

FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT/
FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

for the

REGIONAL CONNECTOR TRANSIT CORRIDOR PROJECT

prepared by the

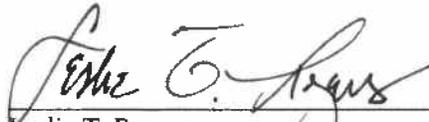
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION

and the

LOS ANGELES COUNTY
METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY

Pursuant to:

National Environmental Policy Act (42 USC §4332) 49 USC Chapter 53, 49 USC §303, 16 USC §470, 23 CFR Part 771, 23 CFR Part 450, Executive Order 12898 Section 6002 SAFETEA-LU, 40 CFR parts 1500-1508, and California Environmental Quality Act, PRC 21000 *et seq.*; and the State of California CEQA Guidelines, California Administrative Code, 15000 *et seq.*



Leslie T. Rogers
Region IX Regional Administrator
Federal Transit Administration

JAN 11 2012

Date: _____



Arthur T. Leahy
Chief Executive Officer
Los Angeles County
Metropolitan Transportation Authority

JAN 11 2012

Date: _____

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FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT/ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

LEAD AGENCIES: Federal Transit Administration, U.S. Department of Transportation and Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority

STATE CLEARINGHOUSE NO. 2009031043

TITLE OF PROPOSED ACTION: Regional Connector Transit Corridor Project

ABSTRACT: The Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) proposes to implement a light rail connector in downtown Los Angeles that will directly link the tracks of the Metro Gold Line light rail system with the Metro Blue Line and future Metro Expo Line. The connector would run from the current Metro Blue Line and future Metro Expo Line terminus at 7th Street/Metro Center Station to a point on the Metro Gold Line near 1st and Alameda Streets. The Regional Connector Transit Corridor project area is in downtown Los Angeles and encompasses approximately two square miles. The project length is slightly less than two miles. The entire project area is within the City of Los Angeles. The boundaries of the project area generally extend north to the US 101 Freeway, east to the Los Angeles River, south to 9th Street, and west to the SR 110 Freeway. Alternatives studied include a No Build Alternative, a Transportation System Management (TSM) Alternative, and three light rail transit (LRT) build alternatives as follows:

- No Build
- TSM
- At-Grade Emphasis LRT Alternative
- Underground Emphasis LRT Alternative
- Locally Preferred Alternative (formerly referred to as Fully Underground LRT Alternative)

This report is a combined Final Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (EIS/EIR), satisfying the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). This Final EIS/EIR defines the alternatives studied and describes each alternative's associated potential transportation and environmental impacts, operating and maintenance and capital costs, and potential funding sources. Potential areas of impact include transit, traffic, parking, land use/neighborhoods, land acquisition, displacement and relocation, equity and environmental justice considerations, visual quality, air quality, climate change, noise and vibration, geology, soils and seismicity, exposure to hazardous substances, water resources, biological resources, energy resources, safety and security, historic, archaeological and paleontological resources, community facilities and parklands, construction impacts, and other CEQA determinations. Mitigation measures for the impacts of the alternatives are also identified. Included within this Final EIS/EIR is a Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP). The information contained in this document will be used by the Metro Board of Directors to make a decision on whether to implement the project and to confirm the Locally Preferred Alternative in conjunction with the Federal Transit Administration for implementation.

Additional written comments and/or questions concerning this document should be directed to:

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PREFACE

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) have prepared this Final Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (EIS/EIR) for a light rail transit (LRT) investment in Los Angeles County, California. FTA is the lead agency under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Metro is the lead agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The proposed action is a light rail extension connecting the Metro Blue Line (and future Metro Expo Line) and Metro Gold Line tracks in downtown Los Angeles. The connection would enable passengers on all three lines to travel cross-county through downtown Los Angeles without needing to transfer. The proposed granting of federal funds for the project is the federal action that necessitates analysis under NEPA.

This project results from nearly 20 years of planning and environmental review. In January 2009, Metro completed an Alternatives Analysis that evaluated transit mode and alignment alternatives in the Regional Connector Transit Corridor. This resulted in Metro's narrowing of over 30 light rail alternatives down to two alternatives. A third light rail alternative was added during preparation of the Draft EIS/EIR in response to community input. The Draft EIS/EIR was released for public review and comment on September 3, 2010. Based on the technical analysis in the Draft EIS/EIR and public comments received, the Metro Board of Directors designated a Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) and authorized preparation of this Final EIS/EIR on October 28, 2010. A Supplemental Environmental Assessment/Recirculated Sections of the Draft Environmental Impact Report (Supplemental EA/Recirculated Draft EIR Sections) document was released for public review and comment on July 22, 2011 in order to formally document refinements made to the LPA during preliminary engineering and the related environmental effects. The Regional Connector Transit Corridor Project is included in Metro's Long Range Transportation Plan and is part of the Regional Transportation Plan adopted by the Southern California Association of Governments, the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization, in 2008.

This Final EIS/EIR is designed to take the decision process one step further, by evaluating the LPA in greater detail. Steps in the further evaluation include:

- **Refinements of the LPA** – Incorporates design refinements made based on the Draft EIS/EIR and public input, as well as design options such as pedestrian connections at stations.
- **Confirmation of Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures** – This Final EIS/EIR studies the LPA in increased detail and confirms environmental impacts and mitigation measures.

Alternatives presented in the Draft EIS/EIR have been carried forward into this Final EIS/EIR. Discussion of the Fully Underground LRT Alternative has been updated to reflect its designation by the Metro Board of Directors as the LPA, and subsequent design refinements made to address environmental impacts. This Final EIS/EIR also analyzes a No Build Alternative, a relatively low cost Transportation System Management (TSM) Alternative, the At-Grade Emphasis LRT Alternative, and the Underground Emphasis LRT Alternative.

This Final EIS/EIR presents the results of a comprehensive analysis of the alternatives. In Chapter 1, the Final EIS/EIR presents the purpose and need for a transit investment within the Regional Connector Transit Corridor. Chapter 2 summarizes the alternatives considered, including physical features and operating characteristics. Chapter 3 summarizes the transportation benefits and impacts of each alternative. Environmental factors, impacts, and mitigation are discussed in

Chapter 4. Chapter 5 contains the Section 4(f) evaluation. Chapter 6 addresses each alternative's cost and financial feasibility, while Chapter 7 addresses public outreach. Chapter 8 contains the mitigation measures to be implemented for the LPA. Chapter 9 contains a summary of the responses to comments received on the Draft EIS/EIR and Supplemental EA/Recirculated Draft EIR Sections (full text of the comments and responses is provided in Appendices F-2, F-3, and F-4). Chapter 10 contains additional CEQA analysis to address the recent court decision in *Sunnyvale West Neighborhood Association v. City of Sunnyvale City Council*. More detailed technical documentation, identified in the Table of Contents, is available for those interested in the analysis methodology and results appendices.

During the Draft EIS/EIR circulation period, Metro held two public hearings to receive oral and written testimony on the document from the general public and accepted comments via mail and e-mail. The public hearings were conducted in compliance with CEQA and NEPA. A comprehensive effort to inform the public through email, mail, print, broadcast and digital media, flyers, social networking, and other web-based tools was undertaken on a similar scale with previous rounds of meetings. The 45-day comment period began on September 3, 2010 and ended on October 18, 2010. The Metro Board of Directors designated the Fully Underground LRT Alternative as the LPA on October 28, 2010 after considering the alternatives and evaluation results in the Draft EIS/EIR, written comments on the document, and testimony received at the public hearings. The LPA project definition scope was submitted to FTA for approval into the New Starts Preliminary Engineering (PE) phase of project development. As part of the PE process, the project was further refined as more detailed decisions are made within the designated project scope. Refinements will be confirmed during final design. Some portions of the Draft EIS/EIR (the Supplemental EA/Recirculated Draft EIR Sections) pertaining to these refinements were recirculated for a 45-day public review between July 22, 2011 and September 6, 2011. The PE phase also includes completion of the NEPA process with a Record of Decision (ROD). A federal commitment to fund the project would not be made until after the ROD is signed and the project completes the PE design phase.