selection of a single alternative by Caltrans and Metro is highly likely given the close working relationship between the two agencies, and the extensive technical work and outreach that is being conducted to ensure the final environmental document fulfills the purpose and need for the proposed improvements, with the least environmental and community impact.

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Background

Metro and Caltrans have a long history of working together successfully on the development and implementation of numerous highway projects throughout Los Angeles County. While Metro and Caltrans are project participants, other federal, state, regional and local agencies have a statutory responsibility to advise and make comments throughout the environmental review process. These agencies are referred to as cooperating agencies under NEPA and responsible agencies under CEQA. The roles and responsibilities for Caltrans and Metro on the SR-710 North are as follows:

Caltrans

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) is the designated lead federal agency responsible for ensuring compliance with NEPA and preparing the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). As the owner and operator of State Route 710, Caltrans serves as the lead state agency responsible for ensuring State compliance with CEQA and preparing the Environmental Impact Report (EIR). In California, FHWA assigned its authority for NEPA compliance to Caltrans. This makes Caltrans responsible for compliance with both NEPA and CEQA for all state highway projects. In addition, Caltrans provides technical oversight to ensure state highway facilities are designed and built in accordance with Caltrans standards, specifications and special provisions.

Caltrans will lead the effort for the circulation of Draft EIR/EIS for public comment and public hearings. Following the circulation of the Draft EIR/EIS and public hearings, a final environmental document recommending a preferred alternative will be prepared. Caltrans is responsible for certifying the EIR and issuing a Record of Decision (ROD) based on the EIS.

Metro

As the statutory County Transportation Commission for Los Angeles County, Metro is responsible for initiating transit and highway improvement projects, major corridor studies, alternatives analyses and environmental documents to improve mobility. Metro also has a major role in programming funds for transportation projects in Los Angeles County. Metro programs available Regional Improvement Program funds, which are the county share portion of the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), for transportation projects in Los Angeles County. Metro is also the designated recipient of formula funds from the Federal Highway Trust Fund for major metropolitan areas.

Prior to preparing the final environmental document, staff will recommend a preferred alternative to the Board based on the study results and input from stakeholders. The ultimate decision to fund an alternative included in the final environmental document rests with the Metro Board.

NEXT STEPS

Staff will provide periodic updates to the Board on the SR-710 North environmental clearance process; Caltrans will circulate the Draft EIR/EIS for public comments and hold public hearings in the Spring of 2014; and prior to preparing the final environmental document, staff will recommend a preferred alternative for Board action.

Caltrans and Metro will continue to jointly engage and ensure public participation and community outreach throughout the duration of the SR-710 North study.

