

GREATER GOLDEN HILL PLANNING COMMITTEE MINUTES

June 12, 2013 – Approved

NOTE: The May 2013 meeting did not take place.

The meeting took place at Balboa Park Golf Course Club House on Golf Course Drive. Chair Ruchelle Alvarez called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM. The agenda had been posted in accordance with the Brown Act. A quorum was present.

Members present: Present: Ruchell Alvarez, Richard Baldwin, Susan Bugbee, Janice Davis, John Kroll, Richard Santini, Pat Shields, David Strickland, David Swarens, Matt Thomas, Angela Vasconcellos. **Members absent:** Cheryl Brierton, Mike Burkhardt.

Approval of Minutes. Shields moved, Vasconcellos seconded to approve the April minutes. Motion carried with one abstention.

AGENDA TOPIC: Route 94 Express Lanes Project

Representatives of CALTRANS and SANDAG presented two alternative construction plans for State Route 94, both designed to improve traffic flow throughout the county and offer commuters more travel options. The Express Lanes project would connect I-805 with downtown San Diego by constructing two new express lanes along 94, one in each direction, and a new direct connector between 94 and 805. They would accommodate new bus rapid transit service as well as carpools and vanpools. The project would also modify interchanges, connectors, and bridge overcrossings and undercrossings along that route. The express lanes would connect to a wider network of express lanes on 805 and in the future on I-15.

The project alternatives will be analyzed in an environmental impact report/study and associated engineering studies, which will examine three alternatives: two build alternative and one no-build alternative.

Alternative 1

At-grade express lanes would be constructed in the median of SR 94 beginning just east of 22nd St, and extending to just east of SR-15, transitioning to an elevated I-805/SR 94 connector extending to just north of Hilltop Drive on I-805.

The left-hand freeway-to-freeway connectors at the SR 94/SR 15 interchange would be replaced with standard right-hand connectors.

The eastbound on-ramp from 32nd St. and westbound on-ramp from 49th St. to SR 94 would be removed to improve weaving and merging conditions.

The existing northbound SR 15 to westbound SR 94 loop connector would be removed for the same purpose.

Alternative 2

At-grade express lanes would be constructed in the median of SR 94 beginning just east of 22nd St,

The express lanes would transition to an elevated structure just west of 28th St., extending to just north of Hilltop Drive on I-805 – a distance of about two miles.

The eastbound on-ramp from 32nd St. and westbound on-ramp from 49th St. to SR 94 would be removed to improve weaving and merging conditions.

Mitigations

To mitigate the impact of these changes, the agencies suggested that features could be added to the projects that would restore or enhance connectivity, improve bicycle or pedestrian circulation, add park or open space areas, and improve urban design. Possible mitigating features could include decks covering sections of the freeway, parks, urban design or aesthetic features, and environmental quality improvements. Specifically, a superdeck covering SR 94 from 22nd to 25th St. could provide 7.5 acres of park or open space at a cost of \$100 million. Other decks would range in size from 1.5 to 4.5 acres. However, the smallest deck would cost \$15 million. SANDAG has identified \$10-15 million for community enhancements for the entire corridor to 805, not only the Golden Hill-Sherman Heights area.

Workshops

Community workshops to discuss the alternatives will take place July 17 at 6 PM at the Jacobs Center for Neighborhood Innovation, 404 Euclid Ave., and July 24 at 6 PM at the Sherman Heights Community Center, 2258 Island Ave.

Public Comments and Questions

The Golden Hill Community Development Corporation presented a letter supporting the superdeck (see attached).

Sources of additional funding for enhancements would have to be determined. Eliminating the 32nd St. on-ramp raises concerns about traffic backups in Golden Hill. Enthusiasm for the superdeck was expressed. (Turgeon noted that due to cost, the city cannot fund it solely through typical impact fees on new development.)

Q.: Will lost vegetation be replaced? A: Yes, but perhaps not fully.

The Golden Hill CDC supports the superdeck.

The elevation in Alt. 2 (about 60' high) is of concern to nearby residents.

Q. Is an option to dig a trench being considered? A.: No.

Q. Will complementary projects be considered along with these proposals? A.: Yes.

Q. Dirt and noise from the existing SR 94 is already high. Will additional noise be mitigated?

A. Yes.

Q. Will FastTrack fees benefit Golden Hill? A. No. They will go to maintain the roads.

Committee Comments and Questions

Adding trees and canopies is crucial in terms of global warming.

Enhancements are needed in older neighborhoods.

This plan is 50 years old; it's a dinosaur.

How about a light rail alternative?

Do we really need this? The traffic isn't that bad.

Q. Can we get a rendering of how the 60'elevation will look? A: In time.

Q. What is the decision process? A: After environmental studies, the decisions are made by SANDAG, Caltrans, and the city government. Letters can be sent to all these groups to express opinions. (Laurie Berman is the state Caltrans contact.)

Q. (to audience): If funds can't be raised for the superdeck, how many favor the no-build alternative? A: (A sizable number raised their hands.)

Q. What about outreach to renters who may be affected? A. We're trying. It's difficult.

The noise impact is much worse from above than below.

Additional Public Comments and Questions

Q. From what point is the 60' height measured? A. From the 94 lanes.

Lack of funds to maintain any deck is a problem.

Q. If Alt. 3 (no-build) is chosen, is there a way to mitigate the current impact of 94? A. No.

Q. What will happen if wider bridges over 94 lead to two-lane streets? A. No improvements to those streets will be made.

Q. Is this project a done deal except for this section? A. Yes. Construction is underway on 805.

Q. If this project is not built, where will buses go on this section? A. On general purpose lanes.

Q. What is the projected increase in mass transit if the project is approved? A. We don't have figures, but we're trying to offer commuters choices. Greater Golden Hill may not benefit, but we need to think regionally.

Q. What will happen to 94 at 22nd St.? A. The number of lanes will narrow down.

Q. Will the City Council vote on the choices? A. It will vote on the freeway agreement.

Motion

Alvarez proposed but then withdrew a motion to write a letter to the mayor opposing the project based on information we have at this point. Several committee members said it was too early for such a letter and that additional questions needed to be asked of the planners.

ADDITIONAL AGENDA ITEMS

Park priorities will be discussed at a special committee meeting on June 26 at 6:30 PM.

Swarens needs a substitute to attend the July Airport Noise Advisory Committee meeting. Thomas will try to attend.

A community group wants to install a children's park in the 25th St. Park (Thomas).

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 PM.



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June 10, 2013

To the members of the Greater Golden Hill Planning Committee:

In light of the fact that CalTrans proposes to expand SR94 by constructing two additional lanes and a new direct connector between I-805 and SR 94, we are deeply concerned about how this will impact the already fractured communities that border the westernmost end of SR 94. This is the largest-scale public works project most of us are likely to see in our lifetimes and provides a critical opportunity to work with CalTrans to ensure we create the best results for our community. The GGHCDC respectfully requests that the GGHPC:

- 1) Include the super deck park lid over SR94 between 22nd and 25th streets in the Community Plan Update
- 2) Support the inclusion of a superdeck over the SR94 between 22nd and 25th streets in the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Caltrans SR94 Project.
- 3) Consider creating a Transportation Sub-Committee so that all issues of the SR94 expansion impacting our community can be discussed fully and publicly.

The GGHCDC believes that the superdeck will not only be of tremendous benefit for Golden Hill and Sherman Heights but for all San Diego residents and visitors to America's Finest City.

Sincerely,

The Greater Golden Hill Community Development Corporation