



Board Report

File #: 2017-0742, File Type: Project

Agenda Number: 19.

PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE FEBRUARY 14, 2018

SUBJECT: ORANGE LINE BUS RAPID TRANSIT IMPROVEMENTS

ACTION: RECEIVE AND FILE

RECOMMENDATION

RECEIVE AND FILE update on the status of the environmental clearance, grade separations, railroad type quad gating, and community outreach for the Metro Orange Line (MOL) Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Improvements.

ISSUE

At the October 26, 2017 meeting, the Board adopted Motion 15.1 (Attachment A) to include additional grade separations as viable alternatives in the environmental analysis for the Orange Line Bus Rapid Transit MOL BRT corridor; and requirement to coordinate with the City of Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT) on more detailed traffic analysis regarding impacts of the staff's recommended project on local streets. This report provides an update on the staff's approach to advancing the grade separation/gating scope which is in line with the Board's motion and proceeding forward with a statutory exemption.

BACKGROUND

The basis for staff's approach to advance the grade separation/gating scope emerged from the Orange Line BRT Improvements Technical Study that was presented to the Planning and Programming Committee in October 2017:

- Implement Measure M projects on schedule and identify approaches to accelerate delivery when possible; and
- Do so in a manner consistent with available resources without disrupting committed funding and schedules of other Measure M projects.

The MOL BRT is notable in that it is fully funded with Measure M dollars and has a ground breaking date of FY 2019. With no "other funds" indicated in the Measure M Ordinance, it is clear that the project is expected to be delivered at cost and with equivalent dedicated Measure M funds.

It was clear from the technical analysis (presented in October 2017) that an on-time delivery within the ordained budget could not accommodate a project that heavily emphasized grade separations as the principal solution to implementing the project description in Measure M: MOL BRT improvements with critical grade separation(s) implemented early through Operation Shovel Ready.

More importantly, the technical analysis did indicate a project scope that could, within the budget, deliver a project that achieved key BRT safety and performance objectives within Measure M-driven parameters of schedule adherence and available resources: the recommended project scope combining grade separation from Sepulveda to Van Nuys and gating the cross street traffic. Further, that combined project scope achieved superior performance objectives than other alternatives studied in the technical analysis, including constructing the grade separations indicated in the motion.

The staff's recommendation was to advance the grade separation/gating scope and to evaluate the applicable environmental determination, ranging from a statutory exemption to an environmental impact report.

DISCUSSION

The Board's directive to "carry the seven potential stand-alone grade separations identified in the consultant report forward into the environmental process for further consideration **as project alternatives**" (emphasis added) presents some notable trade-offs in terms of schedule delay and potential cost increases in the event the final project is an environmentally cleared alternative that exceeds the available funding currently identified.

Considering these trade-offs, and in keeping with the commitment and expectation to deliver projects on-schedule and within budget, staff will pursue a complementary parallel analysis, aligned with the prior recommended grade separation/gating project scope, to evaluate a "not to preclude" design strategy that would explicitly accommodate implementation of additional grade separations to the MOL BRT corridor in the future, should additional funding be realized.

This approach honors the Board's overall commitment to Measure M's timely implementation, while allowing continued exploration of enhancements consistent with Motion 15.1's spirit of flexibility.

Environmental Review

Staff initiated the public engagement, environmental review, engineering support, and coordination with LADOT on the recommended project: grade separation from Sepulveda to Van Nuys and gating at-grade crossings. Based on existing conditions, community input, and analysis of the project schedule impact, staff determined that this project is statutorily exempt (SE) under California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Section 21080(b)(11) of the Public Resources Code. Staff has initiated preliminary design for the grade separation between Van Nuys and Sepulveda, and gating other intersections of the MOL, as well as studying the project effects to noise, traffic, visual, construction, and operations, in order to minimize the impacts of the project.

Additionally, staff is designing and analyzing an elevated bike path between Van Nuys and Sepulveda Boulevards. This was part of the recommended project in order to provide bike commuters a more direct connection to the stations as compared to the existing, adjacent Class 1 bike path, encourage more bicycle use, and further enhance safety for bicyclists and pedestrians. There are two design

options being considered including an elevated continuous bikeway structure adjacent to the proposed elevated busway structure from Sepulveda to Van Nuys, or elevated bikeway structures only at Sepulveda and Van Nuys Boulevards. The at-grade bike path would remain under both design options. Staff will continue to develop the design of the bike path grade separation and evaluate its potential benefits and impacts.

Community Outreach

In late November/early December, staff conducted the initial round of community outreach for the Metro Orange Line Improvements Project. This robust effort included three open house meetings in North Hollywood, Canoga Park and Van Nuys, an innovative online webinar intended to reach diverse audiences and in-person surveys at our busiest Orange Line stations.

More than 100 people attended at least one of these meetings, including representatives from the offices of L.A. Councilmember and Metro Board Director Paul Krekorian, L.A. Councilmember Nury Martinez, L.A. Councilmember Bob Blumenfield, L.A. Councilmember Mitchell Englander, Congressman Tony Cardenas, and California Senator Bob Hertzberg. We also received valuable input from more than 600 current riders through our in-person surveys at the Orange Line stations.

Metro staff is now reviewing all the comments received from the surveys and community meetings and advancing the project through the environmental review and design work. Attachment B contains a summary of the comments received and survey results.

Metro will continue to build awareness and understanding of the proposed project with key San Fernando Valley stakeholders by making project presentations as well as facilitating tours of the gating system along the Metro Expo Line in the first half of 2018. Staff will also engage current riders through outreach at stops and stations and through attendance and participation in large community events, with a continued focus on reaching Spanish-speaking Valley residents. The Project website, e-blasts and Metro's social media channels, will be used to keep the community updated on the Project. Following completion of the next phases of technical work, Metro expects to hold another round of community meetings in summer 2018.

Coordination with LADOT

As early as January 2017, staff began preliminary feasibility discussions about using railroad gate mechanisms on the MOL with City staff (LADOT) on the recommended grade separation/gating project scope. Recognizing that the recommended gating concept is common on all Metro rail facilities in the City of Los Angeles, and also a unique and non-traditional application for improving MOL safety, efficiency, and potentially improving overall traffic delays for motorists, staff is working cooperatively with City staff on two main fronts. Staff is coordinating with the City in implementing a pilot installation of railroad gates at a non-public traffic signal controlled signalized intersection on the MOL to test and verify the reliable activation and proper operation of gates for BRT application, both during normal operations as well as during failure modes. This particular intersection was selected because it will not impact traffic flow on public streets and will not cause undue delays for motorists, while at the same time will provide a realistic environment for Metro and City staff to thoroughly test various simulations and operation of the gates. Staff is currently advancing this pilot work by preparing design drawings and submitting them to the City for review and concurrence after which staff will procure a contractor and start the installation of pilot gates by summer 2018.

Staff is working with the City on a second parallel phase to develop a comprehensive traffic impact analysis of adding gates at busway crossings with city streets. Through a series of ongoing meetings and coordination, staff has incorporated feedback received from LADOT into the documents that have been submitted thus far. The documents include gating concepts showing physical improvements needed to support the gates (e.g., medians, lane closures, right turn channelization, etc.) for each intersection where gates are being proposed. Gating concepts will be used as a basis for traffic signal phasing and impact analysis. Staff has also prepared and shared with City a concept of operations document, a detailed technical gate feasibility assessment, and the assumptions and methodologies that will be used to conduct a comprehensive detailed traffic impact analysis.

This traffic impact analysis, which will include development of a model design concept and simulations to verify the anticipated traffic impacts due to gating, will also be shared with the City for their review and feedback. In fact the City will be engaged at every step of the process in terms of gathering data to populate the traffic model, documenting the calibration and validation of the model to replicate existing traffic operations, verifying the proposed gate operation and traffic signal phasing sequence for each crossing, and identifying ultimate scenarios to evaluate the potential impacts to traffic from gate operations. The traffic impact analysis has been initiated and is expected to be completed by late spring 2018, with LADOT being engaged throughout the evaluation of analysis results, to ensure the proposed gating system achieves the stated project goals while creating minimal additional delays for Valley vehicle traffic.

In conjunction with the development of the traffic impact analysis, Metro and City staff will continue coordination efforts to develop preliminary designs of gating at selected intersections to identify and resolve engineering challenges in order to improve safety, efficiency, and traffic impacts along the alignment.

Based on the traffic impact analysis and input from the City, Metro will initiate preliminary engineering designs for each intersection where gates are being proposed. The design plans will incorporate necessary treatments to maintain the current parallel bike path that is on the MOL alignment. In addition, staff will incorporate the findings from the pilot gate project into the design plans. Based on the preliminary engineering designs acceptable to the City, staff will develop cost estimates for implementing the gates and evaluate the cost implications on the project's current budget.

Due to the tight project schedule that must be adhered to in order to meet the commitments made to voters in Los Angeles County, Metro and City staffs are working in lock-step to meet the deadlines established by Measure M, and look forward to ongoing proactive cooperation between both parties to ensure the MOL improvements are delivered on time and within budget.

NEXT STEPS

Staff will continue with preliminary design for the grade separation between Van Nuys and Sepulveda, traffic analysis based on gating other intersections of the MOL, as well as studying the project's potential effects to the environment and surrounding community in order to minimize impacts. Coordination with LADOT to evaluate impacts of gating on traffic in the MOL corridor will continue as described herein. Staff will document the analysis findings and determination for the SE and will update the Board in summer 2018. Attachment C contains the Project Schedule.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A - Board Motion 15.1 dated October 26, 2017

Attachment B - 2017 MOL Community Outreach

Attachment C - MOL Project Schedule

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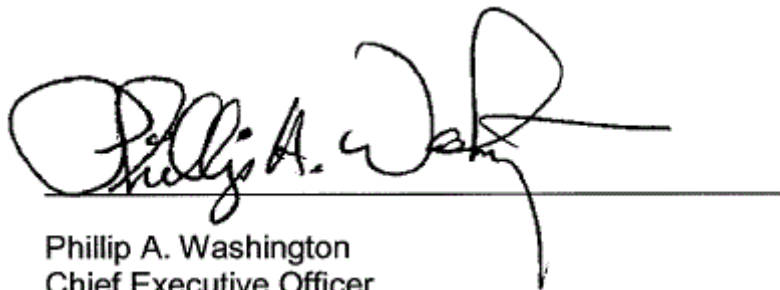
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Board Report

File #:2017-0729, File Type:Informational Report

Agenda Number:15.1

**REGULAR BOARD MEETING
OCTOBER 26, 2017**

MOTION by

DUPONT-WALKER AND SOLIS AMENDMENT

October 26, 2017

Orange Line Bus Rapid Transit Improvements

AMENDMENT BY DUPONT-WALKER AND SOLIS

I MOVE THAT the recommendation be amended to carry the seven potential stand-alone grade separations identified in the consultant report* forward into the environmental process for further consideration a project alternatives, and that MTA coordinate closely with LADOT on the environmental, stakeholder, and public review processes to refine and better identify potential traffic delay and other impacts to affected intersections.

*Reseda Blvd., Balboa Blvd., Sepulveda Blvd., Van Nuys Blvd., Woodman Ave., Burbank Blvd., and Laurel Canyon Blvd. and further to explore cost-sharing with the Cities and the COG.

METRO ORANGE LINE IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT

Project Kick-Off Community Open House Meetings and Webinar

Wednesday, November 29 – Thursday, December 7, 2017

	Open House Meeting #1 North Hollywood – November 29, 2017	Open House Meeting #2 Canoga Park - November 29, 2017	Open House Meeting #3 Van Nuys – December 2, 2017	Open House Meeting #4 Webinar – December 2, 2017	Total
Participants	51	17	20	32	120
Question/ Comment Cards	29	7	18	16	70
Elected Offices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Office of Senator Bob Hertzberg, (18th District) – Steve Fukushima - Office of Los Angeles City Councilmember Nury Martinez (District 6) – Arcelia Arce and Lauren Padick - Office of Los Angeles City Councilmember Paul Krekorian (District 2) – Doug Mensman 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Office of Los Angeles City Councilmember Bob Blumenfield (District 3) – Jeff Jacobberger - Office of Los Angeles City Councilmember Paul Krekorian (District 2) – Doug Mensman 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Office of Congressman Tony Cardenas, District 29 - Nigel Sanchez - Los Angeles City Council District 6 - Nury Martinez - Ovanes Chobanian - Office of Los Angeles City Councilmember Paul Krekorian (District 2) – Doug Mensman 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Office of Los Angeles City Councilmember Mithcell Englander (District 12) – Eric Moody 	
Neighborhood Councils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - North Hollywood NC - Reseda NC - Studio City NC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Valley Alliance of Neighborhood Councils (VANC) - Canoga Park Neighborhood Council - Encino Neighborhood Council - Reseda Neighborhood Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Encino Neighborhood Council - Tarzana Neighborhood Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tarzana Neighborhood Council 	
Other Stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Valley Industry Commerce Association (VICA) - Los Angeles County Bicycle Coalition (LACBC) - NoHoArtsDistrict.com 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - N/A 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - N/A 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - N/A 	
Q&A and Comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Railroad Type Gates – Concern over significant traffic impacts that would result from the proposed railroad type gates at heavily congested intersections; request for Metro to conduct a beta test for the gates at a busy intersection to assess impacts to traffic before installing all of the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Railroad Type Gates/Noise – Concern over how loud the bell noise will be for the railroad type gates - Traffic – Improve traffic signal timing in local streets to address major bottle necks at MOL crossings; it takes 30 minutes to cross Vanowen 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Grade Separation – Concern expressed over space beneath future grade separations becoming homeless encampments. - Traffic – Concerns and comments made concerning impact new gates could have on traffic. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Connectivity with other Metro transit: Question raised about if this project will evaluate connections from other bus lines to the Orange Line and how the Orange Line will connect with future Metro lines (I/E The East San Fernando Transit Corridor and Sepulveda Transit 	

METRO ORANGE LINE IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT

Project Kick-Off Community Open House Meetings and Webinar

Wednesday, November 29 – Thursday, December 7, 2017

	<p>gates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Noise – Multiple comments expressing concern over the bell noise that will be generated by the railroad type bells (when they go up/down); request for a soundwall along Oxnard St between White Oak Ave and Louise Ave - Grade Separation – Concern over detours and travel time delays during the construction of the Sepulveda to Van Nuys aerial structure - First/Last Mile – Consider connectivity options for the disabled and seniors that cannot use active transportation options as well as for those that are not using apps and Uber/Lyft to reach their final destination - Operations – General questions, comments and concerns regarding the existing Orange Line facility and operations. 	<p>St and Eton Ave (one block away from the MOL Canoga Ave/Vanowen St crossing) during peak hours</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Operations – General questions, comments and concerns regarding the existing Orange Line facility and operations (including homeless encampments, number of buses and frequency, need for DASH service) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Active Transportation – Concerns expressed over bike accommodations and lack of storage capacity on buses and at stations. - Safety and Security – Concerns expressed over station security and safety on buses. Several requests for additional transit security and police presence on buses and at stations. - Operations – Concerns expressed over lack of restrooms at most Orange Line stations. General comments and concerns regarding current the Orange Line facility and operations (bus frequency and connections to DASH service). 	<p>Corridor).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Railroad Type Gates/Noise – Concern raised over how gating may impact traffic in the Orange Line Corridor. - Grade Separation – Question raised as to why grade separations weren't planned for the entire corridor. A question was also raised about what will happen with space underneath planned grade separations. - Active Transportation – Concern expressed over lack of bike storage on Orange Line buses and at stations. Question raised about Metro installing a future bike hub at an Orange Line station. A question was also raised concerning connectivity for bicyclists and pedestrians to the grade separated structures. - Operations – Questions raised about express service on the Orange Line, if fares would increase, and who makes the final determination for what gets approved and implemented as part of this project. 	
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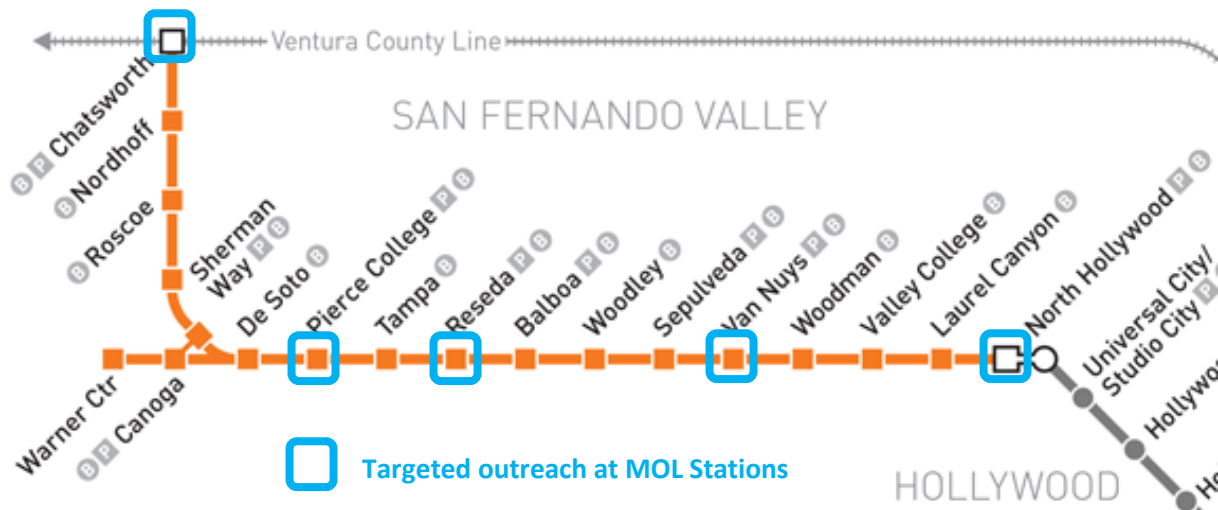
**Orange Line BRT Improvements Project
Targeted Outreach to MOL Riders – Summary
November 14-16, 2017**

Targeted outreach to Metro Orange Line (MOL) riders was conducted at key MOL stations to promote and solicit input via a brief survey on the proposed MOL improvements funded by Measure M. The surveys offered an opportunity to engage active MOL riders who may otherwise not participate at the Project Kick-Off meetings, including non-English speaking riders. Bilingual (English/Spanish) outreach staff set up pop-up information booths at the stations to provide riders and passersby with an opportunity to learn about the proposed improvements and take the brief survey. In general, one outreach team member staffed the information booth while other outreach team members approached transit riders waiting or arriving at different areas of the station.

Paper and digital surveys were offered in English and Spanish to encourage participation from as many transit riders as possible. Members of the public were offered incentives for engaging with outreach staff and/or for taking the survey, including Metro tote bags, pens, reflector bracelets, window decals and granola bars. Stakeholders who took the survey were also offered the chance to enter into a raffle for a \$25 Metro TAP Card or a \$25 Visa gift card. A winner was randomly selected from each of the surveyed stations. Riders that chose not take the survey were still handed a bilingual ‘take-one’ handout with information on the proposed improvements and details for the upcoming Project Kick-Off Open House Meetings.

The survey included seven (7) short questions that require a “check box” response. The surveys were conducted at five of the top performing MOL stations across the transit corridor during peak service days and hours (based on Metro ridership data). The surveys were conducted during the week from November 14-16 at the following MOL stations: Van Nuys (11/14/17, morning hours), North Hollywood (11/14/17, evening hours), Reseda (11/15/17, morning hours), Pierce College (11/15/17, afternoon hours), and Chatsworth (11/16/17, evening hours).

Figure 1. Targeted Outreach Conducted at Key MOL Stations



In all, the outreach team engaged a total of 910 MOL riders of which 620 completed the survey, with one in five (20%) of the surveys completed in Spanish. Below is a quick summary of the number of

**Orange Line BRT Improvements Project
Targeted Outreach to MOL Riders – Summary
November 14-16, 2017**

survey participants, number of riders engaged through the “pop-up booths”, and a brief outline of input that was collected through these stakeholder interactions.

Table 1. Survey Participants

Station	English Survey			Spanish Survey			Total Surveys	Total Stakeholder Interactions
	Print	Digital	Total	Print	Digital	Total		
Van Nuys – 11/14, morning	41	35	76	7	28	35	111	200
North Hollywood – 11/14, evening	100	47	147	13	22	35	182	300
Reseda – 11/15, morning	37	35	72	10	18	28	100	120
Pierce College – 11/15, afternoon	100	39	139	8	5	13	152	170
Chatsworth – 11/16, morning	38	23	61	8	6	14	75	120
TOTAL			495 (80%)			125 (20%)	620	910

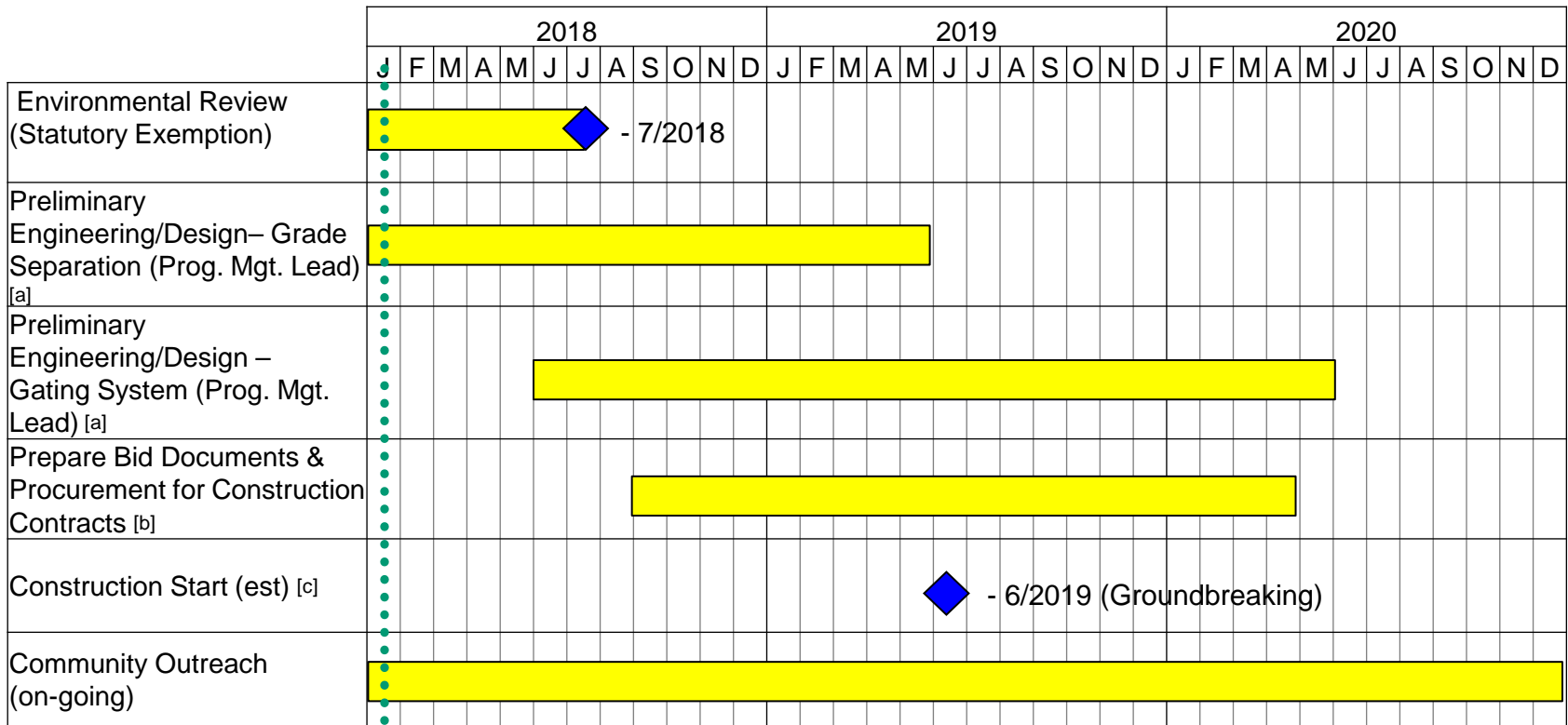
Table 2. Key Issues and Concerns

Key Issues/Comments
<p>General comments/concerns</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lots of support for the Orange Line – existing and proposed improvements; minor opposition from users that did not see the need for the improvements • Support for conversion of Metro Orange Line to rail now, instead of phased approach • Support for expansion of the Orange Line going farther east <p>Safety – Proposed Improvements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for the proposed safety improvements to the existing corridor • Need for the railroad type crossing gates <p>Operations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Have police officers inside the buses and at each station ○ Sheriff’s deputies don’t do anything except check tickets, but city police enforce rider conduct rules

Orange Line BRT Improvements Project
Targeted Outreach to MOL Riders – Summary
November 14-16, 2017

- Theft occurs at the stations and on buses – bikes and purses are stolen
- Make stations more secure with additional security during off-peak times
- A large number of riders feel unsafe inside the bus due to the high number of homeless people who ride the Metro Orange Line and riders who under the influence of drugs
- Operational Improvements – Enhancing User Experience
 - A number of riders would like USB chargers on the bus and/or stations
 - Free Wifi (at the stations and on the buses)
 - Lower bus fares
 - Electronic time signs at stations are sometimes inaccurate
 - Better time accuracy in phone app
 - Bus drivers could improve their customer service skills
 - Drivers should reopen doors if they see people running toward bus – Bus drivers sometimes will not wait for the passenger who is running to catch the bus and leave or close the door as they approach the bus.
 - More service during the weekend
 - Cleaner stations and buses
 - Install additional seating
 - TAP card machines don't work sometimes
 - Need for more trash cans
- Service reliability
 - Fewer red lights would improve service
 - Need for faster buses, dedicated express lanes
 - Buses come very frequently
 - 2-3 buses will sometimes show up at the same time causing delays
 - Service delays are unacceptable; buses are sometimes late
 - Need for more buses at night
- Stations
 - Request for a bus station at White Oak Ave
 - Station design of Reseda station makes it difficult to catch the bus before it leaves

Metro Orange Line BRT Improvements Schedule



◆ = Milestone Date

Last Revised: 01/2018

Footnotes:

[a] Design level to be determined based on contracting method(s).

[b] Schedule may vary pending on Metro selection of construction contracting method(s) and third party agreements with the City of Angeles.

[c] Measure M assumed a groundbreaking date of June 2019 and an opening year ranging between 2025 and 2027.



Next stop: Orange Line Improvements.

Orange Line BRT Improvements
Metro Planning & Programming Committee
February 14, 2018



February Board Item Receive & File

- ❑ Provide update on progress of aerial grade separation between Van Nuys and Sepulveda, gates, pilot gate, and community outreach
- ❑ Project is Statutorily Exempt (SE) under CEQA Section 21080(b)(11) of the Public Resources Code
- ❑ Staff approach for separate but parallel process to evaluate additional grade separations in response to Oct. 2017 Board Motion

Orange Line BRT Improvements Project



❑ Goals and Objectives

- Enhance safety at BRT crossings
- Improve BRT travel times

❑ Schedule Commitment

- Measure M Groundbreaking in 2019; Opening in 2025
- Identify approaches to accelerate delivery when possible
 - ✓ Operation Shovel Ready Project
 - ✓ Twenty-Eight by '28 Project List

❑ Funding

- Orange Line BRT Improvements: \$286M in FY 2015

Project Features

- ❑ Aerial BRT busway from Sepulveda Blvd. to Van Nuys Blvd.
- ❑ Railroad-Type Gates at 34 locations
- ❑ Elevated bike path at Sepulveda Blvd. and Van Nuys Blvd.
- ❑ Designed for future conversion to LRT





Project Update



Environmental Review

- Project is **Statutorily Exempt (SE)** under CEQA Section 21080(b)(11) of the Public Resources Code
- Oct. 2017 Board motion requested evaluation of additional grade separations, which will be done as separate, parallel process

Preliminary Engineering Design

- Advancing conceptual design of elevated grade separations
- Developing gating concepts, design, and traffic impact analysis in coordination with LADOT

Community Outreach

- ❑ Community update in November/December 2017
 - Three community open house meetings & live webinar (120 attended)
 - Surveys at MOL Stations (620 respondents)
 - City and elected briefings
- ❑ What we heard
 - Broad public support for Orange Line improvements
 - Concerns/Issues to be addressed:
 - Traffic and noise effects due to gating operations
 - Temporary traffic detours during construction of grade separated structures
 - Safety and security of stations and public space beneath grade-separated structures





Next Steps

- ❑ Spring to summer 2018:
 - Briefings and potential tours of Expo Line gating system
 - Pop-up events and follow-up surveys
- ❑ Summer 2018:
 - Community Open House
 - Next Board Update with refined project description/scope
- ❑ Coordinate with LA City on pilot installation of railroad-type gates at the City of Los Angeles driveway east of Sepulveda Blvd