

DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT/
DRAFT 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

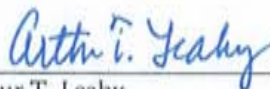
Pursuant to:

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

Date: 8-25-2010



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

Date: 8-25-2010

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DRAFT 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 terminus at 7th Street/Metro Center Station to a point on the Metro Gold Line near the Little Tokyo/Arts District Station. The Regional Connector Transit Corridor project area is in downtown Los Angeles and encompasses approximately two square 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 under consideration 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
- Fully Underground LRT Alternative

This report is a combined Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) / Environmental Impact Report (EIR), satisfying the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The Draft EIS/EIR defines the alternatives under consideration 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, 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. The information contained in this document will be used by the LACMTA Board of Directors to make a decision on whether to implement the project and to select, from among the alternatives, alignment options and station options under consideration, a locally preferred alternative 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 Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (EIS/EIR) to solicit agency and public comment on a proposed major transit investment in Los Angeles County, California. 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.

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 to two. A third light rail alternative was added during preparation of the Draft EIS/EIR in response to community input. 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 Draft (EIS/EIR) is designed to take the decision process one step further, by evaluating the LRT alternatives in greater detail. These include:

- **Project concept alternatives** – Three light rail alternatives are analyzed, representing different routes and underground/at-grade configurations
- **Station location options** – The Draft EIS/EIR considers several station location options for some alternatives;
- **Alignment options** – Compares optional routes for connecting the Metro Blue, Expo, and Gold Lines; and
- **Other components** – Other decisions to be made based on the Draft EIS/EIR such as inclusion of optional pedestrian bridges and other alignment features.

The Draft EIS/EIR also presents a No Build Alternative and a relatively low cost Transportation System Management (TSM) Alternative.

The Draft EIS/EIR presents the results of a comprehensive analysis of these alternatives. In Chapter 1, the Draft 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 draft Section 4(f) evaluation. Chapter 6 addresses each alternative's cost and financial feasibility, while Chapter 7 addresses public outreach. More detailed technical documentation is available for those interested in the analysis methodology and results appendices.

During the Draft EIS/EIR circulation period, Metro will hold two public hearings to receive oral and written testimony on the document from the general public. Public hearing

locations will be in the project area. Metro will provide a notice of these public involvement meetings in compliance with CEQA and NEPA. A comprehensive effort to inform the public with email, mail, print, broadcast & digital media, flyers, social networking and others will be undertaken on a similar scale with previous rounds of meetings. Public hearing times and locations will be:

Tuesday, September 28, 2010

6:30PM to 8:00PM

Japanese American National Museum
369 East 1st Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012

Monday, October 4, 2010

11:30AM to 1:00PM

Los Angeles Police Department Headquarters
100 West 1st Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012

The 45-day comment period will begin on September 3, 2010 and end on October 18, 2010. After the 45 day circulation period closes, the Metro Board will consider the adoption of a Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) after considering the alternatives and evaluation results in this Draft EIS/EIR, written comments on the document, and testimony received at the public hearing. The LPA project definition scope will be submitted to FTA for approval into New Starts Preliminary Engineering (PE) phase of project development. During PE, the project will be further refined as more detailed decisions are made within the adopted project scope. The PE phase will also include completing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) processes with a Final EIS/EIR and a Record of Decision (ROD). A Federal commitment to fund the project would not be made until after the ROD and after the project completes the Preliminary Engineering design phase.