



Board Report

File #: 2022-0507, File Type: Project

Agenda Number: 26.

CONSTRUCTION COMMITTEE SEPTEMBER 15, 2022

SUBJECT: METRO G-LINE WATER INFILTRATION AND QUALITY PROJECT

ACTION: APPROVE RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION

CONSIDER:

- A. ADOPTING the Final Initial Study/ Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND), and the recommended Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP), pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA); and
- B. AUTHORIZING the Chief Executive Officer or her designee to file a CEQA Notice of Determination (NOD) for the Project with the Los Angeles County Clerk and State of California Clearinghouse.

ISSUE

Metro staff have completed all necessary steps for the Board to adopt the Final IS/MND and MMRP in compliance with CEQA for the Metro G Line (Orange) Water Infiltration and Quality Project (Project). As CEQA Lead Agency for the Project, Metro must complete the CEQA environmental review process to receive grant funding for construction and proceed with construction activities.

BACKGROUND

The Metro G Line (Orange) Water Infiltration and Quality Project proposes to divert stormwater runoff from the surface, and existing regional storm drains to a network of infiltration drywells across seven locations within Metro properties and along the G Line right-of-way. The infrastructure would include pretreatment facilities to capture, treat, and infiltrate stormwater runoff from over 2,300 acres of drainage area, recharging the San Fernando Valley Groundwater Basin in the Upper Los Angeles River watershed. The Project would also reduce surface water pollution, improve surface water quality at downstream receiving waters (Los Angeles River), and reduce the risk of localized flooding by mitigating peak flow rates.

The Project will be designed and constructed in conjunction with the Metro G Line Bus Rapid Transit

(BRT) Improvements Project. On August 25, 2022, the LACMTA Board of Directors awarded a firm fixed price contract for Phase 1 Preconstruction Services of the Progressive Design-Build contract and established a Preconstruction Phase-of-Project Budget for the Metro G Line BRT Improvements Project. These related projects have been assessed separately under CEQA, as each has substantial utility irrespective of the other's approval (i.e. each project has independent utility and logical termini).

Los Angeles County voters approved Measure W in November 2018, establishing the Safe, Clean Water (SCW) Program and its funding source via a special parcel tax. This innovative new program managed by the Los Angeles County Flood Control District, provides local, dedicated funding to increase Los Angeles County's local water supply, improve water quality, and enhance communities. The Program generates up to \$285 million each year to fund multi-benefit stormwater and urban runoff capture projects, which is distributed across nine different Watershed Areas.

On September 15, 2021, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors approved funding for the Project as one of the recipients of the SCW Program's Regional Program funding, beginning in FY 2021-22. The SCW Program grant will provide \$34,515,458 of the \$45.6M total project cost, which includes design, construction, and 30 years of operations and maintenance funding. Recognizing the groundwater supply and water quality improvements resulting from this project, the LADWP has agreed to enter a cost sharing agreement with Metro to contribute the remaining \$11,088,000 in funding required for the Project. This strategic partnership and collaboration between Los Angeles County, LADWP, and LACMTA will provide cost effective regional water supply and quality benefits to the region, while delivering world-class transportation infrastructure.

On January 27, 2022, the LACMTA Board of Directors authorized the CEO or her designee to execute the terms and conditions of the SCW Program grant and to negotiate and execute the terms and conditions of a cost sharing agreement with the LADWP. Since that time, Metro has received a \$1.6M disbursement of SCW Program funding for Project planning and design.

As a term of the SCW Program grant, Metro is the Lead Agency regarding compliance with CEQA for the funded infrastructure project. SCW Program construction funds cannot be disbursed until Metro has documented its compliance with CEQA.

The purpose of the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan (MMRP) is to ensure that the mitigation measures identified in the Final IS/MND that mitigate the potentially significant environmental effects of the Project are, in fact, properly carried out. Metro is responsible for assuring full compliance with the provisions of the MMRP.

DISCUSSION

Metro, as the CEQA Lead Agency and Project proponent, has completed an Initial Study/ Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND) for the proposed Project. If the Metro Board adopts the Final IS/MND, the Project will be eligible to receive SCW Program construction funds and commence construction activities.

Metro began the environmental planning process in November 2021. Metro released the Draft IS/MND for a 30-day public review and comment period, which commenced on June 21, 2022. Metro

has reviewed and evaluated the comments received on the Draft IS/MND and prepared written responses to all comments included in the Final IS/MND. Metro provided outreach to the community by providing email notifications to community stakeholders in the G Line project's database. The Public Review and Comment period was also advertised in both local English and Spanish language local newspapers.

All public comments have been received, addressed, and incorporated in the Final IS/MND document. The comments received do not trigger any recirculation as required by CEQA Guidelines Section 15073.5, nor do they question Metro's determination that an MND is the appropriate CEQA compliance document for the proposed Project.

The Final IS/MND document includes information on impacts that will not exceed the threshold of significance with the adoption of mitigation measures. Metro will commit to ensuring that the mitigation measures identified in the Final IS/MND document are implemented during project implementation. State CEQA Guidelines Section 15097 requires that when a public agency completes an environmental document that includes measures to mitigate or avoid significant environmental effects, the public agency must adopt a reporting or monitoring program for the changes to the project which it has adopted or made a condition of project approval to mitigate or avoid significant effects on the environment. The reporting or monitoring program must be designed to ensure compliance during the project's implementation.

The Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP) attached to the Final IS/MND documents the committed mitigation measures. During project implementation, Metro staff will keep track of the environmental commitments per the Final IS/MND and MMRP.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no impact to the FY23 budget as a result of this item. Metro has already received \$1.6M in SCW Program funding for planning and design. Metro must comply with CEQA to receive the remainder of the SCW Program grant and LADWP funding for construction. The Project will be fully funded through the SCW Program grant and LADWP cost-share.

EQUITY PLATFORM

Eighty-nine percent (89%) of the Project's direct benefit (drainage area) area is located within the 2022 equity-focused communities (EFCs) and 90% is within disadvantaged communities (DAC) or severely DACs, as defined by the California Utilities Commission Water Code Section 79505.5. The Project indirectly provides a local and more affordable supply of clean water to local residents, reduces environmental hazards to the community by reducing water pollution, both at the surface and in regional water sources and increases the community's wellbeing by mitigating localized nuisance flooding.

The CEQA analysis determined that the Project impacts will not exceed the threshold of significance with the adoption of mitigation measures. Impacts are less than significant with mitigation incorporated for the following resource areas: Biological Resources, Cultural Resources,

Paleontological Resources, Hazards & Hazardous Materials, Noise/ Vibration, and Tribal Cultural Resources. Metro engaged the community during the 30-day public review and comment period and received 24 comments from a total of three comment letters. All comments received were incorporated into the Final IS/MND. Metro is committed to ensuring that the mitigation measures identified in the Final IS/MND document are implemented during the design and construction process. Metro will adopt a Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP) and will be responsible to keep track of the environmental commitment per the Final IS/MND and MMRP during project implementation.

Those living, working, visiting, and passing by the Project will be kept informed about Project developments through an Engagement Plan developed by Metro Community Relations in coordination with the Metro G Line BRT Improvements Project. This Plan will include a variety of briefings, presentations, community meetings, digital media, media relations, paid media buys consisting of print and radio media, and the dissemination of a notice via door-to-door distribution to the local stakeholders in the project corridor. Information and signage will be developed to educate the public on the infiltration system, water supply and quality benefits provided to the surrounding communities.

IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

The Metro G Line (Orange) Water Infiltration and Quality Project supports the implementation of Metro's Strategic Plan Goals, with specific alignment to Initiative 5.2 - Exercise good public policy judgment and sound fiscal stewardship. The implementation of this project will support these strategic goals by: 1) Supporting compliance with State and local water regulations; 2) Delivering water supply benefits through water capture and infiltration, with the potential to make Metro Net Water Positive; 3) Improving surface water quality downstream of the project area, and; 4) Increasing community wellbeing by mitigating localized nuisance flooding.

The project will also support the achievement of Metro's Sustainability Strategic Plan Water Target #2 - Increase runoff infiltration and capture capacity for stormwater by 15% from 2020 baseline levels.

NEXT STEPS

Upon Board certification of the Final IS/MND, staff will file a Notice of Determination with the State of California and Los Angeles County.

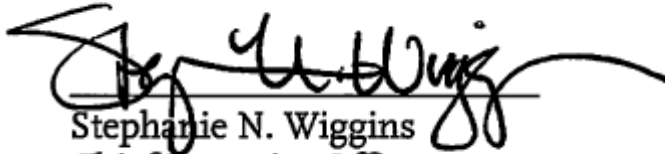
ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A - Final IS/MND

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