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**SAN FRANCISCO
MUNICIPAL TRANSPORTATION AGENCY**

DIVISION: Sustainable Streets

BRIEF DESCRIPTION:

Update on the 19th Avenue/M-line Southwest Subway project, including the recently completed Feasibility Study and the upcoming pre-environmental study.

SUMMARY:

- 19th Avenue has major conflicts among traffic, pedestrians and transit, with resulting pedestrian safety issues. Along this corridor, the M Ocean View operates at only 8-9 mph and experiences reliability issues.
- While the approved M-line realignment into Parkmerced would increase safe pedestrian access to the M for San Francisco State University students and Parkmerced residents, it does not resolve traffic conflicts where the M will cross between the median and the west side of 19th Avenue.
- The recently concluded Feasibility Study, by the San Francisco County Transportation Authority, identified a high performing subway alternative to the approved realignment. This subway alternative would improve M-line travel times, pedestrian/bicycle safety and accessibility, and the attractiveness of this important southwest San Francisco gateway.
- The subway alternative would take the M-line underground from south of St. Francis Circle, crossing under 19th Avenue, then running in full and partial subway next to Stonestown Galleria and San Francisco State University. Tracks would then run at grade through Parkmerced, but cross over Junipero Serra Boulevard on a light rail/pedestrian/bicycle bridge, traveling at-grade on Randolph Street to rejoin the existing alignment.
- The next phase will complete the required Caltrans Project Study Report, advance engineering to the 5-10% level, refine cost estimates, develop the funding and implementation strategy, support coordinated land use planning, and conduct limited community outreach.

ENCLOSURES:

1. 19th Avenue/M-Line Southwest Subway Presentation

APPROVALS:

DATE

DIRECTOR _____ 3/27/14

SECRETARY _____ 3/27/14

ASSIGNED SFMTAB CALENDAR DATE: April 1, 2014

PAGE 2.

PURPOSE

Update on the 19th Avenue/M-line Southwest Subway project. This project should reduce M Ocean View conflicts with pedestrians and traffic, while improving M-line travel times, thereby reducing operating costs and attracting additional ridership.

GOAL

This report supports *the FY 2013-2018 SFMTA Strategic Plan*.

GOAL 1: Create a safer transportation experience for everyone.

Objective 1.3. Improve the safety of the transportation system.

GOAL 2: Make transit, walking, bicycling, taxi, ridesharing, and carsharing the preferred means of travel.

Objective 2.1. Improve customer service and communications.

Objective 2.2. Improve transit performance.

Objective 2.3. Increase use of all non-private-auto modes.

Objective 2.4. Improve parking utilization and manage parking demand.

GOAL 3: Improve the environment and quality of life in San Francisco.

Objective 3.3. Allocate capital resources effectively.

DESCRIPTION

The San Francisco County Transportation Authority recently completed the 19th Avenue Transit Feasibility Study, which responded to concerns about existing 19th Avenue conditions and the potential impacts of the committed baseline realignment. The report is available at: www.sfcta.org/19thave.

Designated as State Highway 1, 19th Avenue carries about 66,000 vehicles per day, among the highest of any surface arterial in San Francisco. The M Ocean View operates between Downtown and Balboa Park, via West Portal, the 19th Avenue median, and the Oceanview-Merced-Ingleside (OMI) neighborhood.

The 19th Avenue corridor has several major improvement needs:

- ***Transit Performance Issues*** – the slow travel speed of the M Ocean View (8-9 mph), reliability problems, and crowded conditions;
- ***Unattractive, Difficult Transit Access*** – All M Ocean View riders must cross three lanes of traffic to access median stations on 19th Avenue; both light rail station platforms and bus stops experience overcrowded conditions during peak hours;
- ***Challenging, Unattractive Pedestrian Conditions*** – Narrow sidewalks, long crossing distances, closed crosswalk, and long separations between crossing opportunities, all contribute to 19th Avenue's designation as a WalkFirst High Injury Corridor, part of the 6% of street miles where 60% of all fatal and severe pedestrian collisions occur; and
- ***Circuitous Bike Routing and Challenging Crossings*** – Most of 19th Avenue is not part of the San Francisco Bicycle Network, but adjacent streets on either side serve as an indirect north-south route through the area; bicyclists often bike on the sidewalk or on 19th Avenue despite the lack of a facility.

PAGE 3.

The Parkmerced transit-oriented development will add more than 5,600 net new housing units and supportive mixed uses, approximately tripling the density of the site. The Parkmerced development plan includes realignment of the M-line through the heart of the Parkmerced site to provide strong transit access to new residents and safer access to the M from both Parkmerced and San Francisco State University. As approved by the City and County of San Francisco and the SFMTA, Parkmerced is committed to designing and constructing a relocation of the M-line through the site by creating two new at-grade crossings for the light rail tracks to cross 19th Avenue at Holloway Avenue and at Junipero Serra Boulevard.

While it would bring the M-line closer to future ridership opportunities, this baseline realignment would likely not improve light rail reliability, transit speed or traffic congestion due to these at-grade crossings. Furthermore, travel conditions along the corridor are expected to worsen, partly as the result of background growth expected in other parts of the city and region, generating additional trips along 19th Avenue. Recognizing this, Parkmerced LLC has agreed to support SFMTA in additional planning and funding over the next four years to devise a solution that would grade-separate the M where it crosses 19th Avenue, and to defer building the alignment as currently proposed to allow this solution to proceed through environmental review.

Responding to these concerns and recommendations from the 2010 19th Avenue Corridor Study, the San Francisco County Transportation Authority in 2012 initiated a Feasibility Study of a 19th Avenue westside grade-separated alignment of the M Ocean View. This Feasibility Study was undertaken with the active involvement of the SFMTA, the San Francisco Planning Department, and the major property owners (Parkmerced, San Francisco State University, and General Growth Partners, owners of the Stonestown Galleria).

The highest performing alternative identified by the recently completed Feasibility Study, the Longer Subway and Bridge, has the following key features:

- Light rail tracks descend underground in the Lakeside private right-of-way, via a portal south of St. Francis Circle.
- Tracks cross in a subway to the west side of 19th Avenue near Rossmoor.
- A new station that consolidates the Ocean, Eucalyptus, and Winston stations near Macy's and Mercy High School is provided.
- The southbound/outbound track surfaces near the northern boundary of the San Francisco State University campus, running west of the 19th Avenue travel lanes, providing a potential shared transit-way with buses and shuttles. The northbound/inbound track surfaces in Parkmerced south of Holloway Avenue.
- A new station at SFSU could be located as far north as the SFSU Science Building and Wyton Lane (a pedestrian pathway on the east side of the street), or as far south as between Holloway and Crespi in the northeast corner of Parkmerced.
- Vehicle access on Holloway west of 19th Avenue would be closed and redirected to Crespi Drive to allow for faster light rail travel time and a safer pedestrian crossing of the north leg of 19th Avenue.
- Light rail tracks would travel through Parkmerced at grade with a new station near the Parkmerced retail core and another station near the southeast corner of the development site.
- Light rail tracks would cross over Junipero Serra on a bridge, connecting Parkmerced to Randolph Street in the OMI neighborhood. The bridge would be designed for light rail, pedestrians, cyclists, and emergency vehicles.
- The M-line would run on Randolph Street at-grade connecting with the existing alignment around at the Randolph intersection with 19th Avenue.

PAGE 4.

The Longer Subway and Bridge alternative's benefits and tradeoffs, detailed in the Feasibility Study Final Report, include: a 35-45% decrease in light rail travel time through the corridor; 30-50 feet of road space available for wider sidewalks, a bicycle facility, and more bus stop loading space; a 33% reduction in the distance across the street for pedestrians; four new pedestrian crossing opportunities; and a new pedestrian-bicycle connection between Parkmerced and the OMI neighborhood via the light rail bridge.

The capital cost for this alternative, including design and other "soft costs," is estimated at \$420-780 million, with \$520 million identified as the most likely cost. This project is expected to save up to \$2 million in annual Muni operating costs relative to the Baseline from reduced travel times. (In the next phase, the operating costs will be analyzed in more detail, including the incremental costs of subway and staffed station operation.)

Other alternatives and options are discussed in the next section.

The next phase, the Pre-Environmental Study, will advance project development to the 5-10% level of engineering, prepare a Caltrans Project Study Report (PSR) required for projects affecting the State highway, clarify the alternatives to be analyzed in the environmental review phase, update capital and operating costs, and advance a funding and implementation strategy. Limited community outreach will also be conducted. This phase will be led by the SFMTA in continued partnership with the Transportation Authority, Caltrans and the SF Planning Department. The Feasibility Study Project Manager, a Transportation Authority Senior Planner, is expected to continue managing the project, under the direction of SFMTA management. The Transportation Authority is also expected to procure the consultant team, in cooperation with the SFMTA.

This next phase is expected to be completed by summer 2015. This will be followed by the environmental review phase, producing a combined EIR/EIS to satisfy both State and Federal requirements. During this phase, the required Caltrans Project Report and the SFMTA Conceptual Engineering Report will also be completed. The environmental review phase and permitting needs to be completed by July 2018, under the City's Development Agreement with Parkmerced.

Funding allowing, final design and construction will follow. The project team is reviewing options for managing these phases, including a possible design/build option. The earliest possible completion date for the project would be in 2022. However, that would be faster than comparable large transportation projects in San Francisco, and funding has not been fully identified.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

In the Feasibility Study three northern and three southern options were initially developed. Two options (one in the north and one in the south) were rejected after the first round of outreach, and the remaining four were refined and evaluated.

The four options fully evaluated were as follows:

Northern Section

1. Longer Subway (this is described above as part of the highest-performing alternative)

2. Shorter Subway – This alternative would be identical to the Longer Subway in the northernmost segment, with the M-line running in a full subway from south of St. Francis Circle, crossing under 19th Avenue. However, the southbound track would run at surface from north of Winston Drive, with the northbound track running underground to San Francisco State University (SFSU). Tracks would be fully at grade alongside SFSU and through Parkmerced.

Southern Section

3. Bridge to Cross Junipero Serra Boulevard (*this is described above as part of the highest-performing alternative*)

4. Tunnel Under 19th Avenue & J. Serra Boulevard Intersection – Under this alternative the M-line would cross from Parkmerced’s Felix Avenue to rejoin the existing alignment via a tunnel under the 19th Avenue & J. Serra Boulevard intersection. Tracks would transition to the surface via a long portal in the middle of 19th Avenue east of J. Serra Boulevard. The alignment would then be identical to the current one through the OMI neighborhood.

Three options to be studied further during the next Pre-Environmental Study phase include:

St. Francis Circle Separation – This variation would build on the Longer or Shorter Subway option by beginning the underground light rail alignment north of the complex intersection, which currently causes substantial delay for all modes.

Ocean Avenue Underground Station – This variation would build on the Longer or Shorter Subway option by adding an underground light rail station at Ocean Avenue in the Lakeside Village retail area.

Subway through Parkmerced – This variation would build on the Longer Subway option, keeping both tracks underground from south of St. Francis Circle through the southeast corner of Parkmerced, emerging as needed to begin elevating over Junipero Serra. This would allow for faster, safer operation through Parkmerced, which is expected to have high levels of pedestrian activity as the site builds out.

FUNDING IMPACT

The upcoming Pre-Environmental Study phase’s \$1,020,000 budget is fully funded. It commits the SFMTA to provide \$75,000 in operating funds, but the phase is mostly funded from other sources (\$492,000 in an MTC Priority Development Area Planning grant, \$306,000 in Prop K funds, and the remaining \$147,000 from major property owners).

The overall capital project is estimated to cost between \$420 and \$780 million, including design and other “soft costs.” The next phase will develop a funding strategy that will leverage financial commitments already available to the project (Parkmerced’s commitment to design and construct the portion through its site, valued at roughly \$70 million, and SFSU’s commitment of \$1.8 million toward reconstruction of the Holloway Avenue station). It will also consider innovative sources, including development-based revenues and loans. Although identified as a high priority by the Mayor’s Transportation 2030 Task Force, the project was not recommended for existing or proposed new funding sources for design and construction.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

During the Feasibility Study, the project team undertook two rounds of intensive outreach. This effort included:

- Two large community meetings and more than ten smaller presentation that reached several hundred stakeholders;
- About 5,000 visits to the Study website;
- More than 150 on-line and print surveys completed during Phase 2 of outreach;
- Email mailings; and
- Five newspaper/blog articles.

The response was generally positive, with support for the project expressed by homeowner associations, Parkmerced, San Francisco State University, General Growth Properties (Stonestown Galleria owner), and Supervisor Norman Yee.

Alternatives were modified based on community input, and options were identified for further analysis in the next phase. The survey confirmed that the highest-performing Longer Subway and Bridge alternative was also most supported by the community.

OTHER APPROVALS RECEIVED OR STILL REQUIRED

Before construction, the project will require environmental clearance under both the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the federal National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) and permits, particularly from Caltrans and the California Public Utilities Commission. Designs and a funding plan will need to be approved.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Board receive the update on the 19th Avenue/M-line Southwest Subway project, including the completion of the *19th Avenue Transit Feasibility Study: Final Report*.