



**OFFICE THE CITY MANAGER
CITY HALL**

CITY COUNCIL STAFF REPORT

Meeting: April 17, 2018

Subject

State Route 85 Transit Guideway Study

Recommended Action

Receive report on State Route (SR) 85 Transit Guideway Study and authorize the Mayor to send a letter to the Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) requesting advance funding for Task 2 and Task 3.

Background

In January 2016, the VTA Board of Directors created an advisory board, the SR 85 Policy Advisory Board (PAB), to oversee the study of long-term transit and transportation plans to serve the SR 85 Corridor and advise the VTA Board on the scope, funding and construction of both near- and long-term transit and transportation improvement projects for this corridor.

The SR 85 Transit Guideway Study evaluates transportation alternatives of the 23.7-mile corridor that connects the cities of Mountain View and San Jose, from the SR 85/US 101 interchange in Mountain View to the SR 85/US 101 interchange in South San Jose. Study alternatives include Bus Rapid Transit service and infrastructure, Light Rail Transit, and possible future transportation technologies or other options. The project consists of a travel market analysis and public input, development and analysis of alternatives with additional public input, and selection of preferred alternative recommended to the VTA Board.

Funding for the SR 85 Transit Guideway Study was anticipated to come from 2016 Measure B (\$1.4 million). However, shortly after the measure was passed by voters, a lawsuit was filed challenging the legality of 2016 Measure B. As a result, all tax dollars collected to date are being held in reserve until the court issues its decision.

In May 2017, the VTA Board voted to advance funding for the completion of SR 85 first phase of the study, including travel market analysis and initial public input. At the time, the Board of Directors envisioned that the lawsuit would be resolved by the time Task 1 was completed. However, at the last SR 85 PAB meeting on February 26th, staff informed the PAB that the study would be placed on hold until the legal challenge is resolved, which would likely delay the study by 6 to 12 months.

Discussion

In February 2018, VTA staff informed the SR 85 PAB that the travel market analysis and initial public input phase of the study was nearing completion. Preliminary calculations show that hypothetical transit travel times on a dedicated guideway would be slightly faster by bus compared to light rail. Additionally, based on a review of operating costs for 17 different transit operators, staff advised the SR 85 PAB that bus service would be less costly to operate than light rail.

The response from a public survey showed that residents are interested in a transit option along SR 85, however, respondents are time-sensitive. Respondents indicated that their willingness to take transit largely depends on how long the transit trip would take compared to their current mode of transportation. Additionally, survey responses show that there will still be a significant first/last mile issue for most potential riders.

The next step is to develop project alternatives and analyze those alternatives, which is estimated to take 8 to 10 months to complete. The analysis will produce a report that compares each of the alternatives across many metrics such as ridership, cost to build, cost to operate, travel speed, greenhouse gas emissions, etc. The purpose of the analysis is to provide the SR 85 PAB and VTA's Board of Directors with a fair and accurate accounting of each project that can inform their decision about transit infrastructure investment on the SR 85 corridor

Given the progress on the SR 85 Guideway Study and current momentum, some Cupertino Council Members are requesting to send a letter urging the VTA Board to advance funding for the next phase of the study rather than placing the project on hold and waiting for resolution of the legal challenge to proposed funding source (2016 Measure B).

Two VTA Board subcommittees are scheduled to discuss funding for the SR 85 Guideway Study on April 19, 2018. The VTA Board is scheduled to meet on May 3, 2018. Attached is a draft letter.

Sustainability Impact

To the extent that the SR 85 Guideway Study results in a project that relieves traffic congestion through bus rapid transit or light rail transit, it will result in a reduction in vehicle emissions.

Fiscal Impact

There is no fiscal impact.

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Approved for Submission by: David Brandt, City Manager

Attachments:

A. Draft Letter