



PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

CITY HALL

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CITY COUNCIL STAFF REPORT

Meeting: May 21, 2019

Subject

Update Regarding SR 85 Policy Advisory Board and provide input regarding alternatives.

Recommended Actions

Receive update and provide comment.

Background

The State Route (SR) 85 Transit Guideway Study evaluates transportation alternatives of the 23.7-mile highway corridor that connects the cities of Mountain View and San Jose, from the SR 85/US 101 interchange in South San Jose to the SR 85/US 101 interchange in Mountain View. Measure B Funding allocated \$350 Million in sales tax funding for a corridor transit study, transit and congestion relief projects, and noise abatement along the SR 85 corridor.

The SR 85 Transit Guideway Study is conducted by VTA staff under the direction of the SR 85 Policy Advisory Board (PAB). The advisory board is charged with identifying transit alternatives to be studied and included in a final recommendation to the VTA Board of Directors, a milestone anticipated to occur in spring 2020.

The City of Cupertino's appointed designee is Councilmember Rod Sinks who has participated in SR 85 PAB meetings along with representatives from other communities served by SR 85 (Attachment A). Eight PAB meetings have taken place since February 2017 when the 11 member group first convened. The next planned meeting is in June 2019 (date TBD).

Discussion

At the April 2019 PAB meeting a workshop was held in Cupertino to discuss design alternatives to include in the SR 85 Transit Guideway Study. VTA staff presented concepts designed around particular objectives including fast transit travel speeds, maximizing person-throughput (capacity), and access to transit. Each consisted of different combinations of lane configurations, station types, numbers of stations, and

rules for who can use the transit lane. A fourth alternative would evaluate a no-project alternative, in which case VTA would pursue conversion of the existing HOV lane to an express lane and build a new express lane between I-280 and SR 87.

PAB Feedback – April 2019 Workshop

PAB members generally favored faster travel times and advocated for a lower number of stations along the corridor. A transit-only lane was suggested allowing buses to travel quickly along SR 85, and exit the highway to serve employment areas that may not be directly along the freeway. The PAB also requested to consider reversible lanes, particularly in the segment between I-280 and US 101 where the roadway is narrower. VTA staff will refine project alternatives based on PAB direction before the next meeting.

Light Rail along SR 85

The PAB has reached an understanding that light rail along this corridor is not an ideal solution given its high cost to build and maintain, and also due to the low residential density of the corridor. The Travel Market Analysis (Attachment B) shows a high peak commuter demand and much lower transit demand at other times during the day.

Revenue Generation & Public Transit Service

The PAB has also indicated an interest in generating revenue from corridor users—whether through fees from private shuttles or other users that could fund transit service in the corridor. Finding new revenue sources for commuter transit services will be important as VTA’s current focus is on cost-reductions agency-wide and cost-efficient transit operations. VTA has significant planned reductions to express bus services, which are the least productive and cost-effective resource that VTA operates.

Next Steps

At the date to be determined PAB meeting in June 2019, Cupertino staff will be making a recommendation to the PAB and VTA staff that a continuous protected transit guideway be considered, prioritizing travel speeds over person thru-put, with minimal station stops. This meeting will also contain a discussion of land use implications of stations along SR 85 potentially meeting the definition of a “major transit stop” as defined in SB 743, and how that may or may not be subject to pipeline State housing density legislation. The PAB is anticipated to make a recommendation to VTA’s Board of Directors about the type of transit project they would like VTA to pursue in the corridor by the end of 2019. VTA is moving forward with noise abatement work along the corridor in a parallel track from the transit study. Noise abatement work will be

funded with Measure B dollars and will lower the amount available for transit improvements.

Sustainability Impact

None at this time, however transit service along SR 85 could reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Vehicle Miles Travelled, improve local air quality, and reduce congestion.

Cupertino General Plan

The Mobility Element of the City of Cupertino General Plan (Community Vision 2015-2040):

1. Supports the participation in regional transportation planning processes and working with neighboring cities to develop programs consistent with the goals and policies of Cupertino's General Plan, to minimize adverse impacts on the City's circulation system, and to address regional transportation and land use issues of mutual interest through Policy M-1.1, Regional Transportation Planning; and
2. Supports right-of-way design and amenities consistent with local transit goals to improve transit as a viable alternative to driving through Policy M-4.5, Access to Transit Services.

Fiscal Impact

None

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Attachments:

A – SR 85 Policy Advisory Board Members

B - VTA Market Analysis