



City of Arts & Innovation

City Council Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL **DATE: NOVEMBER 3, 2015**
FROM: PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT **WARDS: ALL**
SUBJECT: RIVERSIDE COUNTY GENERAL PLAN AMENDMENT NO. 960

ISSUE:

The issue for City Council consideration is to receive a report on the County of Riverside General Plan Amendment No. 960 and request: 1) The County maintain a CETAP Corridor parallel to Cajalco between I-215 and I-15 in the General Plan, 2) The County actively work towards a corridor to Orange County as an alternative to the SR-91 Freeway and preserve right of way to the greatest extent possible, and 3) The City request RCTC to re-initiate the CETAP process between the I-15 and I-215 Freeways and restart the previous environmental studies.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the City Council request:

1. The County maintain a CETAP Corridor parallel to Cajalco between I-215 and I-15 in the General Plan; and
2. The County actively work towards a corridor to Orange County as an alternative to the SR-91 Freeway and preserve right of way to the greatest extent possible; and
3. RCTC to re-initiate the CETAP process between the I-15 and I-215 Freeways and restart the previous environmental studies.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

On October 8, 2015, the Transportation Committee (Committee) reviewed this matter; all members were present. The Committee unanimously recommended that the City Council request the County maintain a CETAP Corridor parallel to Cajalco between I-215 and I-15 in the General Plan and actively work towards a corridor to Orange County as an alternative to the SR-91 Freeway, and preserving right of way to the greatest extent possible. Additionally, the Committee recommended the request for RCTC to re-initiate the CETAP process between the I-15 and I-215 Freeways and restart the previous environmental studies.

BACKGROUND:

In 2003 Riverside County adopted a new General Plan. During development of the 2003 General Plan, the County of Riverside extensively studied what transportation improvements would be required to support the transportation needs, both inter and intra County, for the next

20 to 50 years. Due to the importance of the maintaining adequate circulation and mobility, the County initiated the Community Environmental Transportation Acceptability Process (CETAP) Committee which served as advisory board to the County staff during development of the General Plan. The City of Riverside extensively participated in the CETAP process.

General Plan Amendment (GPA) No. 960 is the first comprehensive update to the 2003 General Plan (attachments 1 and 2). In July 2015, Councilmember Soubirous requested that GPA No. 960 be presented to the Transportation Committee to evaluate the proposed changes to the County's Circulation Element and determine if the Draft GPA merits further review and consideration by the City Council. The major changes impacting the City of Riverside deal with the Mid-County Parkway (MCP), Cajalco Road, and the Irvine/Corona corridor,

Mid-County Parkway and Cajalco Road:

In 2004 the Riverside County Transportation Commission (RCTC) began the environmental review of the various corridors included in CETAP. Of particular interest to the City of Riverside was the East-West Hemet to Corona/Lake Elsinore CETAP Corridor. If the selected route was located in the vicinity of Cajalco Road, motorists from east of I-215 and those traveling along the I-215 corridor from south of Riverside would have an alternative route to avoid traveling through the City of Riverside either on the SR-91 Freeway, Van Buren or Alessandro Boulevards to reach the I-15 Freeway and Orange County. Ultimately a route connecting San Jacinto/Hemet to I-15 roughly parallel to the Ramona Expressway and Cajalco Road was selected. The route became known as the Mid-County Parkway (attachment 3). The City of Riverside actively participated in the Mid-County Parkway's project development process, meeting on repeated occasions with RCTC staff, as well as submitting formal comments. Some of the notable milestones include:

- 2004 – Environmental Review Process was initiated to study 9 alternatives
- September 2007 – Alternative 9 was selected as the preferred alternative which proposed the “Far South Alternative”, a route south of Cajalco Road connecting I-15 to SR-79
- October 2008 – RCTC released the Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS) outlining the environmental impacts on the project area
- December 2008 – City Council declared its support for the Mid-County Parkway project.
- June 4, 2009 – RCTC formally notified the City of its recommendation to withdraw the western (I-215 to I-15) segment from the Mid-County Parkway project scope and City Council unanimously voted to oppose this proposal

During June 2009, City staff engaged in numerous discussions with RCTC ultimately offering to support RCTC proposed refocusing of the Mid-County Parkway environmental review to stop at the I-215 Freeway under the following principals:

1. RCTC prioritize funding for the environmental review of Cajalco Road between the I-15 and I-215 Freeways
2. Improvements on the SR-91 and I-15 Freeways must be a top priority and must be built at least concurrently with the MCP and Cajalco Road improvements
3. There must be equity in the funding and capacity improvements on the Mid-County Parkway east of the I-215 Freeway and on Cajalco Road between the I-215 and I-15

Freeways

4. Should the County be unable to environmentally clear the Cajalco Road improvements by 2013, RCTC will restart the westerly segment of the MCP; and
5. Circulation between the I-15, I-215 and SR-60/I-215 Freeways should be a priority for RCTC to fund once the economy improves and to give priority to funding improvements to arterials in the City of Riverside connecting the I-215 and SR-91 Freeways

On July 8, 2009, the RCTC Commission approved:

1. Refocused the MCP Parkway between SR-79 and the I-215 Freeway
2. To Maintain a long term plan for a future east-west CETAP corridor between the I-15 and I-215 Freeways
3. RCTC will prioritize up to \$7 million in Regional Arterial, TUMF or federal funds to the County of Riverside for the preparation of the environmental document for Cajalco Road
4. Consider re-initiation of the CETAP process between the I-15 and I-215 Freeways if the County's Cajalco Road project is not environmentally cleared by 2013
5. RCTC, in conjunction with the County and corridor cities, will prepare a phasing plan for the Mid-County Parkway (east of I-215) and Cajalco Road (between I-15 and I-215) that ensures equitable allocation of discretionary Regional Arterial and TUMF funding for each; and
6. Reconsider funding priorities for east-west regional arterials.

Please refer to Attachments 4, 5, and 6.

After removing the segment from I-15 to I-215 from the Mid-County Parkway project, this corridor continued to be designated as a CETAP corridor which placed a higher level of importance on the corridor. The East-West Corridor's inclusion as part of CETAP demonstrated the County's long-term commitment to the project. The Draft GPA No. 960 proposes to remove the CETAP designation and add a new policy supporting the feasibility of developing Cajalco and Ethanac as Intra-County corridor to support the intent of the East-West Hemet to Corona/Lake Elsinore CETAP Corridor.

This area of the County is anticipated to experience significant growth as there are several housing projects (at various stages of development) that will increase traffic along Cajalco Road beyond levels studied within GPA 960. Moreover, GPA 1120 (separate from GPA 960) will change the land use designations within the Mead Valley Community to allow for 5,520 additional housing units directly along Cajalco Road (between I-15 and I-215). Plans for such housing and their impact were not included within GPA 960 and further suggest that additional widening and increased travel lanes are warranted on Cajalco Road. Consequently, the Public Works Department believes this policy would limit Cajalco to 4-lanes when Cajalco should be built out to at least expressway standards with 6 to 8 lanes.

Irvine/Corona Corridor

Part of the CETAP effort included looking at connections linking Orange and Riverside counties. The primary alternative was a tunnel concept through the Cleveland National Forest linking the I-15 Freeway at Cajalco Road to 133 toll road. In June 2005, RCTC approved the Irvine-Corona

Expressway Tunnel to mitigate projected traffic increases on SR-91 and provide an alternate route to SR-91. This inter-county corridor was anticipated to connect to the MCP. The corridor study has received substantial public and agency review and is supported by the cities of Corona, Riverside, and Moreno Valley.

GPA No. 960 expresses support to continue to study the technical feasibility of the corridor but removes the CETAP designation and places greater emphasis on the SR-91 Freeway to provide mobility between Riverside and Orange Counties. As a result, it appears that the County will no longer “seek to preserve the right-of-way” for construction of the project. The project will remain in the County’s Regional Transportation Plan and Strategic Plan for consideration as a long-term future project, where it will continue to be studied for technical feasibility.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact to the General Fund associated with this report.

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Approved by: Al Zelinka, FAICP, Assistant City Manager
Approved as to form: Gary G. Geuss, City Attorney

Concurs with:



Paul Davis, Chair
Transportation Committee

Attachments:

1. General Plan Amendment 960 - Circulation Element
2. General Plan Amendment 960 – Errata
3. Mid County Parkway Alternatives, 2008
4. June 15, 2009 RCTC Letter to City
5. June 29, 2009 City Letter to RCTC
6. July 29, 2009 RCTC Commission Action regarding MCP.