

BRIEFING MEMO

AC TRANSIT DISTRICT
Board of Directors
Executive Summary

GM Memo No. 04-362

Meeting Date: December 8, 2004

Committees:

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|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|
| Planning Committee | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Finance Committee | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| External Affairs Committee | <input type="checkbox"/> | Operations Committee | <input type="checkbox"/> |

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|---------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Board of Directors | <input type="checkbox"/> | Financing Corporation | <input type="checkbox"/> |
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SUBJECT:

Telegraph-International-East 14th Street Bus Rapid Transit Project Schedule and Inter-agency Coordination Update

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Information Only Briefing Item Recommended Motion

Fiscal Impact:

There may be additional costs to complete the Environmental Impact Study (EIS) associated with the delays to the project.

Background/Discussion:

Environmental Schedule Update

The Administrative Draft of the EIS (ADEIS) will be delayed from its original release date of December 2004 to early March, 2005. This delay was primarily caused by additional work requested by Caltrans and the City of Oakland. Some technical problems have also contributed to the delay.

BOARD ACTION: **Approved as Recommended** [] **Other** []
 Approved with Modification(s) []

[To be filled in by District Secretary after Board/Committee Meeting]

The above order was passed on _____, 2004.

Rose Martinez, District Secretary
By _____

Caltrans

Because of the efforts of Dana Cowell, Caltrans District 4 Chief of Transit and Community Planning, Caltrans is fully engaged in the BRT project. Caltrans wants to take a more active role because they have jurisdiction over the right-of-way south of 42nd Avenue (State Route 185), the freeway on- and off-ramps, and signals that cross other state rights-of-way such as Ashby Avenue. Caltrans' active participation may require more coordination activities from District staff, but the benefits of their participation far outweigh that increased effort.

Several coordination meetings have been held with Caltrans District 4 executive staff and division chiefs regarding technical issues and the internal Caltrans process. John Chang from Caltrans has been designated Project Manager, which signals a commitment of participation. He will manage their internal review process and guide the District through the various requirements of that agency.

To facilitate their review of the EIS, Caltrans has made several requests of the District, which will add a minor delay to the project schedule. However, it is hoped that the work will smooth their review of the EIS and facilitate cooperation on issues that affect the District's potential use of the Caltrans portion of the corridor.

The following tasks would be added prior to release of the ADEIS:

- Preparation of separate cooperative agreements with various District 4 divisions, including: environmental review, quality assurance, traffic operations, highway operations, design and right-of-way. The scope of these agreements has not yet been determined. The agreements are to permit Caltrans staff to work on the project and track their staff time. There would be no funds exchanged in these agreements. Each agreement will be developed jointly by AC Transit and Caltrans.
- Development of a mutually agreed upon "Project Compact" which will specify review periods, deadlines and the document circulation processes. The Project Compact is designed to facilitate review by Caltrans while minimizing the risk of further delays to the project. The District's EIS project consultant is preparing the Compact.
- Preparation of a Project Study Report/Project Report. The PSR/PR is a detailed description of the project and summary of impacts. District staff is preparing the PSR/PR.

City of Oakland

The City of Oakland has requested additional traffic analysis work for this project from the District. These requests, combined with delays to an Oakland-sponsored project, also contributed to delays in the BRT EIS schedule. In October, the City of Oakland staff gave its approval of the traffic analysis methodology and a list of specific intersections for study. This process was months behind the work done in Berkeley and San Leandro.

The process was complicated further by the need to coordinate District efforts with a parallel EIR undertaken by Oakland for the Telegraph Avenue Bicycle Lane project. Consultants for both the District and the City of Oakland had agreed to split the environmental work, thereby expediting both projects and lowering costs. However, during the summer, Oakland stopped work on the bike lane study. To prevent even greater delays, the District's consultants performed this out-of-scope work. The consequences are as follows:

- Increased the number of study intersections from 60 to 100. Traffic counts were completed in Berkeley and San Leandro in spring 2004. Traffic counts will not be completed for Oakland until December 2004.
- An additional analysis year (2010) was added
- Created out-of-scope work to develop a traffic signal timing plan for Telegraph Avenue

Technical Difficulties

The District is using the VISSIM software program to simulate traffic flow and BRT operations on complicated street networks, such as downtown Berkeley, Southside Berkeley and the Temescal neighborhood of Oakland. Staff recently learned that the program had a software bug that rendered its results useless. The vendor provided a patch for the defect. However, much of the work had to be re-done, resulting in a 3 week schedule delay.

The traffic simulations and the additional traffic work for the City of Oakland are critical path items for the project, because several other technical studies are dependent on the traffic study results. Noise and vibration, air quality and energy consumption studies all need final traffic numbers in order to proceed. However, other studies such as historic resources, biological resources and water quality are independent of traffic and have not been affected by the delays.

Minimizing Further Delays to the Schedule

Besides Caltrans involvement, the other potential source of schedule delay is the review by the Federal Transit Administration. A meeting with FTA Region 9 staff will be held December 6 to discuss the process for review of the EIS. Because the Draft EIS cannot be released for public and agency review prior to review by FTA, an expedited review at their end is crucial. We will be discussing the possibility of FTA review of individual chapters of the EIS as a way to speed the process.

Other Updates

The Technical Advisory Committee met on November 10. District staff and consultants presented the BRT alternatives to be studied, conceptual designs for stations and preliminary traffic findings. Although there have been many coordination meetings with local jurisdictions to discuss these issues, this was the first opportunity for the entire TAC to see work for the entire corridor.

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The next step is to take the findings to the Policy Steering Committee (PSC) to brief the elected officials on the progress of the study. A meeting is being scheduled for December or January based on the availability of the PSC members. Due to the resignation of former Director Piras, there is a vacancy on the PSC. Staff is working with President Wallace to assign a Board member as a replacement.

Prior Relevant Board Actions/Policies:

Attachments:

None.

Approved by: Rick Fernandez, General Manager
Nancy Skowbo, Deputy General Manager - Service Development

Reviewed by: Tina Spencer, Long Range Planning Manager

Prepared by: Jim Cunradi, Senior Transportation Planner
Tina Spencer, Long Range Planning Manager

Date Prepared: November 29, 2004