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STATE OF CALIFORNIA

ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER, Governor

PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

320 West 4th Street, Suite 500
Los Angeles, CA 90013



November 23, 2005

Anthony Loui
Project Manager
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One Gateway Plaza
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Re: Los Angeles Mid-City Westside Transit Corridor
Mid-City Exposition Light Rail Transit Project
Final Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report
Volume 1 – October 2005

Dear Mr. Loui:

The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) has jurisdiction over safety of highway-rail crossings in California, and CPUC approval is required for constructing new or altering existing crossings. On November 1, 2005, we received the above referenced document.

L3-1

In mid-September 2005, we received from the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (LACMTA) a Grade Crossing Preliminary Hazard Analysis report for the proposed crossing of the Mid-City Exposition Light Rail Transit Project (Expo Line). On November 1, 2005 we participated in preliminary field reviews of the proposed at-grade crossings with LACMTA. The Hazard Analysis Report shows that the track alignment will be along the Flower Street Design Option, instead of the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) described in the Final Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (FEIS/EIR). On page 31 of the Executive Summary it states

In general, these studies concluded that the Flower Street Westside Design Option would most likely create unacceptable impacts on traffic unless the LRT operations were to accept significant delay. LADOT does not find this alternative acceptable.

We need to know if the alternative described in the Hazard Analysis report is the final design, and whether LADOT finds it acceptable.

L3-2

The FEIS/EIR contains an extensive discussion about the proposed at-grade crossings, including the type of warning device that will be installed at each crossing. We must point out that the design of each crossing is contingent on CPUC approval. As a result, the final approved Expo Line may be significantly different than what is described in the FEIS/EIR, and may include the closure or grade separation of additional crossings. We agreed with LACMTA on a process that utilizes the Hazard Analysis Report for reviewing and evaluating proposed at-grade crossings.

L3-3

L3

Anthony Loui
November 23, 2005
Page 2

Based on the outcome of this process, CPUC will ultimately approve or reject proposed at-grade crossings and the number/type of warning devices.

On page 20, under the "At-Grade Crossings" heading, the following language is contained:

At-grade and grade separated crossings have been determined using the adopted Metro Grade Crossing Policy for LRT. This policy provides a uniform approach to analyze crossings for feasibility of LRT operations at-grade. The City of Los Angeles, Culver City, Caltrans and the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) made input regarding the crossing evaluation using this Policy.

This statement gives the false impression that the CPUC approves of the Policy. We want to clearly state that we have major concerns with the Metro Grade Crossing Policy. The Policy primarily uses roadway vehicular counts to preliminarily categorize crossings as "At Grade Operation Should Be Feasible", "Possible At Grade Operation", and "Grade Separation Usually Required". Crossings with low vehicular traffic counts are categorized as "At Grade Operation Should Be Feasible". We disagree with this approach. Crossings with low vehicular traffic counts should be considered prime candidates for closure. Instead, the Policy treats these crossings as candidates for at-grade operation.

On page 12 of the Executive Summary, under Section "S-5 Locally Preferred Alternative", it is stated that "During off-peak hours, to further reduce travel times Metro may also introduce express service where there would not be a stop at every station." During our field meeting with LACMTA we were informed that there will be no express trains.

On page 2.4-66, there is a discussion on installing large pavement buttons or flexible bollards instead of raised island medians. We do not believe these devices are as effective in controlling motorists as raised island medians are. Therefore, we may require the installation of raised island medians where these devices are proposed. This may impact traffic lane configurations, and possibly roadway capacity.

On pages 4.6-11, and 4.6-12, there is a discussion on crossing bells and silencing them after the automatic gates are lowered. On top of page 4.6-12 it is stated that for the noise impact assessment it is assumed that the CPUC will authorize silencing of the bells after the gates are lowered. To assume that the CPUC will readily approve the silencing of the bells is incorrect; modifications of this type are approved by the CPUC on a case-by-case basis.

On page 4.6-12 there are various incorrect references to CPUC General Order 75-C. The correct reference is General Order 143-B.

Appendix C lists the CPUC as one of the agency on the service list for the FEIS/EIR. Yet, a copy of the FEIS/EIR was hand delivered to us only after we ask for it, instead of having received it in the mail. Since LACMTA is well aware of which CPUC office and staff normally address these matters, we expect the documents should have been mailed to the correct address. In the future, please address environmental documents to my attention.

L3-1

L3-1

L3-1

L3-1

L3-1

L3-1

L3

Anthony Loui
November 23, 2005
Page 3

Should you need to contact me, I may be reached at 213-576-7081, vsj@cpuc.ca.gov, or the above address.

Sincerely,



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