Department of Public Works
Bureau of Engineering
Report No. 1

May 15, 2015
CD Nos. 4 and 13

GLENDALE BOULEVARD-HYPERION AVENUE COMPLEX OF BRIDGES IMPROVEMENT PROJECT
CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (CEQA) COMPLIANCE AND PROJECT APPROVAL
WORK ORDER NOS. E700067A, E700068A, E700069A, AND E700221A

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Consider the Initial Study and the proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND) as revised, prepared in accordance with the CEQA, for the Glendale Boulevard-Hyperion Avenue Complex of Bridges Improvement Project (Transmittal No. 1), which finds that the project, with mitigation, will not have a significant environmental impact.

2. Adopt this report and forward it to the City Council with the recommendation that the Council:

   a. Consider the IS/MND (Transmittal No. 1), the comments received during the public review process (Transmittal No. 2), the subsequent traffic studies (Appendix F to Transmittal No. 1), the documentation of the collaboration with the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) as presented in this report, and the four design options considered by the CAC as presented in Transmittal No. 3;

   b. Find, on the basis of the whole record before it, that there is no substantial evidence that the project as mitigated will have a significant effect on the environment, and find that the IS/MND reflects the City’s independent judgment and analysis;

   c. Adopt the IS/MND (Transmittal No. 1);

   d. Approve the project as described in the IS/MND, which includes the Recommended Option (Transmittal No. 4) with the: (1) addition of bicycle lanes to the roadway of Hyperion Avenue Viaduct, and (2) elimination of a continuous, concrete median barrier;

   e. Adopt the Mitigation Monitoring Plan (Transmittal No. 5).
FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

There is no impact on the General Fund. The project is funded through the federal Highway Bridge Program and the City’s Proposition G funds (Seismic Bond), supplemented by Metro Call for Projects grants.

TRANSMITTALS

1. Glendale Boulevard-Hyperion Avenue Complex of Bridges Improvement Project IS/MND/Environmental Assessment and Section 4(f) Evaluation and Finding of No Significant Impact (MND), dated August 2013; supplemented by a revised proposed MND, by Chapter 8 (Revisions to the Proposed Project), dated March 2015, and by Appendix F (Traffic Studies). (This transmittal is also referred to as the “IS/MND”).

2. Public Comments and Responses.

3. Four Design Options Considered by the CAC (in four Exhibits).

4. Recommended Option on Hyperion Avenue (included in Chapter 8 of the IS/MND).


DISCUSSION

Background

The Glendale Boulevard-Hyperion Avenue Complex of Bridges over the Los Angeles River, completed in 1929, is Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument No. 164, and is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Connecting the communities of Atwater Village, Silver Lake and Los Feliz, the complex comprises six structures:

• Waverly Drive Bridge
• Hyperion Avenue Bridge over Riverside Drive
• Hyperion Avenue Bridge over Interstate 5
• Hyperion Avenue Bridge over the Los Angeles River
• Southbound Glendale Boulevard Bridge over the Los Angeles River
• Northbound Glendale Boulevard Bridge over the Los Angeles River

The street configuration varies over the six structures. Waverly Drive is a local street. The Hyperion Avenue Bridge has sidewalks on both sides (except under the Waverly
Drive Bridge, where there are none), two travel lanes in each direction, and a painted median. Each of the two Glendale Boulevard Bridges has two lanes and one sidewalk. None of the bridges have shoulders or bike lanes.

The northbound I-5 off-ramp to Glendale Boulevard requires motorists to turn right onto northbound Glendale Boulevard. Motorists wishing to travel southbound on Glendale Boulevard must first make a right turn, travel over the northbound Glendale Boulevard Bridge, and merge to the far left lane and make a U-turn at Glenfeliz Boulevard.

The Los Angeles River Bike Path passes under the complex along the right bank of the river. The path has an access ramp from southbound Glendale Boulevard, but not from the northbound side due to the location of the freeway off-ramp.

With the exception of the Waverly Drive Bridge, all of the structures require strengthening to improve seismic safety.

Description of Proposed Project Including Revisions (Recommended Option) Made following Public Review, as Presented in Transmittal No. 1

This project is being proposed to address seismic and design deficiencies, improve traffic operations, enhance access to the Los Angeles River Bike Path, and restore historic features.

The major components of the project include seismic retrofitting, realignment of the northbound I-5 freeway off-ramp, widening of the Glendale Boulevard bridges, reconfiguration of the Hyperion Avenue Bridge roadway without widening, pedestrian and bicyclist circulation improvements, replication of the original bridge railings, and water quality enhancements.

Specifically, the project components include:

- **Widening of Glendale Boulevard bridges**: The northbound and southbound Glendale Boulevard bridges would each be widened by eight feet to provide room for shoulders and wider sidewalks while retaining the two existing travel lanes. The shoulders would facilitate the implementation of bicycle routes in the future as designated in the 2010 Bicycle Plan.

- **Seismic design strengthening of all but the Waverly Drive Bridge**: This would primarily involve strengthening of the substructure elements: abutment transverse wall shear friction retrofit, spandrel column ductility retrofit, interior spandrel wall strengthening, and pier wall channel lining retrofit.
• Realignment of the northbound I-5 off-ramp to allow left turns at a new, signalized intersection at Glendale Boulevard (Figure 1 below).

• New bike path access: The realignment of the I-5 off-ramp would make room to add a new access ramp to the Los Angeles River Bike Path from northbound Glendale Boulevard. This ramp would also provide access to a new pedestrian bridge to be constructed over the river (Figure 1 below).

• Infiltration/Detention Basin: To improve water quality of the Los Angeles River, an infiltration/ detention basin would be constructed to provide pretreatment of runoff from the bridge complex prior to its discharge to the river. The basin would be located in a section of Sunnynook Park reserved for this purpose.

• New pedestrian bridge across the river on the old Red Car piers: This would connect to a new path to Glendale Boulevard on the north side and to the Los Angeles River Bike Path on the south side, providing a pedestrian detour around project construction and then remaining as a permanent improvement (Figure 2 below).
Figure 2: Rendering of new pedestrian bridge across the Los Angeles River.

- Reconfiguration of the Hyperion Avenue roadway and sidewalks (Transmittal No. 4):

  **Sidewalk and curb - east side** The existing 2-foot-wide curb along the east side of Hyperion Avenue adjacent to the retaining wall beneath the Waverly Drive Bridge would be reduced to six inches in width. The 5-foot sidewalk along the east side of the viaduct would be eliminated because it cannot be safely accessed from either end.

  **Sidewalk and curb - west side** The existing 5-foot-wide sidewalk along the west side of the Hyperion Avenue Bridge and the 2-foot-wide curb adjacent to the retaining wall beneath Waverly Drive would be replaced with a new 6-foot-wide sidewalk (north of the retaining wall) that remains 5-foot wide adjacent to the retaining wall (at approximately the point where the staircase from Riverside Drive meets Hyperion Avenue) at which point the sidewalk will narrow to four feet.

  **Bicycle lanes - east and west side** The existing roadway on Hyperion Avenue would accommodate a 6-foot-wide, 3-inch-thick raised bicycle lane on the east side of the bridge, and a 5-foot-wide, 3-inch-thick raised bicycle lanes on the west side of the bridge. These bike lanes would narrow to four feet where Hyperion Avenue passes under the Waverly Drive Bridge.
Pedestrian Crosswalk At the north end of the complex, a signalized pedestrian crosswalk from the west side of Hyperion Avenue to the west side of Glendale Boulevard (across southbound traffic on Glendale Boulevard) would be installed.

- Historic restoration: The original balustrades were covered with gunite in 1962 and now appear as solid walls. These would be replaced on all bridges of the complex with balustrades that replicate the original 1929 design. Additionally, the original light poles would be restored (Figure 3 below).

The project has been developed through ten years of coordination with Council District Nos. 4 and 13, neighborhood councils, community groups, and federal, state and local agencies. An update on the project was presented to the Cultural Heritage Commission by the Bureau of Engineering (BOE) on December 6, 2012, with the commission expressing approval.

**Environmental Impact Evaluation**

This project has federal funding and is subject to both the CEQA and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). NEPA compliance is under the jurisdiction of Caltrans, as delegated by the Federal Highway Administration. The City is responsible for CEQA compliance. The proposed project was evaluated in a joint environmental document (Transmittal No. 1): an IS/MND for CEQA, and an Environmental Assessment with finding of no significant impact for NEPA. The MND identifies potentially significant impacts and measures to avoid or reduce those impacts to levels that are insignificant,
and recommends that the mitigation measures be incorporated into the project and the mitigated negative declaration be adopted in compliance with CEQA.

Public Review
An IS/MND was originally circulated for public and agency review for 30 days, from September 12 through October 11, 2013.

A community workshop at the Friendship Auditorium in Griffith Park on September 25, 2013, drew approximately 70 attendees, about half of whom identified themselves as bicyclists. Some attendees remarked that the speed limit on Hyperion is frequently exceeded; they expressed concern that the proposed roadway design would exacerbate the situation. Other attendees complained that there were no bike lanes proposed for the Hyperion Bridge. Others expressed approval of the project proposal, particularly of the pedestrian enhancements, the off-ramp realignment, and the historic restoration components. Additionally, 26 written comments (expressing the same sentiments) were submitted at the meeting.

During the review, several requests for a public hearing were received; in response, a formal public hearing was held on October 28, 2013, and the deadline for submitting written comments was extended to November 7, 2013. Approximately 150 people attended the hearing, with 63 speaking. Additionally, written comments were submitted at the hearing.

In addition to the oral and written comments received at the community workshop and formal public hearing, we received approximately 200 comments through email, including variations of a form letter made available through local blog sites. The total number of comments received on the MND through all avenues was more than 300, though many individuals submitted multiple comments. Transmittal No. 2 contains the comments with responses.

Summary of Comments Received from Public
While some comments expressed satisfaction with the project proposal and a desire to see it implemented as proposed, the majority expressed opposition to the project as proposed and expressed a desire for the following additional facilities to be included in the plans:

• Bike lanes on Hyperion Avenue.

• Pedestrian enhancements such as maintaining the sidewalk on both sides of the Hyperion Avenue, or a crosswalk across all eight lanes (southbound Glendale Boulevard, Hyperion Avenue, and northbound Glendale Boulevard) where the bridges end and the roadways converge in Atwater Village.

• Traffic calming strategies on the Hyperion Bridge.
Additional Traffic Studies

While these comments do not identify environmental impacts of the project, due to the volume of such requests and the change in sentiment for seeking a balanced multi-modal transportation facility, the BOE retained a qualified traffic engineer to evaluate various existing and future vehicle, pedestrian, and bicycle conditions, and their infrastructure needs. The objective is to reach a design option that would improve the public safety and optimize the multi-modal use of the limited space on the Hyperion Avenue Bridges and its approach roadway.

Based on the current Federal, State, and City’s traffic design policies and standards, the technical studies included a series of operational (traffic demand) analyses on six scenarios for the project area. These scenarios considered both maintaining two travel lanes in each direction and reducing one travel lane in the northbound direction on the Hyperion Avenue. Also considered were a few pedestrian crosswalk options on the north end of the bridges (near Atwater Village) and traffic calming measures. The studies in general concluded that both the four-lane and three-lane configurations on the Hyperion Avenue would operate acceptably within the horizon year 2040, though at different degrees of service, comfort, and convenience for the users of a particular mode. It is also noted that the proposed crosswalk aiding pedestrians to cross to and from the Hyperion Avenue would interrupt the vehicular traffic flow on Hyperion Avenue. The studies were documented in six technical memos (attached as appendix F to Transmittal No. 1) and all the findings were reviewed and concurred with by the City of Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT).

CAC

A CAC was formed by Council Office Nos. 4 and 13 after the environmental document was circulated to further collaborate with BOE and the LADOT in developing recommendations based on the comments. The CAC consisted of nine members, chosen from the neighborhood councils or community groups, and recommended by the Council Offices. As of this date, the BOE has held five CAC meetings. Four design options for Hyperion Avenue, labeled as Exhibits 1A, 1, 2, and 3, and graphically illustrated in Transmittal No. 3 were presented to the CAC. The distinctive features of the four design options are described below:

• Exhibit 1A - Four vehicular traffic lanes (two lanes in each direction), shared-use paths on both sides for pedestrians and bicyclists.

• Exhibit 1 - Four vehicular traffic lanes (two lanes in each direction), sidewalk on the west side only, bike lanes both sides.

• Exhibit 2 - Three vehicular traffic lanes (one lane northbound direction, two lanes southbound direction), sidewalk on the west side only, bike lanes both sides, bike lane buffer both sides.

• Exhibit 3 - Three vehicular traffic lanes (one lane northbound direction, two lanes southbound direction), sidewalks on both sides, bike lanes both sides, bike lane buffer both sides.

On August 7, 2014, the CAC members voted 6 to 3 in favor of Exhibit 3 above. The representatives from the Friends of Los Angeles River, Silverlake/Ivanhoe Parents, Los
Angeles Walks, Los Feliz Neighborhood Council, Los Angeles County Bicycle Coalition, and Silverlake Neighborhood Council supported Exhibit 3. The representatives from Atwater Village Neighborhood Council, Friends of the Atwater Village, and Los Feliz Improvement Association supported Exhibit 1. On December 18, 2014, the CAC members were shown LADOT’s Exhibit 1A as an option that represents a compromise between Exhibits 1 and 3 above. Another vote was held, and the CAC members voted 6 in favor of Exhibit 3, and 3 in favor of Exhibit 1A.

**Recommended Option for Hyperion Avenue**

Though Exhibit 3 was favored by the majority of the CAC members, the daily low count of pedestrians across the Hyperion Avenue Viaduct and the approach roadway would not warrant sidewalks on both sides by reducing one traffic lane at this time. Therefore, the Recommended Option, illustrated in Transmittal No. 4, is to maintain the original 4-lane configuration of the circulated IS/MND as modified to include: (1) addition of bicycle lanes to the roadway of Hyperion Avenue Viaduct, and (2) elimination of a continuous, concrete median barrier. This Recommended Option offers flexibility of converting to other roadway options if the transportation conditions warrant it in the future.

**Recirculation Not Required**

The proposed roadway configuration of the Recommended Option is a minor modification from what was presented in the circulated IS/MND. The proposed revisions do not require recirculation of the IS/MND per CEQA Section 15073.5 since the changes to the project do not constitute a substantial revision and will not result in any new avoidable significant effects. The Recommended Option is illustrated in Transmittal No. 4, and evaluated in Chapter 8 of Transmittal No. 1.

**No Significant Environmental Impact identified**

The comments and issues discussed above pertain to existing facilities (or their absence) on the bridge complex and identify important design considerations for the future that warrant further investigation. However, they do not identify any significant environmental impacts that would result from the project. The purpose of CEQA is to identify significant environmental impacts that would be created by a project and ways to avoid or reduce those impacts.

The IS/MND identifies potentially significant impacts related to biological and cultural resources in addition to motor vehicle traffic (from the off-ramp relocation) and pedestrian traffic (during construction), and describes mitigation measures that will avoid or minimize those impacts to a less-than-significant level. The revisions to the proposed project do not create any new significant effects and do not affect the proposed mitigation measures. The Mitigation Monitoring Plan (Transmittal No. 5) identifies the recommended mitigation measures and the manner in which they should be implemented. If the City Council adopts the IS/MND and approves the project with the mitigation measures incorporated, it must also adopt the Mitigation Monitoring Plan.
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