

New Starts Bi-Weekly Briefing – December 16, 2009

Notes: Bring scorecard to each meeting.

TRO-1, TRO-2, TRO-4, TRO-6, TRO-8, and TRO-9 participated via teleconference.

Charlotte, Northeast Corridor

- The South Corridor light rail transit (LRT) project opened in 2007. Ridership was higher than expected.
- The Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS) reduced the platform lengths from 300 feet to 200 feet. The platforms might not be sufficient for trains consisting of three or more cars.
- CATS would like to add \$70.0 million to the cost of the Northeast Corridor project to fund traction power and system upgrades, including the lengthening of existing platforms.
- Does FTA agree with adding costs to the Northeast Corridor project?
- TPE prepared a one-page summary, which referred to Chicago Brownline (Ravenswood) and Dallas Northwest-Southeast as precedents. TPE noted that both projects were authorized.
- FTA's normal policy has been to prohibit the use of New Starts funds for rehabilitation projects.
- If expansion of the platforms for South Corridor will be achieved by adding the cost to the Northeast Corridor, then the environmental impact statement (EIS) for the Northeast Corridor would need to be revised.
- American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds might serve as a funding source.
- NEXT STEP/ACTION ITEM:
 - Staff will discuss this project with TOA tomorrow.

Northern New Jersey, Access to the Region's Core (ARC)

- New Jersey Transit (NJT) wants FTA to allow them to use ARC funds now to purchase vehicles for the project five years before they will be needed. NJT states that prior to use for the ARC project, the vehicles can be used as part of the existing fleet.
- TRO-1 mentioned that FTA allowed the Rhode Island Department of Transportation to purchase commuter rail vehicles using a combination of New Starts and rail modernization funds.
- The ARC vehicles would cost a total of approximately \$420.0 million for 100 multi-level cars and 26 locomotives.
- FTA should subtract the depreciated values, equal to five years, from New Starts funding.
- NJT wants to use an Early Systems Work Agreement to pay for the cars.
- They already have pre-award authority to purchase vehicles.
- TCR noted that Secretary La Hood and Administrator Rogoff recently met with NJT. They discussed concerns about minority business involvement and the disadvantaged business enterprise program. The Office of the Secretary recommends separating ARC goals from overall NJT goals.
- NEXT STEPS/ACTION ITEMS:
 - TRO-2 will write a summary and send it to TPE.
 - Tomorrow, staff will review the proposal with TOA.

Honolulu

- The project entered preliminary engineering (PE) a couple of months ago.
- The schedule for completion of the Final EIS is uncertain.
- Honolulu might request a Letter of No Prejudice (LONP) of approximately \$400.0 million. In advance of final design (FD) approval. When the city obtains a Record of Decision, they intend to immediately request an LONP.
- At this point, the timing of FD approval is uncertain.
- In rare instances, FTA has approved LONPs while projects were still in PE. Were approvals for construction outside of utility work or were they for significant activity? TPE will check.
- Would an LONP decrease the project cost or accelerate the schedule?
- TPE stated that the mayor sent a letter the Administrator stating that the city expects to complete the EIS soon. TRO-9 has not seen the letter.
- NEXT STEPS/ACTION ITEMS:
 - Today, TRO-9 will hold a call with the grantee and the PMO. They have begun to schedule regular calls.
 - TPE will prepare a summary today for the meeting with TOA tomorrow. (*Note: Following the afternoon call among FTA, grantee, and PMO representatives, staff decided not to put this project on the TOA agenda since some matters are unresolved.)

Funding Recommendations

- FTA has received the conference report and will need to look at the budget again.
- Staff will ask the Administrator if he wants to review certain scenarios.

Other Items

- The FMO report for the Sacramento South Corridor LRT Extension was received yesterday and the quarterly meeting will be held today.
- TPE hopes to complete the Berryessa and Draper PE packages today.
- TPE plans to send the San Francisco package to TOA this week.