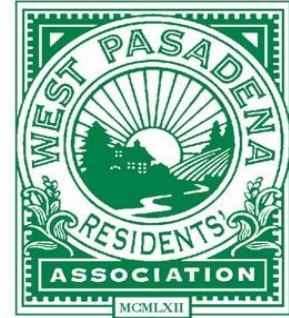


June 14, 2020

Mr. Steve Mermell
City Manager, City of Pasadena
Via email



RE: Gold Line Grade Separation at California Blvd.

Dear Mr. Mermell:

As you know, WPRA represents over 7,000 households in West Pasadena and is acutely concerned about traffic and mobility issues.

After the demise of the 710 tunnel, the City of Pasadena submitted a list of projects to Metro to benefit from funds allocated for TSM/TDM upgrades—including the California/Gold Line grade separation project. We understand that Metro has allocated \$230 million for this purpose. We are also aware that the California/Gold Line grade separation is listed among those capital improvement projects that are on the city's "to do" list.

WPRA has grave concerns about our City's direction in this regard, and believes the undertaking of this project has considerable unanswered questions regarding necessity, utility, community needs, tangible benefits, and alternative mobility-enhancing uses of these funds.

- ♦ At this writing, we are not aware that the question of the "710 stub" relinquishment to our City has been resolved with Metro and Caltrans. Development of the stub lands, regardless of the form it may take, will alter and affect freeway ramps, traffic patterns, through-traffic volume, and ingress and egress points onto California Blvd. How is the City able to determine whether the grade separation of the Gold Line at California is necessary or beneficial **prior** to determining the above?
- ♦ The City of Alhambra received \$100 million in the same process for the design and development of the southern stub of the 710. Why wasn't the re-design of the stub—post relinquishment—on the City's list of projects that were submitted to Metro?
- ♦ Covid-19 has changed multiple constructs and diminished available funds. Given Pasadena's financial challenges resulting from closures, reduction of tax revenues, and the necessity to provide essential services with reduced resources, can spending at least \$230 million, and probably much more, for one project—that to our knowledge has not been carefully vetted—be a wise decision?
- ♦ To the best of our knowledge, the \$230 million from Metro does not include a contingency for cost overruns, and Metro has stated that it will not provide more than the identified \$230 million for this project. It is a matter of record that very few construction projects are able to be completed within allocated budget and time-frames. Experts have estimated that bridge projects customarily have 30-100% overages. Since the Metro funds are limited, where will the additional funding come from? Bridges cannot be completed 'to 80%.' Will Pasadena be required to make up any differential from its own funds?

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- ♦ If the grade separation is constructed, would we just be moving the bottlenecks a few blocks away, at great cost and unknown impact? This and other questions of traffic impact must be thoroughly analyzed before committing to this project.
- ♦ Recent events have also altered employee/employer commuting patterns and transit behavior. At this point, do we know whether these changes are transitory or ongoing and permanent? Is it wise to devote such a large sum to one project at this juncture, without substantiating the direction of these trends?
- ♦ Most of our neighbors have not had a voice in this choice by the City. To the best of our knowledge, there has not been the customary thorough public input into the advisability and desire for this project. There is a host of competing needs for services, infrastructure, and mobility improvements that could yield broader benefits. Have these been explored, evaluated, and prioritized?
- ♦ **What else could Pasadena do with \$230 million to improve mobility?**

The opportunity for the stub land recovery has been made possible by decades of community advocacy from multiple groups like ours. WPRAs urge the City to work with the community to advance alternatives that will support local economic recovery and not risk the City's funds. Among these should be funding for the 50 acre "ditch" dividing West Pasadena to ensure that its future incorporates the varied uses outlined in the Connecting Pasadena Plan, as well as consideration of some of the smaller projects on the City's initial list (e.g., Pasadena Ave/St. John Avenue reversion to two-lane, Arroyo Link, etc.), which have already had some degree of public engagement and can be scaled down, if needed, should final costs exceed initial estimates.

These are unprecedented times we are living in and government agencies such as Metro, notwithstanding their prior processes, have begun to show flexibility in adjusting the use of other approved funds to better meet community needs and recovery.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on this very important prospective project, and look forward to receiving your responses to the questions that our residents would like addressed.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments and request.

Respectfully,



Dan Beal, President



Mic Hansen, Land Use Chair

For the WPRAs Board of Directors

cc: Laura Cornejo, Director of Transportation
 David Reyes, Director of Planning and Development
 Mayor Terry Tornek
 Steve Madison, Councilmember, District 6
 Takako Suzuki, Field Representative, District 6