MEETING NOTICE
AND AGENDA

MID-COAST CORRIDOR TRANSIT PROJECT
WORKING GROUP

Monday, June 16, 2014
3 to 4 p.m.

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

Staff Contact: David Hicks
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AGENDA HIGHLIGHTS

• REVIEW AND DISCUSSION OF STATION DESIGN
CONCEPTS FOR THE MID-COAST CORRIDOR TRANSIT
PROJECT

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The Mid-Coast Corridor Transit Project Working Group (PWG) is asked to review and approve the minutes from its November 14, 2013, meeting.

Members of the public shall have the opportunity to address the PWG on any issue within the jurisdiction of the PWG that is not on this agenda. Public speakers are limited to three minutes or less per person. PWG members also may provide information and announcements under this agenda item.

Staff will update the PWG on the status of the Mid-Coast Corridor Transit Project, as well as several important developments that have occurred, including the selection of a construction manager/general contractor and the discovery of San Diego fairy shrimp in the project right-of-way.

SANDAG staff and project architects will present preliminary station design concepts to the PWG, review design options, and request feedback. Staff also will review plans for a series of public workshops in July to seek public input on the station design concepts.
The meeting of the Mid-Coast Corridor Transit Project Working Group (PWG) was called to order at 3:37 p.m.

1. MEETING SUMMARY OF MAY 29, 2013 (APPROVE)

David Potter (Clairemont Resident) made a motion to approve the May 29, 2013, PWG meeting minutes. Joe LaCava (La Jolla Community Planning Association) seconded the motion and the minutes were approved.

2. PUBLIC COMMENTS/COMMUNICATIONS/MEMBER COMMENTS

There were no public comments/communications/members comments provided on items not on the agenda.

3. MID-COAST CORRIDOR TRANSIT PROJECT: REFINED BUILD ALTERNATIVE (INFORMATION)

Before SANDAG staff presented Agenda Item No. 3 to the PWG, Chairman Ron Roberts (County of San Diego) shared that the Mid-Coast Corridor Transit Project has made significant progress since the PWG last met. The comment period for the draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement/Subsequent Environmental Impact Report (SEIS/SEIR) concluded, Chair Roberts traveled to Washington D.C. to raise project awareness, and the project team continues to meet with community groups and stakeholders. Chair Roberts said that he has been receiving a lot of positive feedback and enthusiasm for the project to move forward.

Leslie Blanda (SANDAG), Project Development Program Manager, introduced the report/presentation of the proposed refinements to the Build Alternative to the PWG. Ms. Blanda provided an update on the project’s status, noting the review and comment period for the Mid-Coast Corridor Transit Project’s draft SEIS/SEIR closed on July 17, 2013. SANDAG and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) prepared the draft SEIS/SEIR. More than 300 individuals, organizations, and agencies submitted comments; and approximately 1,420 comments were received.

Ms. Blanda explained that the FTA regulations implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) require identification of the “preferred alternative” being considered in the final SEIS. FTA does not allow options to be carried forward in the final SEIS.
In accordance with the FTA regulations, the draft SEIS/SEIR evaluated a Build Alternative and a No-Build Alternative. The Build Alternative included in the draft SEIS/SEIR contained two options:

- The Veterans Administration (VA) Medical Center Station Option
- Genesee Avenue Design Option

Ms. Blanda explained that several comments were received on the two options during the public review period. Approximately 45 comments expressed support for inclusion of the VA Medical Center Station Option into the Project and approximately 10 comments were received expressing opposition to the use of straddle bents on Genesee Avenue. Additionally, Ms. Blanda explained several comments were received on the alignment, stations, traction power substation locations, and construction staging areas, all having the potential to affect the Build Alternative. After further analysis of these comments, several refinements to the Build Alternative are proposed.

Ms. Blanda provided an overview of what the Refined Build Alternative Report, which includes:

- Summary of comments with the potential to change the Build Alternative
- Summary of the proposed refinements to the Build Alternative
- The proposed Refined Build Alternative to be analyzed in the final SEIS/SEIR

John Haggerty (SANDAG), Rail Director, provided an analysis of each of the proposed refinements detailed in the Refined Build Alternative Report:

- Include the VA Medical Center Station Option to improve access to the UC San Diego Campus and produce approximately 1,600 boardings daily.
- Eliminate the Genesee Avenue Design Option to eliminate significant visual impacts along Genesee Avenue.
- Eliminate straddle bents from the Interstate 5 crossing south of Nobel Drive to improve visual aesthetics. The refinement would relocate the crossing to the south by approximately 360 feet.
- Realign the viaduct from the north side of Voigt Drive to the south side of Voigt Drive to substantially reduce the project-related electromagnetic interference with sensitive medical equipment located in Scripps Memorial Hospital’s XiMED building.
- Refine the Clairemont Drive Station design to include a bus stop and eliminate the need for pedestrian ramps from Clairemont Drive to Morena Boulevard. Comments received noted that the on-street bus stops on Clairemont Drive would be inconvenient for passengers transferring to and from the Trolley.
- Refine parking structure layout at Nobel Drive Station, as a result of coordination with the property owner and further engineering refinements. This refinement would include replacement parking spaces and 260 additional transit parking spaces.
• Shift Voigt Drive Station location slightly to the east to accommodate the shift in the Light Rail (LRT) alignment to the UC San Diego campus on the south side of Voigt Drive.

• Acquire 260 parking spaces at the Terminus Station at Westfield University Towne Center from Westfield instead of constructing a parking deck for transit patrons.

• Refine the design of several traction power substations, eliminate two substations, and shift the location of several other substations.

• Eliminate four construction staging areas based on comments received on the draft SEIS/SEIR and add two new staging areas due to proposed refinements to the LRT alignment.

• Eliminate two retaining walls and add two bridges north of La Jolla Colony Drive near the La Paz condominiums as a result of further engineering studies conducted.

Mr. Haggerty explained that the stations at Tecolote Road, Balboa Avenue, Pepper Canyon (at UC San Diego West), and Executive Drive are proposed for inclusion in the Refined Build Alternative without significant changes. Mr. Haggerty provided further explanations for the Tecolote Road and Balboa Avenue Stations:

For the Tecolote Road station, SANDAG received numerous comments on the draft SEIS/SEIR to reconfigure or eliminate the station to avoid the acquisition of Armstrong Garden Center. Mr. Haggerty explained that SANDAG has conducted a very careful site analysis, and he presented a slide to the PWG for each alternative SANDAG considered. Mr. Haggerty explained that eliminating the station entirely, reconfiguring the station site, or replacing surface parking with a parking structure would reduce the project’s transit ridership and increase parking demands at the Old Town Transit Center and Clairemont Drive Stations. Mr. Haggerty added that the proposed station has been included in numerous transit planning documents over the years, most recently reaffirmed in the SANDAG updated Smart Growth Concept Map.

For the Balboa Avenue Station, SANDAG received several comments requesting that the Balboa Avenue Station be relocated to the City of San Diego’s maintenance yard to the north side of Balboa Avenue or be eliminated entirely. Mr. Haggerty explained that the current station site provides an important connection for bus routes serving nearby communities and provided additional information.

Mr. Haggerty provided an overview of the project’s next steps:

• SANDAG Board asked to approve the Refined Build Alternative as the project to be evaluated in the final document (Friday, November 15)

• Prepare revisions to the project engineering plan set and environmental analyses to support the Refined Build Alternative in the final document

• Prepare response to each comment to include in final document

• Final document available for public review after review and approval by FTA (mid-2014)
• Board approval and certification after 30-day review period for final document (fall 2014)

• FTA Record of Decision (fall 2014)

Questions/Comments:

Rob Hutsel (San Diego River Park Foundation) asked if the owners of the La Jolla Village Square are in support of the refined parking structure layout proposed at Nobel Drive Station. Mr. Haggerty said that the owners prefer the proposed refinement to the original option, but would ultimately prefer to not have impact to their property at all.

Mr. Potter asked if a graphic of the revised Clairemont Station is available for viewing. Mr. Haggerty confirmed he had a graphic available and presented a slide to the PWG. Mr. Potter said that he has heard rumors circulating of a plan for commercial development at the station site, but is concerned that no update has been shared with the public. Mr. Haggerty explained that currently no plan exists, but it would be ideal to do mixed-use development at the site. Mr. Haggerty added that SANDAG is working with the property owner to discuss possible usages that would be beneficial for both parties.

A PWG member asked if the traction power substation shown in the revised Clairemont Station graphic was included in the original plans for the station. Mr. Haggerty explained that one substation existed in the original plans, but a second substation is proposed to be added to the Refined Build Alternative. The PWG member asked how traction power substations fit into the environment and if they affect retail, residential, and development spaces. Mr. Haggerty responded that the substations are stand-alone entities that would be screened. Mr. Haggerty added that SANDAG will do whatever possible to make the substations have a minimal visual impact on the community. PWG member, Jeff Barfield (Clairemont Mesa Planning Group), added that it would be helpful to see a visual example of the substation screening included in the final document.

Ian Foster (Clairemont Resident) asked if another traffic light is being added at the Clairemont Station. Mr. Haggerty said that no additional traffic lights are being proposed, but looking at Mr. Foster’s idea might be beneficial.

Mr. Potter asked if the motel near the Clairemont Station will remain in its current location. Mr. Haggerty confirmed that the motel will remain. Mr. Potter asked if there was a street passing through the station area. Mr. Haggerty explained that it is actually a driveway for buses to pass through.

Mr. Barfield expressed his concern of a possible agreement with the property owner for a joint-use parking structure at the Clairemont station. He asked if the joint-use facility is a possibility and if so, would the owner get a contribution? Mr. Haggerty explained that SANDAG has been in communication with the property owner, but no solid plans exist.

Mr. Barfield asked how SANDAG would acquire the rights to lease the 150 parking places. Mr. Haggerty responded that SANDAG would most likely buy the property rather than lease the space. He added that SANDAG is hopeful they will work out some sort of mutual agreement with the property owner.
James Dawe, the legal representative of Bartell Hotels, provided public comment during the PWG Questions/Comments section of the meeting. Mr. Dawe stated that Bartell Hotels is the owner of the Sheraton Hotel located at 3299 Holiday Court in La Jolla. Mr. Dawe said that he had only recently learned that the proposed transit project would construct an aerial trolley track a few feet from the hotel's eastern property line. He explained that this aerial track would significantly impact the business and its guests. Mr. Dawe stated that he has been meeting with SANDAG staff over the past three to four months and attended today's meeting to ensure that none of the proposed refinements would further impact the hotel.

Janay Kruger (University Community Planning Group) stated the University Community Planning Group is very excited about the refinements made to the transit locations and eager to see the project move forward. Ms. Kruger added that she is not in favor of the location of the traction power substation adjacent to Rose Canyon Open Space Park. Mr. Haggerty said the substation cannot be relocated, but SANDAG has made a commitment to screen the substation with landscaping. Ms. Kruger stated that Rose Canyon is proposing berming so it would look more natural. Ms. Kruger also noted that she is putting together a subcommittee to review the new proposed station designs in the beginning of 2014.

Robert Classon (UC San Diego) expressed concern that the additional construction staging site that has been identified to accommodate the proposed shift in the alignment from the north to the south side of Voigt Drive is located on a UC San Diego parking lot, near the campus’ center. Mr. Classon explained that the site is just west of UC San Diego’s Triton Ballpark. Mr. Haggerty assured Mr. Classon that SANDAG will work with UC San Diego to come to a mutual agreement.

Mark Marcus (La Jolla Country Day School) asked if SANDAG has considered widening the Genesee Avenue and Regents Road crossing. Mr. Haggerty confirmed that SANDAG has analyzed these options and taken them into account.

Mr. Hutsel asked if the relocation of the Armstrong Garden Center was a part of the original plans for the Tecolote Road Station. Chair Roberts confirmed this was the case.

Mr. LaCava asked if the PWG needs to take action on the proposed refinements to the Build Alternative presented today. Chair Roberts explained that the PWG does not need to take action on the agenda item.

Mr. LaCava said that he is surprised by the slow response from property owners in the Morena area because the Tecolote Station has great potential to be a strong economic driver for the area. Chair Roberts stated that although one business continues to voice its opposition against the project, the majority of property owners in the Morena area are supportive of the project. Mr. Potter added that a member of Morena Business Association, who is also a project supporter, is present at today’s PWG meeting.

Mr. Foster asked when the initial construction will start for the project. Mr. Haggerty explained that once SANDAG receives the FTA Record of Decision in fall 2014, SANDAG will start property acquisition and utilities relocation. Mr. Haggerty forecasted that the project will officially break ground in either late 2015 or early 2016. Mr. Haggerty added the Mid-Coast Transit project team is also working to coordinate with the Los Angeles-San Diego-San Luis Obispo Corridor
Project (Elvira to Morena Double Track) project team, since the two projects share several similarities.

4. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Roberts stated that the goal of today’s meeting was to bring the PWG up-to-date with recent project developments, which have primarily been positive. He mentioned that a lot of effort has been put into the design work and engineering by the project team. Chair Roberts thanked the PWG members for expressing their concerns and feedback in today’s session.

Chair Roberts explained the project team has been meeting with stakeholders and interested members of the public since 2010, and that it’s unfortunate that the project just come to the attention of Mr. Dawe’s client after all this time. Ms. Kruger added that she has delivered project flyers on different occasions to the front desk of Mr. Dawe’s client’s property.

Chair Roberts stated that another PWG meeting will be held in early 2014. The meeting will focus more on the project’s architectural components (i.e., station designs).

Chair Roberts adjourned the meeting at 4:48 p.m.
PROJECT WORKING GROUP MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:
Ron Roberts, Supervisor, County of San Diego (Chairman)
Robert Emery, Retired MTS Board Member and Poway Councilmember (Vice-Chair)
Rob Hutsel, San Diego River Park Foundation
Anette Blatt, Scripps Health
Mark Marcus, La Jolla Country Day School
Jerry Engen, Westfield
Debra Gutzmer, CBRE
David Potter, Clairemont Resident
Joe Lacava, La Jolla Community Planning Association
Robert Classon, UC San Diego
Ian Foster, Clairemont Resident
Janay Kruger, University Community Planning Group
Bruce Rainey, Scripps Health
Jeff Barfield, Clairemont Mesa Planning Group

SANDAG STAFF IN ATTENDANCE:
Leslie Blanda
John Haggerty
David Hicks
Greg Rodriguez