



## Board Report

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### PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE NOVEMBER 16, 2022

**SUBJECT: SR-14 TRAFFIC SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT**

**ACTION: RECEIVE AND FILE**

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

RECEIVE AND FILE status report on the SR-14 Traffic Safety Improvements Project.

#### **ISSUE**

In August 2022, the Board approved Motion 10 (Attachment A), authored by Directors Najarian, Butts, and Barger, which asked the CEO to direct staff to work with Caltrans to find a path forward to correct non-standard freeway configurations at 3 locations along State Route 14 (SR-14), including the development of a funding plan for the environmental clearance phase of the project, and to provide monthly progress updates to the Board.

#### **BACKGROUND**

In January 2019, the North County Transportation Coalition (NCTC), a Joint Powers Authority (JPA) consisting of the unincorporated areas of North Los Angeles County (5th District), City of Palmdale, City of Lancaster, and City of Santa Clarita, initiated a planning effort to evaluate potential traffic safety improvements on SR-14, through the North Los Angeles County region.

In collaboration with NCTC, the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) prepared a Traffic Safety and Operational Analysis Report (TSOAR) to examine the operational conditions on the SR-14, from Interstate 5 (I-5) to Pearblossom Highway/ Angeles Crest Highway. This study identified safety, operational and environmental benefits that would result from adding a general-purpose lane between the bottleneck gaps.

Within the study limits, the number of lanes on SR-14 fluctuate roadway between 2 to 3 lanes in each direction. These lane “drops” increase the number of merging conflicts, resulting in sideswipe, and rear-end collisions. Fatal and fatal-plus-injury crash rates on both northbound and southbound SR-14 exceed the state average. The fatal-plus-injury and total accident rates for both northbound and southbound direction increase at the lane “drop” locations, especially in dark conditions. The additional lanes evaluated in the TSOAR address the higher than state average for fatal and fatal-

plus-injury rates in the following freeway segments in order of prioritization:

Southbound SR-14

1. Golden Valley Road Off-ramp to Newhall Avenue Under Change (UC)
2. Agua Dulce Canyon Road Off-ramp to Sand Canyon Road Over Change (OC)
3. Pearblossom Highway to Escondido Canyon Road OC

Northbound SR-14

1. Newhall Avenue UC to Golden Valley Road
2. Sand Canyon Road OC to Soledad Canyon Road
3. Puritan Mine Road UC to Sierra Highway OC

Caltrans followed the TSOAR with a programming report, the Project Study Report-Project Development Support (PSR-PDS), completed in August 2021. However, due to budget constraints, only three of the six segments were analyzed in the PSR-PDS. Proposed improvements for these three segments, referenced in Motion 10, are now ready for the next phase of project development, i.e., environmental clearance:

Southbound SR-14

1. Golden Valley Road Off-ramp to Newhall Avenue UC
2. Agua Dulce Canyon Road Off-ramp to Sand Canyon Road OC

Northbound SR-14

1. Newhall Avenue UC to Golden Valley Road

In June 2022, the Metro Board adopted a set of Objectives for Multimodal Highway Investment. These objectives commit Metro to a holistic and multimodal approach to highway planning, accounting for the unique mobility needs and priorities of the subregions and addressing historic and potential impacts to the quality of life of adjacent communities. These objectives will guide the development of improvements along SR-14. For example, the environmental document will include evaluation of multi-modal transportation options within the study area and multiple opportunities for meaningful community engagement. Furthermore, the design of any freeway improvements will be sensitive to local context/environment and avoid or minimize the need for property acquisition.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Findings**

As of October 2022, four coordination meetings have been held between Metro, Caltrans, and NCTC to develop an action plan for the environmental clearance. Coordination with NCTC has resulted in a better understanding of critical concerns that span the Project's limits. Community input will be integrated during the environmental phase of the project. As a result of that coordination, the following path forward was established:

- 1) To address traffic safety concerns, Caltrans has identified a series of short, middle, and long-term safety improvements along SR-14. Caltrans is immediately proceeding with implementing

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short-term safety improvements, including horizontal alignment signs, roadway conditions, and vertical grade signs. Mid-term safety improvements will include alignment delineation and enhanced pavement markers. Long-term safety improvements will include rumble strips, upgrading concrete median barriers, and upgrading overhead signs. The various improvements have been evaluated using vehicle accident/crash patterns in the area.

- 2) To advance the improvements referenced in Motion 10, Metro will procure a professional services contract to develop an environmental document through the Multimodal Highway Program On-Call contract (subject to Board approval in December 2022). Consistent with Metro's Objectives for Multimodal Highway Investment, the environmental document will evaluate highway geometric and safety improvements (identified by Caltrans in the PSR-PDS and as described in item 1), as well as multi-modal elements. A draft scope of work for the environmental document is already under development in collaboration with Caltrans and NCTC. Major considerations in the environmental review of the project will be regional mobility, system performance, multimodal efficiency, greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, safety, and equity. Regarding GHG emissions, a major consideration will be Senate Bill (SB) 743, which requires projects to mitigate or reduce total project-generated automobile travel to meet the State's emission reduction goals. Metro is developing a framework to mitigate VMT impact from highway projects on the State Highway System (SHS) in Los Angeles County. The program will identify multi-modal elements to incorporate into highway projects or fund alternative projects/programs to reduce VMT and correlated greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Metro staff and stakeholders will select a methodology for quantifying VMT in the winter of 2022, evaluate mitigation criteria, tool development, and select a mitigation framework in the summer/fall of 2023. The environmental document will be funded by available Measure R highway funds for the North County sub-region.
- 3) Caltrans is also making progress in identifying the necessary funding for the Project Initiation Document (PID) of the three segments that were identified in the TSOAR but not evaluated in the PSR-PDS that was completed in August 2022 due to funding restrictions.

## **EQUITY PLATFORM**

A majority of the cities of Lancaster and Palmdale are Equity Focus Communities, as are some areas in the City of Santa Clarita. Driving on the SR-14 is the primary method by which these communities access the Los Angeles Basin. Safety improvements to SR-14 are anticipated to benefit drivers to and from these communities. The Project Development Team (PDT) will be inclusive of community members for the selection of methodology and development throughout the environmental clearance phase of the Project.

## **IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS**

This project supports strategic plan goal #1: Provide high-quality options that enables people to spend less time traveling.

Goal 1.1. The SR-14 Traffic Safety Improvements Project will expand the transportation system as responsibly and quickly as possible as approved in Measure R and M to strengthen

LA County's Transportation system.

### **NEXT STEPS**

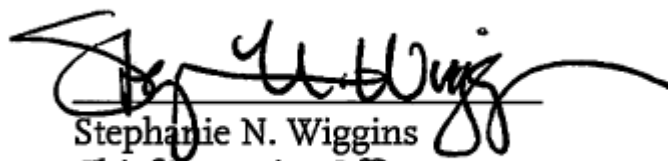
In anticipation of Board approval of the Multimodal Highway Program On-Call contract, staff will finalize the scope of work, schedule, and detailed cost estimate for the environmental document. The new On-Call contract will be presented at the November/December Board meeting. Contingent upon the Board's approval, a task order can be issued shortly after. Additionally, staff will start drafting the necessary Caltrans Cooperative Agreement and continue coordination with Caltrans and NCTC for the development of these documents. Metro staff has and will continue to coordinate with Caltrans and NCTC throughout the project development process, including also for the development of a community engagement plan for the environmental phase.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment A - SR-14 Traffic Safety Improvements Motion 10

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Metro

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**PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE  
AUGUST 17, 2022**

**Motion by:****DIRECTORS NAJARIAN, BUTTS, AND BARGER**

## SR 14 Traffic Safety Improvement Project Motion

In 2001, the MTA board approved an Antonovich/Roberts motion to conduct a combined highway study for North County. About 1 in 3 people in the study area lived and still live in equity focused communities. A large labor pool relies on the SR 14 to get to and from work, the corridor also serves as the only truck route for goods movement between North County and the greater Los Angeles area

Completion of the study in 2004 produced the SR-14 Major Impact Study (MIS). The study concluded that SR 14 had unsafe, sub-standard configurations that have led to 1,800 collisions and more than 30 deaths between 2014 and 2018. In broader terms, the sub-standard lane drop configuration creates bottlenecks that have contributed to more accidents and deaths per capita than other facilities in the county and state. It has been 18 years since the MIS was released and it is time to fix these life-threatening conditions.

Six unsafe and sub-standard freeway locations were identified in the study for correction. Currently, 3 of the locations are ready for environmental clearance . Cost sharing between Caltrans and MTA is \$40-\$60 million. The North County Transportation Coalition has contributed \$4.7 million towards this effort.

**SUBJECT: SR 14 TRAFFIC SAFETY IMPROVEMENT PROJECT MOTION****RECOMMENDATION**

APPROVE Motion by Directors Najarian, Butts, and Barger that the CEO direct staff to work with Caltrans to find a path forward to correct sub-standard configurations for the 3 locations ready for environmental clearance, including a funding plan, and provide monthly progress updates to the Board beginning October 2022.