



Transportation Commission

ACTION CALENDAR

November 15, 2005

To: Honorable Mayor and
Members of the City Council

From: Transportation Commission

Submitted by: Rob Wrenn, Commission Chair, Transportation Commission

Subject: Recommendations on Caldecott Tunnel EIR

RECOMMENDATION

Request City Manager: 1) ensure that Berkeley's Office of Transportation has adequate staffing and funds for the review of and response to Caltrans' draft EIR when it is released. If there is not enough in-house staffing, then funds should be provided to hire a consultant; 2) request that Caltrans conduct, as part of the current environmental studies, a detailed study of what impacts the project will have on traffic along the primary local routes in southeast Berkeley (defined as the area encompassing from Dwight Way to the Oakland border in the north-south direction and from SR-24/Tunnel Rd. to Adeline St./Martin Luther King Jr. Way in the east-west direction) and potential mitigation measures for these impacts. Traffic models used must represent existing conditions in Berkeley; 3) request that Caltrans expand the scope of the EIR to include a full consideration of the traffic safety impacts to bicyclists and pedestrians along the primary local routes in southeast Berkeley and potential mitigation measures for these impacts; 4) request that Caltrans use models that are appropriate for the study. The SR-24 corridor is a unique area and standard Caltrans models may not be adequate for the study. For example, the curvature and topography of SR-24 present different conditions for noise propagation and attenuation than straight highways through flat land; and 5) request that Caltrans' transit study include service and impacts in Alameda County and be complete at the time of the Caldecott Improvement Project public hearings, so those hearings may include transit information and provide a complete picture of potential improvements.

FISCAL IMPACTS OF RECOMMENDATION

Cost of hiring a consultant to assist Transportation staff if it is determined that one is needed.

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) is proposing improvements to reduce congestion and improve mobility at and near the Caldecott Tunnel along State Route 24 (SR-24). Alternatives being studied include roadway improvements, transit improvements, a fourth tunnel with two or three traffic lanes, and "no project." Technical studies, the Project Report, the Environmental Report, and preliminary roadway and tunnel designs are now underway. The draft environmental document is scheduled for release in late 2005; the public will have 45 days to review and respond to the draft EIR.

BACKGROUND

The City of Berkeley opposed the Caldecott Tunnel Improvement Project in 2000. Caltrans moved forward with project scoping in 2003. Early cost estimates for the project ranged from \$200 million to \$400 million. A significant amount of funding is now in place:

| Amount | Source |
|---------------|--|
| \$125M | Contra Costa County Sales Tax (Measure J) |
| \$ 20M | State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) |
| \$ 20M | Traffic Congestion Relief Program (TCRP) |
| \$ 50M | Regional Measure 2 (Bridge tolls) |
| <u>\$ 8M</u> | <u>Alameda County Congestion Management Agency (ACCMA)</u> |
| \$223M | Total of current available funding |

The Transportation Commission approved a five-part recommendation at its September 15 Regular Meeting by unanimous vote (MSC: Smulka/Campbell Absent: Landau).

RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

SR-24 runs through Oakland, not Berkeley, but construction of a fourth tunnel may have significant impacts on Berkeley. It is important that the project's environmental study include an adequate assessment of these impacts on Berkeley, which include:

Traffic. The project may cause an increase in traffic that is substantial in relation to the existing traffic load and capacity of the street system. It may cause conditions to exceed the level-of-service standard on main routes in southeast Berkeley that connect to SR-24. It also may impact pedestrian and bicyclist safety along these routes.

Noise. Increased traffic may generate noise levels in excess of local standards. It also may result in a substantial permanent increase in ambient noise levels around Berkeley homes along the SR-24 corridor and main routes in southeast Berkeley that connect to SR-24.

Public Transit. A fourth bore might provide less incentive for people to use BART and other public transportation.

ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS CONSIDERED

None

CITY MANAGER

See companion report.

CONTACT PERSON

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