

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR HILDA L. SOLIS

December 8 2020

Supporting State Proposals to Expand and Preserve Affordability for Caltrans SR710 Corridor Properties

In 1956, President Eisenhower signed into law the Federal-Aid Highway Act which initiated the largest infrastructure project of its time by authorizing a 41,000-mile network of interstate highways that would span the nation. While freeway construction would allow the sprawling suburbs to grow around the nation and in Los Angeles County (County), denser low-income communities of color were demolished and experienced massive displacement. Towards the late 1950's and early 1960's, the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) acquired hundreds of parcels in the cities of Los Angeles, Pasadena, and South Pasadena in preparation for the construction of the new State- Route 710 Freeway (SR-710). The acquisition of homes has significantly altered the social, cultural, and economic fabric of the predominantly Latino community of El Sereno.

In 2017, the Metro Board of Directors selected the Transportation System Management/Transportation Demand Management Alternative as the Locally Preferred

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Alternative for the SR-710 North Project. This action removed any freeway buildout from consideration due to widespread community opposition of the project, the exorbitant cost of building any freeway option, and the negative consequences that result from freeway expansion projects. With no freeway project anticipated along the corridor, Caltrans has been utilizing their acquired properties to provide housing to tenants in the three cities including the El Sereno community in Los Angeles.

Caltrans currently owns over 400 properties in the SR-710 corridor, including 330 single family homes and 103 multi-family units of which 163 are vacant. Caltrans tenants have raised concerns about the lack of proper maintenance of the state-owned properties. Many of the residential properties have been deemed uninhabitable and are subsequently vacant due to lack of upkeep. Caltrans has argued that these homes were being rented on a temporary basis and were expected to be razed upon construction for the freeway; thus, long-term improvements for these homes were not a necessary expense. For years, the community of El Sereno has experienced rising housing costs and displacement pressures and is further suffering due to the neglect of these Caltrans-owned homes.

Properties along the SR-710 corridor represent a significant opportunity to make these underutilized parcels available for affordable housing. The County can help identify a comprehensive approach to plan for long-term affordable housing and community benefits for the residents of El Sereno. It is important for this Board to support legislation that moves ownership away from Caltrans, secures long-term affordability for homes in El Sereno, and prioritizes community outreach for the use of these parcels.

I, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors:

1. Direct the County's Sacramento advocates to support proposals that would enable the County to acquire properties owned by Caltrans for the SR-710 North Project and to preserve them as long-term affordable housing.
2. Direct the Chief Executive Officer to report back in writing to the Board in 30 days to identify various County funding sources, including but not limited to the Affordable Housing Trust Fund and the \$7.2 million transferred to the Affordable Housing Trust Fund on August 4, 2020 from unclaimed funds collected by the Treasurer Tax Collector, to acquire properties owned by Caltrans.

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