Reading file

UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION IX
75 Hawthorne Street
San Francisco, CA 94105-3901

December 10, 2007

Ray Sukys
U.S Department of Transportation
Federal Transit Administration, Region IX
201 Mission Street, Suite 1650
San Francisco, CA 94105

Subject: Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement for the Central Subway, Third Street Light Rail Phase 2 Project (CEQ #20070443)

Dear Mr. Sukys:

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has reviewed the above-referenced document pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations (40 CFR Parts 1500-1508), and Section 309 of the Clean Air Act. Our detailed comments are enclosed.

EPA supports several of the project's goals, including goals to reduce environmental impacts, maximize transit use, and reflect the needs and desires of the community. EPA commends the extensive community outreach and efforts to incorporate community and business concerns into the project. We look forward to the successful implementation of this project. While we have not identified environmental impacts requiring substantive changes to the document, we have identified areas where more information is requested to clarify environmental impacts and ensure project impacts are minimized. EPA has rated this document LO, *Lack of Objections*. Please see the attached *Rating Factors* for a description of our rating system.

We appreciate the opportunity to review this Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS). When the Final SEIS is released for public review, please send one copy to the address above (mail code: CED-2). If you have any questions, please contact Connell Dunning, Transportation Team Lead (dunning.connell@epa.gov; 415-947-4161) or Susan Sturges, lead reviewer for this project (sturges.susan@epa.gov; 415-947-4188).

Sincerely,

Connell Dunning

For Nova Blazej, Manager
Environmental Review Office

Enclosures: EPA's Detailed Comments
Summary of Rating Definitions

cc: Joan Kugler, City and County of San Francisco Planning Department
John Funghi, San Francisco Municipal Transportation Authority

EPA DETAILED COMMENTS ON THE DRAFT SUPPLEMENTAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT FOR THE CENTRAL SUBWAY, THIRD STREET LIGHT RAIL PHASE 2 PROJECT, SAN FRANCISCO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA, DECEMBER 10, 2007

Spoil Disposal

The Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) discloses that approximately 489,000 cubic yards (Alternative 3A) to 637,000 cubic yards (Alternative 3B) of excavated material will be generated by the project and require disposal. In addition, approximately 13,000 cubic yards of spoils (Alternative 3B) to 35,000 cubic yards of spoils (Alternative 2) would need disposal at a Class I facility. The Draft SEIS states that spoils will be transported by trucks for off-site disposal at landfills, but does not include information on the environmental effects associated with off-site spoil disposal.

Recommendation:

- Include in the Final SEIS a discussion of the environmental impacts associated with the disposal of excavated material at each potential off-site disposal site. Clarify the timeline for any additional environmental approvals required for disposal (Section 106 consultation, Clean Water Act Section 404 permit, Endangered Species Act Section 7 consultation, etc.).

Air Quality

The control measures for dust and exhaust emissions detailed in Section 6.14 are commendable and we encourage Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to commit to these measures as mitigation in the Final SEIS and Record of Decision (ROD). Given the serious health effects that diesel particulate and other fine particulates can cause, the proposed large number of trucks and construction equipment, and the large number of sensitive receptors in the project corridor, we recommend that FTA avoid and minimize human exposure to particulate matter and diesel exhaust from the project to the greatest extent possible. In addition to these measures, we recommend additional mitigation measures for the Final SEIS and ROD below:

Recommendations:

- Install wind fencing and phase grading operations where appropriate, and operate water trucks for stabilization of surfaces under windy conditions.
- When hauling material and operating non-earthmoving equipment onsite, prevent spillage and limit speeds to 15 miles per hour (mph). Limit speed of earth-moving equipment to 10 mph.
- Reduce use, trips, and unnecessary idling from heavy equipment.
- Maintain and tune engines per manufacturer's specifications to perform at EPA certification levels and to perform at verified standards applicable to retrofit technologies. Employ periodic, unscheduled inspections to limit unnecessary idling and to ensure that construction equipment is properly maintained, tuned, and modified consistent with established specifications.

- Utilize EPA-registered particulate traps and other appropriate controls where suitable to reduce emissions of diesel particulate matter and other pollutants at the construction site.
- To the extent feasible, locate construction equipment and staging zones away from sensitive receptors and fresh air intakes to buildings and air conditioners.

Environmental Justice

EPA commends the project's extensive outreach to communities and efforts to incorporate community feedback into the project in an area with a significant number of low income and minority residents. The Draft SEIS identifies that 72 percent of households residing in the Central Subway corridor do not have vehicles and that 9 percent are unemployed compared to county average of 25 percent without vehicles and 5 percent unemployed. The project corridor includes: 1) the Chinatown neighborhood which is 92 percent minority (largely Asian) with a large elderly population, and 2) the Downtown and South of Market areas with a larger concentration of African Americans with 76 percent of the community minority.

Project build alternatives will result in the relocation of 8 to 10 businesses and from 1 or 2 residential units up to 17 residential units in a predominantly minority and low income neighborhood for the construction of the Chinatown Station. The Draft SEIS identifies redeveloping the Chinatown Station site with affordable housing units above the station and ground floor retail where possible as a recommendation to minimize effects of the project. To ensure that impacts associated with relocation are minimized to the greatest degree possible, EPA provides the following recommendation:

Recommendation:

- In Final SEIS and ROD, commit to the redevelopment of affordable housing and ground retail on station sites as recommended in the Draft SEIS. Identify in the Final SEIS: 1) the timing and location of the redevelopment strategies, 2) the responsible party for the redevelopment, and 3) how the redevelopment can be incorporated into the Central Subway construction schedule.

Project Funding Shortfall

Section 8.1.4 of the Draft SEIS estimates that $424 of local capital funding is still unidentified for the project.

Recommendation:

- In the Final SEIS, ensure that strategies identified in the Draft SEIS to accommodate the funding shortfall (or other strategies identified in the future) will not result in adverse impacts to the community, such as fare increases or reductions in existing transit service or maintenance.