MTA Board Authorizes Initiation of the I-710 EIR/EIS

On June 22, 2006, the MTA Board authorized initiation of the environmental (EIR/EIS) phase of the I-710 South project pursuant to the Major Corridor Study’s Locally Preferred Strategy (LPS). Prior to this authorization the Board set forth four requirements that needed to be met, including (1) completion of the mini-study and incorporation into the LPS, (2) formation of a multi-jurisdictional entity to coordinate the appropriate aspects of the project, (3) development of a funding plan for the EIR/EIS, and (4) identification of strategies for achieving near-term improvements to the corridor’s air quality. These accomplishments are highlighted in this issue.

The MTA Board action followed a series of meetings at which the mini-study results were presented to the Tier 2 Community Advisory Committee (April 19, 2006), the Technical Advisory Committee (April 20, 2006), the Oversight Policy Committee (April 27, 2006), and incorporated fully into the Locally Preferred Strategy which completed the Major Corridor Study and concluded the work of all of the committees.

Mini Study Results In Hand

The I-710/I-5 Alternative Analysis, known to the Corridor communities as “the Mini-Study”, was undertaken to take a closer look at the complex traffic issues at the northern end of the I-710 Corridor. The East Los Angeles and City of Commerce Tier 1 community advisory
committees requested further study and were actively involved in posing questions to the engineering team and evaluating the answers. The results are now in hand and will move forward into the EIR/EIS for full evaluation.

One major outcome of the study is the conclusion that the so-called “missing connectors” — freeway to freeway connectors from the northbound 710 to the southbound 5 and from the northbound 5 to the southbound 710 — are not needed at this time. The original engineering work for the I-710 Major Corridor Study identified these ramps as possible elements in a freeway improvement plan but also showed that they would have major community impacts. In its committee report, the East Los Angeles Tier 1 committee specifically requests that its members be consulted if this determination is changed at any future time.

The Mini-Study looked at impacts from planned improvements to I-5 as well as to the I-710 in the study area. For the first time, both planning efforts were brought fully together. As requested by the communities, an option for elevated HOV lanes on the I-5 was examined. This option was found to be feasible and to protect many of the properties that would be impacted by an at-grade HOV lane. The two communities both agreed that this recommendation is worthy of further study, but questions remain about impacts of this option and about where the HOV lanes would start and terminate. The study also indicates that two of the I-5 interchanges, Washington Boulevard and Bandini Boulevard, will require improvements to safely accommodate truck traffic.

The Mini-Study reviewed all of the proposed I-710 designs in the area and produced modifications that could accommodate ten lanes (five in each direction) without any anticipated residential property acquisition. The Study also refined the proposed improvements for the Atlantic Boulevard/Bandini Boulevard interchange with the addition of a free right-turn for the northbound off-ramp. Both communities expressed support for these improvements, and Commerce requested that they be constructed as soon as possible.

In addition, traffic projections for many local streets under several different scenarios were developed. These projections led to detailed comments and suggestions for further study from the community committees. The engineering team also recommended that improvements to arterial highways (major surface streets) and local intersections be made as soon as possible. All community comments and suggestions — such as the inclusion of sound walls and questions for further study — will be included in the upcoming EIR/EIS analyses.

Members of the Commerce and East Los Angeles Tier 1 Community Advisory Committees devoted many hours to the mini-study, and their efforts will contribute to a more effective and sensitive design for any I-710 improvements that might ultimately be constructed.

**Multi-Jurisdictional Partnership Guides EIR/EIS**

The newly-formed I-710 EIR/EIS Project Committee held its first meeting on April 27, 2006. Membership includes representatives from the 14 cities along the 710 as well as the County of Los Angeles, MTA, Caltrans, SCAG, Port of Long Beach (POLB), Port of Los Angeles
(POLA), the San Gabriel Valley COG, and the I-5 JPA. The I-710 Executive Committee held its first meeting on May 3, 2006. The committee is comprised of members from all of the funding partners: MTA (Director Don Knabe), GCCOG (Long Beach Vice Mayor Bonnie Lowenthal), Caltrans (District Director Doug Failing), Los Angeles County (Supervisor Gloria Molina), Port of Long Beach (Commissioner Mike Walter), Port of Los Angeles (Commissioner Jerilyn Lopez Mendoza) and the Co-chairs of the I-710 Project Committee (City of Commerce Mayor Nancy Ramos and a co-chair from the southern end of the freeway who will be selected at a later date.)

The Executive Committee’s role is to provide overall direction and policy guidance to the I-710 Corridor improvement program which includes development of an EIR/EIS as well as other issues that are critical to safety, health and economic vitality within the Corridor. The Project Committee is responsible for advising on matters presented to them in the course of the development of the environmental and engineering analyses. A Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) will be responsible for the review of all technical environmental documentation. The day to day development of the environmental analysis and outreach program will be managed by MTA in close coordination with the funding partners. The Gateway Cities COG will coordinate the activities of the Project Committee and TAC, and both MTA and the COG will support the activities of the Executive Committee.

A goods movement advisory group will be available to advise on matters involving legislative, regulatory, funding and other specialized issues. The final element of the EIR/EIS partnership is community participation which will be formally structured to facilitate meaningful engagement the EIR/EIS process.

The next meeting of the Executive Committee is scheduled for September 28, 2006, 1:30 - 2:30 p.m., MTA Headquarters, One Gateway Plaza, Los Angeles, 3rd Floor Boardroom. Future meetings of all committees will be posted at www.gatewaycog.org and www.metro.net.

**Community Advisory Committees to be formed**

Modeled on the highly regarded community outreach program used to complete the I-710 Major Corridor Study, Community Advisory Committees will be formed to provide input and feedback on environmental documentation that will be developed in the preparation of the EIR/EIS. The outreach program for the initial I-710 study phase has been hailed by community members, the Project Committee and the Executive Committee as one that fostered innovation and consensus in corridor transportation programs. At an upcoming meeting of the I-710 Project Committee, members will be requested to work with their respective city councils or county supervisor to develop Community Advisory Committees for the I-710 EIR/EIS and to identify their roles and responsibilities. The Fall 2006 Newsletter will include updated information on community outreach for the environmental phase.
Project Partners Commit Funding

Seven agencies will contribute to the $30 million EIR/EIS study. MTA, Gateway Cities Council of Governments, Port of Long Beach, Port of Los Angeles, and Caltrans each committed $5 million; and SCAG and the I-5 Joint Powers Authority have committed to $3 million and $2 million, respectively. The study will begin early next year and is expected to be completed in early 2010. Requests for Proposals (RFP) for environmental, engineering and community outreach services are in preparation, and are expected to be issued later this year. Look for updates on the RFP process in the Fall 2006 newsletter.

Air Quality Compendium Incorporated into Ports Clean Air Action Plan

In collaboration with the GCCOG, POLB, POLA, CARB, SCAQMD, Caltrans and SCAG, MTA prepared a report entitled, Compendium of Existing and Proposed Near-Term Air Quality Improvement Strategies for the I-710 Corridor (March 2006), which identifies actions being pursued or considered to reduce emissions in the corridor and at the ports as part of other initiatives. This document identifies all of the Tier 2’s recommendations on health and air quality, as well as air quality initiatives of the GCCOG, POLB, POLA, CARB, SCAQMD, NRDC and the Coalition for Clean Air. The compendium was previewed at the April 19 meeting of the Tier 2 CAC. In May 2006 the compendium was presented to the I-710 Executive Committee which requested that the document be updated on a quarterly basis.

Much of the work cited in the compendium is reflected in the recently released San Pedro Bay Ports Clean Air Action Plan, the latter which can be accessed at www.polb.com or www.portoflosangeles.org

Project Committee Tackles Technology

Setting the tone for a wide ranging and open minded environmental process, the newly convened I-710 EIR/EIS Project Committee invited experts in innovative transport technologies to make presentations at its very first meeting on April 27, 2006. The need for clean freight movement has recently caught the attention of transportation researchers and manufacturers, and the presentations illustrate that some innovative technologies may be adaptable in the transport of cargo containers to and from the Ports.

Dr. Kenneth James, a researcher from the Center for Commercial Deployment of Transportation Technologies (CCDoTT) at Cal State Long Beach, presented a proposed technology called ECCO Systems. The ECCO System is based on mag-lev technology which the Tier 2 Committee had previously learned about. This system is an American-based modification of the passenger mag-lev in use in China and Germany. It is an outgrowth of military technology research. One application involves the transport of containers from the Ports to
the Alameda Corridor, and another application currently under study is the transport of containers from the ports to the Intermodal Container Transfer Facility (ICTF). This technology is “zero diesel emissions” and would be quieter than any cargo technology currently in use. The technology could have potential for longer distance hauling, including the ability to climb steep grades.

Bruce Dahnke, representing Sky Tech Transportation Inc., delivered a presentation of The Sky Tech system which proposes an overhead grid made up of metal “I-beams” (the type of steel beam seen at high rise construction sites). Containers would generally travel along the underside of the beams and could be turned in any direction on the grid. They would be computer controlled and moved by a Linear Induction Motor (LIM). Specially designed cranes would lift containers up and down within the system. Grids would need to be constructed at each pier, rail yard and intermodal yard. This system is a clean power source, provides security advantages and may be able to reduce loading and unloading time for container ships. Each container can move along the system individually and does not need to wait for a train to be assembled.

Neither technology is yet in use for freight operations. Nonetheless, the Project Committee was excited to learn about the creative thinking going on about innovative technologies. Members expressed their ongoing interest in learning more from these presenters and others. Alternative goods movement technologies will be evaluated in the I-710 EIR-EIS.

**Information Links Abound**

Thanks in large part to the I-710 MCS process, especially the efforts of the Oversight Policy Committee and Tier 1 and Tier 2 community advisory committees, the issues of meaningful community participation, air quality, health, goods movement, and infrastructure development are in the forefront of public policy and are being examined by a host of agencies and organizations. Useful links are identified below.

San Pedro Bay Ports Clean Air Action Plan, [www.portoflosangeles.org](http://www.portoflosangeles.org)
Emission Reduction Plan for Ports and Goods Movement, [www.arb.ca.gov](http://www.arb.ca.gov)
Goods Movement Task Force, [www.scag.ca.gov/goodsmove](http://www.scag.ca.gov/goodsmove)
Southern California Multi-County Goods Movement Action Plan, [www.metro.net/megmap](http://www.metro.net/megmap)