



Memorandum

Date: 03.13.14 **RE:** Plans and Programs Committee
March 18, 2014

To: Plans and Programs Committee: Commissioners Mar (Chair), Kim (Vice Chair), Breed, Campos, Yee and Avalos (Ex Officio)

From: Elizabeth Sall – Interim Deputy Director for Planning 

Through: Tilly Chang – Executive Director 

Subject: **ACTION** – Recommend Adoption of the 19th Avenue Transit Study Final Report

Summary

The 19th Avenue Transit Study (Study) builds on recent planning efforts to develop plans for a west-side grade-separated (i.e. partial subway or bridge crossings of 19th Avenue) alignment of the M-Ocean View as it traverses the neighborhoods surrounding 19th Avenue in Southwest San Francisco. The purpose of the Study is to define conceptual alternatives and assess their feasibility, benefits, and impacts. The Plans and Programs Committee heard an informational update on the Study in October, 2013. Since that time, we have completed outreach and drafted the final report for the Study. We have also initiated start-up activities for the next phase of project development. The San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA) will lead the next phase in collaboration with the Transportation Authority and the California Department of Transportation. The SFMTA's allocation request for Prop K funds for this next phase of work is included as a separate agenda item at the March Plans and Programs Committee meeting. **We are seeking a recommendation to adopt the 19th Avenue Transit Study Final Report.**

BACKGROUND

The M-Ocean View is part of the Muni Metro light-rail system, operating between Downtown and Balboa Park by way of 19th Avenue. 19th Avenue is a major north-south arterial in western San Francisco that is designated as State Highway 1 carrying approximately 66,000 vehicles per day, among the highest of any surface arterial in the city. The M-Ocean View operates in the median of 19th Avenue between approximately Sloat and Junipero Serra Boulevards, adjacent to major land uses on the west side of the street: the Stonestown Galleria regional shopping center, San Francisco State University (SF State), and the Parkmerced neighborhood.

The Transportation Authority initiated the 19th Avenue Transit Study (Study) to follow through on commitments that the City and County of San Francisco made at the time of approval of the Parkmerced development by the San Francisco Board of Supervisors. The Parkmerced development will add more than 5,600 net new housing units and supportive mixed uses, approximately tripling the density of the site. Instrumental to that plan's vision of a transit-oriented development was bringing the M-Ocean View out of the median of 19th Avenue and through the heart of the Parkmerced site to provide strong transit access to new residents. Parkmerced is committed to implementing a relocation of the M-Ocean View through the site by creating two new at-grade crossings for the M-Ocean View to cross 19th Avenue at Holloway and at Junipero Serra (referred to as the Baseline). The Study developed alternatives to grade-separate (subway or bridge) the M-Ocean View crossings of 19th Avenue and bring it to the west side of the street between Stonestown Galleria and Parkmerced. As articulated in conditions in the Development Agreement, the City and County of San Francisco has until July 2018 to

develop and approve an alternative grade-separated version of the project in order to coordinate with and use the investment Parkmerced is committed to making as local match to a larger project.

At its November 2011, February 2012, and April 2012 meetings, the Transportation Authority Board appropriated Prop K to serve as part of local match for the Caltrans Planning Grant-funded Study, approved a consultant contract for the lead technical consultants, Arup North America, as well as approved a Memorandum of Agreement with the San Francisco Planning Department and the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA) to support their collaboration with the Transportation Authority on the effort. At its October 8, 2013 meeting, the Plans and Programs Committee heard an informational update on the Study as it was in the midst of its second round of outreach focused on the evaluation results of alternatives and the features and benefits of the highest-performing alternative. Since that time, outreach has been completed and all the Study's technical work has been completed and documented in a final report.

The purpose of this item is to seek a recommendation to adopt the Final Report, included as Enclosure 1.

DISCUSSION

Transportation Conditions and Needs: The Study identified four major needs for Study alternatives to address:

- **Transit Performance Issues:** slow travel speed of the M-Ocean View (~8.5-9.5 mph during peak hours), low reliability, and crowded conditions;
- **Unattractive, Difficult Transit Access:** all M-Ocean View riders must cross three lanes of traffic to access or egress median-running M-Ocean View stations on 19th Avenue; both light-rail station platforms and bus stops experience overcrowded conditions during peak hours;
- **Challenging, Unattractive Pedestrian Conditions:** narrow sidewalks, long distance across the street, closed crosswalks, and long distances between crossing opportunities, all contribute to 19th Avenue's designation as a High-Injury Corridor, part of the 6% of street miles where 60% of all fatal and severe pedestrian collisions occur; and
- **Circuitous Bike Routing and Challenging Crossings:** most of 19th Avenue is not part of the San Francisco Bicycle Network, but adjacent streets on either side serve as an indirect north-south route through the area; bicyclists often bike on the sidewalk or on 19th Avenue despite the lack of a facility, given it provides more direct routing than the officially designated network.

Alternatives Developed and Evaluated: Three northern and three southern options were initially developed. Two options (one in the north and one in the south) were rejected after the first round of outreach, and the remaining four were carried through for refinement and evaluation. The evaluation identified a set of options, the Longer Subway and Bridge alternative as the highest-performing. This alternative would take the M-Ocean View underground between St. Francis Circle and SF State, surface the southbound track near Buckingham Way and the northbound track near Gonzalez Drive within Parkmerced. The light-rail would travel through the center of Parkmerced at grade and exit the site by way of Font Boulevard, traveling over Junipero Serra Boulevard by way of a bridge that would land on Randolph Street. The entire 19th Avenue roadway would be re-constructed to make use of the vacated median light-rail tracks, rebuilt with wider sidewalks on both sides of the street as well as a landscaped median and pedestrian refuge.

This Longer Subway and Bridge alternative's benefits and tradeoffs, detailed in the Final Report, include: a 35-45% decrease in light-rail travel time through the corridor, 30 to 50 feet of road space repurposed for wider sidewalks and more ample bus stop loading areas (varying depending on the location within the corridor), a 33% reduction in the distance across the street for pedestrians, four new pedestrian crossing opportunities, and a new pedestrian-bicycle connection between Parkmerced and the Ingleside Heights neighborhood as a part of the light-rail bridge. The cost for this alternative, including all soft costs, is estimated between \$420-\$780 million, with \$520 million the most likely cost¹. It is expected to save up to \$2 million in annual Muni operating costs relative to the Baseline because of the travel time benefit. Another option evaluated, the Shorter Subway, was estimated to cost \$90 million less, but generated less substantial benefits and would produce only 50% of the operating cost savings of the Longer Subway.

Community and Stakeholder Involvement: The project team engaged in two rounds of intensive outreach over the course of the Study. Multilingual notification included a comprehensive set of email and print methods and multilingual techniques. The outcomes included:

- Several hundred stakeholders reached through two large community meetings and more than ten smaller presentations;
- Stakeholder meetings provided focused input from key stakeholders including: Lakeside neighborhood, Ocean View, Merced Heights, Ingleside Heights (OMI) neighborhood, Merced Extension Triangle neighborhood, West Portal/West of Twin peaks neighborhood, Walk San Francisco, Transit Riders Union, San Francisco Bicycle Coalition;
- Five newspaper/blog articles generated during the course of the Study;
- ~6,000 visits to the Study website; and
- More than >150 surveys completed during Phase 2 of outreach. The survey confirmed that the highest-performing Longer Subway and Bridge alternative was also most supported by the community.

Based on input received, we removed and modified some alternatives, as well as scoped for additional analysis during the next phase of work to inform decision-making on some alternatives characteristics that were common areas of discussion during outreach and could provide substantial performance benefits. This input is detailed in the final report and Outreach Summary appendices.

Next Steps: After completion of the Study, we are poised to launch into the next phase of work. This Pre-Environmental Study phase will advance project development to the 5-10% level of engineering, prepare a Project Study Report as required for projects affecting the State-owned right-of-way, clarify the alternatives to be analyzed in the environmental review phase, update capital and operating costs, and advance a funding and implementation strategy. This phase will be led by the SFMTA in continued partnership with the Transportation Authority as well as in partnership with the California Department of Transportation. Funding for the phase, expected to cost about \$1 million, includes a Priority Development Area Planning Grant, contributions from SFMTA's operating budget, Parkmerced, SF State, and General Growth Properties (Stonestown Galleria owner), as well as a contribution from Prop K that is agendized for separate action on the March Plans and Programs Committee agenda.

We are seeking a recommendation to adopt the 19th Avenue Transit Study Final Report.

¹ Arup, North America. Level 5 Rough Order of Magnitude Cost Estimate in accordance with the Association for Advancement of Cost Engineering International Best Practices plus 30% soft costs.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Recommend adoption of the 19th Avenue Transit Study Final Report, as presented.
2. Recommend adoption of the 19th Avenue Transit Study Final Report, with modifications.
3. Defer action, pending additional information or further staff analysis.

CAC POSITION

The CAC was briefed on this item at its February 26 meeting, and unanimously adopted a motion of support for the staff recommendation.

FINANCIAL IMPACTS

None.

RECOMMENDATION

Recommend adoption of the 19th Avenue Transit Study Final Report.

Enclosure:

1. 19th Avenue Transit Study Final Report