

REGIONAL TRANSIT ISSUE PAPER

| Agenda Item No. | Board Meeting Date | Open/Closed Session | Information/Action Item | Issue Date |
|-----------------|--------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|------------|
| 6 | 02/10/14 | Open | Information | 02/04/14 |

Subject: Update on Entertainment and Sports Center

ISSUE

Informational Update on RT Service to the Proposed Downtown Sacramento Entertainment and Sports Center.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

None.

FISCAL IMPACT

None.

DISCUSSION

The City of Sacramento is moving toward construction of an Entertainment and Sports Center (ESC) in Downtown Sacramento. Demolition is scheduled to begin in mid-2014 with the ESC scheduled to open in Fall 2016 in time for the NBA season. Based upon the proposed location for the ESC at the northeast corner of L Street and 5th Street, at the site of the current Downtown Plaza Mall and the proximity of this site to RT's light rail system, this project will result in many opportunities and a few challenges for RT.

RT staff began preliminary preparations in Spring 2013; since September, a multi-departmental working group has been meeting approximately twice a month on the ESC and meeting with representatives from the developers and the City of Sacramento as needed. The City released a Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) on December 16, 2013. An RT comment was submitted on January 31, 2014. Project approval is expected in April 2014.

While planning the transit service for the ESC, RT staff has adhered to the following principles and has identified various strategies to achieve them:

Principle 1. **Maximize transit usage to events at the ESC.**

Strategies: Allowing boarding on both sides of the train at 7th & K; possible alternate station loading strategies; enhanced light rail service with additional cars added to existing service and/or additional trains added; transit information provided to event attendees; and enhanced ticket purchasing.

Approved:

Presented:

Final 02/05/14

General Manager/CEO

RoseMary Covington, AGM of Planning & Transit System Development

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Principle 2. **Provide safe, convenient, comfortable service to individuals and families traveling to events at the ESC.**

Strategies: Additional signage and wayfinding to multiple stations available in the vicinity; enhanced ticket purchasing; transit information provided to event attendees; on-site assistance staff and increased security at downtown stations and outlying park and ride stations.

Principle 3. **Continue efforts to enhance the transit experience for existing passengers.**

Strategies: Relocate bus stops to locations that will result in equal or better service and accommodations; enhanced light rail service with additional cars added to existing service and/or additional trains added; install Connect Card infrastructure; and support the implementation of the Bike Share program.

Principle 4. **Ensure that any additional ESC service cost is within the revenue totals collected for service, whether through fares or any other contract for service related to the ESC.**

Strategies: Enhanced ticket purchasing options through advanced sales, the Connect Card program, increased vendors and/or machines or other methods; and work with collective partners to ensure adequate resources are available.

Impacts to Transit Service

The DEIR estimates a 7 percent transit mode split for NBA games in the initial year, which works out to an estimated 1,225 light rail passengers based on the ESC's 17,500-person capacity. Under existing 30-minute headway service with only 2-car trains, the DEIR estimated that the busiest single light rail train would reach 97 percent of capacity, but would not exceed design capacity of 125 persons per light rail vehicle. Based on RT comments, however, the DEIR acknowledged that light rail station platforms would exceed capacity and that this problem would be compounded by queuing at fare vending machines as well as congestion on mini-high ramps and platforms.

To avoid the acknowledged impacts due to station capacity, the DEIR proposes a Transportation Management Plan (TMP) be developed in cooperation with RT, which will specify management strategies to avoid the impacts. A draft TMP, prepared by the ESC consultants and included as an appendix to the DEIR, proposes a list of potential strategies, including but not limited to closure of 7th Street between J and L Streets, which would allow the street to be used as a waiting area and allow boarding on both sides of the train; alternate station loading strategies; enhanced light rail service; and enhanced ticket purchasing. The draft TMP states that RT might find additional train capacity would be beneficial, but explicitly states that it is not necessary to mitigate the impact.

As RT is successful in maximizing transit utilization, additional service/trains, security, and other infrastructure may need to be added to the system. RT will work with its partners to make sure there are adequate resources to meet these needs.

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Other Issues and Notes

- The ESC plans call for the permanent closure of two bus stops on L Street between 5th and 7th Streets. Between RT and Yolo County Transportation District buses, these two stops serve an average of 1,100 boardings and 560 alightings per weekday, more than all but two other bus stops in the RT system. RT staff, the City, and ESC representatives have agreed to a proposed stop on Capitol Mall between 5th and 6th streets to replace these stops prior to the Downtown Plaza demolition (scheduled to begin May 7, 2014). A long-term desire would be to add another stop on Capitol Mall between 7th and 8th streets centered between RT's Capitol light rail stations.
- Peer properties have reported negligible bus ridership from NBA events. The DEIR also assumed that 100 percent of transit ridership would use RT's light rail system, based on model outputs. Most RT patrons are expected to use a park-and-ride lot from which they can drive directly to their homes. Currently, there are no RT bus routes that run late enough to be used by patrons leaving NBA games. Based on the aforementioned factors, staff does not recommend adding special event bus service for ESC events. Based on origin/destination data provided by the ESC developers, if additional bus service were to be provided on a special service basis, it appears that the Natomas and North Sacramento areas would have the greatest demand. RT will be considering other downtown bus route adjustments that may improve flow and access for its customers.
- RT staff will be preparing a report to the Board in April to provide an update on RT's pay-for-parking program and how it might relate to ESC event service.
- The ESC is a tremendous opportunity for Sacramento. The region will benefit as the transit providers position their services to maximize transit utilization and we expect utilization to increase in the future as ESC patrons become familiar and comfortable with transit. RT staff has surveyed other peer cities that have achieved successful use of transit serving arenas in their downtown areas. We have found a range of transit use, showing promising interest for our community. For instance, UTA in Salt Lake City boards on average approximately 2,000 (10%) attendees after NBA games with 4-car light rail trains and 15-minute headways adjacent to the site. Denver RTD boards 1,700 (10%) of NBA attendees and Portland transit ridership for NBA games is on average 20% of attendees. The provision of adequate transit supply and user amenities will facilitate the achievement of similar ridership levels and environmental benefits for the Sacramento community.

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Next Steps

RT staff will continue meeting with representatives from the City and the ESC developers as needed to: relocate bus stops for the ESC construction; work out operational and customer service provisions in preparation for opening day of the facility; and coordinate on promotional opportunities. RT hopes to have an on-going relationship with the City and the operator of ESC to coordinate transit services for the life of the facility.