

Board Report

Los Angeles County
Metropolitan Transportation
Authority
One Gateway Plaza
3rd Floor Board Room
Los Angeles, CA

Agenda Number: 8.

PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE JULY 17, 2019

SUBJECT: VERMONT TRANSIT CORRIDOR

File #: 2019-0506, File Type: Motion / Motion Response

ACTION: RECEIVE AND FILE

RECOMMENDATION

RECEIVE AND FILE response to Motion 16.1 (File #: 2019-0259, Attachment A), regarding the Vermont Transit Corridor.

ISSUE

In April 2019, the Metro Board approved a Motion by Directors Garcetti, Dupont-Walker, Hahn, Solis, and Butts regarding the Vermont Transit Corridor. The Motion directed staff to advance technically feasible rail concepts through the environmental review process and undertaking a feasibility study of extending the Vermont Transit Corridor to the South Bay Silver Line Pacific Coast Highway Station, if additional funding materializes.

The Motion also directed staff to report back with a "...Public Private Partnership business case approach for each Minimum Operable Segment". Staff's understanding of the intent of reporting back on the Public Private Partnership (P3) Business Case was to understand how a substantially more robust transit facility with tunneling and potentially rail could be made financially feasible considering the funding limitations of the Measure M Expenditure Plan.

DISCUSSION

As a project progresses through its initial phases of definition and development, various tools can be utilized to help inform the feasibility of various project alternatives and the associated benefits. With respect to the Vermont Transit Corridor, considering the variety of modes, configurations, and alignments under consideration, these tools can provide important information regarding all options for how best to serve this critical transit corridor.

Collectively, the findings of the types of analysis undertaken can inform a Business Case for a particular project delivery approach. Such tools can include both qualitative and quantitative analysis of the project itself, assessment of the risks and opportunities of delivery and long-term operation of the project, examination of various approaches to construction schedules and phasing, and the range of potential funding and financing options, including revenue sources that are external to Metro.

Each of the various types of analysis that could be conducted would require project data inputs based on a project scope that has been defined to an appropriate level. This could include definition of modes, alignments, the number of stations and location of terminals, location and size of potential maintenance facilities, service levels (frequency and passenger capacity), maintenance and state-of-good-repair expectations, and revenue service date, among other project characteristics. This information is made available through reports provided by Metro's project consultants through feasibility assessments, environmental study, and preliminary engineering.

As the project proceeds through the planning and development process and various project alternatives are defined, Metro staff will carry out the following analysis, as appropriate, based on the level of project definition.

- Qualitative Delivery Options Analysis: Upon initial definition of various scope alternatives highlevel qualitative assessment would be undertaken to determine if and how a various delivery models, including a Public Private Partnership, may benefit a project.
- 2. <u>Value Capture Analysis</u>: After initial screening of various scope alternatives, a financial assessment of the corridor would be undertaken to understand how the project might be linked with forecast development trends and whether value capture from commercial and residential real estate might be a source of ancillary revenues.
- 3. <u>P3 Market Sounding and Industry Engagement</u>: If a P3 delivery model is determined of offer potential value, interviews with P3 industry participants would be undertaken to better understand the market's interest in the project, as well as various private sector views about opportunities and risks associated with its delivery. Market soundings require that a specific mode and alignment has been determined. In addition to evaluating market interest in delivering the project through a P3 as a technologically-enhanced Bus Rapid Transit corridor, as suggested in an Unsolicited Proposal, staff will continue to engage the private sector regarding opportunities to enhance the feasibility of all project options under consideration, as well as opportunities to bring new ancillary revenues to the project beyond supplementary grant funding sources.
- 4. <u>Strategic Funding and Financing Assessment</u>: Once various scope alternatives are better defined, an assessment of the range of funding and financing strategies would be compiled and assessed for their potential to enhance the feasibility of various project alternatives. This could include additional state and federal grants, as well as government-supported financing tools. The likely affordability of a project would be assessed across a number of dimensions, including capital construction cost, annual debt service cost or estimated availability payments, operation and maintenance costs, and overall financing capacity. These findings can help to guide Metro's approach to selecting the most feasible alternatives.
- 5. <u>Value for Money Assessment</u>: Central to a P3 Business Case is a Value for Money (VfM) analysis, which compares the risk-adjusted cost of the project under different delivery models on a net present value basis to determine which delivery model is likely to generate the most value per dollar of public investment over the full life of the project (generally a ~30 year period). VfM analysis and is time and resource intensive and requires fully developed raw costs for a single project alternative to provide useful insights. Staff would undertake this analysis after potential P3 value has been identified qualitatively and the planning process has

advanced a project concept to a design level where reliable and detailed cost estimates for the projects full lifecycle can be developed.

As noted above, the private sector has expressed interest through the Unsolicited Proposal process in delivering the Vermont Transit Corridor as a technology-enhanced BRT through a P3, based on the scope defined in the Vermont BRT Corridor Technical Study completed in 2017. A Phase II analysis of this unsolicited proposal is underway.

Additional project development activities are needed at this point to continue to refine the range of project options, and information regarding their implementation, through feasibility analysis associated with the environmental process. At the same time, robust community outreach and engagement will continue in the corridor in order to complete all the work needed to identify and validate the appropriate scope and delivery method for this project.

DETERMINATION OF SAFETY IMPACT

This Board action will not have an impact on established safety standards for Metro's capital projects.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

For each of the various activities undertaken for this project, the Office of Extraordinary Innovation (OEI) would work with the project team in the Countywide Planning and Development Department to allocate resources and costs for any subsequent business case development activities in the appropriate fiscal year budgets. Such activities would likely be supported by contractors from Metro's P3 Financial Advisory Bench Contract or Planning Bench Contract, and any task orders for such work would be approved by Metro's Board of Directors or CEO based on the size of the contract award.

IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

The recommendations support the following Metro Vision 2028 Strategic Plan Goals:

- Goal 1: Provide high-quality mobility options that enable people to spend less time traveling.
- Goal 5: Provide responsive, accountable, and trustworthy governance within the Metro organization.

<u>ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED</u>

Staff could convene and begin the process of conducting Business Case analysis prior to initial scope definition. This approach is not recommended because without some level of conceptual project definition, the analysis would not produce meaningful insights and would not be an efficient use of time and resources. Staff could wait until the project definition has been finalized. This is also not recommended because various alternatives might be eliminated without more thorough consideration.

NEXT STEPS

The next step for this project is the initiation of the feasibility analysis, which staff plans to be

underway by early 2020, and expect should take approximately 12 months. The Vermont Transit Corridor Project Team will proceed with procuring consultant services to support the next phase of environmental review of feasible alternatives for the project, including technically feasible rail alternatives as outlined in Motion 16, as amended by Motion16.1.

When an appropriate level of detail has been developed for alternatives, staff will determine undertake the appropriate level and type of Business Case assessment that would provide reliable and useful insights into enhancing project feasibility and report back to the Board accordingly.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A - Motions 16 and 16.1

Attachment B - Vermont TC Board Report

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Board Report

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Agenda Number: 16.1

PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE APRIL 17, 2019

Motion by:

GARCETTI, DUPONT-WALKER, HAHN, SOLIS AND BUTTS

Related to Item 16: Vermont Transit Corridor - Rail Conversion/Feasibility Study

MTA should always strive to deliver the best transit project possible and not prematurely eliminate warranted project alternatives.

The Vermont Transit Corridor is a significant Measure M project intended to improve mobility along Vermont Avenue. Vermont Avenue is MTA's highest-ridership bus corridor. Vermont connects some of the most economically and socially diverse communities and several major destinations in the Los Angeles region.

Historically, Vermont Avenue was the second priority for rail transit investment after Wilshire Boulevard, as seen by the current Red Line route north of Wilshire Boulevard. Current and future Vermont Transit Corridor users deserve a world-class, reliable, and convenient transportation option. While the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) concepts recommended by MTA will improve bus operations and travel times, the Vermont Transit Corridor rail concepts would deliver superior customer experience, connectivity, reliability, and capacity.

Exposition Park in particular is one of the significant destinations served by the Vermont Transit Corridor. Exposition Park currently draws about four million visitors per year and is developing a new master plan in anticipation of additional growth.

Exposition Park is experiencing nearly \$2 billion in new and recent investments, including the Lucas Museum of Narrative Art, the Oschin Air and Space Center, the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum renovation, and an addition to the Natural History Museum. The Lucas Museum alone is a \$1 billion investment forecasted to draw an additional one million visitors per year to the regional park. Additionally, the Los Angeles Football Club's Banc of California Stadium is a \$350 million investment with a significant transit-patron attendance. Lastly, Exposition Park will be a major venue for the future 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

The Vermont Transit Corridor also connects to the University of Southern California (USC). USC is LA County's second-largest private employer and eighth-largest employer in LA County overall. USC

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serves about 47,500 students, over 20,100 faculty and staff, and many more visitors, whom share a highly constrained parking capacity.

With ongoing development along the corridor, MTA could draw significant public-private partnership interest and private infrastructure investment. The Vermont Transit Corridor Project is a historic opportunity for LA County to close a transit service connectivity gap and to provide a world-class, reliable transportation option for people to access education, employment, and entertainment. This critical corridor connects multiple MTA rail lines, serves various regional employment centers, and connects populous, lower-income communities who rely on transit as well as emerging transit-oriented communities.

Bus service quality and reliability improvements on Vermont Avenue are much needed. MTA should continue to develop world-class Bus Rapid Transit alternatives for Vermont Avenue to ensure transit riders experience a high-quality, seamless ride.

However, given high transit ridership and constrained, congested conditions on Vermont Avenue, MTA must also study all technically feasible rail alternatives during environmental review and explore innovative funding mechanisms to accelerate their effectuation. Additionally, should MTA recommend congestion pricing in the Downtown LA area, a Vermont rail alternative will ensure a high-quality transit option. Lastly, given that MTA seeks to advance BRT concepts that would not preclude future rail conversion, evaluating all technically feasible rail alternatives should not significantly affect the environmental analysis budget and schedule.

MTA should preserve the ability to deliver the Vermont Transit Corridor as a rail project should additional funding materialize. Historically, there is precedent for this. The Expo Phase 1 and Crenshaw/LAX projects included both BRT and rail alternatives in their respective environmental documents.

SUBJECT: VERMONT TRANSIT CORRIDOR - RAIL CONVERSION/FEASIBILITY STUDY

RECOMMENDATION

APPROVE Motion by Garcetti, Dupont-Walker, Hahn, Solis and Butts that the Board direct the CEO to:

- A. Advance technically feasible rail concepts previously identified through the 2017 Vermont Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Technical Study into environmental review to preserve the ability to deliver rail transit if additional funding materializes;
- B. Include a feasibility study of extending the Vermont Transit Corridor to the South Bay Silver Line Pacific Coast Highway transitway station to ensure regional connectivity via Minimum Operable Segments, including identification of potential maintenance facility sites; and
- C. Report back to the MTA Board in July 2019 with a Public Private Partnership business case approach for each Minimum Operable Segment.

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Board Report

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File #: 2019-0205, File Type: Project Agenda Number: 17.

REVISED COMMITTEE

PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE APRIL 17, 2019

SUBJECT: VERMONT TRANSIT CORRIDOR - RAIL CONVERSION/FEASIBILITY STUDY

ACTION: APPROVE RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION

CONSIDER:

- A. RECEIVING AND FILING the findings and recommendations from the Vermont Transit Corridor Rail Conversion/Feasibility Study;
- B. APPROVING advancement of the two BRT concepts: 1) an end-to-end side-running and 2) a combination side and center-running, previously identified through the 2017 Vermont Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Technical Study into environmental review;
- C. AUTHORIZING study of a center-running BRT facility or similarly high performing, dedicated BRT facility across the Vermont Transit Corridor study area that is feasible to be delivered per the Measure M expected opening date to supplement the existing 2017 Vermont BRT Technical Study;
- D. DIRECTING the CEO to return to the Board with the findings from the supplemental study prior to initiating the environmental review scoping process; and
- E. DIRECTING broad public, stakeholder and partner engagement to be undertaken as part of the supplemental study and environmental review efforts.

(CARRIED OVER FROM MARCH)

ISSUE

The Vermont Transit Corridor is a Measure M project with an expected opening date of Fiscal Year (FY) 2028. This project is also included in the Twenty-Eight by '28 Initiative adopted by the Board in January 2018. In order to meet the Measure M and Twenty-Eight by '28 schedule, a project for the corridor needs to be identified and environmentally cleared through an environmental review study.

At the March 23, 2017 Board meeting, the Board approved a motion (Attachment A) directing staff to take a number of actions, including proceeding with the Vermont Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project as a near-term transit improvement, while also initiating a study looking at future potential rail. This report addresses that motion. The study concluded that the BRT concepts recommended to advance into environmental review are not in conflict with future conversion to rail.

BACKGROUND

The existing Metro bus service along the Vermont Transit Corridor extends approximately 12.4 miles from Hollywood Boulevard south to 120th Street. The Vermont Transit Corridor is the second busiest bus corridor in Los Angeles County with approximately 45,000 daily boardings and connections to four Metro rail lines. The corridor serves numerous key activity centers including Koreatown, Kaiser Permanente Los Angeles Medical Center, University of Southern California, and Exposition Park. Attachment B shows a map of the corridor and study area, which includes one-half mile to either side of Vermont Avenue.

In February 2017, Metro completed the Vermont Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Technical Study. The study evaluated the feasibility of implementing BRT, including bus lanes and other key BRT features. The study identified two promising BRT concepts, which would provide improved passenger travel times, faster bus speeds, and increased ridership. The two concepts are an end-to-end side-running BRT and a combination side- and center-running BRT.

At the March 23, 2017 Board meeting, staff presented the findings and recommendations from the Vermont BRT Technical Study (Legistar File No. 2016-0835). At that meeting, the Board approved a motion directing staff to proceed with the Vermont BRT project as a near-term transit improvement, while also initiating a study looking at rail, specifically focusing on connecting the Metro Wilshire/Vermont Red Line Station to the Exposition/Vermont Expo Line Station as a first phase. Based on ridership demand, future potential conversion to rail on the Vermont Corridor after FY 2067 is projected in Measure M.

In July 2017, staff provided the Board with an approach for augmenting the BRT Technical Study with an additional scope of work to conduct a rail conversion/feasibility study. The purpose of the rail conversion/feasibility study has been to re-evaluate the initial BRT concepts to ensure that their design would not preclude a future conversion to rail and to evaluate and compare multiple rail modes and/or alternatives, including an extension of the Metro Red Line along Vermont Avenue.

DISCUSSION

In December 2017, staff initiated work on the Vermont Transit Corridor - Rail Conversion/Feasibility Study (Attachment C-Executive Summary). In addition to re-evaluating the design of the initial BRT concepts to ensure they would not preclude a future conversion to rail, six preliminary rail concepts were identified. The initial rail concepts included evaluating and comparing multiple rail modes (Heavy Rail Transit (HRT), Light Rail Transit (LRT), and Streetcar/Tram), alignments, and configurations, including:

1) LRT High Floor, Center-Running

- 2) LRT Low-Floor, Side-Running
- 3) Streetcar/Tram, At-Grade Side-Running
- 4) HRT with Direct Connection to Purple Line
- 5) HRT with Direct Connection to Red Line
- 6) HRT Stand-Alone Alignment (beginning/ending at Vermont/Wilshire)

Screening criteria were then applied to these six (6) initial rail concepts to identify the three (3) most technically feasible concepts for further detailed analysis. The screening criteria included: customer experience; system connectivity; system operability and reliability; passenger capacity/personthroughput; capital costs; operating and maintenance costs; construction impacts; and transit service disruption. The three rail concepts determined to be the most technically feasible are: 1) LRT, Center-Running; 2) HRT with Direct Connection to Red Line; and, 3) HRT with Stand-Alone Alignment.

While the HRT connection to the Metro Red Line would provide a one-seat ride from 120th Street to North Hollywood, it would have significant construction and service impacts to the existing rail service for up to two years. The LRT and the HRT stand-alone options, which would not significantly impact service during construction, would require passengers to transfer at the Wilshire/Vermont Station to either the Metro Red or Purple Line.

The table below shows a comparison of the capital and operating and maintenance cost estimates, as well as the projected corridor ridership, for each of the BRT and rail concepts.

	BRT Side- Running	BRT Combo Side-/Center- Running	LRT Center- Running	HRT Connecting to Red Line	HRT w/ Stand- Alone Alignment
Capital Costs (2018)	\$236 - \$310 M	\$241 - \$310 M	\$4.4 - \$5.2 B	\$7.1 - \$8.4 B	\$5.9 - \$6.9 B
Annual O & M Costs	13.4 M	13.4 M	\$28.8 to 53 M	\$53.8 to 80.5 M	\$35.1 to 70.0 M
Daily Corridor Ridership (2042)	82,000	82,000	91,000	116,000-144,000	103,000-131,000
At-Grade	12.4 miles	12.4 miles	4.6 miles	N/A	N/A
Grade Separated	N/A	N/A	5.2 miles	10.3 miles	9.8 miles

Currently, a total of \$522 million, including \$25 million in Measure M, \$5 million in Cap and Trade funds, and \$492 million in other local funds, are allocated for this BRT project.

Summary of Rail Concepts Feasibility

In developing the rail concepts, not only were the various technologies considered but also the vertical and horizontal configuration of each. The vertical profile of rail on the corridor included atgrade, at-grade with grade separations (below or above) at specific intersections, a fully elevated system, or a fully below-grade system. The biggest challenges associated with the at-grade options were the obvious ROW constraints on the corridor. The existing ROW is 50- to 55-feet wide (curb to curb) in the northern two-thirds of the corridor, while south of Gage Avenue, the ROW widens significantly to 180 to 200 feet. In considering Metro's LRT Grade Crossing & Safety Policy, it was

determined that the LRT option would need to operate below grade north of Gage Avenue. South of Gage Avenue, where the ROW widens significantly, the LRT could operate at grade. The two remaining HRT options would be fully underground.

The study also looked at the feasibility of connecting the Metro Red Line at the Wilshire/Vermont Station to the Metro Expo Line at the Exposition/Vermont Station as a first segment. As part of the phasing analysis, potential Maintenance and Storage Facility (MSF) locations were also considered. However, given the challenges in locating, environmentally clearing and acquiring land for a suitable MSF in the northern segment of the corridor, which is predominately commercial and/or residential, a first segment, or minimum operable segment (MOS), along Vermont Avenue between the Red/Purple and Expo Lines was determined infeasible.

Staff also confirmed that none of the existing MSFs will be able to accommodate new rail vehicles as part of the Vermont Transit Corridor project in terms of storage and everyday maintenance. While Metro Division 20 is currently being expanded to accommodate the future Metro Purple Line extension, it will not be large enough to serve the Vermont Line even under the MOS scenario. Therefore, the first segment would need to extend further south to Slauson Avenue or the I-105 Freeway to access potential MSF sites.

Implications for Future BRT Conversion to Rail

Since the LRT option would substantially be underground and the two HRT options fully underground, it was determined that the implementation of BRT along the Vermont Corridor would not preclude a future conversion to rail. The end-to-end side-running BRT would operate in a travel lane adjacent to a parking lane. The end-to-end combination side- and center-running BRT would do primarily the same with an exception south of Gage Avenue. South of Gage Avenue, the BRT would operate within the two center lanes. Should light rail be constructed in the future, the two center BRT lanes could be converted to rail.

Recommendation

Overall, the Rail Conversion/Feasibility Study found that: BRT continues to be feasible in the Vermont Corridor; BRT does not preclude conversion to rail transit in the future; BRT has the capacity to serve ridership demand until 2042 and beyond; several rail alternatives were determined feasible for future implementation; cost of rail alternatives far exceeds Measure M funding; and some useful rail features can be installed and used as part of BRT. Additionally, there are some unique urban design opportunities south of Gage Avenue, such as the reprogramming of the underutilized median to one side of the street in order to make the open space more useful and accessible to the community. The study also identified opportunities to integrate on-street amenities to improve first-last mile connectivity and help foster the creation of transit oriented communities.

Given the importance of the Vermont Transit Corridor and the need to improve the overall quality of transit service, staff recommends advancing the two BRT concepts into environmental review. With some minor engineering refinements, the refined BRT concepts will not preclude a future potential conversion to rail. Additionally, staff recommends conducting additional study of an end-to-end center-running BRT facility and/or a similar high performing dedicated BRT facility that is feasible to be delivered per the Measure M expected opening date. This additional study would supplement the 2017 Vermont BRT Technical Study and be completed prior to commencing environmental review of

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any BRT concept.

These BRT improvements can be delivered more immediately and at a fraction of the cost of rail, while further building corridor ridership. This is necessary in order to address the March 23, 2017 Board motion, meet the Measure M opening date, and address the Twenty-Eight by '28 Initiative.

Stakeholder Outreach

In both spring and fall 2018, staff completed two sets of key targeted stakeholder meetings along the corridor. Invitees included businesses, religious institutions, schools, hospitals, major cultural centers, community/neighborhood groups, neighborhood councils, and Chambers of Commerce. Staff also provided individual project briefings to all affected City of Los Angeles Council Districts as well as at other community group meetings. The purpose of the outreach was to discuss and solicit further feedback on the two BRT concepts and any potential future rail concepts. There was overall broad support for BRT on Vermont, with a small group still in favor of rail being delivered much earlier.

Public and stakeholder engagement will continue and be broadened throughout the <u>additional study</u> <u>and</u> environmental process to solicit valuable feedback that will further inform and define the BRT concept for the corridor. A series of meetings, including public scoping and public hearings as well as individual briefings with key stakeholders and elected officials, will be conducted as part of the process.

Consistency with Metro's Equity Platform Framework

The Vermont Transit Corridor project will provide new benefits of enhanced mobility and improved regional access for transit-dependent, minority and/or low-income populations within the study area. Should the Board approve advancing the project into the environmental review phase, the project will be approached and designed for consistency with Metro's recently adopted Equity Platform Framework.

DETERMINATION OF SAFETY IMPACT

Approval of this item will not impact the safety of Metro's customers or employees.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Funding of \$400,000 is included in the FY20 budget request in Cost Center 4240, Project 471402 (Vermont Transit Corridor) to initiate the <u>additional study and</u> environmental review, pending budget adoption. Since this is a multiyear contract, the Cost Center Manager and Chief Planning Officer will be responsible for budgeting in future years for the balance of the remaining project budget.

Impact to Budget

The funding source for the Vermont Transit Corridor project is Measure M 35% Transit Construction. As these funds are earmarked for the Vermont Transit Corridor project, they are not eligible for Metro bus and rail capital and operating expenditures.

IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

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The purpose of the Vermont Transit Corridor project is to identify and implement strategies for improving bus service along Vermont Avenue. These strategies, including dedicated bus lanes, improved passenger amenities at stations, and enhanced lighting, will enhance the customer experience by reducing passenger travel times, improving service reliability, and enhancing passenger comfort and security. The Vermont Transit Corridor project supports the following Strategic Goals:

- #1: Provide high-quality mobility options that enable people to spend less time traveling.
- #2: Deliver outstanding trip experiences for all users of the transportation system.
- #3: Enhance communities and lives through mobility and access to opportunity.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The Board may decide not to approve advancing the Vermont Transit Corridor project to the environmental review phase. This is not recommended as this corridor is included and funded in Measure M and highlighted in the Twenty-Eight by '28 Initiative. Delaying the environmental analysis would jeopardize the ability to meet the Measure M ground breaking and opening dates.

NEXT STEPS

Should the Board choose to approve the <u>recommendations</u>, staff will proceed immediately to procure consultant services for the <u>additional study</u> and environmental review of the corridor in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Staff will keep the Board apprised of the study and return to the Board at key project milestones.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A - March 23, 2017 Board Motion

Attachment B - Map of Vermont Corridor

Attachment C - Executive Summary - Vermont Transit Corridor Rail

Conversion/Feasibility Study

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