



CITY COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

MEETING DATE: OCTOBER 3, 2006

ITEM NUMBER:

SUBJECT: SANTA ANA RIVER CROSSINGS STUDY

DATE: SEPTEMBER 20, 2006

FROM: PUBLIC SERVICES DEPARTMENT - TRANSPORTATION SERVICES DIVISION

PRESENTATION BY: PETER NAGHAVI, TRANSPORTATION SERVICES MANAGER

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: PETER NAGHAVI, TRANSPORTATION SERVICES MANAGER, 714-754-5182

RECOMMENDATION:

1. Approve the Memorandum Of Understanding (MOU) between the Cities of Costa Mesa, Fountain Valley and Huntington Beach and the Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA), regarding the proposed Garfield Avenue/Gisler Avenue bridge crossing over the Santa Ana River (Attachment 1), and authorize the Mayor to execute; and
2. Authorize the City Manager to make minor refinements to the MOU based on discussions with other Cities and OCTA; and if necessary, authorize Mayor to sign revised MOU.

BACKGROUND:

The Orange County Transportation Authority's (OCTA) Master Plan of Arterial Highways (MPAH) currently designates two future crossings over the Santa Ana River south of the I-405 Freeway. These Santa Ana River Crossings, referred to as SARX and shown in Attachment 2, are located at Gisler Avenue/Garfield Avenue (within the Cities of Costa Mesa, Fountain Valley, and Huntington Beach) and at 19th Street/Banning Avenue (within the Cities of Costa Mesa, Huntington Beach and Newport Beach). Over the years, and after much study and receipt of public input, the Costa Mesa City Council has determined that the construction of bridges at these locations would impose a significant impact to a number of residential areas, schools, and parks that are in close proximity. City Council and staff further believe that a 19th Street/Banning Avenue bridge would create significant adverse impacts on the existing wetlands and biological resources along the Santa Ana River bed. In consideration of these impacts, the City of Costa Mesa, since November 1991, has been working with involved agencies to remove these bridges from the MPAH.

Kimley-Horn and Associates was retained in 1998 to perform the required studies to prepare a program level Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the SARX Study. The study cost of \$200,000 was funded by OCTA (\$50,000), City of Costa Mesa (\$100,000), City of Newport Beach (\$35,000), and City of Huntington Beach (\$15,000). The City of Fountain Valley, while participating in this study, did not contribute towards funding of this study. The draft EIR was completed and circulated for cities' review and public

comment on June 22, 2001. Comments from 11 agencies and 545 citizens and/or associations and the respective responses to comments were included in the final EIR dated April 2002. During the entire program EIR process, OCTA staff has maintained that, in order for OCTA's Board of Directors to take action on this EIR, all agencies must agree on a collectively acceptable recommendation, or consensus. Several meetings were held with technical staff as well as City Managers from all involved cities to discuss the results of this study, but no consensus was reached.

In 2002, the City of Fountain Valley solicited grant funds from OCTA through the Combined Transportation Funding Program (CTFP) for preliminary and final design for the Gisler Avenue/Garfield Avenue bridge. Following objections expressed by the City of Costa Mesa (Attachment 3), the OCTA Board did not approve grant funding for the final design and directed staff to work with the Cities of Costa Mesa and Fountain Valley to develop an alternative wherein a Supplemental EIR will be prepared under OCTA direction. This supplemental EIR was expected to be considered in conjunction with, and an expansion of, the previous EIR developed in 2002. This alternative ensured that the new study on Garfield Avenue/Gisler Avenue bridge would be conducted with input and direction from both the cities of Costa Mesa and Fountain Valley. In order to conduct this study, the City of Costa Mesa contributed \$100,000 of OCTA Measure M Growth Management Area (GMA) funds. The City of Fountain Valley contributed \$250,000 from Measure M GMA funds and an additional \$100,000 from their City funds. A Memorandum Of Understanding (MOU) was approved by the City Councils of Costa Mesa, Fountain Valley, Huntington Beach as well as the OCTA Board to proceed with the preparation of the Supplemental EIR in May and August 2005.

During the early stages of analysis by the Consultant, it was determined that a Supplemental EIR was not a viable option, as the original Program EIR completed in 2002, would require significant updates. The cost and time required to conduct a new EIR was determined to be significantly greater than that allowed in the approved MOU. Therefore, an alternative plan to use the analysis and information generated to date was developed in order to attempt to reach a satisfactory conclusion for all parties. The revised approach resulted in a study titled "Circulation Feasibility Study and Cost Estimate." This study documented the traffic impacts with the Garfield Avenue/Gisler Avenue bridge in place, as well as roadway improvement alternatives without the bridge, based on the most recent traffic and transportation model data that was technically acceptable to all cities. In addition, a preliminary layout of the bridge was prepared so that the physical impacts and preliminary costs of constructing the bridge could be ascertained.

Following the conclusion of this study, OCTA has continued to work with all cities in developing an acceptable solution. Several meetings were held with the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) as well as Policy Advisory Committee (PAC) over the course of past year in order to conduct an acceptable study. Costa Mesa is represented on the PAC by Mayor Allan Mansoor as well as Councilmember Gary Monahan.

ANALYSIS:

The Circulation Feasibility Study and Cost Estimate (Garfield/Gisler Study) analyzed the following four scenarios, shown in Attachment 4, for future year (2030) conditions:

- No Project – Build Garfield/Gisler bridge;
- Proposed Project – Do not build Garfield/Gisler bridge, widen Talbert/MacArthur bridge and construct a new slip onramp from eastbound Ellis Avenue to southbound I-405 Freeway;

- Smart Street Strategy “A” – Do not build Garfield/Gisler bridge, widen Talbert/MacArthur bridge, and implement smart street improvements on Brookhurst Street, Adams Avenue, Harbor Boulevard and Fairview Road; and
- Smart Street Strategy “B” – Do not build Garfield/Gisler bridge, widen Talbert/MacArthur bridge, implement smart street improvements on Brookhurst Street, Adams Avenue, Harbor Boulevard and Fairview Road, and construct a new slip onramp from eastbound Ellis Avenue to southbound I-405 Freeway.

The Smart Street Strategies “A” and “B” include smart street improvements on several corridors. These improvements generally consist of traffic signal synchronization, construction of bus bays and removal of on-street parking.

Traffic forecasts for each of the above scenarios were developed using updated General Plan land use information from each city as well as most recent OCTA transportation model. Level Of service (LOS) analysis was conducted at several major intersections in the Cities of Costa Mesa, Fountain Valley, Huntington Beach and Santa Ana that would potentially be impacted by construction of a Garfield/Gisler bridge crossing. Attachment 5 shows the study area intersections and summary of results of the LOS analysis for each scenario.

At each of the impacted intersection in each scenario, mitigation strategies to result in LOS D or better operation were determined. The costs for the implementation of mitigations were also determined for each scenario. The following is the summary of the cost of implementation of each scenario including the mitigations.

- No Project – Build Garfield/Gisler bridge - **\$65,633,000 to \$81,893,000**
(range due to variation in bridge cost)
- Proposed Project - Do not build Garfield/Gisler bridge, widen Talbert/MacArthur bridge and construct a new slip onramp from eastbound Ellis Avenue to southbound I-405 Freeway - **\$29,333,000**
- Smart Street Strategy “A” - Do not build Garfield/Gisler bridge, widen Talbert/MacArthur bridge, and implement smart street improvements on Brookhurst Street, Adams Avenue, Harbor Boulevard and Fairview Road - **\$36,532,000**
- Smart Street Strategy “B” - Do not build Garfield/Gisler bridge, widen Talbert/MacArthur bridge, implement smart street improvements on Brookhurst Street, Adams Avenue, Harbor Boulevard and Fairview Road, and construct a new slip onramp from eastbound Ellis Avenue to southbound I-405 Freeway - **\$36,961,000**

While the cost for the Proposed Project scenario is the lowest, the TAC determined that Smart Street Strategy “A” is the preferred solution. This is due to consideration of the potential transportation benefits that would be realized by this scenario. This scenario achieves results that are comparable to the “No Project” scenario (with Garfield/Gisler bridge) and therefore, more acceptable to OCTA and the cities involved.

At the conclusion of the study and TAC recommendation, a PAC meeting including elected officials and City Managers was conducted. The meeting resulted in the following conclusions:

- There is no consensus agreement for the outright removal of the Garfield/Gisler bridge from the MPAH;
- In lieu of removal of the Garfield/Gisler bridge, place it on the MPAH with a designation of “Right of Way Reserve” status. The Right of Way Reserve status means that the jurisdictions do not include this bridge in their General Plans as well as in other planning and development studies. However, this will also retain the existing MPAH designation on Garfield and Gisler Avenues and the potential for placing the Garfield/Gisler Bridge back on the MPAH in the future, should the need arises;
- The improvements and mitigations of Smart Street Strategy “A” will be implemented by all jurisdictions; and
- OCTA will prepare an MOU that would be considered and approved by all jurisdictions. The MOU will highlight all recommendations from the PAC as well as the roles and responsibility of each agency.
- Following approval of the MOU by all cities, OCTA staff will request approval from the OCTA Regional Planning and Highways (RP&H) Committee and from their Board of Directors.

The MOU is included as Attachment 1. Key elements of the MOU include the following:

- OCTA shall amend the MPAH in regards to the Garfield/Gisler bridge, and the eastbound and westbound approaches, by designating it as a “Right-of-Way Reserve” corridor;
- Cities shall amend their General Plan Circulation Elements to reflect the “Right-of-Way Reserve” corridor designation for Garfield/Gisler Bridge;
- OCTA shall assist the Cities in determining funding sources for implementation of improvements identified in the Smart Street Strategy “A”;
- Cities shall include the improvements of the Smart Street Strategy “A” in their Capital Improvement Programs (CIP) and solicit funding from OCTA and other sources for implementation;
- OCTA and the cities shall not assume future construction of the Garfield/Gisler bridge in any transportation planning, traffic modeling and land use planning activities; and
- Upon completion of all improvements in the Smart Street Strategy “A”, OCTA in coordination with all cities shall re-evaluate traffic LOS in the project study area and determine whether to delete, continue to reserve or re-instate the Garfield/Gisler bridge onto the MPAH as a planned facility.

The mitigations assigned to the City of Costa Mesa, based on the Garfield/Gisler Study, are acceptable and generally reflect those in the City’s General Plan. City Staff, including the City Attorney, have reviewed the MOU and have provided comments to OCTA which have been incorporated.

The City of Costa Mesa staff presented the proposed MOU to the City Council during the study session on August 8, 2006. Similar presentations have been made by the respective staff of Fountain Valley and Huntington Beach at their City Council study sessions. The City of Fountain Valley City Council is requesting that certain minor modifications be made to the MOU prior to its formal adoption by its City Council. The modifications may include a timeframe for the implementation of the mitigations. This will be addressed by OCTA and all participating agencies at the PAC meeting scheduled for October 16, 2006. While staff is requesting that the City Council approve the MOU in its current form, staff also requests

City Council authorization of the City Manager to accept minor modifications to the MOU that may be requested by other cities, so long as it retains all the main provisions in the current form and it does not deviate from the desired City goals. If these goals are not met, then the revised MOU will be brought back to City Council for further discussion.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

The City Council may elect to not approve the MOU. This will result in OCTA maintaining the current status of the Garfield Avenue/Gisler Avenue bridge on the MPAH.

FISCAL REVIEW:

All of the improvements assigned to the City of Costa Mesa are included in the City's General Plan Circulation Element and several of them are included in the current 7-year Capital Improvement Program (CIP). The improvements would be funded by traffic impact fees and grants from OCTA, state and federal sources.

LEGAL REVIEW:

The City Attorney has reviewed the MOU and approved it as to form.

CONCLUSION:

OCTA, in coordination with the Cities of Costa Mesa, Fountain Valley and Huntington Beach, recently completed a study titled "Circulation Feasibility Study and Cost Estimate," analyzing the Garfield Avenue/Gisler Avenue bridge. The study included analysis with the bridge and three other scenarios without the bridge, but including other improvements. The study concluded that Smart Street Strategy "A" scenario, which does not include Garfield/Gisler bridge, and includes the Talbert/MacArthur bridge widening and Smart Street improvements on several corridors, is the best alternative considering the transportation benefits to the public and the overall implementation cost.

Following the conclusion of this circulation study, OCTA prepared an MOU for consideration and approval by all cities. This MOU amends the MPAH for the Garfield/Gisler bridge by changing its designation to "Right-of-Way Reserve" status. This ensures that this bridge is not assumed by any agency in transportation planning, traffic modeling and/or land use planning activities. Further, the MOU requires all agencies to implement the improvements in the Smart Street Strategy "A" and follow-up with another study in the future to determine the feasibility of removal of the Garfield/Gisler bridge from the MPAH.

The mitigations assigned to the City of Costa Mesa in the MOU, based on the Garfield/Gisler Study, are acceptable to staff and generally reflect those in the City's General Plan. City Staff, including the City Attorney, have reviewed the MOU and have provided comments to OCTA which have been incorporated in the final document.

The City of Fountain Valley is requesting certain modifications to the MOU, primarily incorporation of timeframe for completion of the improvements. This will be discussed during a PAC meeting scheduled in October.

Staff requests the City Council approval of MOU in its current form as it is most acceptable to the City. Staff also requests City Council authorization of the City Manager to negotiate and accept minor modifications to the MOU that may be requested by other cities, so long as it retains all the main provisions in the current form and it does not deviate from the City's goal.

PETER NAGHAVI

Transportation Services Manager

WILLIAM J. MORRIS

Director of Public Services

DISTRIBUTION: City Manager
City Attorney
Assistant City Manager
Deputy City Clerk
Deputy City Manager/Development Services Director
Director of Public Services
Staff
City of Fountain Valley
City of Huntington Beach
City of Newport Beach
File

ATTACHMENTS: 1 [Memorandum of Understanding](#)
2 [SARX Locations](#)
3 [Letters to OCTA](#)
4 [Circulation Feasibility Study Scenarios](#)
5 [Intersection Level of Service Analysis Results](#)