

Appendix B
Public Participation Plan

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

I. Purpose and Background

The Regional Connector Transit Corridor Project area encompasses approximately 1.6 square miles of downtown Los Angeles within the boundaries of the I-110 freeway to the west, Alameda Street to the east, the US-101 freeway to the north, and 9th Street/Los Angeles Street and 7th Street to the South. It lies entirely within the City of Los Angeles limits in the central city area.

The Regional Connector Project is analyzing options for providing through service between Metro's Blue, Gold, Gold Eastside Extension and Expo Lines, and linking these rail corridors directly to Union Station by connecting the 7th Street/Metro Center station with the Little Tokyo/Arts District station, thereby providing a vital connection through downtown with other light rail service.

Completion of this connector line would provide a number of regional benefits including improved mobility, significantly reduced travel times, increased ridership, greater utilization of all rail lines and more accessibility to regional employment and cultural destinations. Construction of the Regional Connector Project would directly impact a 1.6 square mile geographic area in downtown Los Angeles, while its potential benefits accrue to transit users across the entire region. At the same time, the Regional Connector would also provide much-needed transportation alternatives for downtown Los Angeles's growing residential population and entertainment and cultural centers.

In January 2009, Metro's Board of Directors approved the Regional Connector Transit Corridor Alternatives Analysis Study and authorized staff to proceed with the next phase of the Project. This Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)/ Environmental Impact Report (EIR)/Advanced Conceptual Engineering (ACE) phase follows the 12-month Alternatives Analysis that recommended two Build Alternatives for further study along with the No Build and Transportation System Management (TSM) alternatives. The Alternatives Analysis included an in-depth public participation process that included scoping meetings, community update meetings, key stakeholder meetings and elected officials' briefings, as well as development and dissemination of informational materials, a project website, project information line and media relations.

The Draft EIS/EIR phase of the Regional Connector LRT project will involve an extensive and inclusive community outreach process that builds upon, and enhances the public engagement efforts developed during the Alternatives Analysis phase of the project. This Public Participation Plan includes outreach not only to downtown Los Angeles stakeholders, but also to current and potential light rail riders; a wider population of transit users in Los Angeles County. This effort will also re-engage targeted stakeholder outreach efforts during the Alternatives Analysis while, at the same time, identify and involve potential new interested stakeholders who may now, more than before, have a special interest in this project. This Plan builds upon Metro's experience with the Alternatives Analysis, including lessons learned and identification of potential opportunity areas as well as Metro's best practices in public outreach.

II. Compliance with Federal Requirements (SAFETEA-LU)

The Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) was subsequently succeeded by the Safe, Accountable, Flexible and Efficient Transportation Equity Act – A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) on August 10, 2005 by Congress. TEA-21 and SAFETEA-LU continue the strong federal emphasis on public participation, requiring that the public participation plans of metropolitan planning processes “be developed in consultation with all interested parties and ... provide that all interested parties have reasonable opportunities to comment on the contents of the transportation plan”. As outlined in the bill, methods to accommodate these goals, to the maximum extent possible, include:

- Holding any public meetings at convenient and accessible locations and times;
- Employing visualization techniques to describe plans;
- Making public information available in electronically accessible formats and means, such as the internet, as appropriate, to afford reasonable opportunity for consideration of public information.
- Coordinating local public participation/involvement processes with statewide public involvement processes wherever possible to enhance public consideration of the issues, plans, and programs, and reduce redundancies and costs.

SAFETEA-LU also expanded the definition of participation by “interested parties”. Broadly defined it now includes as its partners, groups and individuals who are affected by or involved with transportation in the appropriate County and the surrounding region. Examples stated include citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of public transportation employees, private providers of transportation, representatives of users of public transportation, representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities, representatives of the disabled, and other interested parties with a reasonable opportunity to comment on the transportation plan.

SAFETEA-LU also requires that public meetings be held at convenient and accessible times and locations, that all plans be available by website and documents be written in easy, understandable language utilizing visual components.

This Public Participation Plan was developed cognizant of compliance with SAFETEA-LU.

III. Goals & Objectives of the Public Participation Process

The Public Participation Plan for the Regional Connector Transit Corridor Project provides an efficient, proactive and comprehensive guide to community outreach efforts throughout the DEIS/DEIR/ACE phase of this project. This Plan builds on the foundation of the public engagement effort developed during the Alternatives Analysis. The public involvement and consensus building effort for this project has several goals and objectives; it will:

- Utilize an inclusive outreach strategy that maximizes input from a broad range of project stakeholders;
- Provide forums for residents, businesses and community leaders to participate in the planning;

- Create multiple opportunities for the generation of ideas, comments and possible mitigation measures; and,
- Establish a forum for educating stakeholders on a regular basis as the project evolves.

The Public Participation Plan is in compliance with the public participation requirements of NEPA, CEQA and for the FTA New Starts program.

The intent of the public involvement process is to work cooperatively with the community toward the development of a preferred alternative that meets the purpose and need of the project.

Issues to be addressed during the DEIS/DEIR/ACE outreach process for the Regional Connector might include further development and refinement of the alternatives, locations of the stations, bus/rail interface and other transit issues, urban design, land use, neighborhood and community impacts, environmental impacts, and potential mitigation measures.

IV. Description of Public Participation/Involvement Activities

a. Schedule Overview

The 18 month schedule for the Draft EIS/EIR is summarized below. A series of community update meetings and formal public hearings will be held at key milestones. In addition, the project team will continue to meet with individual stakeholder groups. The public engagement effort will continue throughout the study as urban design proceeds and targeted stakeholders are involved in the planning process.

Spring 2009	Summer 2009	Fall 2009	Winter 2010	Spring 2010	Summer 2010
• Scoping Period	• Urban Design	• Urban Design • Community Update Meeting	• Circulate Draft DEIR	• Public Hearings on DEIR	• Board Meeting • Final EIS/EIR • Begin PE

b. Stakeholder Identification & Community Profile

Metro will maintain and update the stakeholder database developed during the Alternatives Analysis to track interested individuals and groups, their areas of interest, communication, and other pertinent information for the duration of the project. Building on the database developed during the Alternatives Analysis phase of the study, Metro will continue to provide ongoing maintenance and updates to keep the database current.

The DEIS/DEIR phase will include extended outreach beyond Downtown Los Angeles, including all jurisdictions that potentially benefit from the Regional Connector. There are a variety of existing and potential new project stakeholders; many of these stakeholders were identified during the AA Study, and they will be further engaged during the DEIS/DEIR/ACE process. Stakeholders for this study include, but are not limited to:

- Local, County, Federal & State Elected Officials
- Neighborhood Councils, Associations and Community Councils

- Business and Labor Associations
- Retail & Entertainment Centers/Destinations
- Education, Cultural, Religious, Health Care Institutions along the existing and proposed alignment
- Transit Advocacy and Environmental Groups
- Public Agencies/Officials
- Cities along all existing and proposed alignments

Communication with individuals and organizations beyond the physical study area will be a priority during this phase given the regional significance of the project.

Further, building on information gathered during the Alternatives Analysis, Metro will develop a Community Profile, including an issues assessment, relevant to community participation in the study. The Community Profile will identify:

- key communities and constituencies in the study area;
- key communities and constituencies outside the study area, likely to benefit from the project;
- issues of special interest to communities and constituencies; and,
- strategies and actions to address these communities, constituencies, and issues.

In this way Metro will be able to monitor the issues and priorities of the distinct communities within and of relevance to the project in and beyond the study area.

c. Public Scoping Meetings, Community Updates and Public Hearings

c1. Facilitation of Draft EIS/EIR Scoping Meetings

Metro will conduct four (4) Public Scoping meetings, one (1) Agency meeting and one (1) briefing for local elected officials within the scoping period of the project to solicit comment and input for the DEIS/DEIR prior to the May 11, 2009 deadline for public scoping comments. For Public Scoping, two meetings will be held in Downtown Los Angeles, respectively one daytime meeting to accommodate those stakeholders working in the project area, and one evening meeting to ensure those living in the area are able to attend. Additionally, two more meetings will be scheduled in Pasadena, and the University of Southern California/South Park area: locations outside the project area where transit users will most benefit from construction of the Regional Connector.

The purpose of these meetings is to inform the public about the study, solicit input on the alternatives to be considered and identify issues and areas of concern that will need to be addressed in the DEIS/DEIR. These meetings will be recorded by a court reporter and documented as a part of the DEIS/DEIR/ ACE planning effort.

c2. Formal Public Meeting Coordination and Facilitation

Two rounds of community update meetings will be held during the Draft EIS/EIR and will coincide with key milestones. Metro will schedule and facilitate these public meetings, in up to five (5) locations, for a total of ten (10) community update meetings. A detailed summary of comments and meeting notes will be prepared after each round of meetings. Prior to each round of community update meetings, Metro will schedule one briefing for local elected officials. All presentation materials and meeting handouts will be posted to the Regional Connector website.

c3. Public Hearings

Metro anticipates four (4) public hearings, coordinated with the DEIS/DEIR formal public comment period and consistent with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), FTA, and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) guidelines. As for the scoping meetings, Metro will schedule a briefing meeting for elected officials prior to the hearings. TRG will be responsible for all logistics related to the hearings for the DEIS/DEIR phase, including schedule, location selection, staffing, presentation materials and handouts, meeting notifications and publicity, and securing a court reporter.

At the conclusion of the public hearings, Metro will develop a written summary which will include the number of attendees, major issues, and concerns raised, and recommended actions to address the issues. All written comments submitted at the public hearing and via email and US mail will be electronically scanned and included in the project documentation.

d. Other Meetings

Metro will proactively continue to coordinate with key project stakeholder groups in the area to engage them in the planning process. At the same time, Metro will respond to requests from community groups and other organizations to participate in their meetings.

e. Events

To reach out to those not active in civic issues or who do not typically attend community meetings, Metro will participate in local events such as festivals, fairs and other grassroots outreach opportunities. In addition to the events that Metro already participates in, other local opportunities to raise the project's visibility and awareness within the study area will be explored such as farmers markets, mall or shopping center booths and other more community-focused events.

f. Public Notice and Review

Public notices and meeting publicity for the Regional Connector will include:

- Placement of display advertisements two weeks prior to the scoping meetings in the Downtown News, Rafu Shimpō (English/Japanese), Garment & Citizen (Spanish/English), Pasadena Star News and the Daily Trojan
- Mail-out of scoping notice in English, Spanish and Japanese two weeks prior to the first scoping meeting to entire project database
- Mail-out of meeting notice to project database

- Email notification to all in the project database two weeks prior to first meeting, as well as email reminders for upcoming meetings two days prior to first meeting
- Post scoping meeting information on the Metro website (www.metro.net/regionalconnector) two weeks in advance of meetings
- Update Regional Connector Facebook page and distribute meeting invitations via Facebook
- Placement of “Take One” meeting notices on Metro trains and buses serving the project area including the Metro Gold and Blue Lines, and on all downtown bus routes
- Distribution of meeting notices at key downtown Los Angeles gathering places such as the Central Library and Little Tokyo Branch Library, the lobbies of loft buildings and condos, and retail, restaurant and social service venues within the corridor
- Distribution of flyers at Union Station to promote the meetings
- Publicity of scoping meetings to be consistent with FTA requirements
- Development of Project Scoping Presentation Materials in multimedia, easy-to-understand, and multi-language formats

g. Written Materials

Metro will continue to develop text and visuals for collateral materials, specifically Mailers, Brochures, Fact Sheets, “Take Ones”, Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), and other pieces as needed, as well as a quarterly e-bulletin/newsletter. Materials will be translated, at minimum, into Spanish and Japanese and, as requested, Chinese and Korean. Metro will also develop an electronically, easy-to-read and quick-reference project e-bulletin/newsletter to be distributed approximately quarterly.

h. Website

The project website (www.metro.net/regionalconnector) will be regularly updated to coincide with key milestones. In addition to serving as a source for public information, the website will also serve as a way to gather information. The webpage will facilitate ongoing database additions and provide a means for the community to provide input, ask questions, receive responses and distribute study materials. Metro will monitor web page use, track activity through the project database and respond to inquiries within one business day.

i. Media

Metro takes a proactive role working with the mainstream media to publicize all community meetings and to raise awareness of the Regional Connector Project. This includes the development of press releases and placement of display advertisements. This effort is complemented by outreach to grassroots, ethnic and niche print, broadcast and new media. For the DEIS/DEIR phase, Metro will outreach to wider media such as traffic reporters, as well as the Spanish, Chinese, Japanese and Korean-language media.

Metro will continue to utilize “new” media such as blogs, electronic news outlets, chat rooms, discussion boards, etc. to raise awareness of its projects. Metro will continue to use Facebook and other new media resources (social networking forums) to inform and educate project stakeholders about the study. A complete record of all blogging and other electronic communications on the project will also be maintained.

j. Tours

To help facilitate better understanding of light rail technology, configuration options and community integration, tours of the operational sections of Gold and Blue Lines as well as the construction section within downtown Los Angeles will be held as needed. Tours of other comparable non-Metro systems may also be appropriate.

k. Accommodations

All public meetings will be scheduled at locations accessible by transit users and all buildings for public events are ADA accessible for wheelchairs. Information regarding bicycle lockers/storage can also be researched upon request. Interpreters (language and hearing) or other auxiliary aids will be arranged if requested at least 3 days prior to the meeting.

V. Outreach to Traditionally Underserved Groups

Federal requirements for public participation plans include a process for seeking out and considering the needs of those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems, such as low income and/or minority groups. Metro has actively worked with organized business and community groups in Little Tokyo and throughout downtown Los Angeles, contacted homeless service providers in the project area to inform them of community meetings, and will continue outreach efforts to transit users. In addition, materials are translated into Spanish and Japanese, and where requested into Korean and Chinese.

VI. Description of Committees Contributing to the Planning Process

Formation of Regional Connector Working Group

Metro will form a Working Group that will serve in an advisory capacity to the Regional Connector project team. This Working Group is intended to:

- Provide input and feedback at least key decision points
- Offer ongoing guidance about the progress of the project
- Complement the overall community-driven process
- Review the work completed by the geographic sub-groups described below
- Serve as a sounding board to the project team

Geographic Sub-groups within the Working Group, organized by approximate station locations to discuss issues of particular interest and/or concern to their neighborhoods will be created. These sub-groups will reflect the following geographic areas:

- Little Tokyo
- Bunker Hill
- Historic Core
- Financial District

Formation of a Technical Advisory Group

Metro will form a Technical Advisory Group comprised of various City of Los Angeles departments, as well as Los Angeles County, State and Federal agencies that will meet on an as needed basis.

VII. Public Participation Measures of Effectiveness

On a periodic basis, the Public Participation process will be reviewed to determine if modification of any particular strategy is necessary or if additional strategies need to be incorporated into the Plan to reach desired demographic groups.