

# TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

November 6, 2009

AGENDA ITEM NO.: **10**

**Action Requested: INFORMATION**

SAN DIEGUITO RIVER BRIDGE AND DEL MAR FAIRGROUNDS  
PLATFORM FEASIBILITY STUDIES

File Number 1142900

## **Introduction**

SANDAG, with assistance from the North County Transit District (NCTD) and the 22nd District Agricultural Association (22nd DAA), recently completed two studies for improvements on the Los Angeles-San Diego-San Luis Obispo Rail Corridor Agency (LOSSAN) corridor. The first is the Project Study Report (PSR) for the San Dieguito River Bridge Replacement and Second Track Project and the second is a similar Final Conceptual Engineering and Environmental Constraints Report for a proposed permanent seasonal rail platform at the Del Mar Fairgrounds.

## **Discussion**

### ***Proposed San Dieguito River Bridge Replacement and Second Track Project***

The existing mainline track crosses the San Dieguito River and lagoon on a 1,100-foot single track wood trestle bridge built in 1916 and continues north on an embankment to the Via de la Valle overpass. Like all the wood trestles along the LOSSAN corridor, this bridge requires regular and expensive maintenance. The southern end of the structure currently sits within the 50-year flood plain. This is well below the standard Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) 100-year flood plain.

A Project Study Report has been prepared investigating the replacement of the existing single-track bridge and adding a new 1.1 mile segment of second main track between the existing double-track segments in Solana Beach and Del Mar, resulting in a combined total double-track segment of 2.8 miles (Attachment 1). Eight alternatives were studied with a construction cost ranging between \$75 million and \$98 million in 2009 dollars. The alternatives include the construction of a single, double-track bridge or two parallel single-track bridges. Both alternatives would involve the removal of the existing timber trestle bridge and be built within the existing NCTD right-of-way. All alternatives also would require the trackway and bridge be constructed at a higher elevation in order to pass a 100-year flood.

A Program Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (PEIR/EIS) for the San Diego to Los Angeles portion of the LOSSAN Rail Corridor was finalized in 2007. It called for no net loss of jurisdictional wetlands in accordance with Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. The proposed new double track between Solana Beach and the new bridge will require new fill to be placed in the wetlands. Therefore, to offset this encroachment the new bridge(s) will have to be longer than the existing structure to ensure no net loss of wetlands or suitable wetlands mitigation will need to be identified.

The PSR identified many high environmental constraints for this project. In addition to the wetlands issues described above, biological resources including habitat for endangered and threatened species will likely be impacted. The project also is in the Coastal Zone as defined by the California Coastal Act.

It should be noted that the San Dieguito Lagoon Restoration Project, a project funded by Southern California Edison and scheduled for completion in calendar year 2010, will retrofit the existing bridge to permit dredging of the lagoon to improve tidal flushing. This is a stand-alone project that does not effect the conclusions drawn in the PSR; the existing bridge will still need to be replaced and elevated because of the existing structural and floodplain deficiencies.

### ***Proposed Del Mar Fairgrounds Permanent Seasonal Rail Platform Project***

The draft Del Mar Fairgrounds Permanent Seasonal Rail Platform Conceptual Engineering and Environmental Constraints Report was presented to the Transportation Committee on May 15, 2009. Since that time the study has been finalized and it has been studied in conjunction with the adjacent San Dieguito River Bridge Replacement and Double-Track Project.

The seasonal platform study presented two options: a 600-foot platform that could accommodate approximately 1,900 passengers with an estimated construction cost of \$3.7 million, and a 1,000-foot platform that could accommodate 3,200 passengers with an estimated construction cost of \$5.3 million. (Daily rail ridership between the Solana Beach Train Station and the Fairgrounds during the 2008 Del Mar race season ranged from a low of 550 to a high of 6,500.) Both options plan for an elevated platform on the east side of the trackway with ramps and steps directly to the Fairgrounds parking lot. Siting the platform in this location with direct access to the Fairgrounds was a joint effort by SANDAG, NCTD, and the 22nd DAA staff that works in terms of both easy access to events and compatibility with the DAA's draft master plan for the Fairgrounds. The platform and trackway are both elevated in this location in order to clear the floodplain and to meet grade elevations before reaching Via De La Valle. Both options also require the construction of a second track over the San Dieguito River in order to allow for one train to be at the platform while another passes so as not to disrupt service.

SANDAG has received one stakeholder request to phase the construction of the San Dieguito bridge and double track with the goal of getting the seasonal platform built sooner. The request proposes construction of a new double track from Solana Beach to the existing San Dieguito bridge with a platform constructed on the existing track north of the existing bridge. In order not to impact the existing bridge, the platform would be at the far north end of the Fairgrounds property. It should be noted that this location is not compatible with the 22nd DAA's proposed master plan

This proposal deserves further study; however, initial investigations show there are a number of issues that may be difficult to resolve. In order for the proposed platform to be compatible with the new taller bridge, it may have to be moved even further north to allow for the transition to the higher grade. The double track also would require new fill in the wetlands requiring mitigation since the existing bridge would remain in place and would not be lengthened. Finally, a preferred alternative to replace the existing San Dieguito bridge has not been adopted since detailed engineering and environmental studies have not been performed. The preferred alternative may not be at the alignment or elevation that is compatible with the platform at this location. However, each of these issues could potentially be resolved or mitigated during the project development process.

## **Next Steps**

These projects are currently on hold due to lack of available funding to continue the development of either the San Dieguito Bridge Replacement and Second Track Project or the Del Mar Fairgrounds Permanent Seasonal Rail Platform. SANDAG recently prepared a detailed application for federal stimulus funds for both projects and submitted this to the state for transmittal to the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA). However, the state chose to only transmit high-speed rail project applications by the October 2, 2009, FRA deadline. Staff will continue to look for funding opportunities in order to continue the development of both projects.

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Attachment: 1. Map of San Dieguito River Bridge and Del Mar Fairgrounds Study Area

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SOURCE: AirPhoto USA, 2007; SanGIS, 2009; BRG Consulting, Inc., 2009

10/29/09



# San Dieguito River Bridge and Del Mar Fairgrounds Study Area

ATTACHMENT

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