



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

8/18/2020 Board Meeting

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7-4

**Subject**

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Award a \$13,999,000 contract to Bernards Bros., Inc. for fire alarm and smoke control system upgrades at Metropolitan's Headquarters Building; and authorize an increase of \$1.5 million to an agreement with Lee & Ro, Inc., for a not-to-exceed amount of \$4 million for specialized inspection and technical support; the General Manager has determined that the proposed action is exempt or otherwise not subject to CEQA

**Executive Summary**

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The fire alarm and smoke control systems in Metropolitan's Headquarters Building provide detection, notification, and control of building functions so that occupants and visitors can safely exit in the event of a fire. The existing system is more than 20 years old and requires upgrading to ensure that the fire and smoke control systems will continue to provide a robust and reliable fire and life safety system for all building occupants and facility infrastructure. The scope of work for this project has been closely coordinated with the current ongoing seismic upgrade construction and other near-term planned projects in the Headquarters Building. This action awards a construction contract to replace the existing fire alarm and smoke control systems at Metropolitan's Headquarters Building in Los Angeles.

**Details**

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**Background**

Metropolitan's Headquarters Building is a 522,682 square-foot, concrete-frame structure consisting of a 12-story high-rise tower attached to a five-story wing. Metropolitan's occupancy of the Headquarters Building began in 1998. The business functions located in this building are critical for maintaining the continuity of Metropolitan's day-to-day operations. The Headquarters Building includes office space for approximately 840 Metropolitan staff and meeting space for the Board of Directors and members of the public.

The fire and life safety systems operate to protect and preserve human life during a fire emergency and include fire alarms, smoke controls, fire sprinklers, communication/notification devices, and controllers. The fire alarm and smoke control systems provide detection, notification, and control of building functions during a fire event. These capabilities enable building engineers and security staff to promptly locate the source of the event, as well as allow occupants to safely exit the building. The existing fire alarm and smoke control system panels are more than 20 years old and are no longer supported by the original manufacturer. Ongoing maintenance of the system is problematic, as after-market replacement parts are difficult to obtain. Many times, staff has been forced to obtain reconditioned parts and supplies on the secondary market in order to keep the existing system operational. Finally, these aging devices are experiencing an increasing number of system troubles, false alarms, and downtime events.

To ensure continued code compliance and system compatibility, appurtenant fire/life safety equipment on each floor will also be replaced under this project. These appurtenances include communication devices, zone controllers, exhaust fan damper controllers, notification devices, and associated wiring. The new system will provide enhanced smoke control functions with additional features and ensure compliance with the City of Los Angeles (City) fire codes. These code-compliant features will mitigate smoke during a fire event, allowing occupants more time to exit the building, aiding firefighting and search-and-rescue efforts, and minimizing smoke damage.

In August 2017, Metropolitan's Board authorized final design of the initial stage of building improvements for the Headquarters Building, which included, among other items, the plans for the upgrades of fire/life safety systems. Final design of the fire alarm and smoke control upgrades is now complete. Staff recommends proceeding with construction at this time.

In accordance with the April 2020 action on the biennial budget for Fiscal Years 2020/21 and 2021/22, the General Manager will authorize staff to proceed with the fire alarm and smoke control upgrades at Metropolitan's Headquarters Building, pending board award of the construction contract described below. Based on Metropolitan's current Capital Investment Plan (CIP) expenditure forecast, funds for the work to be performed pursuant to this action during the current biennium are available within the Capital Investment Plan Appropriation for Fiscal Years 2020/21 and 2021/22 (Appropriation No. 15517). The project has been reviewed in accordance with Metropolitan's CIP prioritization criteria and was approved by Metropolitan's CIP evaluation team to be included in the System Reliability Program.

### **Fire Alarm and Smoke Control System Upgrades at Metropolitan's Headquarters Building – Construction**

The scope of the construction contract includes: (1) replacement of the building's fire alarm system; (2) upgrade of the building's smoke control system to ensure compliance with the City's current fire codes; (3) replacement of the garage's carbon monoxide monitoring system; (4) installation of a new emergency responder radio system; (5) integration of the fire alarm, smoke control, carbon monoxide monitoring, and fire protection systems into the existing building management system; and (6) local agency permitting. In support of these upgrades, Metropolitan staff will install information technology network equipment such as switches, routers, controllers, access points, and associated electrical infrastructure and will also commission the network systems.

A total of \$21.04 million is required to perform this work. In addition to the contract amount, other allocated funds include \$733,000 for Metropolitan force activities described above; \$595,000 for materials and incidental expenses related to the Metropolitan force activities; \$1,500,000 million for submittal reviews, specialized inspection and other technical support by Lee & Ro, Inc.; \$1,490,000 for construction inspection by Metropolitan staff; \$660,000 for submittals review, responding to requests for information, and preparation of record drawings; \$576,000 for contract administration and project management; and \$1,487,000 for remaining budget.

**Attachment 1** provides the allocation of required funds. The total estimated cost to complete the fire alarm and smoke control upgrades, including the amount appropriated to date and current funds requested, is approximately \$22.54 million. Approximately \$1.5 million has been expended on this project to date.

#### ***Award of Construction Contract (Bernards Bros., Inc.)***

Specification No. 1962 for fire alarm and smoke control upgrades at Metropolitan's Headquarters Building was advertised for bid on May 13, 2020. As shown in **Attachment 2**, one bid was received and opened on July 8, 2020. The bid from Bernards Bros., Inc., in the amount of \$13,999,000, complies with the requirements of the specifications. The engineer's estimate for this project was \$13.5 million. Staff investigated the possible causes for the single bid by debriefing a number of the prime contractors that attended the mandatory pre-bid job walk. The consensus response from these contractors indicated that two primary factors resulted in the single bid. Many of the contractors were pursuing other opportunities in the greater Los Angeles region, and the region is currently experiencing a high volume of construction projects. Secondly, the prospective bidders were unsure that they could bid competitively against the contractor that already has a major contract in the Headquarters Building. For this contract, Metropolitan established a Small Business Enterprise participation level of at least 25 percent of the bid amount. Bernards Bros., Inc. has committed to achieve this level of participation. The subcontractors for this contract are listed in **Attachment 3**.

This action awards a \$13,999,000 contract to Bernards Bros., Inc. for fire alarm and smoke control upgrades at Metropolitan's Headquarters Building.

Inspection of the construction will primarily be performed by Metropolitan staff, with specialized support from Lee & Ro, Inc. For this project, the anticipated cost of inspection is approximately 10.4 percent of the total construction cost. Engineering Services' performance metric target range for inspection of projects with construction costs greater than \$3 million is 9 to 12 percent. The total cost of construction for this project is \$15,327,000, which includes the amount of the contract (\$13,999,000) and Metropolitan force activities (\$1,328,000).

### **Technical Support and Specialized Inspection Support During Construction (Lee & Ro, Inc.) – Amendment to Agreement**

Lee & Ro, Inc. and its subconsultants are the engineers-of-record for this project and will provide technical support during construction. Planned activities include: (1) responding to requests for information from the contractor; (2) reviewing submittals; (3) advising staff on technical issues which may arise; and (4) preparation of record drawings. The estimated cost for these services is \$1.4 million.

In addition, the City of Los Angeles requires a portion of the on-site inspection be performed by certified deputy inspectors holding specialized certifications for structural and life safety systems. Metropolitan has insufficient in-house technical staff possessing these specialized certifications. As a result, Lee & Ro, Inc. will provide staff to inspect specific areas of the construction, including: (1) structural elements such as field welding and bolting of equipment; (2) penetration of concrete walls, slabs, and foundations; and (3) final testing of smoke control and fire alarm systems. The estimated cost for these services is \$100,000. In total, this action would authorize an increase of \$1.5 million for a new not-to-exceed amount of \$4 million.

Lee & Ro, Inc., was prequalified to provide specialized inspection and technical support services through a competitive process via Request for Qualifications Nos. 1077 and 1215. Subsequently, Lee & Ro, Inc., was selected for this work based on its extensive experience with special inspections required by the City of Los Angeles and its knowledge of life/safety systems.

### **Alternatives Considered**

The only viable alternative to the replacement of the existing fire alarm and smoke control system would be to undertake a concerted effort to maintain the aging components of the existing system. As discussed earlier, the original system manufacturer no longer provides ongoing support for Metropolitan's current system. As components fail, it has become increasingly difficult to find replacement parts on the open marketplace. With the potential for more aging parts to fail, and the acquisition of replacement parts becoming more and more problematic, the potential exists that staff may find it difficult to maintain a fully functional fire alarm system for the building. If the fire alarm system were out of service for any length of time, a fire watch would be required and must be approved by the authority having jurisdiction. This approach would be disruptive to Metropolitan's normal business operations. Finally, the current system cannot be modified to incorporate the City's current fire code requirements, which enhance occupant safety and infrastructure integrity. Consequently, staff recommends that the existing system be replaced with a new system that is supported by the system supplier, and which is fully compliant with current City fire codes. The approach of postponing the replacement of the existing fire alarm and smoke control systems until spare parts are no longer available from any source was considered. However, this option was deemed not to be a viable option due to its potentially disruptive impacts to Metropolitan's business operations when the system eventually becomes unrepairable.

The upgrades to the fire and smoke alarm system were originally planned to be part of the Headquarters Building Seismic Improvements bidding package and subsequent contract. During the design of this portion of the overall bidding package, staff solicited input from fire and smoke alarm system suppliers as part of the design process. Based on the comments received from this industry sector, staff subsequently removed the fire and smoke alarm work from the seismic improvements package so that relevant comments on the specified technologies could be addressed. This approach allowed the seismic improvements contract to proceed on schedule while allowing staff to further refine and optimize the design of the fire and smoke alarm bid advertisement package.

### **Summary**

This action awards a \$13,999,000 contract to Bernards Bros., Inc. for the fire alarm and smoke control upgrades at Metropolitan's Headquarters Building. See **Attachment 1** for the Allocation of Budgeted Funds, **Attachment 2** for the Abstract of Bids, **Attachment 3** for the listing of Subcontractors for Low Bidder, **Attachment 4** for the listing of Subconsultants for Agreements with Lee & Ro, Inc., and **Attachment 5** for the Location Map.

### ***Project Milestone***

April 2022 – Completion of the Headquarters Fire Alarm and Smoke Control Upgrades

## Policy

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Metropolitan Water District Administrative Code Section 8121: General Authority of the General Manager to Enter Contracts.

Metropolitan Water District Administrative Code Section 11104: Delegation of Responsibilities.

By Minute Item 50917, dated August 15, 2017, the Board authorized final design of the initial stage of building improvements for Metropolitan's Headquarters Building.

By Minute Item 51963, dated April 14, 2020, the Board appropriated a total of \$500 million for projects identified in the Capital Investment Plan for Fiscal Years 2020/21 and 2021/22.

## California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)

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### CEQA determination for Option #1:

The proposed action is categorically exempt under the provisions of CEQA and the State CEQA Guidelines. In particular, the proposed action consists of the awarding of a construction contract and minor modifications to existing public facilities, along with the installation of equipment within existing public facilities involving negligible or no expansion of use and no possibility of significantly impacting the physical environment. In addition, the activities may involve a check for performance of an operation, or quality, health, or safety of a project. Accordingly, the proposed action qualifies under both Class 1 and Class 9 Categorical Exemptions (Sections 15301 and 15309 of the State CEQA Guidelines).

### CEQA determination for Option #2:

None required

## Board Options

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### Option #1

Award a \$13,999,000 contract to Bernards Bros., Inc. for fire alarm and smoke control system upgrades at Metropolitan's Headquarters Building; and authorize an increase of \$1.5 million to an agreement with Lee & Ro, Inc. for a new not-to-exceed total of \$4 million for specialized inspection and technical support.

**Fiscal Impact:** Expenditure of \$21.04 million in capital funds. All costs will be incurred in the current biennium and have been previously authorized.

**Business Analysis:** This option will maintain a robust fire and life safety system to protect and preserve human life during a fire/smoke emergency event and will allow the upgrades to proceed while the building is lightly occupied.

### Option #2

Do not proceed with the project at this time.

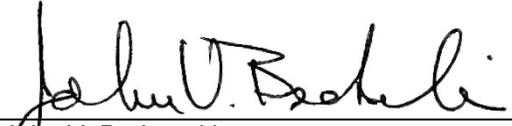
**Fiscal Impact:** None

**Business Analysis:** This option would defer the fire/life safety improvements until seismic upgrades are completed and increase the risk that the system fails before it is upgraded.

**Staff Recommendation**

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Option #1

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
John V. Bednarski  
Manager/Chief Engineer  
Engineering Services

7/21/2020  
Date

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Jeffrey Kightlinger  
General Manager

8/4/2020  
Date

**Attachment 1 – Allocation of Budgeted Funds**

**Attachment 2 – Abstract of Bids**

**Attachment 3 – Subcontractors for Low Bidder**

**Attachment 4 – Subconsultants for Agreements with Lee & Ro, Inc.**

**Attachment 5 – Location Map**

Ref# es12676850

### **Allocation of Funds for Fire Alarm and Smoke Control System Upgrades at Metropolitan's Headquarters Building**

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	<b>Current Board Action (August 2020)</b>
Labor	
Studies & Investigations	\$ -
Final Design	-
Owner Costs (Program mgmt., permitting, envir. monitoring)	576,000
Submittals Review & Record Drwgs.	660,000
Construction Inspection & Support	1,490,000
Metropolitan Force Construction	733,000
Materials & Supplies	480,000
Incidental Expenses	115,000
Professional/Technical Services	
Lee & Ro, Inc.	
Technical support during construction	1,400,000
Specialized inspection support	100,000
Right-of-Way	-
Equipment Use	-
Contracts	
Bernards Bros., Inc.	13,999,000
Remaining Budget	1,487,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 21,040,000</b>

The amount expended to date on the fire alarm and smoke control system upgrades at Metropolitan's Headquarters Building is approximately \$1.5 million. The total estimated cost to complete, including the amount appropriated to date and funds for the work described in this action, is \$22.54 million.

**The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California**

**Abstract of Bids Received on July 8, 2020 at 2:00 P.M.**

**Specifications No. 1962**

**Fire Alarm and Smoke Control Upgrades at Metropolitan's Headquarters Building**

The work consists of improvements to the fire life safety systems, which includes replacement of the fire detection and alarm system, HVAC system improvements for smoke control, building management system integration, and related electrical improvements.

Engineer's estimate: \$13,500,000

<b>Bidder and Location</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>SBE \$</b>	<b>SBE %</b>	<b>Met SBE<sup>1</sup></b>
<b>Bernards Bros., Inc. San Fernando, CA</b>	<b>\$ 13,999,000</b>	<b>\$ 3,529,409</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>YES</b>

<sup>1</sup> Small Business Enterprise (SBE) participation level established at 25% for this contract.

**The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California**

**Subcontractors for Low Bidder**

**Specifications No. 1962**

**Fire Alarm and Smoke Control Upgrades at Metropolitan’s Headquarters Building**

Low bidder: Bernards Bros., Inc.

<b>Subcontractor and Location</b>
Miller Environmental, Inc., Orange, CA
Whitehead Construction, Inc., Riverside, CA
Premier Drywall / Precon Industries, Inc., Santa Maria, CA
Triumph Painting, Riverside, CA
Circulating Air, Inc., North Hollywood, CA
EMCOR Services Mesa Energy Systems, Irvine, CA
Baker Electric, Inc., Escondido, CA
Avcom Systems, Inc. Db a Callide Technical, Inc., San Diamas, CA

**The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California**

**Subconsultants for Agreement with Lee & Ro, Inc.  
Agreement No. 186033**

**Technical Support and Specialized Inspection Support During Construction  
for Fire Alarm and Smoke Control Upgrades at Metropolitan’s Headquarters Building**

<b>Subconsultant and Location</b>
PBS Engineers, City of Industry, CA
GTS Architecture, Inc., City of Industry, CA
Blackman & Forsyth, Santa Monica, CA

# Distribution System

