



CITY OF COMMERCE AGENDA REPORT

TO: Honorable City Council **Item No.** _____

FROM: City Administrator

SUBJECT: A DISCUSSION OF THE IMPACTS OF CALIFORNIA HIGH SPEED RAIL PROJECT IN THE CITY OF COMMERCE, AND RECOMMENDATION FOR MITIGATION IMPACTS ACHIEVING BENEFITS

MEETING DATE: OCTOBER 16, 2018

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that City Council authorize City staff to engage with the California High Speed Rail Authority to advance the following five (5) recommendations:

1. Relocate the Metrolink Station within Commerce over the I-5 freeway
2. Provide Active Transportation and vehicular connectivity from 26th Street to Sheila Road, Eastern Avenue and the LA River
3. Provide a buffer area (linear Park, with Bicycle Trail and Urban Greening and Stormwater Treatment Elements) with remnant areas based on the Right of Way parcel acquisitions along Washington Boulevard
4. Provide a First-Last Mile connection to the Citadel, over the I-5 Freeway
5. Request that CHSRA delay the release of the draft EIR until after July 2019 to allow the possible recommendations resulting from this effort to be incorporated into the draft EIR document.

BACKGROUND:

Since late 2016, the California High Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA) has been working to release a Draft EIR for the segment between Los Angeles Union Station south to Anaheim, along the BNSF line. Additionally, over the past 12 months, CHSRA has begun to disclose specific impacts, within the City of Commerce. While CHSRA and BNSF engaged in negotiations, the City was not a party to same. The design concepts generated as a result of these negotiations produced significant impacts to the City. The recommendations made by City staff in this report are a means to address and mitigate these impacts, while simultaneously also generating benefits to the City.

ANALYSIS:

The primary impacts in Commerce identified by CHSRA include a number of property right-of-way acquisitions between Hobart yard and Washington Boulevard along with the relocation of the Commerce Metrolink Station into Montebello.

The City of Commerce is geographically located within the sub-region that is impacted not only by the CHSRA project but also by the I-5 and I-710 projects. Of the two major active regional projects of I-710 expansion and the California High Speed Rail projects, City of Commerce has been identified as the most impacted City by both projects.

Based on the cumulative impacts of these regional projects, the City of Commerce is disproportionately and adversely impacted, while the region benefits as a whole from these projects. While a traditional mitigation on a one-to-one basis is generally sufficient, it is staff's position that this does not suffice for the City of Commerce because of the disproportionate impacts; including the City being further disjointed and disconnected by the impacts of these cumulative projects.

To that end, staff has worked to envision and bring forth not only mitigation measures, but also, to develop specific concepts that can be incorporated into the proposed project to actually transform the adverse impacts into benefits for the City.

The primary focus of the benefit realization has been on promoting quality of life and economic development through fostering connectivity, and creating opportunity zones for the City. A focus of environmental justice for disadvantaged communities, which are often segmented by rampant and unregulated industry, is in creation of community cohesion through robust connectivity. Also, through careful planning and future connectivity, it is possible to promote such initiatives as Transit Oriented Development and other opportunity zones.

The CHSRA has released a number of preliminary engineering drawings to the City. Staff and consultants reviewed these drawings, and through iterative work, generated various versions of these drawings. While the modified versions do accomplish the CHSRA project goals, they were amended and modified by staff to actually entail benefits to the community of Commerce.

While staff has only considered the preliminary plans provided, which are incomplete per the CHSRA's own guidelines, we believe the recommendations are necessary to engage CHSRA with the discussions for their consideration and incorporation into the EIR. Moreover, the recommendations made by City staff are generally technically feasible. If the recommendations are supported by Council, staff will forward them to the CHSRA for the timely engagement and further discussion.

FISCAL IMPACT:

No fiscal impact at this time.

RELATIONSHIP TO STRATEGIC GOALS:

The issue before the City Council is consistent with the 2016 Strategic Plan – Goal #6: “Enhance Quality of Life Goal” and “Maintain and prioritize improvements to City facilities and infrastructures in accordance with adopted master planning documents including the Green Zone Action Plan to accommodate annual and long term goals.”

ALTERNATIVES:

1. Approve staff's recommendation
2. Disapprove staff recommendation
3. Provide further direction to staff

Prepared by: Chidi Ugwueze, CIP Project Manager

Approved by: Maryam Babaki, Director of Public Works & Development Services

Reviewed by: Vilko Domic, Finance Director

Approved as to form: Noel Tapia, City Attorney

Respectfully submitted: Edgar P. Cisneros, City Administrator