

- **Board of Directors**
Engineering and Operations Committee

May 10, 2005 Board Meeting

8-7

Subject

Authorize participation in a Joint Powers Agreement to coordinate the planning of the Central Pool Augmentation Program and a transportation utility corridor between Riverside and Orange Counties

Description

Recently, a multi-agency Joint Powers Agreement (JPA) has been proposed to provide comprehensive, broadly based and mutually beneficial consensus planning, investigations, financing, and recommendations for one or more transportation and utility corridors linking Riverside and Orange Counties. It is anticipated that Riverside County, Orange County, Metropolitan, and possibly the cities of Corona and Irvine would participate in this agreement. The proposed transportation and utility corridor is aligned with the Environmental Impact Report (EIR)-identified tunnel for Metropolitan's Central Pool Augmentation (CPA) Program. Environmental and geotechnical studies are required to evaluate the feasibility of this alignment for both projects. Therefore, participation in this agreement will benefit Metropolitan, as the investigations undertaken to evaluate a transportation and utility corridor will complement current efforts on the CPA Program. The JPA would facilitate cooperation in obtaining additional funding for these investigations. The parties would participate with the express understanding that the acquisition of rights-of-way and similar property interests necessary for the respective transportation and utility corridor would be accomplished proportionally with a member's project interests and at little or no expense to the other members.

Metropolitan's CPA Program has goals of (a) Providing capacity to meet long-term Central Pool treated water demands; (b) Strengthening system reliability; and (c) Increasing system flexibility. One of the key components of the CPA Program will be a new treated water conveyance system from the Eagle Valley Water Treatment Plant near Lake Mathews to the existing Allen-McColloch Pipeline in Orange County. The approved EIR for the CPA treated water conveyance system includes a tunnel through the Cleveland National Forest. However, the feasibility of an alternative pipeline alignment is being evaluated due to potential high groundwater pressures with the EIR tunnel alignment.

This action authorizes staff to execute and participate in the multi-agency JPA. The technical investigations to be conducted through this agreement will help Riverside County Transportation Commission and Orange County Transportation Authority complete their ongoing Riverside County – Orange County Major Investment Study, and will complement ongoing work on Metropolitan's alignment investigations for the CPA Program.

As a party to the proposed JPA, Metropolitan would agree to partner with the counties of Orange and Riverside, over the next two to five years, in the investigation of independent or joint use transportation and utility corridors. Metropolitan would agree to cooperate with Orange and Riverside Counties in obtaining additional funding.

An example of technical studies that may be funded and undertaken includes a comprehensive geotechnical and geological exploration program along the common alignments of the transportation and utility corridors.

These activities, coupled with Metropolitan's ongoing CPA activities, are aimed at refining the final pipeline and tunnel alignments. Entering into the multi-agency JPA will allow Metropolitan to complete many required investigations at reduced costs, as well as explore opportunities to reduce the overall cost of implementing the CPA Program.

California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)

CEQA determination for Option #1:

The proposed action is not defined as a project under CEQA because it involves continuing administrative activities (Section 15378(b)(2) of the State CEQA Guidelines). In addition, the proposed action is not subject to CEQA because it involves other government fiscal activities, which do not involve any commitment to any specific project which may result in a potentially significant physical impact on the environment (Section 15378(b)(4) of the State CEQA Guidelines). Also, the proposed actions consist of basic data collection and resource evaluation activities which do not result in a serious or major disturbance to an environmental resource. This may be strictly for information gathering purposes, or as part of a study leading to an action which a public agency has not yet approved, adopted, or funded. Accordingly, the proposed actions also qualify for a Class 6 Categorical Exemption (Section 15306 of the State CEQA Guidelines).

The CEQA determination is: Determine that the proposed action is exempt from CEQA pursuant to Sections 15378(b)(2), 15378(b)(4), and 15306 of the State CEQA Guidelines.

CEQA determination for Option #2:

None required

Board Options/Fiscal Impacts

Option #1

Adopt the CEQA determination and authorize the Chief Executive Officer to enter into the multi-agency JPA to coordinate the planning of the Central Pool Augmentation Program and a transportation utility corridor between Riverside and Orange Counties, and in form approved by the General Counsel.

Fiscal Impact: Annual fee to be set by the JPA board

Option #2

Do not authorize staff to enter into the multi-agency JPA.

Fiscal impact: None

Staff Recommendation

Option #1



Roy L. Wolfe
Manager, Corporate Resources

5/4/2005
Date



Dennis B. Underwood
CEO/General Manager

5/4/2005
Date