

**Board Report**

File #: 2018-0694, **File Type:** Project**Agenda Number:** 20.

**PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE
NOVEMBER 14, 2018****SUBJECT: LINK UNION STATION****ACTION: APPROVE RECOMMENDATIONS****RECOMMENDATION**

APPROVE the designation of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) "Proposed Project" in the Link Union Station (Link US) Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) as Alternative 1 with Design Option B which provides up to 10 run-through tracks with shared lead tracks. The CEQA Proposed Project includes an above-grade passenger concourse that will also include a new expanded, at-grade passage way which will provide additional passenger travel-path convenience and options.

ISSUE

The Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) for the Link US Project is scheduled to be circulated for public review in January 2019. The DEIR includes a total of three alternatives:

1. Alternative 1 - Up to 10 run-through tracks with shared lead tracks;
2. Alternative 2 - Up to 10 run-through tracks with dedicated lead tracks;
3. Alternative 3 - No Build

With each build alternative, the DEIR includes two design options for the proposed passenger concourse:

1. Design Option A: At-grade passenger concourse
2. Design Option B: Above-grade passenger concourse

All the alternatives and design options are being evaluated at an equal level of detail in the DEIR. In addition, all alternatives and options will maintain the historical integrity of the Los Angeles Union Station. In an effort to be more transparent and help the public focus the comments on the DEIR, staff recommends that the DEIR identify a CEQA "Proposed Project" for Alternative 1 with Design Option B as the CEQA Proposed Project of up to 10 run-through tracks with shared lead tracks and above-grade passenger concourse with a new expanded passage way to begin the first step in the DEIR process. Staff will return to the Board in June 2019 to adopt the preferred alternative of the passenger concourse for the Final EIR (FEIR). The above-grade passenger concourse with a new expanded passage way is approximately \$500 million less than the at-grade passenger concourse.

BACKGROUND

The environmental process began in 2016 with a combined CEQA and National Environmental Policy Act Environmental (NEPA) environmental documents which are led by Metro for CEQA and the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) for NEPA. In February 2018, the State of California acting through the California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA) and California High Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA) applied to the FRA to assume their federal environmental review responsibilities under the NEPA, or otherwise known as NEPA Assignment. Under NEPA Assignment, CHSRA would be considered the NEPA Lead Agency on the High Speed Rail (HSR) program including Link US and other HSR related rail projects, enabling more efficient reviews and approvals of the federal environmental documents.

Due to a longer NEPA process which may take up to two years, Metro is moving forward with a separate CEQA environmental document to meet the expectations of the funding partners comprising of the CalSTA, CHSRA, and Southern California Regional Rail Authority (SCRRA). With the approval of the staff recommendation for the CEQA Proposed Project, the CEQA environmental document is anticipated to be released for public circulation in January 2019 with an anticipated completion by June 2019.

Staff will continue to work closely with the FRA and CHSRA to expedite the NEPA environmental document.

DISCUSSION

CEQA Proposed Project

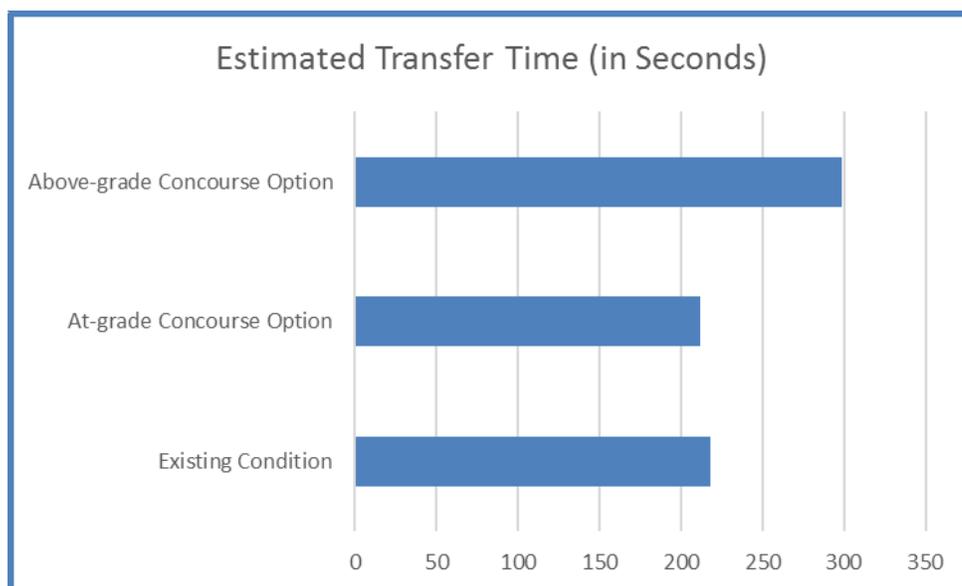
The DEIR analyzed both Alternatives 1 and 2 at an equal level of detail. Based on the preliminary results from the DEIR, staff recommends Alternative 1, up to 10 run-through tracks with shared lead tracks, as the CEQA Proposed Project because it would address the purpose and need of the project and would result in less environmental impacts compared to Alternative 2. In particular, Alternative 2 would result in right-of-way (ROW) impacts to the William Mead Homes (WMH) property, while Alternative 1 would avoid ROW impacts to the WMH property. Alternative 2 would result in impacts to a baseball field, a handball court, a laundry facility, on-street parking of the WMH property. However, no residents would be displaced or require to be relocated under Alternative 2. WMH, constructed in the 1950s, was the first affordable housing project in the City of Los Angeles and is eligible to be added to the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP).

Recommended Concourse Option

Staff recommends the above-grade concourse option with a new expanded passageway be included as part of Metro's CEQA Proposed Project given the significant cost differential between the two options. The DEIR analyzed both Design Options A (at-grade option) and B (above-grade option) at an equal level of detail. Based on the conceptual design of the two concourse options, the Link US project team has estimated that the at-grade passenger concourse option (Design Option A) is approximately \$500 million more expensive than the above grade passenger concourse (Design Option B). As analysis has progressed, staff have identified a design concept that captures the benefit of both concourse design options, by widening and expanding the existing passageway.

A focused technical study, Concourse Study, is being prepared to evaluate feasible options for a new expanded passenger concourse that would replace the existing pedestrian passageway and recommend options to be carried forward for further analysis in the DEIR. The existing passage way is approximately 30 feet wide. The new expanded passage way for the above-grade concourse will be approximately 100 feet wide to accommodate the increase of passengers from the current 110,000 per day to over 200,000 passengers per day at Union Station by 2040. The new expanded passage way will provide the identical travel path convenience as the at-grade passenger concourse for the same cost value of the above grade passenger concourse. The Concourse Study recommended that both the at-grade and above-grade concourse options be carried forward for further analysis to begin the first step in the DEIR. The staff recommendation for Metro Board approval to include the above grade concourse option as part of the CEQA Proposed Project still allows staff and ultimately the Board flexibility to modify the concourse option based on additional technical studies and ongoing community input through the environmental process. Staff will continue to include both concourse options in the environmental process. Staff will return to the Board in June 2019 to adopt the final preferred alternative in the FEIR. Furthermore, since the second phase (Phase B) of the project which includes the passenger concourse is not funded, staff will return to the Board at a future date when funding has been identified to make a final determination on passenger concourse options.

The Concourse Study also evaluated the two concourse options in terms of passenger transfer time, environmental impacts, impacts to rail operations during construction, capital cost and other factors. See Attachment A for a comparison between the two concourse options. In particular, preliminary results suggest that the transfer time under the above-grade option would be approximately 1.5 minute longer for passengers with disabilities than the time under the at-grade option, if a passenger makes a transfer from the future Platform 4 to the Red/Purple Line platform. Transfer time differences vary with different start and end points of the transfer at the station. See chart below for a comparison of estimated transfer time between the existing condition, future condition with the above-grade concourse and the at-grade concourse.



Note: Estimated times shown are for the transfer between Platform 4 to the Red/Purple Line Platform

Community Outreach

Since July 2017, the Link US project team has provided over 25 project update briefings to project stakeholders including community and business organizations, neighborhood councils, and elected officials. Additionally, the project team has participated in public events to share project information including CicLAvia, Union Station Farmers Market, Union Station TrainFest, etc, and has provided status updates to Union Station Area Roundtable discussions hosted by Metro Communications. On September 26, 2018, approximately 200 people attended an open house event held in the East Portal of Union Station featuring two (2) presentations as well as boards with project renderings. See Attachment B for more details on community engagement activities since July 2017. Through our community outreach activities, staff has received some comments in support of the above-grade passenger concourse option; however, the majority of comments received regarding the passenger concourse were in favor of the at-grade option. In addition, staff has received a significant amount of comments from the general public in regard to the passenger concourse specifically concerning the increase of travel time with the above-grade concourse option. In response to these comments, staff will work on enhancing the above-grade concourse option to reduce passenger travel times to closely resemble the travel times of the at-grade passenger concourse option.

Active Transportation Improvements

As part of the Link US CEQA environmental study, staff will include new bike lanes on Commercial Street from Alameda to Center Streets, which could facilitate a future connection to the Proposed LA River Bike Path near Center Street. In addition to the at-grade connections identified by stakeholders and adopted in the Connect US Action Plan, if additional funding is identified, the Link US CEQA environmental document includes a dedicated bicycle/pedestrian bridge over the US-101 as an alternative option in lieu of the at-grade active transportation element. This dedicated bridge is desired to provide a seamless off-street connection between Metro's LA River Bike Path project and Union Station, ensuring that users of the River Path have high quality, low-stress access to Southern California's primary transportation hub. Staff is working with the FRA and CHSRA on how they would like to address ATP in the NEPA environmental document.

In March 2017, the Metro Board directed staff to evaluate opportunities to create pedestrian/active transportation ("ATP") linkages to the LA River. The Link US project has taken into consideration the Connect US Action Plan, a community driven plan that identifies bicycle and pedestrian improvements connecting LAUS, the Civic Center, Chinatown, Little Tokyo and the LA River. Since completion of this plan in 2015, the City of Los Angeles has adopted the Plan's recommended ATP improvements as part of its Mobility Element, and the improvements are also expected to be adopted in the Central City and Central City North Community Plan updates underway. Importantly, the City of Los Angeles and Metro have successfully partnered to secure \$60 million in grants toward implementing identified ATP projects, with future grant applications anticipated. The funded projects offer a near complete set of improvements that create street level access between LAUS and the LA River, tracking the travel patterns identified by stakeholders.

Under a separate Project Study Report (PSR) study by Metro's County-wide Planning, Metro will be partnering with the City of Los Angeles in early 2019 to complete a PSR looking at the intersection of Alameda and the entrance to the 101 freeway to complete this component of the ATP street network

connections to the LA River. This separate PSR study and resultant plan, coupled with at-grade ATP improvements on Commercial Street to be implemented by the Link US project, will complete the street network of ATP connections to the LA River.

Update on Project Funding and Phasing

In January 2018, staff submitted a grant application to the 2018 Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program (TIRCP) and proposed an interim condition, hereafter referred to as Phase A, with an initial 2-track run-through operation that has independent utility. On April 26, 2018, CalSTA awarded \$398.39 million to Phase A of Link US, as part of the grant award to SCRRA’s Southern California Optimized Rail Expansion (SCORE) program. In May 2018, the CHSRA Board adopted its 2018 Business Plan which reiterated the agency’s commitment to direct the remaining \$423.34 million of Southern California MOU funds to the Link US project. Table 1 below lists the funding plan totaling \$950.4 million for the Link US project.

Table 1 - Link US Funding Plan as of October 2018

Funding Source	Amount (All \$ listed in millions)
State Proposition 1A/High Speed Rail Bonds	\$423.34 ⁽¹⁾
Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program (TIRCP)	\$398.39
Metro (Measure R 3% Commuter Rail)	\$51.67 ⁽²⁾
SCRRA Joint Powers Authority Contribution (non-Metro), Amtrak and other local funds	\$58.27
Other CHSRA funds	\$18.73 ⁽²⁾
Total Funding Identified for Phase A	\$950.40

Notes:

1. Staff is working closely with CHSRA to seek CHSRA Board approval of the funding of \$423.335 million for Link US and authorize the CHSRA CEO to execute the Project Management Funding Agreement with Metro.
2. Metro and HSR have contributed a total of \$70.40 million for environmental and preliminary engineering to date.

Phase A of Link US would include construction of the full viaduct over the US-101 freeway, right of way acquisition, utility relocation and street improvements along Commercial and Center Streets, early signal and communication work in the throat, and a 2-track ramp from Platform 4 to the new viaduct. Staff has been working closely with project funding partners to develop value engineering strategies to ensure that Phase A can be delivered within the total budget of \$950.4 million (based on 2017 project cost estimate). Staff is currently working with other funding partners to secure funding agreements for the project.

Phase B work of Link US includes raising of the railyard, optimization of the throat with a new lead track, all remaining run-through trackwork, signal and communication work, six new and enhanced regional rail platforms and enhancements to the Gold Line platform with escalators and elevators, the new West Plaza, and the new passenger concourse (at-grade or above-grade option). The estimated cost of Phase B of Link US is approximately \$1.15 billion (based on 2017 project cost estimate) which is currently not funded. The funding plan for Phase B of Link US will require further coordination with CHSRA, CalSTA, SCRRA and other agency partners, as well as Metro Transit

Oriented Community regarding the private public partnership opportunities at LAUS.

DETERMINATION OF SAFETY IMPACT

The project is being designed in accordance with Metrolink and Metro standards, federal and state requirements. The recommended CEQA Proposed Project for the Link Union Station project will have no impact on safety.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Approval of the staff recommended alternative as the CEQA Proposed Project would have no financial impact to the agency.

Impact to Budget

The funds required for completing the EIR/EIS consist of previously approved and programmed Measure R Metrolink Commuter Rail Capital Improvements (3%) and funds from CHSRA. These funds are not eligible for Metro bus/rail operating or capital expenditures.

IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

The Link US project supports Strategic Goal 1: Provide high-quality mobility options that enable people to spend less time traveling. The proposed run-through tracks would increase regional and intercity rail capacity and reduce train idling at Los Angeles Union Station (LAUS), enable one-seat rides from Santa Barbara County to San Diego County through LAUS, and accommodate a new high-quality transportation option such as High Speed Rail in Southern California. The project also supports Strategic Goal 2: Deliver outstanding trip experiences for all users of the transportation system. The proposed new passenger concourse and the new outdoor plaza (West Plaza) would improve customer experience and satisfaction by enhancing transit and retail amenities at LAUS, and improving access to train platforms with new escalators and elevators. Lastly, the project supports Strategic Goal 4: Transform LA County through regional collaboration and national leadership. The project requires close collaboration with many local, regional, State and Federal partners including City of Los Angeles, SCRRA, LOSSAN Authority, Caltrans, CHSRA, CalSTA, FRA and Amtrak.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The Board may elect not to approve the staff recommended alternative as the CEQA Proposed Project in the Draft EIR, and/or proceed with completing the environmental document for Link US. This alternative is not recommended as it would be contrary to prior Board directions and it would delay the implementation of the Link US project.

Additionally, the staff recommendation for Metro Board approval to include the above grade concourse option as part of the CEQA proposed project is the first step needed to begin the DEIR environmental process and does not lock the board in. Staff will continue to include both options in the environmental documents. Staff will return to the by June 2019 adopt the preferred alternative of

the passenger concourse options for the FEIR.

NEXT STEPS

The Link US Project Team anticipates circulation of the Draft EIR as early as January 2019 to further gather feedback from the community and the general public. Staff will return to the Board in January 2019 for a contract modification to address project changes as required to meet the funding requirements, CEQA process, etc. Once the DEIR has been released in January, staff will return to the Board in June for the selection of the preferred alternative of the passenger concourse options to be included in the Final EIR.

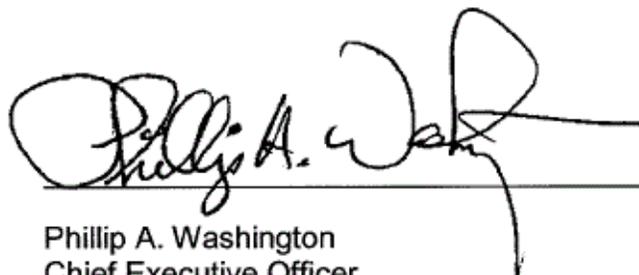
ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A - Link US Concourse Study Summary of Findings

Attachment B - Link US Community Engagement Activities Since July 2017

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