



## Staff Report

**TO:** City Council  
**FROM:** Robert L. Vestal, Public Works Director  
**DATE:** July 15, 2025  
**SUBJECT:** Pennsylvania Avenue Grade Separation Update – Capital Improvement Project No. 2017-012

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**Description** Strategic Plan Target 2 – Infrastructure, Projects, and Traffic - Goal 2.1 Advance the Pennsylvania Avenue Grade Separation project to completion of the Final Design Phase (shovel ready), ensuring alignment with safety, mobility, and long-term infrastructure priorities.

### **Background and Analysis:**

On June 19, 2018, the City Council awarded a Professional Service Agreement (PSA) to IDC Consulting Engineers, Inc. (IDC) to perform 35% level design for the Pennsylvania Avenue Grade Separation Project (CIP 2017-012).

On August 28, 2018, the City Council approved Amendment No. 1, which incorporated additional surveying for the railroad shoofly track. The 35% Level design was completed in 2019. The project was put on hold for some time due to a lack of funding.

On July 19, 2022, the City Council approved Amendment No. 2, which increased the contract amount for IDC to complete the final design. However, Amendment No. 2 did not include all the necessary scope to complete the project.

On October 1, 2024, the City Council awarded an amended and restated agreement to IDC with a full scope to complete the design and prevent the City from missing upcoming opportunities for federal funding.

On October 1, 2024, the City Council also awarded an amended and restated agreement to Moffat Nichol to complete the CEQA and NEPA process.

On June 26, 2025, the California Transportation Commission (CTC) approved a \$50.4 million dollar Trade Corridor Enhancement Program (TCEP) grant to be awarded to the City provided that the City meet the requirements of the grant.

### Current Project Design Status

- Caltrans Geometric Approval Drawing (GAD) – 80% complete
- Caltrans Design Standard Decision Document (DSDD) – 80% complete
- Caltrans Structural Type Selection Report – 60% Complete
- UPRR Structural Design – Preparing 3rd Submittal at 60% design level
- UPRR Track Design – Preparing 90% submittal

### Current Project Environmental Status

- CEQA – The City filed a statutory exemption (SE) with the County of Riverside in August of 2022. Caltrans requested to be the lead agency and re-file the CEQA per Caltrans Standards. Caltrans has requested the CEQA document be elevated to an IS/MND.
- NEPA – Caltrans anticipates a categorical exclusion for NEPA. Current technical studies are 80% complete. Caltrans has requested an additional air quality study.

### Items still required to reach Ready-to-List (RTL) for TCEP

- Caltrans PS&E Package approval
- Utility Design and Right-of-Way Acquisition
- Western Riverside Multi-Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSCHP) process
- Environmental Regulatory Permitting – CDFW 1600 Permit
- UPRR Construction Agreement
- UPRR Permits for Utilities and Jack & Bore
- Caltrans Environmental Certification
- Caltrans Utility Certification
- Caltrans Right-of-Way Certification

### Project Challenges and Strategies

Environmental Deadlines – The TCEP grant requires the environmental documents be completed within six (6) months after program adoption. This means that the City must complete CEQA by December 26, 2025. In order to reach this milestone, the City plans to do the following:

- CEQA – The grade separation qualifies as a statutory exemption under CEQA (CCR, Title 14, Division 6, Chapter 3, §15282). As the lead agency, Caltrans did not allow this exemption. The City plans to submit a letter to the Caltrans District 8 Director requesting the City to assume the role as lead agency for

CEQA, as opposed to Caltrans. This will allow the City to complete the CEQA filing as a statutory exemption.

- NEPA – The City will continue to work with Caltrans to complete the NEPA as a categorical exclusion. Completion of NEPA is not needed for TCEP funding, but will allow the City to receive other federal grants.

Utility Design and Right-of-Way Acquisition – To date, Caltrans has not permitted these activities to begin until the environmental document has been completed. The City believes that since this is a grade separation project with one build alternative, there is low risk for the City to begin the design of the utility relocations, especially considering that the Edison relocation design can take more than a year to complete. The City is working with Caltrans to request approval to begin this process prior to completion of the environmental document.

The project design has faced difficulty meeting Caltrans and UPRR design approval standards, which has resulted in additional agency comments and delayed turnaround times. Design quality for Civil and Hydrology design has also been a concern. The City is exploring the possibility of issuing an RFP to repackage the design and expedite the project completion with a consultant that may be more familiar with Caltrans and UPRR processes.

**Fiscal Impact:**

This Staff report constitutes a project status update and does not have fiscal impacts.

The cost to prepare this staff report is estimated to be \$350.

**Recommended Action:**

Receive and file this update.