MID-COAST CORRIDOR TRANSIT PROJECT – DRAFT COMPARATIVE EVALUATION OF ALTERNATIVES REPORT AND PROJECT SCOPING

Introduction

The Board of Directors included the Mid-Coast Corridor Transit Project in the TransNet Early Action Program. The Mid-Coast Corridor Transit Project will extend transit service from the Old Town Transit Center to University City serving major activity centers such as the University of California, San Diego (UCSD), University Towne Centre (UTC), and downtown San Diego.

SANDAG and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) are preparing a Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement/Subsequent Environmental Impact Report (DSEIS/SEIR) for the Mid-Coast Corridor Transit Project. SANDAG will serve as the lead agency for the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and FTA will serve as the lead agency for the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

The initial step in preparing the DSEIS/SEIR was the development and evaluation of preliminary conceptual project alternatives for consideration during CEQA scoping. The Draft Comparative Evaluation of Alternatives Report identifies the purpose and need for the Mid-Coast Corridor Transit Project; examines changed conditions since approval of the prior environmental documents for the project; defines and evaluates the alternatives considered; and recommends a set of alternatives for consideration during scoping.

Discussion

Draft Comparative Evaluation of Alternatives Report

The Draft Comparative Evaluation of Alternatives Report defines, evaluates and recommends preliminary conceptual alternatives for consideration during the scoping period. The conceptual alternatives include the No-Build Alternative, based on the capital and operating improvements in the SANDAG Mobility 2030 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), and the Transportation Systems Management (TSM) Alternative based on the highest level of bus service improvement that can be achieved in the corridor with limited capital investment.

The Draft Comparative Evaluation of Alternatives Report defines and evaluates seven light rail transit (LRT) alternatives, four bus rapid transit alternatives (BRT) and one commuter rail (CR) alternative. The LRT alternatives include the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA), and its alignment option, approved by the Board of Directors as refined to respond to changed conditions in the Mid-Coast Corridor. Two of the LRT alternatives are similar to the refined LPA and vary only as
aligned on, or immediately south of, Voigt Drive. Two of the LRT alternatives avoid the Voigt Drive alignment and the remaining LRT alternative remains on the east side of I-5 and does not serve the UCSD West Campus. The BRT alternatives were developed to determine the effectiveness of BRT in serving the Mid-Coast Corridor. BRT alternatives had not been considered in the prior environmental documents. The BRT alternatives range from an alternative that provides exclusive guideway throughout the majority of the corridor to provide the fastest travel times and highest reliability to a less capital intensive alternative that provides exclusive guideway only in the most congested areas. The CR alternative utilizes the existing LOSSAN Corridor heavy rail tracks and double tracking included in the RTP to provide service from downtown San Diego to the University City area. This alternative includes a tunnel from the LOSSAN right-of-way to a deep underground station at UTC via a tunnel under Genesee Avenue.

**Recommended Alternatives for Scoping**

The Draft Comparative Evaluation of Alternatives Report recommends that five of the seven LRT alternatives described above be carried forward for consideration at scoping. The five LRT alternatives effectively meet project goals, improve regional mobility, are cost-effective or near cost-effective, and are anticipated to be competitive for FTA New Starts funding. The recommended LRT alternatives include the LPA, as refined to respond to changed conditions, and the two alternatives that are similar to the refined LPA and vary only as aligned on, or immediately south of, Voigt Drive. The draft report further recommends that these three alternatives be combined into one alternative with alignment options as these share similar routes and effectiveness. The recommended alternatives also include the two LRT alternatives that avoid Voigt Drive. A total of three LRT alternatives are thus recommended for consideration at scoping. Attachment 1 presents a map of the three recommended LRT alternatives. Attachment 2 presents the FTA Cost Effectiveness Indicator for all alternatives.

The draft report points out that compared to the LRT alternatives, the BRT and CR alternatives are not as effective in meeting project goals and improving regional mobility. Further, the BRT and CR alternatives are not cost-effective and are unlikely to be competitive for FTA New Starts funding.

The Executive Summary of the Draft Comparative Evaluation of Alternatives Report is presented as Attachment 3 and provides a more detailed summary of the information provided herein. A copy of the Draft Comparative Evaluation of Alternatives Report is provided under separate cover. A downloadable copy of the Report is available at [www.sandag.org/midcoast](http://www.sandag.org/midcoast). A printed copy of the report or electronic copy on CD are also available by request from the SANDAG Public Information Office at (619) 699-1950.

**Meetings Prior to Scoping and Scoping Period**

The Draft Comparative Evaluation of Alternatives Report and the recommended alternatives for scoping are scheduled to be presented to the Board of Directors as information at its March 26 meeting. The Transportation Committee will be asked to recommend to the Board project alternatives to be carried forward to scoping at the April 16 meeting. The Board of Directors is scheduled to approve alternatives for scoping at its April 23 meeting. The Independent Taxpayer Oversight Committee will review status of the Mid-Coast Corridor Transit Project at the April 14 meeting.
The 30-day scoping period for the Mid-Coast Corridor Transit Project DSEIS/SEIR is anticipated to be conducted from May 3 through June 1. The alternatives recommended to be carried forward, and the alternatives recommended for elimination, will be presented to the public for review and comment during the scoping period. Additional information on scoping meetings and public outreach activities will be presented to the Transportation Committee and Board of Directors at the April 16 and April 23 meetings respectively.

The Project Working Group reviewed the conceptual alternatives recommended for scoping at the March 17 meeting. Project Working Group comments will be provided to the Transportation Committee at today’s meeting. The Project Working Group is scheduled to meet on a monthly basis in April, May, June, and July.

**LPA or Alternatives for Evaluation in the Draft SEIS/SEIR**

The Board of Directors and FTA will make the final decision on the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) or alternatives to be evaluated in the DSEIS/SEIR. The final decision is anticipated in July. Once the scoping period is complete a Final Comparative Evaluation of Alternatives Report will be prepared. The final report will contain a summary of the scoping comments, response to the comments, any revisions to the conceptual alternatives based on the scoping comments, and a recommendation on an LPA or alternatives to be evaluated in the DSEIS/SEIR. The Final Comparative Evaluation of Alternatives Report is scheduled to be presented to the Transportation Committee and the Board of Directors in July.

JACK BODA  
Director of Mobility Management and Project Implementation

Attachments: 1. Map of Light Rail Transit Alternatives  
2. FTA Cost Effectiveness Indicator  
3. Executive Summary of the Mid-Coast Corridor Transit Project Draft Comparative Evaluation of Alternatives Report  
   (the entire report is available at www.sandag.org/midcoast)

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Mid-Coast Corridor Transit Project

Recommended LRT Alternatives-Common Alignment Between OTTC and SR 52
Mid-Coast Corridor Transit Project

Recommended LRT Alternatives

- LRT 1 (Combines 1, 4 and 5)
- LRT 3
- LRT 6
  - Transit Center
  - Transit Station

*UCSD East Station location differs by alignment

Map not to scale
Stations are for illustrative purposes; locations are not exact.
## FTA Cost Effectiveness Indicator

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<th>Total Capital Cost (1,000s)</th>
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