





Date: January 8, 2009

To: Patrick H. West, City Manager 

From: Michael P. Conway, Director of Public Works 

For: Members of the I-710 Local Advisory Committee:
Mayor Bob Foster, Vice Mayor Val Lerch, Councilmember Tonia Uranga,
Councilmember Rae Gabelich

Subject: I-710 EIR/EIS update

The consultants hired by the MTA to prepare the Environmental Impact Report for the proposed improvements to the I-710 are continuing to develop the project alternatives, project data, and screening methodologies for this document. As certain milestones are reached by the consultant the various oversight committees as shown on the attached organization chart (attachment 1) will be asked to provide comment and direction. Most of these initial review meetings have been with the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), which the City Engineer staffs for the City of Long Beach. Recommendations from the TAC will be forwarded to the Corridor Advisory Committee, which is scheduled to meet on January 22nd, and to the Project Committee, which is scheduled to meet on January 29th.

While the issues and recommendations will be presented in full detail by the consultants at these meetings, staff wanted to give the City's I-710 Local Advisory Committee (Committee) some advance general information about items of particular interest to the City of Long Beach.

Demand Projections

In the Initial Feasibility Analysis report prepared by the consultant there are three potential methodologies for determining future traffic demand on the I-710. They include the following:

- High port cargo growth without near dock expansion
- High port cargo growth with near dock expansion
- Low port cargo growth

The term "near dock expansion" refers to the construction of additional cargo transfer facilities just outside of the port area. This would result in cargo being placed on trucks and taken to these transfer facilities where they would be placed on trains for shipment, as opposed to being directly placed on trains at the port or shipped through the I-710 corridor by truck. Since expansion of train loading capacity at the port is limited due to the lack of available land for track expansion, near dock expansion becomes the primary alternative for loading cargo on trains. As would be expected the, "high port cargo growth without near dock expansion" demand model

results in a higher truck volume than the other two scenarios. The TAC was asked to recommend which of the three demand scenarios should be used in preparing the EIR. After much discussion it was agreed that the "high port cargo growth without near dock expansion" presented the most likely future scenario based on the fact that construction of large cargo transfer facilities near the port will be difficult to get permitted and constructed due to the neighborhood and environmental hurdles these projects would be subjected to. Despite the current economic slowdown, most felt that port growth would still be significant during the 25-year study horizon for this EIR, and to base the EIR, and the resulting freeway configuration on a low growth scenario would not be prudent. Staff concurs with this recommendation

Lane Requirements

The Initial Feasibility Analysis report also looks at the number of lanes that would be required to meet future demands. In the Locally Preferred Strategy that was originally developed for the I-710, it was assumed that 10 general purpose lanes (5 in each direction) and 4 freight (two truck lanes in each direction) would be required. The current draft calculations from the Initial Feasibility Analysis show that the general purpose lanes within the Long Beach limits of the I-710 could be reduced from 10 to 8 lanes. Staff feels that this would lessen the potential right of way acquisition impacts and should be thoroughly explored as a preferred alternative for the EIR document.

Screening Methodology

The consultants have put together a proposed screening methodology for evaluating the impacts of the various alternatives that will be presented as part of the EIR. Attachment 2 is a copy of a summary chart of the proposed screening measures. In its final form, the screening measures would contain a set of objectives that would be agreed upon, and a set of evaluation criteria based on these objectives. Finally, specific measures would be created to determine how well the evaluation criteria are being met. Staff feels that this initial draft is a good model however, Committee member comments are solicited. What remains unclear and will require further direction from the elected officials participating in this process is how each of these criteria is weighted against each other. Currently some existing freeway-to-freeway ramp connectors are substandard. To make them standard will require the acquisition of adjoining property. For example, Long Beach may find that right of way impacts should have a heavier weighting than eliminating highway deficiencies, which in this example would mean that the ramp deficiencies would remain as is in the preferred alternative.

Alignment Analysis

The consultant has been working on refining the adopted Locally Preferred Strategy (LPS), which as previously indicated, consists of 10 general purpose lanes (5 in each direction) and 4 freight (two truck lanes in each direction). Several versions showing the freeway alignment, lane and ramp configurations, and proposed truck lanes have been prepared. An early version of these plans was presented to the members of the

Committee in November 2008. Due to identified property acquisitions, the Committee sent a letter to Caltrans objecting to the taking of homes (attachment 3). Caltrans responded (attachment 4) indicating that the plans were preliminary in nature and advised against notifying property owners about the potential property impacts being shown on those drawings. The plans continue to be refined and recently a revised set was presented to the TAC members. The revised set of plans and a chart summarizing the changes and remaining issues are attached as attachment 5. Staff has provided comments on these latest set of plans to the MTA who is the lead agency on this EIR. They include the following:

Segment 1

- The City prefers that Option 3 (referred in the drawings as Segment 1 attachment 1C) with the Pico Ave/Anaheim St variant be recommended.
- Please define the extent of the right of way acquisitions easterly of Fashion Ave under Option 3 (referred in the drawings as Segment 1 attachment 1C) (number of partial, number of full)
- If the number of lanes were reduced to those shown in the recent Feasibility Analysis will the right of way acquisitions easterly of Fashion Ave be reduced or eliminated?

Segment 2

- The City prefers Option 3 (referred in the drawings as Segment 2 attachment 2C) due to the connectivity it retains from 710 and 405 to the streets in the vicinity of the 405/710 interchange (mainly Wardlow and Sante Fe).
- If the number of lanes were reduced to those shown in the recent Feasibility Analysis will the right of way acquisitions easterly of Gale Ave be reduced or eliminated?
- If the radius of the EB405 to SB710 ramp was reduced and the transition lane moved northward (with the understanding that ramp speed would be reduced) could the right of way acquisitions easterly of Gale Ave be reduced or eliminated?

Segment 3

- The City prefers Mainline Option 2 (referred in the drawings as Segment 3 attachment 3A-2) without braiding the SB710 to WB91 ramps (referred in the drawings as Segment 3 attachment 3B-3) due to the right of way acquisitions.

As you can see, the main emphasis of staff's comments have been to reduce or eliminate right of way acquisitions wherever possible. Please note that these plans are still preliminary and, as such, are currently for internal use only. It is staff's understanding that these alignment plans will most likely not be discussed with any other committees until comments made by the TAC committee members have been reviewed and addressed.

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If you have any questions about the I-710 study or the information contained in this memorandum, please contact Mark Christoffels, Deputy Director of Public Works/City Engineer, at extension 6771.

P/councilmemo/09/Mayor/I-710 EIR update

Attachments

cc: Suzanne Frick, Assistant City Manager