

SCOPING PROCESS

2.1 Early Scoping Activities

In order to help define the purpose and need and identify a range of reasonable alternatives, Metro conducted an AA, an early public scoping process consistent with the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) guidelines. This "early scoping" process was designed to solicit stakeholders' views on the possible range of alternatives with regards to transportation modes, potential alignments, and station locations.

Between October 2007 and fall 2008, the Regional Connector Transit Corridor project conducted an extensive stakeholder outreach effort. The community outreach effort successfully raised awareness about the study, engaged stakeholders and, most importantly, garnered public input at key decision points that demonstrated widespread consensus about the study recommendations that required Board approval in order to move forward into the environmental process.

Recognizing the unique challenges and opportunities of the study, as well as its potential impacts beyond the immediate Downtown area, the AA outreach program included the following key elements:

- Public meetings, including one series of early public and agency scoping meetings, and two series of public update meetings at key study milestones
- Targeted stakeholder meetings to address specialized issues and localized concerns
- Multi-lingual outreach to include Japanese and Spanish-speaking stakeholders
- Multi-tiered meeting notifications including direct mail, print and broadcast media, advertisements, internet based distribution via e-mail and notices or ads onboard Metro buses and trains
- Employment of "new" media tools such as blogs, social networks and other internet or web-based tools to involve a wider audience in the decision-making process

Early scoping commenced with a briefing for elected officials and their staff on October 17, 2007. An agency early scoping meeting was held on October 30, 2007 at Metro Headquarters followed by publication of an Early Scoping Notice to Conduct an AA in the Federal Register on October 31, 2007. Early public scoping meetings were subsequently held on November 6 and 7, 2007 in downtown Los Angeles at the Los Angeles Central Library and the Japanese American National Museum; a daytime meeting was scheduled to ensure that people working in downtown would have an opportunity to participate in the process, and a nighttime meeting was held to encourage those living in the area to provide their input. The public outreach process is described in the "Final Project Early Scoping Report" published by Metro

in March 2008 (incorporated by reference into this scoping report and available at http://www.metro.net/projects_studies/connector/news_info.htm).

Metro reviewed all public comments from the early scoping meetings and, based on this feedback, developed eight alternatives for further analysis including various modes, alignments and station locations.

A second series of public meetings was held in February 2008 to provide a general study update, review comments and outcomes from the public early scoping meetings and discuss proposed criteria for how project alternatives would be analyzed and screened. A third and final series of public meetings for the AA phase was held in October 2008. These meetings provided Metro with an opportunity to present its recommendations to the public before proceeding to the Metro Board for consideration. A majority of attendees were supportive of the Regional Connector and see this as a cost effective project that will benefit the entire County of Los Angeles and downtown residents.

In addition to these public scoping and update meetings, numerous briefings and meetings were held with key stakeholder groups throughout the AA study period. Targeted stakeholder meetings took place with local elected officials and their staff, elected citizens groups and Neighborhood Councils, residential associations, business, cultural and civic organizations, and religious congregations. These meetings allowed Metro to address stakeholder questions, issues and concerns which were instrumental in developing consensus around the ultimate recommendations.

During the AA phase, the majority of public comments submitted expressed a preference for Light Rail Transit (LRT) technology with a predominantly underground alignment. Preferred station locations included the Financial District, the Bunker Hill/Grand Avenue project area, and connections to Historic Broadway and Little Tokyo. Additional concerns were raised about impacts during construction, compatibility with existing automobile and bus traffic, and traffic management during downtown events.

Throughout the AA phase, there was widespread support for the Regional Connector project to move forward for further in-depth study and into environmental review and clearance. This support was expressed not only by residents and business interests in downtown Los Angeles, but also by transit riders and advocates from across the region.

2.2 DEIS/DEIR Scoping Activities

In January 2009, Metro's Board of Directors approved the Regional Connector Transit Corridor AA Study and authorized staff to proceed with the DEIS/DEIR. The AA process is described in the Final AA Report (Metro 2009) and is incorporated by reference into this scoping report. The Final AA Report may be found at: http://www.metro.net/projects_studies/connector/news_info.htm. This next phase will

continue the transparent and inclusive community outreach process, building upon the public engagement efforts developed during the AA.

2.2.1 Public Participation Plan

In order to ensure that the public remain informed on an ongoing basis and provided with opportunities to comment at key milestones during the DEIS/DEIR process, a detailed Community Outreach and Public Participation Plan (PPP) has been developed. The plan covers both scoping activities and the DEIS/DEIR public involvement process. A summary of the Public Participation Plan by The Robert Group (TRG) can be found in Appendix B.

The PPP includes elements such as stakeholder identification, communications protocols, public input tracking, a proposed schedule for interfacing with the public and recommendations for how meetings should be conducted at various milestones during the of the NEPA process. Additional recommendations for key stakeholder interviews or briefings, inter-agency coordination, topic specific and general meetings are also included in the PPP. Additionally, it includes recommendations for generating publicity for public meetings, and information dissemination via the web and “new” media opportunities to engage the public. It is important to note, that while plans are important, the public involvement activities, especially for this complex project, were developed to be flexible enough to accommodate changing circumstances and enhanced approaches.

The PPP includes outreach to engage not only downtown Los Angeles stakeholders, but also current and potential light rail riders, and a wider population of transit users in Los Angeles County. The outreach efforts outlined in the PPP will also re-engage targeted stakeholders from the AA phase while, at the same time, identifying and involving potential new interested stakeholders who may have a special interest in this project. PPP recommendations are based on Metro’s experience with the AA.

2.2.2 Coordination Plan

Section 6002 of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) established an environmental review process for transit projects that has now been included in Section 139 of Title 23 of the U.S. Code. Section 139 directs agencies to prepare a plan for public and agency participation and comments during the environmental review process. The Coordination Plan describes how the lead agencies will provide opportunities for public and agency input.

2.3 Initiation of Scoping (Notice of Intent/Notice of Preparation)

FTA published the NOI in the Federal Register on March 24, 2009. The publication of the NOI is the official federal notification of the agency’s intent to prepare a DEIS. The NOI included notification of the dates and locations of the agency and public scoping meetings, the public comment period, as well as a description of the project purpose and need and

alternatives. The NOI initiates the NEPA scoping process. A copy of the NOI is in Appendix C.

Metro posted the NOP with the California State Clearinghouse and mailed the NOP to state and local agencies on March 17, 2009. The NOP was also recorded with the Los Angeles County Clerk's Office on March 17, 2009. Publication of the NOP with the State Clearinghouse was done in compliance with California Environmental Policy Act (CEQA) requirements. A copy of the NOP may be found in Appendix D. Publications of the legal notices were also published in local newspapers such as the Los Angeles Times and La Opinion. A copy of these legal notices can be found in Appendix E.

In addition, Metro mailed the NOP and scoping information to 18 Federal, 4 Native Tribes, 31 State, 6 regional, and 11 local agencies to inform them of the start of the DEIS/DEIR scoping process and invite comments. The NOP was mailed to these agencies with a return receipt requested to provide proof of receipt. The complete list of agencies notified in this manner is included in Appendix F.

Comments were accepted by Metro from the date of publication in the Federal Register (March 24, 2009) through May 11, 2009. This provided a public comment period of 49 days.

2.4 Agency Scoping

2.4.1 Participating Agencies

Participating agencies can be Federal, State, tribal, regional, and local government agencies that may have an interest in the project. In accordance with SAFETEA-LU Section 6002 requirements, Metro, in coordination with the FTA, prepared and mailed participating agency invitation letters to 159 agencies with a potential interest in the project in March 2009. The identification of potential participating agencies built on the list of agencies identified through the AA process.

The responsibilities of these agencies include, but are not limited, to:

- Participating in the NEPA/CEQA process starting at the earliest possible time, especially with regards to the development of the purpose and need statement, range of alternatives, methodologies, and the level of detail for the analysis of alternatives
- Identify, as early as practicable, any issues of concern regarding potential environmental or socioeconomic impacts of the project
- Participate in the issue resolution process, described in Section 3.4 of this Plan
- Provide meaningful and timely input on unresolved issues
- Participate in the scoping process

Accepting the designation as a participating agency does not indicate project support and does not provide the agency with increased oversight or approval authority beyond its statutory limits.

Participating agencies for the project are listed in Appendix G. They include federal agencies that did not affirmatively decline the invitation to become a participating agency, and regional, state and local agencies that affirmatively accepted the invitation to become a participating agency. Agencies were given 30 days from the date of the letter to respond. Agencies may also request to be added at any time during the process. Appendix H contains two sample invitation letters; one that was sent to federal agencies and tribes and one that was sent to state, regional, and local agencies.

2.4.2 Cooperating Agencies

Cooperating agencies are, by definition in 40 CFR 1508.5, federal agencies with jurisdiction, by law or special expertise, with respect to any environmental impact involved in the proposed project. A state or local agency of similar qualifications may, by agreement with the lead agency, also become a cooperating agency. The cooperating agencies are by definition participating agencies as well, and while the roles and responsibilities of both are similar, the cooperating agencies have a slightly greater degree of authority, responsibility, and involvement in the environmental review process.

No cooperating agencies have been identified for the Regional Connector Transit Corridor project.

2.4.3 Agency Scoping Meeting

One Agency Scoping meeting was held as follows:

Time: Thursday, March 26, 2009, 1:30P.M.

Location: Metro, Gateway Plaza Room
One Gateway Plaza
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Comments: 9 verbal, 0 written

Attendees: 19, representing the following agencies and jurisdictions (Sign-in sheet included in Appendix I:

- City of Los Angeles Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA)
- City of Los Angeles Department of Public Works, Bureau of Engineering
- City of Los Angeles Department of Public Works, Bureau of Sanitation

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- City of Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD)
 - City of Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD)
 - City of Pasadena
 - Federal Transit Administration (FTA)
 - Los Angeles County Office of Education
 - Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, Transportation Safety
 - Solar Enlightenment
 - Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG)
 - State of California Department of Transportation
 - University of California, Los Angeles

The meeting included a PowerPoint presentation similar to the one shown at the public scoping meetings and described in Section 2.5.4.1.

2.4.3.1 Agency Scoping Meeting Comments

The topics addressed in the question and answer session included:

- Inquiry as to current property owners along the proposed right-of-way for the two LRT alternatives
- A discussion of the capital cost estimates for each alternative and proposed funding sources
- Priority level of the project compared to other current Metro projects
- Safety issues including
 - Project's potential to relieve crowding at 7th Street/Metro Center Station
 - Safety features of at-grade crossings on the At-Grade Emphasis LRT Alternative
- Design details including
 - Locations and depths of the proposed underground stations

- Configuration of the intersection of 1st and Alameda Streets proposed for the Underground Emphasis LRT Alternative
- Issues with placing rail facilities on the northeast corner of 1st and Alameda Streets
- Operational issues including:
 - Proposed operation plans and transfer points
 - Potential service changes at Little Tokyo/Arts District Station under the two LRT alternatives
- Redefinition of rail line names and colors once Regional Connector service begins

A full transcript of the agency scoping meeting proceedings is provided in Appendix J.

2.4.4 State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) Coordination

The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) was provided with a scoping package and a Draft Area of Potential Effects (APE) map on March 13, 2009. FTA wrote a letter to the SHPO on April 7, 2009 asking that Metro coordinate direct with SHPO for Section 106 compliance. SHPO concurred with the Draft APE map on September 9, 2009.

2.5 Public Scoping

Notification of the public scoping meetings was completed via several forms of media as described further in this section. This outreach was in addition to the official notices published in the Federal Register and posted with the State Clearinghouse. Four public scoping meetings were held as described in Section 2.5.3.

2.5.1 Notification Database

Metro maintained and updated the stakeholder database developed during the AA study to track interested individuals and groups, their areas of interest, communication, and other pertinent information for the duration of the project. To the extent possible, Metro includes mailing addresses as well as email contact information on the database. A list of the public agency database entries is provided in Appendix K.

Since the project has regional benefits and, potentially, impacts, Metro is building the outreach database to be more inclusive of stakeholders beyond the downtown area. This is being accomplished by selectively importing information from Metro's existing databases from other projects into the Regional Connector database, as well as targeting councils of governments and those jurisdictions potentially benefiting from the project. The project database will be used to communicate with project stakeholders, including:

- Elected officials on the local, state and federal level
- Neighborhood councils and other elected groups
- Homeowners associations and neighborhood organizations
- Chambers of Commerce, local business improvement districts (BIDs) and business leaders
- Property management firms serving lofts and condominiums in the downtown Los Angeles area
- Community-based and civic organizations
- Large employers and operators of key destinations
- Transportation advocates and interest groups
- Print, broadcast and electronic media, including community-based publications and blogs
- Stakeholders who attended any AA meeting or provided comment
- Other interested groups and persons

For the purposes of notification for the public scoping meetings, the existing AA database was updated to include contact information for new neighborhood council members, and unit numbers for a number of residential buildings. In addition, Metro completed a walk-through of the project area to further identify stakeholders who were then added to the database. At the time of the scoping meetings, 1,542 entries were listed on the Regional Connector database.

2.5.2 Public Notification Activities

A variety of methods were employed to notify stakeholders about the public scoping meetings. These meetings were publicized via direct mail notices to the project database; emails; postings on Metro's website; display advertisements in multi-lingual publications (English, Spanish and Japanese); notices placed on Metro buses and trains serving the project area; a press release which was sent to at least 83 local, regional, ethnic and multi-lingual publications as well as blogs; and through grassroots outreach to downtown property owners and residential management companies. Noticing was conducted in English, Spanish and Japanese.

2.5.2.1 Direct Mail

A scoping notification letter was translated into English, Spanish and Japanese and distributed by US Mail on March 16, 2009, to the postal addresses on the existing project database. The sample letter, which indicates the date, time and address of each scoping meeting, is included in Appendix L.

2.5.2.2 Take Ones

Preceding the public scoping meetings, “Take One” brochures inviting transit users to the scoping meetings were placed on Metro buses and the Metro Gold and Blue Lines in or adjacent to the project area. The “Take Ones” were identical in content to the direct mail notices described in Section 2.5.2.1 and are included in Appendix M.

2.5.2.3 Email Blasts

The project team disseminated e-mail blasts, or electronic mailings, to all stakeholders in the database with email addresses, including elected officials, neighborhood councils, and community-based organizations. These groups then were asked to forward these e-mails to their constituents and/or members. E-mail blasts are typically used to distribute the scoping meeting announcements and other project information instantly and to large numbers of people.

Electronic distribution of the meeting notice took place on March 16, 2009. Notices were sent to 721 email addresses within the existing project database. A copy of the email is included in Appendix N.

2.5.2.4 Newspaper Advertisements

Display advertisements for the scoping meetings were placed in five newspapers within the project area and were selected based on their geographic focus, language needs, and audited circulation numbers. A sample newspaper advertisement is included in Appendix O.

- *Rafu Shimpo* (English/Japanese)
 - Date: March 23, 2009
 - Circulation: 45,000 weekly
 - Serves the Japanese and Little Tokyo community within study area
- *Downtown News*
 - Date: March 20, 2009
 - Circulation: 49,000 weekly

- Serves Downtown Los Angeles and is widely distributed in the study area, including at transit stops
- *Daily Trojan*
 - Date: March 23, 2009
 - Circulation: 9,000 daily
 - Serves the University of Southern California Campus in the Exposition Park/South Park area adjacent to the study area
- *Garment and Citizen* (Spanish/English)
 - Dates: March 20, 2009
 - Circulation: 25,000 weekly
 - Serves Downtown Los Angeles area and is widely distributed to Spanish speaking workers within the study area
- *Pasadena Star News*
 - Dates: March 23, 2009
 - Circulation: 89,000 daily
 - Serves the City of Pasadena and wider portions of the San Gabriel Valley

2.5.2.5 Project Webpage

The project website, located at www.metro.net/regionalconnector, that was initially used for the AA, was updated for the purposes of the DEIS/DEIR, including publicizing the public scoping meetings. Website content for the Regional Connector included a project overview, information about upcoming meetings and other materials including Fact Sheets, presentations made at the public meetings, and other information of interest to the public from the AA. The website will continue to be updated at key milestones. Some materials posted to the website were translated into Spanish and Japanese.

2.5.2.6 Additional Outreach During Public Scoping Period

In order to maximize the coverage of the outreach effort for the scoping meetings, Metro undertook some creative approaches to engage the public as follows:

- Grassroots canvassing was conducted on March 26 and 27, 2009, at Union Station to distribute scoping meeting information to Gold Line riders. Over 3,000 flyers were distributed over these two days.
- Metro partnered with the California Institute of Technology to post on-campus meeting notices to publicize the Pasadena scoping meeting.
- Metro partnered with the University of Southern California to post notices on-campus to publicize the USC meeting. Notices were also forwarded to students in the School of Policy and Planning.
- The outreach team distributed bi-lingual meeting notices along 2nd Street within the Little Tokyo Service Center area.
- Capitalizing on new ways to communicate with a wider audience, Metro also established a “Regional Connector” Facebook page for the project. The Facebook page has over 100 members.
- The information phone line (213.922.7277) was monitored regularly.

2.5.3 Elected Official Briefing Meeting

A meeting was held with elected officials and/or their staff prior to the Public Scoping meetings. Typically, the briefing serves as a sounding board for the project team about the presentation, and provides these officials with notification about the upcoming meetings as well as preliminary information about the status of the project.

Time: Wednesday, March 25, 2009

Location: Metro
One Gateway Plaza, 15th Floor
Windsor Conference Room
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Attendees: Representatives from the following offices attended:

- Office of U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein
- Office of U.S. Representative Dianne Watson
- Office of State Senator Fran Pavley
- Office of State Senator Alex Padilla
- Office of Assembly member Curren Price

- Office of Assembly member Felipe Fuentes
- Office of Los Angeles City Councilmember Jan Perry
- City of South Pasadena

Comments: Metro received oral comments from attendees at the meeting. Several attendees suggested that Metro highlight the potential benefits of the Regional Connector to communities outside downtown Los Angeles and to explain how this project fits in with Metro's other corridor studies running concurrently.

2.5.4 Public Scoping Meetings

Four public scoping meetings were scheduled in late March and early April 2009. Meetings were conducted in compliance with NEPA and CEQA guidelines, and locations were selected to reflect equitable geographic coverage, proximity to public transportation, and to minimize overlap with other meetings scheduled in the project area. For the convenience of all attendees, bus lines to and from the meeting sites were publicized on some notices. In order to provide the greatest opportunity for community participation, meetings were scheduled in the early evening on weekdays.

An approximate total of 175 people attended the scoping meetings, with approximately 82 persons providing verbal and/or written comments at the meetings. Approximately 45 additional comments were received after the meetings through letters and email.

Individual Public Scoping meeting details are as follows:

Meeting 1

Time: Monday, March 30, 2009, 4:30 – 6:00 PM

Location: Alumni Room, Davidson Conference Center
University of Southern California
3415 S. Figueroa Street
Los Angeles, CA 9007

Attendees: 24 (Sign-in sheet included in Appendix P)

Comments: 11 verbal, 10 written

Meeting 2

Time: Tuesday, March 31, 2009, 6:30 – 8:00 PM

Location: Lake Avenue Church
393 N. Lake Ave.

Pasadena, CA 91101

Attendees: 29 (Sign-in sheet included in Appendix Q)

Comments: 11 verbal, 2 written

Meeting 3

Time: Wednesday, April 1, 2009, 6:30 – 8:00 PM

Location: Japanese American National Museum (JANM)
369 E. 1st Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Attendees: 45 (Sign-in sheet included in Appendix R)

Comments: 12 verbal, 11 written

Meeting 4

Time: Thursday, April 2, 2009, 12 Noon – 1:30 PM

Location: Board Room
Los Angeles Central Library
630 W. 5th Street
Los Angeles, CA 90071

Attendees: 56 (Sign-in sheet included in Appendix S)

Comments: 11 verbal, 9 written

2.5.4.1 Public Meeting Format

The meeting format was as follows:

- 20 minutes: Open House
- 20 minutes: Presentation
- 50 minutes: Public Comment

The scoping meetings began with an open house format to provide attendees with an opportunity to review the project information prior to the start of the presentation and subsequent comment period. Project team members were present at the project display boards to answer questions related to the technical aspects of the project. A Spanish language interpreter was made available at all meetings, with a Japanese language interpreter

at the April 1, 2009 meeting. Following the open house period, a PowerPoint presentation was made to provide attendees with information regarding the purpose of scoping and information on the project purpose and need, background, the recently completed AA process, and the alternatives being carried forward into the DEIS/DEIR. Emphasis was placed on the importance of the community providing comments before the comment deadline, at the public meetings or via email, fax, or postal mail.

Following the presentation, attendees who completed speaker cards provided their verbal comments, which were recorded by a court reporter/transcriber. The oral comment period was moderated, and speakers were asked to limit their comments to two minutes. Those requiring translation were provided with four minutes. After the public comment portion of the meeting, the project team was again available to answer technical questions at the informational display boards.

2.5.4.2 Public Meeting Materials

The following items were distributed to meeting attendees in English, Spanish and Japanese.

- Agenda
- Scoping Packet
- Comment Form

Attendees were also invited to download a copy of the presentation made at the meetings from the Metro project website.

Copies of the boards displayed at the meetings as well as meeting handouts are included in Appendix T.

A copy of the Power Point presentation is included in Appendix U.

2.5 Comments Received

The public comment period for the DEIS/DEIR was from March 24 to May 11, 2009, which was greater than the required 45 calendar days. People had opportunities to comment in writing or orally at the four public scoping meetings or they could comment in writing via email, fax, or postal letter. Email comments could be sent either directly to the Metro project manager or via a project specific email address found on the project website. In total, approximately 126 comments were received by the May 11, 2009, scoping deadline:

- Approximately 47 persons provided oral comments and 32 written statements were submitted at the public scoping meetings
- Approximately 45 emails and letters were received during the public comment period

- All comments received are included in Appendices V and W