

Council hires lobbyist for light rail extension

By Peter Fullam, Whittier Daily News

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WHITTIER >> The City Council agreed Tuesday to pay \$90,000 for a lobbyist to back area efforts to secure a Whittier Boulevard route for a Eastside Gold Line light-rail extension.

M Advisors of Los Angeles will be hired for \$90,000 to advocate on behalf of Whittier and the Washington Boulevard Coalition before the Metropolitan Transportation Authority makes a decision in the spring of 2014. Other coalition members include the cities of Pico Rivera, Santa Fe Springs and Commerce. Another \$5,000 was approved to expedite studies for faster completion.

Councilwoman Cathy Warner questioned whether the city should agree to foot the bill without contributions from the other coalition members. The action tips our hand, leaving them off the hook for part of the bill, she said.

But council decided the issue was too important for delay, and the city would just have to hope the other cities will pay their share.

“It’s time for a full-court press,” said Councilman Owen Newcomer, who noted the city has a good argument but needs a professional advocate to advance it.

“Whittier needs to be the leader, and I believe other cities will fall in line because they will benefit as well,” said Councilman Joe Vinatieri.

The agreement was approved 5-0.