

Agenda Item No.	Board Meeting Date	Open/Closed Session	Information/Action Item	Issue Date
6	08/27/12	Open	Information	08/21/12

Subject: Federal Transit Administration New Starts, Environmental Analysis, and Engineering Services for the Green Line to the Airport Rail Project Update

## ISSUE

Update on Federal Transit Administration (FTA) New Starts, Environmental Analysis, and Engineering Services for the Green Line to the Airport Project

## RECOMMENDED ACTION

Information: Update on Federal Transit Administration New Starts, Environmental Analysis, and Engineering Services for the Green Line to the Airport Project

## FINANCIAL IMPACT

None as a result of this action.

## DISCUSSION

The purpose of this presentation is to update the Board on the Green Line to the Airport project status and the potential next steps. *Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (MAP-21), the federal transportation authorization recently signed into law and effective October 1, 2012, simplifies the New Starts process, revises the New Starts project evaluation with a greater focus on land use benefits, shortens the required environmental review/assessment timeframe, and requires that a commitment to non-Federal funding to match new Starts funding can be demonstrated prior to achieving a Full Funding Grant Agreement (FFGA).

The Green Line to the Airport (formerly called the Downtown Natomas Airport or DNA project) has been a Sacramento Regional Transit (RT) priority project for several years. A timeline history of the Green Line is included as Attachment I to this Issue Paper.

In 2001, RT began an Alternatives Analysis to establish the purpose and need for the project, the project mode and the project alignment. The Alternatives Analysis also estimated capital and operating costs; evaluated ridership; and estimated cost effectiveness. After a major effort that included an extensive outreach effort and the evaluation of several transit modes and 27 route alignments, the Board adopted a Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) that identified the transit mode as light rail and selected an alignment from downtown, through the Railyards to the River District, across the American River, along Truxel Avenue in Natomas and to the Sacramento International Airport (SMF). Attachment 2 to this Issue Paper illustrates the entire Green Line to the Airport rail alignment. After adoption of the LPA, RT began work on the DEIS/R (Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Report) required by both Federal and State regulation. However, the FTA declined to review and authorize the release of the Administrative Draft

Approved:

Presented:

Final 8/21/12

General Manager/CEO

Principal Planner

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document due to its assessment of RT's financial status at that time. RT subsequently put the Federal environmental analysis on hold.

Instead, in 2007, the RT Board decided to move forward with construction of the Green Line in Downtown Sacramento, extending to Richards Boulevard at Township 9 in the River District. Measure A funds dedicated to this project were available to partially fund the construction. The RT Board authorized Preliminary Engineering on the Green Line Phase 1 in 2008. After careful evaluation, the RT Board decided that the initial segment of the Green Line would be built as RT's first rail line Design/Build project. The initial segment of the Green Line project is now complete and in revenue service.

Because non-federal funds were used for construction of this initial phase of the project, a federal environmental analysis under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) was not required. Therefore, a *Program-Level* Environmental Impact Report (EIR) was completed for the entire Green Line corridor in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and certified by the RT Board in 2008. RT then prepared a *Project-Level* EIR for Phase 1 of the Green Line to the River District which was certified by the RT Board in accordance with CEQA on April 13, 2009.

In 2008, the RT Board authorized the funding for a "Transitional Analysis" (TA) for the remainder of the Green Line alignment. The purpose of the TA was to: answer the outstanding questions left from previous work; identify cost saving opportunities; and develop that portion of the alignment that would be the most competitive in the Federal New Starts process. This effort entailed meeting with the community on an on-going and regular basis to discuss design concepts and alignment refinements; reaffirming the purpose and need for the project; preparing alternate design concepts in key areas along the corridor to reduce environmental and community impacts; and preparing updated travel forecasts and FTA-required cost effectiveness analyses in accordance with the FTA "New Starts" guidance in effect at that time. The TA was completed in the fall of 2010 and the recommendations were approved by the RT Board on November 8, 2010. Following on this effort, some additional technical questions involving vehicle types and funding have been analyzed.

Passage of the new federal transportation bill, *Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (MAP-21), resulted in changes in the New Starts program and the determination of a project's competitiveness. Many of the changes will streamline the New Starts process and expedite projects such as the Green Line. The changes in MAP-21 also refine the selection criteria and simplify the technical analysis for determining a project's competitiveness in the New Starts program.

The next phase of the New Starts project as described in MAP-21 is Project Development. Project Development requires that environmental work be completed and a Record of Decision (ROD) be obtained within two years. At the completion of the Project Development, FTA will then make a decision on entry into the last stage of the New Starts effort – Engineering.

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The “Engineering” phase includes both the preparation of construction plans (final design) and advanced right-of-way acquisition. It will also require at the completion of this phase, the demonstration of a firm commitment of non-Federal funding from a region to match a federal Full Funding Grant Agreement (FFGA) from FTA.

RT, along with the Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG), has engaged in consultations with FTA regarding the next steps in advancing the Green Line. FTA Region 9 staff in San Francisco has been supportive of an approach to re-start the environmental and engineering analysis for the Green Line – should RT select to do this. As RT has already received funding to begin - but not complete - the Project Development phase of effort, staff is working with the FTA Region to determine how FTA guidance will respond to RT’s situation.

The following table outlines the major steps and a time line for the Green Line to the Airport effort.

Date	Milestone
August 2012	Update to Board
September 2012	Request Authorization to Release an RFP for beginning the Project development phase of work
November 2012	Consultant Team Selection
January 2013	Notice-to-Proceed
February 2013	Project Scoping
Fall 2013	Submit & Review with FTA Admin Draft EIS/R
December 2013	Release DEIS/R for Public Comment
Summer 2014	Documentation of Comments and “Next Steps”
December 2014	Presentation to RT Board of Results and “Next Steps”

**Green Line to the Airport**  
**Timeline History**

1. Sacramento Systems Planning Study Identifies “Downtown-Natomas-Airport (DNA) corridor for long-term transit investment (1990s)
2. The City of Sacramento adopted the North Natomas Community Plan and amended the South Natomas Community Plan to reflect a preferred transit alignment along Truxel Road (1994)
3. RT Board authorizes work on federal New Starts Alternatives Analysis (AA) for DNA Corridor (2000)
4. AA evaluates over 25 different alignment and modal alternatives for the DNA Corridor (2000 to 2003)
5. RT Board selects a “Locally Preferred Alternative” (LPA) for the DNA Corridor (2003)
6. RT begins work on preparation of Draft Environmental Impact Study/Environmental Impact Report (DEIS/R) (2003 thru 2007)
7. RT completes Administrative Draft EIS/EIR (ADEIS/R) and submits to the Federal Transit Authority (FTA) (2007)
8. FTA questions RT’s financial capability and does not allow the ADEIS/R to be released (2007-2008)
9. RT Board decides to move forward with local funding for Phase 1 of the Green Line which is from Downtown Sacramento to Richards Boulevard/Township 9 (2007)
10. RT Board certifies a *Programmatic-Level* EIR and Clearance for the entire Green Line Corridor to the Airport (2008)
11. RT Board authorizes Preliminary Engineering on Phase 1 (2008)
12. RT Board authorizes a “Transitional Analysis” of the remainder of the Green Line Corridor to assess options and the continued feasibility of a New Starts project (2008)
13. RT Board certifies a *Project-Level* EIR and Clearance for Phase 1 of the Green Line (2009)
14. RT Board moves forward with design/build construction method for Phase 1 of the Green Line (2009)
15. RT completes the Transitional Analysis (TA) of the Green Line to the Airport. The TA identifies design enhancements and demonstrates the continued feasibility of a Project to meet the FTA New Starts criteria. (2010)
16. RT works with SACOG, Caltrans, FTA to secure funding (2010 to 2012)

17. RT completes Phase 1 of the Green Line and opens it to revenue service (June 2012)
18. FTA agrees to fund a re-start of the DEIS/R effort as part of a New Starts for the Green Line (July 2012)
19. MAP-21 modifies the New Starts process and Project Justification efforts (July 2012)
20. RT Staff requests authorization from RT Board to release a Request for Proposal to re-start the DEIS/R and New Starts effort (September 2012)
21. Completion and release of DEIS/R and New Starts assessment (2014)



# Regional Transit

Sacramento Regional Transit District  
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# **Green Line to the Airport**

## **Information Update**

August 27, 2012



# Purpose of this Request

- Update the RT Board
- Review Progress To-Date & Schedule Moving Forward
- Address Your Questions



# Green Line to the Airport





# What Has Been Accomplished

- Early 2000s Alternatives Analysis led to selection of a Locally preferred Alternative (LPA) by Board in 2003
- CEQA *Program-Level* clearance of entire corridor in 2008
- American River Parkway Plan includes Bridge Crossing Concept and Alignment in 2008
- Phase 1 Green Line clearance, design, construction and opening in June 2012



# What has Been Accomplished

- Transitional Analysis for Phase 2 and 3
  - RT Board Authorizes in 2008; Completed in 2010
  - Re-affirmed viability of project and LPA
  - Refined earlier design based on community input
  - Updated costs, ridership, federal New Starts competitiveness for Phase 2
- FTA Concurrence on use of Federal Funds for Beginning Next Phase of Project Development

# What needs to Be Accomplished

- Technical Efforts
  - Coordinate with American River Bridge Crossing Study
  - Complete Draft and Final EIS/R
  - Re-Assess New Starts Competitiveness with New Criteria
  - Conduct Analyses of Integration of Green Line into Overall LRT Network
- Advance Identification of a Funding Source

# Green Line to the Airport



# 2010 Transitional Analysis Results

- Re-assessed Previous “AA” Efforts
- Evaluated Five Build Segments to Airport
- Refined Design Concepts Working with Community
- Assessed Financial Forecasts
- Recommended Next Steps
- Results & Recommendations:
  - Extend to N. Natomas Town Center by 2018 (\$545M) and Sac. Int’l Airport by 2021 (\$353M); \$898M Total Cost
  - 11K to 14K Daily Boardings “North of the River”
  - Federal New Starts Rating “Medium to Medium/High”
  - Context-Sensitive Designs
  - Use Low-Floor Streetcar/Tram Vehicles



# Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (MAP-21)

- For New Starts, guidance still in development but...
  - Revises New Starts focus on quicker Agency reviews, more focus on economic benefits and less on long-distance trip benefits
  - More focus on defining a “stable funding source” earlier in the process
  - Technical tools refinements