



**Metro**

Los Angeles County  
Metropolitan Transportation Authority

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September 29, 2020

Mayor Maria Davila  
President  
Gateway Cities Council of Governments

Dear Mayor Davila:

In response to your letter dated September 2, 2020 requesting delayed release of the I-605 Corridor Improvement Project draft environmental document, please be assured that the Metro staff is in agreement and has postponed the release of the document for public review.

The I-605 Corridor Improvement Project environmental document was initiated by Metro, the GCCOG, the corridor cities, and Caltrans to identify and evaluate the necessary improvements to address the current and escalating congestion in this corridor. The environmental document was preceded by planning studies - Project Study Reports (PSR) - for both the I-605/I-5 and I-605/SR-60 interchanges, prepared in collaboration with the same partners. The results of these PSRs, including design alternatives, were reviewed and incorporated (to the extent feasible) into the current environmental document. As part of the draft environmental document, system interchanges at I-105, I-5, SR-60, and I-10 were also studied to identify the necessary improvements to improve connectivity and transitions between the I-605 and those freeways.

The needed improvements on I-5 were identified about three decades ago and the segment between the I-5/I-605 interchange and the LA/Orange County was identified as the first step of the larger improvements in this freeway.

At the completion of the environmental process for that segment, the footprint of the necessary improvements along the I-5 was set at 12 lanes. An agreement was reached with the Federal Highway Administration to secure the necessary right-of-way for the ultimate 12 lanes but initially construct a 10-lane freeway.

Due to lack of funds and risk of cost escalations as a result of unfinished ROW acquisitions, unknown utility relocations, and other risks, the northerly segment of the project between Florence Avenue in Norwalk and the I-5/I-605 interchange was omitted from construction. In order to complete the I-5 project and extend the northerly end of the improvements to a logical termini/distribution point, the northerly segment will need to be designed and constructed. The I-605 CIP considered this necessity and identified the northern limit of the I-5 extension at Paramount Blvd. to include the entire I-5/I-605 interchange in the current draft environmental document. Paramount Blvd. would be the starting point of the segment between Paramount Blvd. and some point north of the I-5/I-710 interchange, which is currently considered by the I-5 JPA and Caltrans for initiation of a separate environmental process.

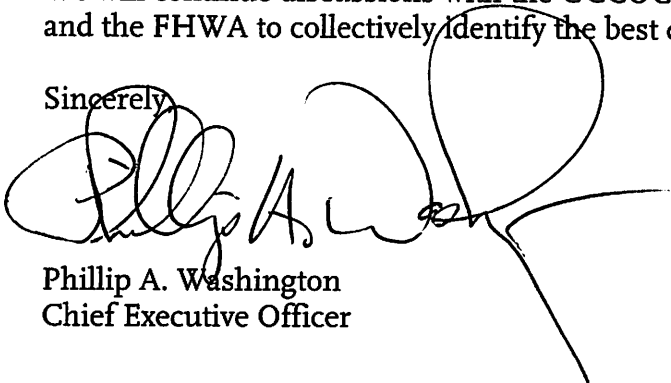
Upon completion of the studies in the draft environmental document for the I-605 corridor improvements, considerable ROW impacts were identified on I-5 primarily due to the need for auxiliary lanes and reconfiguration of the local interchanges (in very close proximity to the 605/5 interchange) to improve traffic flow, as well as requirements for standardization of the shoulders (to 10 feet wide) that mostly had been significantly reduced, standardization of lane widths (back to 12 feet wide) that were narrowed to allow for the past widenings, and a new buffer required between the General Purpose Lanes and the proposed HOV lanes. The highest ROW impacts seem to be in Norwalk, Downey, and Santa Fe Springs. The full extent of these impacts were not evident in the PSR prepared for the I-5/I-605 interchange. The more comprehensive and detailed evaluation of traffic operations and highway design requirements undertaken for the draft environmental document revealed the full extent of impacts.

The impacts of the project were disclosed once known. It was discussed in all recent project meetings, presented to the TAC, discussed in detail with the GCCOG and the I-5 JPA, and presented to the Corridor Cities Committee. The recommendations in the I-605 CIP draft environmental document are consistent with Item 2 of the "SR-91/I-605/I-405 Guiding Principles" adopted by the SR-91/I-605/I-405 Corridor Cities Committee on October 18, 2007 with minor exceptions due to the necessary ROW acquisitions and have merit for consideration of exceptions by the concerned parties in the Gateway Cities area. However, the ROW needs to ensure the functionality and effectiveness of the investment around the I-5/I-605 interchange are extensive and in conflict with Item 1 of the same Guiding Principles. Therefore, all parties agreed to delay the release of the draft environmental document to hopefully identify beneficial improvements with lesser impacts. Metro team confirmed the delay in circulation of the draft environmental document and will discuss other possible options with the project partners/stakeholders to explore the possibility of reducing the property impacts.

Metro staff have discussed the property impacts on I-5 with the FHWA staff. FHWA will review those impacts and will be flexible in their determination of the scope and extent of the proposed widening and consideration of a smaller footprint for the extension of the I-5 widening/HOV lanes as long as the compromises are reasonable and still preserve safety along the corridor.

We will continue discussions with the GCCOG, the I-5 JPA, the impacted cities, Caltrans, and the FHWA to collectively identify the best course of action.

Sincerely,

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Phillip A. Washington". The signature is written over the word "Sincerely," and extends across the width of the page.

Phillip A. Washington  
Chief Executive Officer

Mayor Maria Davila  
September 29, 2020  
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cc: Board of Directors Gateway Cities Council of Governments  
Metro Board Members: Supervisor Janice Hahn, Supervisor Hilda Solis,  
Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas and Mayor Robert Garcia  
SR-91/I-605/I-405 Corridor Cities Committee & TAC