MEETING NOTICE AND AGENDA

MICR-COAST CORRIDOR TRANSIT PROJECT WORKING GROUP

The Mid-Coast Corridor Transit Project Working Group may take action on any item appearing on this agenda.

Wednesday, November 7, 2012

3:30 to 5 p.m.

SANDAG Conference Room 7, 7th Floor
401 B Street, Suite 800
San Diego, CA 92101-4231

Staff Contact: David Hicks
(619) 699-6939
David.Hicks@sandag.org

AGENDA HIGHLIGHTS

• MID-COAST CORRIDOR TRANSIT PROJECT UPDATE

• UPDATE ON MID-COAST CORRIDOR TRANSIT PROJECT PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEM #</th>
<th>RECOMMENDATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>APPROVE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MEETING SUMMARY OF OCTOBER 26, 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>COMMENT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PUBLIC COMMENTS/COMMUNICATIONS/MEMBER COMMENTS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>INFORMATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MID-COAST CORRIDOR TRANSIT PROJECT UPDATE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>INFORMATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ADJOURN</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
MEETING SUMMARY OF OCTOBER 26, 2011

Members in Attendance:
Ron Roberts, Supervisor, County of San Diego (Chair)
Anette Blatt, Scripps Health
Robert Emery, Retired MTS Board Member and Poway Councilmember (Vice-Chair)
Evan McLaughlin, San Diego and Imperial Counties Labor Council/La Jolla resident
Barbara Obrutz, La Jolla resident
David Potter, Clairemont resident
Ann Van Leer, Land Conservation Brokerage, Inc.
Ian Foster, Clairemont resident
Brian Gregory, UCSD
Greg Fitchitt, Westfield
Mark Marcus, La Jolla Country Day School
Joe LaCava, La Jolla Community Planning Association
Janay Kruger, University City resident

SANDAG Staff in Attendance:
Leslie Blanda
Greg Gastelum
Anne Steinberger

AGENDA ITEM #1: WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Mid-Coast Corridor Transit Project Working Group (PWG) Chair Ron Roberts, County of San Diego Supervisor, called the meeting to order at 3:38 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM #2: SUMMARY OF OCTOBER 6, 2010, MEETING

David Potter, Clairemont resident, made a motion to approve the October 6, 2010, meeting summary. Evan McLaughlin, San Diego and Imperial Counties Labor Council/La Jolla resident, seconded the motion and the summary was approved.
AGENDA ITEM #3: PUBLIC COMMENT

Members of the public were given the opportunity to address the PWG on any topic not on the agenda.

Samuel Blick, representing La Jolla Village Square Shopping Center, expressed support for the Mid-Coast Corridor Transit Project and the Nobel station. The owner of the shopping center does have concerns with parking, but has had good meetings with the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) staff to discuss further.

AGENDA ITEM #3: MID-COAST CORRIDOR TRANSIT PROJECT UPDATE

Leslie Blanda, SANDAG Mid-Coast Project Manager – New Starts/Environmental/Planning, provided information about the project’s recent acceptance by the Federal Transit Authority (FTA) into Preliminary Engineering (PE) on September 2, 2011. The Mid-Coast project will now be placed in the pipeline for FTA New Starts funding and will be included in FTA’s 2013 Annual Report of funding recommendations to Congress. Prior to receiving PE approval, the FTA evaluated the project using New Starts criteria and assigned the project a medium-high rating, the highest rating assigned to any FTA New Starts project in the PE phase.

Ms. Blanda then gave an overview of the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) scoping period for the project. She explained that the FTA published a Notice of Intent to conduct NEPA scoping for the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) in July 2011. NEPA scoping supplemented the previous scoping for the project’s SEIS/SEIR. A total of 43 comments were received by 14 different commenters. Most comments were similar to those received during the California Environmental Quality Act scoping period. She noted that a request was received from Councilmember Lorie Zapf to analyze the feasibility of a station at Jutland Drive. Staff looked into this request and, as a result of a low ridership, determined that the station at Jutland will not be carried forward. This information was presented to the SANDAG Transportation Committee the previous Friday (October 21, 2011).

Greg Gastelum, SANDAG Mid-Coast Project Manager - Engineering, provided an overview of progress on the project since PE approval. Mr. Gastelum explained that staff, in conjunction with FTA, has made refinements to the scope, schedule, and budget for the project.

- **Scope:** Since the adoption of a Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA), there have been several key refinements to the scope of the project. The Light Rail Transit (LRT) alignment from State Route 52 north to Nobel Drive has been refined to improve safety and operations, define right-of-way requirements, and minimize encroachments into Rose Creek. Through the University of California, San Diego (UCSD) campus the LPA previously proposed three design options north of the UCSD west campus station. After years of collaboration with UCSD representatives, an aerial LRT alignment is now proposed through the entire campus of UCSD with an elevated station in Pepper Canyon (UCSD West station). Additionally, the LRT alignment was modified north of the UCSD West station to locate the structure crossing over Interstate 5 north of Voigt Drive connecting to the UCSD east campus. The UCSD East station will be an aerial station in the vicinity of Scripps and Thornton Hospitals. All of these refinements to the LPA will be analyzed in the Draft SEIS/SEIR.
• **Station Parking Forecasting:** The Mid-Coast Project originally included a total of 340 parking spaces at the Tecolote Road and Balboa Avenue stations. However, additional modeling for the project has projected a total demand for 920 parking spaces to be provided at the Tecolote Road, Clairemont Drive, Nobel Drive, and University Town Centre (UTC) LRT stations. The additional parking demand could potentially be accommodated at these stations through either the purchase of additional right-of-way to provide adjacent surface parking spaces or the construction of parking structures. The designs will be further refined during PE to determine the feasibility and be included in the Draft SEIS/SEIR to assess any potential impacts associated with the proposed improvements to address the additional parking demand.

• **Budget:** The Mid-Coast project budget approved in the Fiscal Year 2011 budget was $1.246 billion. The current project budget has increased by $350 million to $1.596 billion due to additional construction capital costs ($73 million), the addition of 22 light rail vehicles ($142 million) to meet service requirements, and the escalation of construction, right-of-way, engineering costs, and contingency ($135 million). The project budget will be continuously updated through PE for inclusion in the Draft and Final SEIS/SEIR and updated again prior to entering final design in the FTA New Starts process.

• **Schedule:** At this time, the team anticipates the following project schedule:
  - Draft SEIS/SEIR: Mid-2012
  - Final SEIS/SEIR and PE Completed: Mid-2013
  - FTA Record of Decision: Late 2013
  - FTA Approval to enter Final Design: Early 2014
  - FTA Full Funding Grant Agreement: Late 2014
  - Begin Construction: Mid-2015
  - Revenue Operations: 2018

In terms of next steps, a complete overview of these refinements will be presented to the Transportation Committee meeting (November 2011) and Board meeting (December 2011). Staff will continue to work on the Draft SEIS/SEIR and the engineering studies in support of the environmental document. They will also continue to coordinate with Metropolitan Transit System (MTS), UCSD, the City of San Diego, California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), and FTA in development of the project.

Chair Roberts explained that he was part of the delegation that met with the FTA in September. The FTA’s comments were very positive toward this project and gave it the medium-high rating which was very promising. Chair Roberts acknowledged that there were increases to the project budget, but used an example of the high costs of the implementation of LRT in Hawaii to put the Mid-Coast costs in perspective. He then asked Mr. Gastelum about potential ridership at the proposed Veteran Affairs (VA) Station. Mr. Gastelum explained that staff has tweaked the alignment to better complement the existing bus operations at the front entrance of VA, which will help with the station’s ridership numbers.

Chair Roberts then asked the PWG members if they had questions.
Brian Gregory, UCSD, offered clarification on the ridership at the VA Station. He explained that campus leadership supports the addition of the VA Station for several reasons. Without the station, it would be quite a circuitous route for VA riders to work their way from the UCSD Pepper Canyon station to Gilman Road, cross a busy street and travel to the opposite side of the VA facilities to enter. Not only would this be difficult for the VA riders, but there would also be ongoing operating costs associated with moving VA riders that are disabled. Additionally, many UCSD faculty, staff, and students traveling to the Schools of Medicine and Pharmacy would disembark at the VA station given its proximity to their current facilities. In the future, UCSD plans to build new facilities for the School of Medicine, Pharmacy, or perhaps a new school associated with Health Sciences where the current VA parking lot is located, which would also lead to additional ridership for the VA station over time. Chair Roberts asked whether UCSD had a master plan that spoke to this development that might assist staff in forecasting ridership there. Mr. Gregory responded that a plan including this project is not yet in place.

Ann Van Leer, Land Conservation Brokerage, Inc., asked about the schedule for the environmental process. Mr. Gastelum confirmed that the environmental document will be available for public review mid-2012.

Joe Lacava, La Jolla Community Planning Association, stated that he is glad to see initial designs of the stations for the project. He asked how many spaces would be available for parking at the Balboa Station. Mr. Gastelum confirmed that there would be 220 parking spaces at the Balboa Station. Mr. Gastelum then reviewed the design of the Balboa Station with the PWG members and explained that staff is working closely with MTS on the coordination of the bus connections into this station. He pointed out that the Balboa Station design included a pedestrian bridge to provide pedestrians on the north side of Balboa Avenue with access the LRT station on the south side of Balboa Avenue. Mr. LaCava asked whether this switchback was a requirement. Mr. Gastelum explained that the bridge was a design option staff was considering to create pedestrian access.

Mr. LaCava asked whether the FTA sees the project as cost effective even with the project cost increases. Mr. Roberts explained that the increases in costs were due largely to staff’s discussions with the FTA and the medium–high rating came after those cost increases.

Mr. LaCava asked about the status of the parking plans at La Jolla Village Square and UTC. Mr. Gastelum explained that staff are coordinating plans with Sam Blick and Greg Fitchitt, representatives of these shopping centers.

Mr. Potter asked whether the station designs for Tecolote and Clairemont are available on the Mid-Coast Web site. Mr. Gastelum replied that the designs are not on the Web site, but staff could add them as part of the PWG backup materials.

Janay Kruger, University City resident, asked about the $20 million in the budget for right-of-way (ROW) costs. Mr. Gastelum explained that the $20 million was a prior expenditure to safeguard the project by purchasing the railroad ROW and transferring ownership to MTS.

Barbara Obrzut, La Jolla resident, asked about pedestrian connections to Mission Bay Park. Mr. Gastelum reviewed the design illustration of the Tecolote station with the PWG members. He explained that pedestrians on the east side of the station could cross through the signalized intersection (at Vega Street) to access the station.
Ms. Van Leer asked whether staff assumed that no additional funds would be spent on ROW. Mr. Gastelum replied that the project ROW and the requirements for private parcels are still being evaluated. He added that there may be some small sliver purchases from private property, but the majority of the project stays within the railroad ROW. Ms. Van Leer asked whether staff would bring that back for discussion in the future. Mr. Gastelum confirmed that the ROW acquisition would be refined as the project design is refined.

Mr. Potter asked about the location of the Tecolote station, and whether it is north of the Armstrong Nursery. Mr. Gastelum confirmed that currently staff is working with the City of San Diego and the Armstrong Nursery to utilize their properties for the Tecolote station.

Mr. Potter stated that he would like to see a station design similar to Tecolote’s applied at the Clairemont Drive station. Mr. Roberts added that at one time the PWG had discussed the importance of pedestrian access at Clairemont Drive and inquired about the connections to the station. Mr. Gastelum explained that staff initially looked into providing elevator access and sidewalks for transit users to access the station. However, this would require widening of the bridge structure, making it very expensive. Therefore, the design was changed to remove those connections.

Mr. LaCava stated that neither Tecolote nor Clairemont station bridges are very pedestrian friendly. He asked whether anything else could be done on the bridge structure. Mr. Gastelum explained that staff is working with Caltrans to determine feasibility of widening those structures. Doing so would cost $80 million to $100 million, which isn’t feasible from a budget perspective. He added that staff is open to looking at other options. Chair Roberts suggested looking into additional ways to incorporate pedestrian connections into the design.

Ms. Kruger asked staff to avoid removing the California Pizza Kitchen and avoid Rose Canyon. Mr. Roberts confirmed that staff is working with the La Jolla Villa Square owners.

**AGENDA ITEM #4: MID-COAST CORRIDOR TRANSIT PROJECT PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN UPDATE**

Anne Steinberger, SANDAG Marketing Manager, explained that staff will be revising the Public Involvement Plan to reflect public involvement and outreach activities in the current phase of the project.

Mark Marcus, La Jolla Country Day School, asked whether staff had briefed anyone from the Preuss School about the project. Mr. Gregory explained that there is a LRT Working Group that meets regularly, consisting of representatives from UCSD, SANDAG, and MTS. The Preuss School is represented at the LRT Working Group meetings. Chair Roberts added that UCSD has been very supportive of this project and hoped that the next chancellor will be as supportive as Mary Anne Fox.

Mr. LaCava referenced the SANDAG 2050 Regional Transportation Plan and a recent article about transit projects being delayed. He suggested that SANDAG let people know that transit projects take longer. Chair Roberts agreed and added that transit projects undergo a very cumbersome process.
AGENDA ITEM #5: NEXT STEPS FOR MID-COAST PROJECT WORKING GROUP

Ms. Steinberger reported that the Mid-Coast Project Working Group was anticipated to continue meeting through the environmental process, which was originally scheduled for fall 2011. With the change in schedule, she asked the group for their thoughts on whether the PWG should continue to meet as needed moving forward, with the next meeting taking place in spring 2012. Chair Roberts agreed and suggested that the PWG should meet when there is new information to discuss, and between meetings they could contact Ms. Steinberger or SANDAG staff with any questions. Mr. LaCava agreed with this approach.

AGENDA ITEM#6: ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned at 4:20 p.m.

Key Staff Contact: David Hicks, (619) 699-6939, David.Hicks@sandag.org