I-805 BRT/4 7th Street Trolley Station Area Planning
Community Working Group Meeting Summary # 3
Joe & Vi Jacobs Center, Breakout Room A
September 24, 2012

1. Goals and Objectives from June 4th Meeting

Danielle Kochman, SANDAG, gave a brief overview of the project and a review of the previous Community Working Group Meeting. She discussed how the Goals and Objectives discussed during the last Community Working Group Meeting could be associated with evaluating alternatives and screening criteria.

2. Overview of Alternatives

Danielle discussed the initial alternatives that were developed by the project team. The universe of alternatives was developed by examining each possible combination of the different potential bus station platform locations and the different ways to connect the Bus Rapid Transit service to these station platforms.

a. Three different vertical levels:
   i. **Track Level**, where the bus will drive up a ramp to the existing rail track level and then drive across the Greenwood Underpass. This would allow the transfer between freeway bus services and the trolley services to happen on one level
   ii. **Mid-Level**, where the bus will drive up a ramp to a closer elevation to the existing track level, but stay under the Greenwood Underpass. This platform location would not need an elevator for pedestrian access, and would eliminate any potential conflicts between the bus and trolley crossing.
   iii. **Freeway Level**, where the bus will continue driving on the freeway and stop at freeway level. Pedestrians would use an elevator or stairs for access to the bus platform area.

b. Three types of connections
   i. **In-Line**, which would locate the platform at the center median of the freeway between the Human-Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes
   ii. **Direct Access Ramps (DAR)**, which would create a ramp to bring the bus directly to either a track or mid-level bus/trolley platform without going over the general purpose lanes.
   iii. **Flyover** would create a bridge that will go over the general purpose lanes and up to the East or West side of the freeway.

   If a flyover is used to access a mid-level station, certain characteristics would determine whether the bus lane will **Pass Through a Tunnel Under Tracks** within the hillside, or cut across the edge of the hillside for an **Open Crossing Under Tracks**.
c. Two types of platforms
   i. **Side Platforms** provide two boarding areas on the right sides of the bus lanes in order to allow for passengers to board through the existing doors on the right side of the bus. This would require two separate platforms for northbound and southbound passengers. An example of this can be found in renderings from the I-15 Mid-City BRT Stations Preferred Alternative, which will be shown to the Community Working Group at the next meeting.
   ii. **Bus Island** provides one boarding area for both northbound and southbound passengers.

   **In-Line station alternative:** Because the passengers need to board on the right side of the buses, this alternative would need two grade-separated crossovers for the buses to drive on the left sides of the platform and back onto the right side of the HOV lanes. (At-Grade crossovers can be found on Interstate 110 at Imperial Highway in Los Angeles; however, at-grade crossings are no longer permitted).

Danielle then described how these different stations options were combined to create a set of fifteen unique alternatives. She then introduced another member of the project team, Dennis Wahl from IBI Group, to discuss each alternative in detail using schematic diagrams. These schematic diagrams demonstrate the functional relationship of various elements related to each alternative.

Dennis walked through each of the fifteen alternatives, using figures showing the preliminary concept for the general station layout and bus access for each alternative. These figures were also included in the back of the handout packet. On a second projector screen, aerial views of the site were available, along with the layout plan for each alternative indicating the footprint of the project and which bridges would potentially be impacted. The fifteen alternatives are as follows:

1A) In-Line, Freeway Level, Side Platforms
1B) In-Line, Freeway Level, Center Platform
2A) In-Line DAR, Mid-Level, Side Platforms
2B) West Side Flyover, Mid-Level, Pass Through a Tunnel Under Tracks
2C) East Side Flyover, Mid-Level, Pass Through a Tunnel Under Tracks
2D) West Side Flyover, Mid-Level, Open Crossing Under Tracks
2E) East Side Flyover, Mid-Level, Open Crossing Under Tracks
3A) In-Line DAR, Track Level, Side Platforms
3B) In-Line DAR, Track Level, West Bus Bay Island
3C) In-Line DAR, Track Level, East Side Bus Bay Island
3D) In-Line East/West Side DARs, Track Level, Side Platforms
3E) In-Line East/West Side DARs, Track Level, West Side Bus Bay Island
3F) In-Line East/West Side DARs, Track Level, East Side Bus Bay Island
Dennis and Danielle then opened up the discussion asking the community members for input on additional alternatives, questions or clarification.

a. The project team reminded the Community Working Group that some of the alternatives create a need to reconstruct the Imperial Avenue and Market Street Bridges over the I-805 Freeway. This additional capital cost should be taken into consideration when evaluating the alternatives.

b. Darryl Williams expressed a concern about land acquisition near bridges. He thought that the existing freeway right of way would not have enough land to accommodate project alternatives, so in most cases, we would need to spread beyond freeway right of way.

c. A Community Working Group member expressed how it is important to have a line of site that will allow patrons to see the trolley and buses throughout the station platform.

d. If the bus platform is on the west side of the freeway, people would have to cross over the freeway on a bridge in order to get to the Park and Ride or transfer to the Trolley. Would this be too far, considering its environment above the freeway?

   iii. West Side of I-805 to existing Trolley Platform is approximately 800 feet
   iv. Center of I-805 freeway to existing Trolley Platform is approximately 690 feet
   v. East side of I-805 to existing Trolley Platform is approximately 576 feet

e. Mike Singleton is also doing a walkability study to demonstrate the quarter mile, half-mile and mile walk sheds depending on each alternative.

f. A community member mentioned that the line of site has an important role on security at the transit platform, and should be incorporated in the screening process as a higher priority.

g. A community member mentioned that the connectivity between the bus and trolley may be compared to the existing Old Town Transit Center. Both buses and trolleys can be seen from all parts of the transit center; however, transferability is a little inconvenient with passengers having to travel under the tunnel to transfer to and from different modes.

h. Randy Van Vleck suggested that 1/8th of the screening criteria should relate to the Health Impact Assessment that was done for this project site. The project team clarified that these elements would be included in the detailed analysis.

i. Michael Brunker noted that the current plans for the YMCA will vacate North 45th Street which currently provides access to the west side of the freeway. He suggested that the project manager should follow-up with him to review current YMCA plans, as they might affect access to some of the West side alternatives.

j. Michael suggested that the only logical place for a Bus platform on the west side would be north of Greenwood Underpass, because it would provide access to the residential community. There is currently a vacant strip of land on the north side that could be used
as the bus platform location. The project team clarified that any of these basic alternatives could easily be flipped to the north side of Greenwood Underpass.

k. Michael suggested that it is important to create a formal East to West connection, because people are currently walking along Chollas Creek under the I-805 freeway.

l. Danielle Kochman, project manager, clarified that the alternatives discussed can easily be modified to be placed on either the north or south side of the Greenwood Underpass.

3. Dennis discussed how these fifteen alternatives will be evaluated based on initial screening criteria. The evaluation of the alternatives will allow the creation of a short-list of four to six alternatives for further evaluation. A longer and more detailed set of criteria will be used to evaluate the short-listed alternatives when we get to that step. Dennis described each of the initial criteria developed by the project team as follows:

   a. **Order of Magnitude Cost Estimates**: The project team emphasized that at this stage in the process, it is too early to have cost be the deciding factor for elimination of alternatives.

   b. **Effect on Bus and Trolley Operations**: In terms of bus and trolley operations, buses crossing trolley tracks at grade would require signalization. This would prioritize trolley services. The only operations impacts from alternatives would be on bus travel time either waiting at the signal or driving out of the freeway right of way.

   c. **Proximity of Platforms & Ease of Access**: The closer the bus platform is to the trolley platform, the more convenient connections will be for transfers.

   d. **Economic Development Potential**: Alternatives might affect differently the opportunity for development in the immediate area.

   e. **Need for Design Exceptions**: Alternatives will be evaluated based on design exceptions to Caltrans Standards. For example, some alternatives require the freeway lanes to be narrow; however, we cannot automatically assume that these substandard conditions will be approved.

   f. **Environmental Impacts**: Alternatives will be evaluated based on the impacts on the surrounding environment, including Chollas Creek. Mitigations for potential impacts could increase the costs of the alternative.

   g. **Passenger Security & Related Operating Costs**: Site lines and distances to and from the bus and trolley platforms will be evaluated.

      i. This criterion also includes pedestrian accessibility to and from the station, and crossing tracks.

Dennis showed an example of a matrix that could be used to score each of the alternatives, showing the screening criteria along the horizontal axis and the initial alternatives along the vertical axis. Each square would then be filled in with a score between one and five, which when summed would make the total score for each alternative, allowing the alternatives to be ranked. Danielle and Dennis then opened up the discussion to community members on the proposed screening criteria and process for creating the short list of alternatives.
4. Discussion

a. Randy Van Vleck noted that City Heights was able to create a sense of place on top of the freeway. He raised the question of whether or not we would be able to widen the pedestrian bridge and create a park area that would create a comfortable environment while waiting for the bus as part of the security package for this project.

b. Patrick Ambrosio is familiar with the alternatives evaluation process. The one difference is that Mid-City already has overpasses that were established as community gathering locations. This project’s examples are in the middle of the freeway with no existing East to West connectivity. Patrick would like to see the economic potential (cost or hindrance) of each alternative.

c. Michael Brunker noted that in this area, there is a downhill slope going North to South, and there are some curves in the existing freeway, with cars driving higher speeds because of the slope.

d. Michael also reminded the group about previous discussions of using the I-805 exit at Market Street as a connection to the trolley station.

e. A community member suggested that alternatives on the west side of the freeway seem expensive and don’t serve as many residents as the east side, so the alternatives should be dropped from further study.

f. Norma Chapa emphasized that lighting is very important for security at our platforms and connections.

g. A community member asked about the HOV freeway to freeway connector from I-805 to I-94, and its relationship to this project. The assumption is that people who would like to go Downtown will use the trolley rather than transfer to the BRT. This connector starts north of our project area. The primary destination of BRT services from this station will be Mid-City, Kearny Mesa, Sorrento Mesa and Otay Mesa.

h. The Community Members suggested to further analyze some of the alternatives outside of Caltrans Right of Way:

   i. A community member suggested looking into a vacant land parcel on 47th and Market. It was clarified that there is a scheduled development for a Family Health Center or Walmart at that location.

   ii. Patrick Ambrosio suggested looking into a vacant parcel beyond the Chollas Mead Elementary School, north of the trolley tracks. Would it save money by not having to re-build the Imperial Avenue Bridge if the buses land north of the tracks?

i. The Project Development Team reminded the community that a few years ago, there was an opportunity to straighten the tracks on the west side of I-805; it was decided to stay within the existing track’s right of way. This project will assume that the trolley will stay within its existing right of way.

j. Bus services will run every 7.5 to 15 minutes. Nan De Forrest suggested that if the buses are coming pretty frequently, convenient transfer isn’t as important. Nan suggested that proper signage is more important for transferability.
k. Nan also suggested that design should incorporate natural surroundings like Chollas Creek, and include amenities like bike paths in order to create a sense of place at the new bus platform location and make it a destination for the rest of San Diego County.
   i. The project team re-emphasized that these elements are included in the current project scope. The team is evaluating pedestrian access and bike mobility. The reason west side platform locations are being considered is to increase the capture area for people who would be able to catch the bus.

l. The passenger survey the Project Team is conducting at both Euclid and 47th Street Trolley stations will provide a sense of the current transfer patterns at these locations, and could infer opportunities for bringing bus services to the 47th Street Trolley Station.
   i. Derryl Williams suggested that 47th Street Trolley creates an opportunity to eliminate the traffic problem at Euclid. He hopes that the results of the study would produce a change that would resolve this issue.

m. Nan De Forrest suggested that the Project Team should re-evaluate why bus 13 no longer stops at the 47th Street Trolley Station. Reasons for this operations change could be helpful to our analysis.
   i. This bus service was removed from the 47th Street Trolley Station because 30% budget cuts were applied to low performing routes.

n. Patrick Ambrosio would like to see the trolley platform moved closer to the freeway edge, because it will make transferring more convenient.

o. Nan De Forrest suggested that the Project Team further evaluate the Caltrans Work Yard location. She would like to see if this parcel could benefit our project.

p. A community member reminded the Community Working Group that the City of San Diego received a grant to build a bike path through the Chollas Creek Area. He suggested that the project team further investigate this project and its relationship to the I-805 BRT/47th Street Trolley Station Area Planning Project.

q. A community member expressed concern with Fire Truck access for each of the alternatives. The project team stated that this would be included under Passenger Security, and would also be included in detailed analysis.

5. Next steps
   a. Dennis then discussed the next steps including the scoring process of alternatives and reviewing these scores with the Community Working Group. Alternatives will then be short-listed based on scoring. Afterwards, the Project Team will move forward with detailed analysis of short-listed alternatives.

6. Passenger Survey, Land Use Analysis, and Economic Analysis
   Dennis gave a brief overview of the status of the other elements of the project, including the passenger survey and transit service analysis, land use analysis, and economic analysis. Danielle closed the meeting by noting that these elements will be discussed in more detail at the Community Working Group meeting which is anticipated for October 2012 to be held in conjunction with the City of San Diego’s Euclid and Market Land Use and Mobility Plan Working Group.