

Transit Operators Working Group

April 6, 2023 Meeting Notes

Attendees: Dana Pynn (GTrans); Joyce Rooney, Leslie Scott (Beach Cities Transit); Scott Greene (Metro); Martin Gombert (PVP Transit); James Lee (Torrance Transit); Steve Lantz, David Leger (SBCCOG)

1. Self-Introductions & Acceptance of the March 9, 2023 Meeting Notes

The virtual meeting was called to order by Ms. Pynn at 2:00 p.m. Meeting notes were accepted as presented.

2. Transit Operator Issues and Concerns

No major issues or concerns were reported by the Transit Operators. Mr. Lantz inquired about returning ridership. Ms. Pynn shared that ridership is slowly coming back. GTrans is at approximately 70% of pre-pandemic levels. Although this is still low, it's risen significantly compared to the lowest point at which ridership was approximately half of pre-pandemic levels. Ms. Rooney reported that Beach Cities Transit is slowly climbing as well. Mr. Gombert added that PVP Transit is about 80% of pre-pandemic levels. He noted that PVP Transit carries a large number of student riders and declining enrollments have been an added variable for his agency.

3. Measure R South Bay Transit Investment Program Update

Mr. Lantz shared that the SBCCOG Board will be approving the Measure R SBTIP program update at its April 27th meeting. Following that action, the updates will be transmitted to Metro. Metro will take the rest of Spring/Summer to evaluate Measure M project applications for eligibility and will bring both the Measure R SBTIP and Measure M MSP annual program updates to the SBCCOG Board in September.

4. City of Inglewood Measure M SEP Fund Reallocation Request

Mr. Lantz explained that the SBCCOG Board had previously approved the use of the South Bay's Measure M Subregional Equity Program (SEP) Funds for the Centinela Grade Separation project in Inglewood. The funds are programmed in 2043, but can be accelerated with a 4.5% annual discount to year of expenditure. This means that there would be approximately \$101M in 2024-2025 dollars. The SEP funds are the only South Bay Measure M funding that is eligible for both highway and transit capital projects.

Inglewood is asking that the SBCCOG Board approve suspending the Centinela Grade Separation (CGS) project and instead accelerating the funds and allocate them to the Inglewood Transit Connector (ITC) project to serve as a "backstop". Inglewood is seeking a full-funding agreement from the Federal government, but part of the application includes the identification of a "backstop" which is essentially a contingency fund on top of the 25-30% contingency included in the project budget. The CGS project is now further designed and has two major issues. The first is that the project cost estimates have nearly doubled to an estimated \$300M, meaning that the project is only partially funded with the SEP funds currently allocated to it and Metro has not committed the remaining funds. The second issue is that building the CGS would significantly risk delaying the opening of the ITC before the 2028 Olympic Games. For these reasons, Inglewood is seeking to reallocate funds from the CGS to the ITC. Mr. Lantz also shared that the SBCCOG had previously allocated \$22M of the SEP funds to fund the South Bay share of the K Line cost overruns, contingent upon the City of LA contributing their share and Metro's commitment to backfill construction costs to complete the CGS. As of today, neither of those contingencies have been met, and there has been informal notice that the City of LA will not be contributing to the K Line cost overruns.

Mr. Lantz further explained that SBCCOG funds projects and not cities through the grant programs it administers. SBCCOG staff believes the SEP funds should come back to the SBCCOG and could be reallocated to the ITC project if it's the most meritorious project. However, a direct reallocation would break the long-standing precedent of not allowing such actions without the funds first returning to the SBCCOG for reconsideration. The City of Inglewood will be presenting a motion to the Transportation Committee. Mr. Lantz suggested that TOWG members should be present at the meeting to share their support and/or concerns regarding the Inglewood motion.

Ms. Rooney asked if this would impact any other projects. Mr. Lantz noted that it's not a direct impact to existing projects as the SEP funds were already allocated to the CGS project and the other projects are being funded through other programs. However, it would impact the other programs indirectly as the SEP funds would not be available to offset rising construction costs and therefore reduce the number of projects that could be funded through Measure R SBHP/SBTIP or Measure M MSPs.

Mr. Lee shared that Mayor Butts and his team met with Torrance's Mayor and staff. Mayor Chen was in support of the request so the City of Torrance is likely to support Inglewood's request.

5. Updates on Metro Issues, Initiatives & Studies

-March 2023 Metro Board Highlights

Mr. Lantz shared that the Metro Board is very focused on safety initiatives, hoping to increase safety and attract both former and new riders to return to the system. Strategies being considered include increased patrols on stations and vehicles to enforce fare payment and to prevent loitering; an enhanced cleanliness program; and the re-establishment of a Metro police department.

Mr. Greene added that the rail system is experiencing a significantly worse safety issue than the bus system is. Due to the fact that there is a driver in the bus, but not in every train car, it seems as though issues are less prevalent on the buses. The red line is facing the largest safety concerns, and LAPD and LASD are deploying additional units. Issues have been improving slightly, but it's still an ongoing concern.

-C Line Extension to Torrance Non-DEIR Reports

Mr. Lantz provided a brief overview of the attachment and highlighted some of the items in the reports. These reports provide relevant information to the project that is not required to be part of the DEIR document.

5. SBCCOG updates

Mr. Leger noted that the SBESC outreach team will be out at many events in the community throughout the month of April in celebration of Earth Month. Ms. Scott added that some agencies are providing free fare offers for Earth Month, and Metrolink is holding an Earth Day Photo Contest where the winner receives a year of free rides.

6. Transportation Update Covering February 2023: Item was received and filed.

7. Three Month Look-Ahead: Item was received and filed.

8. Announcements / Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 3:11 p.m.

Prepared by David Leger