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The NO 710 Freeway Extension coalition comprises Highland Park residents, as well as community members from Eagle Rock, El Sereno, Garvanza, Glassell Park, Pasadena, South Pasadena, San Rafael, Mount Washington and the surrounding areas. Since its inception at the end of July, just three weeks ago, the group has grown to over 1000 supporters. The coalition opposes all 710 freeway extension options being considered for its community, including any underground tunnel option. The coalition supports a “No Build” position and believes a light rail alternative for commuters and rail solution for freight is the best option for the health and well-being of the region.

Gentlemen of the City of Los Angeles Transportation Committee,

First, we want to make it clear we are in SUPPORT of City Resolution 12-0002-S82 which was ITEM NO. (30) on the L.A. City Council agenda, Friday, August 24 ITEM NO.(30) that OPPOSES the extension of SR-710 (North) along alternatives H-2, H-6, F-2, F-5, and F-6 and any above ground highway or freeway that would cut through the City of Los Angeles as it recognizes and speaks to 710 Freeway Extension alternatives by surface route highway (H-2, H-6), surface freeway (F-6) or tunnels (F-2, F-5) and their negative impacts to our Los Angeles communities.

We can also assume Metro takes the same position on the two tunnel routes (F-2, F-5) as they are no longer viable for further analysis or consideration due to these being the highest cost alternatives and least effective for reducing congestion.

While the negative effects of surface routes are clear and Metro in their own statements have indicated these alternatives no longer warrant further analysis, we do believe it is important to emphasize that Metro is recommending that tunnel option (F-7) be further assessed in the EIR process.

We have the same concerns regarding the (F-7) option as we did for the other tunnel alternatives that were under consideration (F-2, F-5). Attached is a briefing document on this issue. We hope you take these points into consideration as you conduct your review of City Resolution 12-0002-S82.

Respectfully submitted to the administrative record,

-- No 710 Freeway Extension

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SR 710 EXTENSION OVERVIEW AND ISSUES

TECHNICAL

1. “Tunnel” is defined by Metro as EITHER “cut and cover” or bored through the ground. Current Metro plans do not differentiate between “cut and cover” and bored” tunnels, which Metro treats as being the same thing.

*“Cut and cover” requires removal of all homes, businesses, and other surface structures, digging a trench, building the roadway, and then covering the roadway with a concrete lid and dirt.

*“Bored tunnel” is created by digging large access pits at either end of the tunnel and inserting large boring machines. Dirt is removed through the pits. Even with bored tunnels, “cut and cover” or trench segments may be needed to access the tunnel.

*Metro uses the phrase “tunnel portal” to describe the end of EITHER “cut and cover” or “bored” tunnels.

2. Bored sections will be “twin” tunnels, one northbound, and one southbound.

3. Each tunnel will be four lanes, doubled decked with two lanes over the other two lanes.

4. Each tunnel is 57 feet in diameter, between 4.5 and 6.5 miles long (longest road tunnel in the United States). There will be no way out of the tunnel, except at the ends, or by climbing 100 to 300 feet of stairs.

5. It is anticipated that trucks would be in the upper level due to grades, so cars and trucks would have to be separated.

6. Earlier plans called for tall ventilation multi-story buildings (smoke stacks) along the route. New plans may call for all exhaust to be vented at the ends into El Sereno (F-2, F-5), Eagle Rock (F-2), Pasadena (F-5) and the other proposed route not included in the L.A. City Council resolution (F-7) for El Sereno and Pasadena. The access shaft planned for El Sereno would call for extensive surface excavation, threatening structures where that is located.

7. El Sereno is the proposed site for the access shaft. All of the dirt that is excavated by the tunnel boring machine will be moved by conveyor belt to the access shaft, loaded on trucks and transported to another site (Irwindale as a possible location) 24/7, 365 days a year, for up to 10 years until construction is complete.

FISCAL CONCERNS

1. This project has the potential for massive cost increases and construction/litigation delays.

2. Cost estimates since 2004 for this project have run between \$4.5 to \$14 Billion dollars. This will likely be the single most expensive public works project in the history of Los Angeles. The high variability of the cost estimates by various governmental agencies demonstrates the substantial fiscal risk.

3. Costs of tunnel and its effects on surrounding communities threaten voter support for Measure J (the Measure R sales tax extension), and thus threaten funding for other important transit projects.

4. The final SR-710 Extension costs (including interest) have the potential to be nearly double California's current State budget deficit of \$19 Billion dollars.

5. Tunnel will likely have to be funded with private funds (a so-called PPP or Private, Public Partnership), requiring very high tolls and resulting in substantial profits for Wall Street and foreign financial interests.

6. Toll highways in Southern California have resulted in a string of financial failures and taxpayer bailouts, including the South Bay Expressway (SR 125) in San Diego County (bankruptcy, after costing nearly a half billion dollars more than projected, and requiring tolls to be extended an additional ten years), the Orange County Tollroads (which have had to lay off all toll collectors because they cannot afford to pay them), and the 91 Freeway Tollway (which failure cost the state more than \$100 million in cash, and the tolls are currently the highest in the nation. Costs were estimated to be \$57 million, but turned out to be \$130 million).

TRAFFIC CONGESTION MITIGATION

1. The Tunnel Does Not Address Regional Commuter Needs. Metro's own analysis to date shows that transit alternatives will better serve commuters than would the tunnel. The transit and/or TSM/TDM alternatives would reduce vehicle hours travelled by a significantly greater amount than would the Tunnels. The Tunnels would bring more traffic into Northeast Los Angeles and the San Fernando Valley. Actual experience from the extension of the 210 Freeway into Eastern Los Angeles County (circa 2002) contradicts the SR-710 Study findings and shows dramatic increases in traffic for miles west of the extension. Completion of the Tunnel would bring addition congestion onto the 210 and 134 Freeways, including into City of Los Angeles neighborhoods.

2. The Tunnel Does Not Address Regional Freight Needs. Metro admits that the purpose of its Study is to consider the movement of people, not goods. “No freight alternatives were included in the preliminary set of alternatives. Because the primary need identified for the project is to accommodate regional North – South travel demands, and the primary demand for mobility in the study area is that of people not freight”. August 23rd, 2012 SR-710 Study – Summary of Results of Alternatives Analysis. Accordingly, Metro’s Study leaves a gaping question: where are all the trucks going to go? Metro should be asked to answer this question before proceeding further with the Study.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

1. Tunnel is inconsistent with City of Los Angeles’ ongoing efforts to emphasize transit over the private automobile. Metro’s emphasis should be on completing essential transit projects, including Crenshaw, Expo, and Regional Connector light rail lines, and the subway extension toward West Los Angeles.
2. Portals and ventilation stacks will cause exhaust output into the community, including El Sereno and Cal State Los Angeles areas. Additional exhaust will come from traffic on roadways leading to and from tunnels. Slow prevailing winds will lead to greatly reduce local air quality.
3. Based on the SCAG report there will be 3 venting stacks: El Sereno, South Pasadena, and Pasadena (Huntington Hospital). Newer plans may contemplate all exhaust being vented into El Sereno and Pasadena.
4. Truck traffic will incur a 4% grade in the tunnel and will be forced to lower their gears and speeds that will produce a higher PM, NOx levels.
5. Tunnels and their encouragement of automobile traffic will increase green house gas emissions PM, NOx and other high criteria pollutants.

PALEONTOLOGICAL/CULTURAL/GEOTECHNICAL ISSUES

1. Tunnel will pass through significant active earthquake fault lines.
2. Significant risk of encountering other adverse geotechnical conditions of concern (liquefiable zones), (natural gas) (aquifers).
3. All tunnels will pass through areas of significant paleontological (fossils), cultural, historic, and indigenous resources, especially in tunnel’s South Portal area in El Sereno.

SAFETY CONCERNS

1. The tunnels will have limited escape shafts, requiring people to climb hundreds of feet, and would not be ADA compliant.
2. Unrestricted tunnel access represents a soft terrorist target.
3. Freeways are accident prone, and the tunnels will be no different (SR-60 Pomona Freeway, Tanker fuel truck caught on fire and destroyed the bridge). Past accidents and fires in tunnels have resulted in substantial loss of life, and create significant risk for both motorists and first responders.