

## 6.0 PUBLIC AND AGENCY OUTREACH

### 6.1 Introduction

The Regional Connector Transit Corridor Project approval and certification of the Final EIS was the culmination of prior planning and environmental studies and projects completed in the past two decades. Per court order (Submitted pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, 42 U.S.C. §§ 4321-4370h, 23 CFR 771, and the Order re Plaintiffs' Combined Motion for Summary Judgment and Defendants' Motion and Cross-Motion for Summary Judgment, dated May 29, 2014 and Order re Plaintiff Today's IV, Inc. and 515/555 Flower Associates, LLC's Motion for Injunctive Relief, dated September 12, 2014 issued by the U.S. District Court in *Today's IV, Inc. v. FTA et al. (Today's IV)*, Case No. LA CV13-00378 JAK (PLAx), *Japanese Village, LLC v. FTA et al. (Japanese Village)*, Case No. LA CV13-00396 JAK (PLAx), *515/555 Flower Assoc., LLC v. FTA (Flower Assoc.)*, Case No. LA CV00453 JAK (PLAx) and the Judgments issued on October 24, 2014 by the U.S. District Court in *Today's IV* and *Flower Assoc.*), this SEIS is intended to provide more information on tunnel construction alternatives not pursued and to provide additional detail on tunneling methods not selected for use along Flower Street, specifically Open Face Shield and SEM tunneling for the Flower Street portion of the Regional Connector project alignment between 4th Street and the 7th Street/Metro Center Station.

Public Outreach for this SEIS will be focused on the two areas affected by the construction tunneling alternatives, Flower Street and Little Tokyo. Public notice of the availability of the Draft SEIS, a 45-day public review period and notification of the completion of the Final SEIS will be provided in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)( 23 CFR 771.130).

### 6.2 Highlights of Previous Outreach Efforts

The Regional Connector Transit Corridor Project has garnered considerable stakeholder interest throughout the environmental process during including the AA, Draft EIS, and Final EIS phases. Recognizing the unique challenges and opportunities of the proposed project, as well as its potential benefits beyond the immediate downtown Los Angeles area, Metro developed a creative approach to ensure an inclusive, engaging and transparent outreach process. The community outreach effort was designed to build awareness and understanding of the project, provide opportunities for ongoing stakeholder involvement, and assist in the identification of potential mitigation measures.

Outreach included the engagement of a wide diversity of stakeholders and opinion leaders including business organizations, chambers of commerce, business improvement districts (BIDs), neighborhood councils, community councils, arts organizations, and residents groups in downtown Los Angeles. Particular outreach was done in the Little Tokyo community, located within the Project Area, one of the only three remaining "Japantowns" in the United States, and an environmental justice community. The Little Tokyo Working Group (LTWG) was created and included Metro staff and leaders of the Little Tokyo Community Council (LTCC), which represented over 100 business and community organizations.

A collaborative effort, the group developed alternatives acceptable to the Little Tokyo community and appropriate mitigation measures to address construction and operational impacts. This collaboration led to the development of the Fully Underground LRT as the only acceptable alternative for the community. In 2010 the Metro Board approved the addition of the Fully Underground LRT Alternative to the DEIS for full environmental evaluation. Following the completion of the Draft EIS public review period, the Metro Board of Directors designated the Fully Underground LRT Alternative as the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) at the October 28, 2010 meeting.

Metro published a Supplemental Environmental Assessment (EA) document to introduce refinements made to the LPA in July 2011. The preparation of the Final EIS was completed in January 2012, and the Metro Board of Directors approved the Project on April 26, 2012. A Record of Determination (ROD) was issued by the FTA on June 29, 2012.

The formation and success of the LTWG, accompanied by Metro's desire to implement a transparent and proactive process in engaging this community, collectively provided an extraordinary opportunity for stakeholder engagement to defuse potentially volatile environmental justice issues, and in the process build trust, widespread enthusiasm, and support for a critical transit project.

Additionally, in April 2014 Metro was nominated for the Public Involvement/Partnership Award by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), an award given by the National Association of Environmental Professionals (NAEP), recognizing the community outreach efforts and proactive engagement of the Little Tokyo community in a focused and collaborative dialogue during the NEPA process in order to address their concerns.

### **6.3 Alternatives Evaluated**

This SEIS is to provide additional detail on tunneling methods not selected along Flower Street, specifically Open Face Shield and SEM tunneling for the Flower Street portion of the Regional Connector project alignment between 4th Street and the 7th Street/Metro Center Station.

The northern limit for the Flower Street segment was identified as 4th Street as this is the location where construction of the Project and the two tunnel construction alternatives changes from tunnel boring machine to various construction techniques to connect south with the existing tail tracks structure of the 7th Street/Metro Center Station. Alternative A and B essentially have the same horizontal alignment as the Project, with Alternative B having a slightly lower vertical alignment than that of the Project.

This SEIS evaluation effort also addresses the corresponding impacts on the Mangrove portal site, the former Nikkei property, in Little Tokyo as the tunneling alternatives would result in both an intensification and increase in duration of construction-related truck activity in Little Tokyo. There is no change in the location of the Project or the Project Area studied, which remains as presented in the Final EIS.

## **6.4 Public Participation Plan (PPP)**

A detailed Public Participation Plan (PPP) was developed at the commencement of the environmental effort, and included a stakeholder database, communications protocols, public input tracking, and a schedule for interfacing with the public, and recommendations for how meetings should be conducted. All elements of the PPP will be applicable to this SEIS effort. The full PPP is provided in the Final Scoping Report as Appendix G in the Final EIS.

Project notifications, mailers, and updates will follow the specification outlined in the PPP, including newspaper ads, media outreach, and in appropriate languages. Public meeting notifications will be published in local newspapers and held in the Study Area.

## **6.5 Public and Agency Comment**

This SEIS is being distributed for public review and comment prior to the issuance of a Final SEIS. Comments may be returned during the 45-day Draft SEIS review period to FTA or Metro. FTA and Metro will hold two public meetings on the content and findings of this Draft SEIS during the 45-day public review period.

Any comments on this SEIS should be limited to the scope of analysis of the SEIS. All substantive comments on the content of this Draft SEIS will be addressed in the Final SEIS. A Notice of Availability (NOA) will be published in the Federal Register for the Final SEIS, allowing 30 days for public comments.

## **6.6 Section 106 Consultation**

The extensive consultation process with various cultural groups and agencies to identify traditional cultural properties and cultural practices was conducted during all phases of the environmental planning process has been documented for the Section 106 consultation process and detailed information can be found in Chapter 7, Public and Agency Outreach, of the Final EIS. This coordination has continued through this SEIS phase. Communication with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) was undertaken by FTA staff. FTA will prepare a letter to SHPO explaining the purpose of the SEIS, court order, and the alternatives under evaluation. The letter will include discussion of anticipated impacts and explain if there are no new impacts.