

**Policy Advisory Committee
MINUTES
Friday, March 10, 2023
10:00 AM**

Meeting held at FCOG Sequoia Conference Room.

John Holt, City of Clovis
Wilma Tucker, City of Fowler
Scott Mozier, City of Fresno
John Jansons, Kerman
Sonia Hall, Parlier
Matthew Flood, City of San Joaquin
David Padilla, Caltrans District 6
Tony Boren, FCOG
Moses Stites, FCRTA

The meeting was called to order at 10:02 a.m. by Ms. Tucker (Fowler), Vice Chair. With 6 members present, there was a quorum to conduct business.

JOINT Transportation Technical/Policy Advisory Committee

A. Caltrans Report (Caltrans) [INFORMATION]

David Padilla reported the following:

- Clean California: Cycle 2 call for projects due April 28th. Cleaning Days event dates begin March 17-27th.
 - Tree planning event at two locations, 99/180 and 168/Shaw Ave.
 - Planning grant closed yesterday, received 17 total applications, 9 have been selected.
 - OWP letter has been sent out.

I. TRANSPORTATION CONSENT ITEMS

A. Executive Minutes of February 10, 2023 [APPROVE]

B. Transportation Development Act (TDA) Claims (Les Beshears) - NONE

- Ms. Tucker called for any items wishing to be pulled by members or the public.
- After an opportunity for public comment, Mr. Mozier (City of Fresno) motioned, and Mr. Holt (Clovis) seconded to approve the consent agenda as presented.

All in Favor, no opposed.

Motion passed.

II. TRANSPORTATION ACTION/DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Measure C Expenditure Plan Amendment No. 7: Restore \$20 Million of Amendment 1 to Grade Separation Program (Tony Boren) [ACTION]

Summary: This item seeks to restore \$20 million of the \$24.5 million previously held in trust for the California High-Speed Rail Authority's (CHSRA) Heavy Maintenance Facility (HMF) to the Measure C Grade Separation Program and to allocate those funds to the City of Fresno's Blackstone/McKinley grade separation project. A background discussion follows.

The 2006 Measure C Expenditure Plan included an Alternative Transportation Program (ATP) that would provide an estimated \$102 million for rail consolidation, which would consist of moving the BNSF railroad alignment over to the Union Pacific Railroad alignment near State Route 99. It was anticipated that the \$102 million would merely be seed money for an effort that would run into hundreds of millions of dollars; therefore, the ballot also carried a provision that if rail consolidation was not imminent within 15 years, the money would be dedicated to grade separation projects instead.

In 2010, Fresno Council of Governments and the Fresno County Transportation Authority (FCTA) jointly approved Amendment No. 1 to the Measure C Expenditure Plan to reserve \$25 million of the ATP to incentivize a high-speed rail heavy maintenance facility (HMF) in Fresno. The amendment specifically provided that the California High-Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA) must designate the Fresno Works site as the location for the HMF prior to receiving any of the \$25 million. This amendment did not change the scope of the ATP. The remainder of the ATP funding was still reserved as seed money for rail consolidation; however, with CHSRA building its facilities directly adjacent to the UPRR alignment, rail consolidation became much more difficult and costly.

Between 2010 and 2020, HMF site selection at times appeared imminent but was postponed repeatedly for a variety of reasons. Three potential locations had been included in CHSRA's environmental documents, with Fresno Works as one candidate. In 2017, while CHSRA was actively acquiring right-of-way in Fresno County, FCOG and FCTA jointly modified Amendment No. 1 to provide \$500,000 of the \$25 million set aside for the High-Speed Rail Facilities Program to secure properties necessary for the Fresno site. Amendment No. 3 authorized those funds for land options for two years; however, the HMF decision was repeatedly postponed and the options expired unexecuted.

From 2017 through April 2020, FCTA, Fresno COG, and Fresno Economic Development Corporation (EDC) held discussions with CHSRA staff regarding the HMF. Initially, the need for a decision was driven largely by Measure C's property options. Later, as FCTA considered transitioning rail consolidation to the Grade Separation Program, a decision was necessary to determine how much ATP funding could be dedicated to the Blackstone/McKinley project. FCTA and others made it clear that once a decision was made to pursue the Blackstone/McKinley project, the \$24.5 million would not likely be available for the Fresno Works site.

As a part of the discussions among FCTA, Fresno COG, and EDC, CHSRA proposed other facilities be developed at the Fresno Works site in lieu of the HMF, including a maintenance-of-way facility, a training center, a light maintenance facility (which could also serve as a trainset assembly facility) and the communications center. CHSRA claimed that these facilities would offer Fresno County more jobs in an earlier timeframe than the HMF, and that the HMF would not likely be needed or built for 15 years.

EDC performed an analysis of this proposal and concluded that there would be more near-term jobs, but fewer long-term jobs, and that the jobs associated with these alternative facilities would likely be less skilled than the HMF-associated jobs. In addition, Amendment No. 1 only allowed the money to be accessed for an HMF. These other facilities would not qualify and would require a subsequent amendment.

Consistent with the provisions in the Measure C Expenditure Plan, in April 2020 the FCTA Board authorized converting the Rail Consolidation Program to a Grade Separation Program and selected the Blackstone/McKinley grade crossing near Fresno City College as the highest-priority project. The Board also approved an initial \$6 million for preliminary engineering and environmental phases.

In August 2020, four months after the decision to fund the Blackstone/McKinley project, FCTA received a letter from CHSRA's chief executive officer that the proposed the Fresno Works site be used for the alternative facilities previously described.

In June 2021, the Fresno County Transportation Authority (FCTA) considered whether to rescind Amendment No. 1, making the \$24.5 million available to the Blackstone/McKinley project, or to provide some or all the \$24.5 million to HSR for the alternative facilities. At that time, the FCTA Board voted to request that Fresno COG begin the process to rescind Amendment No. 1, allowing the remaining \$24.5 million to be available for the City of Fresno's Blackstone/McKinley project.

Subsequently, CAHSR CEO Brian Kelly met with Fresno City and County stakeholders to discuss the HMF and the other proposed facilities. Mr. Kelly reiterated that an HMF would not be required for many years, that operations suggest the most advantageous location for an HMF is near a terminal station rather than a midpoint station to avoid deadheading, and that the facilities proposed for Fresno and vicinity would meet many if not all of the job and other economic benefits

anticipated by the HMF. Mr. Kelly requested that the stakeholders consider allocating at least some of the \$24.5 million to Fresno Works site to be utilized for these other CAHSR facilities.

The City of Fresno evaluated the costs associated with bring public utilities to the site and recommended that \$4.5 million of Amendment No. 1 funds be retained to help offset these utility costs, and that the remaining \$20 million be allocated back to the Grade Separation Program for the Blackstone McKinley Grade Separation Project. A timely decision on the \$20 million is required in order to avoid schedule delays to the Blackstone McKinley project.

Timeline

DATE	ACTIVITY
November 2006	Voters approve extending Measure C 20 years. Expenditure Plan includes estimated \$102 million for rail consolidation within the City of Fresno through the Alternative Transportation Program (ATP)
2010	High Speed Rail (HSR) requests proposals for potential Heavy Maintenance Facility (HMF) sites. FCTA and Fresno COG Boards approve Amendment No. 1 to the 2006 EP, setting aside \$25 million of ATP funding for the Fresno Works HMF site
May 2012	HSR completes environment clearance of the Madera to Fresno HSR alignment and begins right of way acquisition
April 2017	FCTA and Fresno COG Boards amend the 2006 Measure C EP to allocate \$500,000 of the \$25 million set aside by Amendment No. 1 for property options on parcels required for the Fresno Works proposed site of the HMF. City of Fresno obtains property options.
May 2018	City of Fresno extends property options one year
May 2019	Property options expire with no decision by HSR on the HMF site
2019	Staff begins the process to convert the ATP to a Grade Separation Program (GSP), consistent with provisions in the 2006 Expenditure Plan
December 2019	HSR begins discussions with FCTA, Fresno COG and Fresno Economic Development Corporation (EDC) on alternative uses of the Fresno Works site.
January-April 2020	FCTA and Fresno COG staff continue to impress upon HSR the need to make a decision on the HMF and other facilities prior to FCTA converting the ATP to a GSP. No decisions made or communicated by HSR.
April 2020	FCTA Board converts the ATP to the GSP and approves funding for the Blackstone - McKinley Grade Separation Project

August 2020	HSR formalizes their proposal for alternative uses of the Fresno Works site with no mention of a HMF location
June 2021	FCTA Board considers the appropriate use of the remaining \$24.5 million reserved by Amendment No.1 and directs staff to work with Fresno COG to rescind Amendment No.1, making the \$24.5 million available for Blackstone/McKinley
December 2022	FCTA and Fresno COG staff prepare draft Amendment No. 7 to rescind Amendment No. 1
January 2023	CAHSR CEO Brian Kelly meets with Fresno area stakeholders to discuss alternative uses of the Fresno Works site
March 2023	<i>Fresno COG Policy Board to consider moving \$20 million from Amendment No. 1 back to the Grade Separation Program</i>
April 2023	<i>FCTA to consider approving COG Policy Board's recommended Expenditure Plan Amendment</i>
April 2023	<i>FCTA to consider amending the cooperative funding agreement with City of Fresno to allocate additional \$20 million to Blackstone/McKinley project to complete right-of-way acquisition and utility relocation.</i>

Action: Staff requests that the TTC/PAC recommend the Policy Board approve Amendment No. 7 to the 2006 Measure C Expenditure Plan, moving \$20 million from Amendment No. 1 back to the Grade Separation Program to help fund the Blackstone McKinley project. Staff further recommends that the remaining \$4.5 million remain in Amendment No. 1 until such a time as utility service for the Fresno Works sits can be determined. Once that occurs, a separate amendment will be necessary to allow use of the \$4.5 million for site improvements for the proposed CAHSR campus to be located at the Fresno Works site.

- Tony Boren (FCOG) provided background information regarding changes to the amendment.
- After an opportunity for public comment, Mr. Mozier (City of Fresno) motioned and Ms. Hall (Parlier) seconded to approve as presented.

All in favor, no opposed.

Motion passed.

B. Fresno County Microtransit Feasibility Study Consultant Selection (Juan Ramirez) [ACTION]

Summary: Transit agencies in Fresno County have been exploring alternative mobility options to efficiently serve all areas in need of transit services. As a result, microtransit has emerged as a promising option to supplement, support or replace fixed route transit in geographic areas where it is challenging to provide fixed route transit. Often, high-frequency transit isn't within walking distance of where most people work and live. Microtransit can serve as a first/last mile option for connecting people to major transit service in the urban area. It can also serve as on-demand transportation for hard-to-serve rural and suburban areas.

Due to the dispersed land use patterns of Fresno County, transit planners and operators have begun considering complementary services to fixed-route transit. Microtransit emerges as a solution to fill in the gap for this situation. If microtransit is financially viable and implemented in Fresno County, many existing trips could be diverted from private auto to microtransit and/or public transportation. This would allow residents who lack access to transportation for jobs, medical services, and other daily necessities to have access. Public transit, in many cases, is especially critical for seniors and people with disabilities. Most importantly, this would result in a reduction in vehicle miles traveled while improving air quality and climate change conditions.

Fresno Council of Governments developed a request for proposals for a microtransit feasibility study in Fresno County. After reviewing the proposals, three of the consultants were invited to an interview with a scoring committee. The committee comprised one member from each of the following four agencies: Fresno County Rural Transit Agency (FCRTA), Fresno Area Express (FAX), Clovis Transit, and Fresno COG. Via Mobility LLC received the highest scores and was recommended to undertake the Fresno County Microtransit Feasibility Study. The firm has vast experience with transit planning and operation globally and has an extensive presence in providing transit service in California.

Attached is the scope of work for the study. The project will be launched in April and is expected to be completed within a year. Please contact project staff Juan Ramirez at jramirez@fresnocog.org with any questions.

Action: Staff requests that TTC/PAC recommend the Policy Board authorize the executive director to enter into a contract with Via Mobility LLC for an amount not to exceed \$240,807.93.

- Juan Ramirez (FCOG) discussed the Microtransit Study.
- After an opportunity for public comment, Mr. Holt (Clovis) motioned and Mr. Flood (San Joaquin) seconded to approve action as presented.

All in favor, no opposed.

Motion passed.

III. ADMINISTRATIVE CONSENT ITEMS

A. Regional Early Action Planning (REAP) Technical Assistance Contract - Estolano Advisors (Phipps) [ACTION]

Action: Approve an on-call contract with Estolano Advisors for Valleywide AFFH technical assistance under the REAP program at a cost not to exceed \$125,000 and authorize the executive director to sign.

B. Valleywide Regional Early Action Planning (REAP) Coordinator Contract Extension (Robert Phipps) [ACTION]

Action: Approve a contract extension with Sigala, Inc. for REAP program management through June 30, 2025 at a cost not to exceed \$250,000.

- Ms. Tucker called for any items wishing to be pulled by members or the public.
- After an opportunity for public comment, Mr. Flood (San Joaquin) motioned, and Ms. Hall (Parlier) seconded to approve the consent agenda as presented.

All in Favor, no opposed.

Motion passed.

IV. ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION/DISCUSSION ITEMS

- None.

V. OTHER ITEMS

A. Items from Staff

- Tony Boren (FCOG) expressed the need to bring together all areas; schools and cities, to discussed the importance of "Safe Routes to Schools". Kristine Cai (FCOG) is outreaching to communities and plans to start a taskforce soon.
- Moses Stites (FCRTA) announced the following:
 - FCRTA is working to create Community Resiliency hubs to expand transportation and provide services during emergencies. Join on March 16th 9:00am-noon at the Firebaugh Central California Food Bank Distribution.
 - Groundbreaking for the new Maintenance Facility in Selma will be held on April 12, 2023, in Selma. The building will be dedicated to former Fowler Mayor David Cardenas.
 - Microgrid Program kick off starting in Biola.

B. Items from Members

- None.

VI. PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS

A. Public Presentations

- None.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:00 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tony Boren". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tony Boren

Public:

None.

Staff:

Brenda Veenendaal, Denise Flores, Kristine Cai, Pankaj Joshi, Robert Phipps, Shichen Fan, Janelle Del Campo, Simran Jhutti, Santosh Bhattarai, Juan Ramirez, Jeff Long.