
SUMMARY OF SCOPING COMMENTS

Metro accepted comments on the Regional Connector Transit Corridor Project throughout the entire scoping period, from March 24, 2009 until May 11, 2009. Agencies, community groups, members of the public, elected officials, and other interested parties submitted an approximate total of 126 letters, emails, comment cards, and individuals' oral testimony during this period. The summary table (Table 3-1) in Section 3.7 provides a tally of the topics discussed in the comments. It should be noted that the combined numbers of comments listed in the following subsections and the summary table will be greater than the total number of comment submissions because some commenters discussed multiple topics in their submission. Topics covered in the comments included the purpose and need, the range of alternatives to be analyzed in the DEIS/DEIR, potential impacts and mitigation measures, and other substantive issues. This section contains a summary of comments received during the scoping period. Full, unedited copies of the public comments and public scoping meeting transcripts are included in Appendix V and agency comments are in Appendix W.

3.1 Summary of Substantive Comments

All comments were reviewed and categorized in an electronic database. The database contains information documenting the name of the commenter, the agency or organization the commenter represents, the method by which the comment was received, the date the comment was received, the topic categories addressed in the comment, and the full text of the comment. The comments were largely fit into four topic categories. The major categories of comments were the project purpose and need (approximately 16 comments), the alternatives to be studied in the DEIS/DEIR (including track configuration, alignment options, station location options, and potential design features; approximately 151 comments), and environmental impacts and mitigation measures (approximately 139 comments). The following sections contain summaries of the comments from each major category.

3.2 Comments Related to Purpose and Need

Most comments regarding the purpose and need for the project cited the benefits of enhanced light rail connectivity and new stations in the downtown area. In total, approximately 16 comments related to purpose and need were received. The general topics that these comments addressed were:

- Making the light rail system connect better through downtown Los Angeles
- Making downtown Los Angeles more accessible from other Los Angeles neighborhoods
- Attracting new riders with improved transit service
- Reducing downtown traffic congestion

- Reducing transfers and shortening transit travel times
- Revitalizing the downtown area
- Timeliness of the project
- Promoting an alternative to driving
- Encouraging a pedestrian-friendly downtown
- Improving air quality
- Accommodating short headways on the light rail system
- Focusing on transit system quality
- Addressing capacity constraints of the light rail system, such as station crowding, before they become serious
- Expanding the rail transit system

3.3 Comments Related to Alternatives

An approximate total of 151 comments specifically discussed the alternatives. Several comments recommend alignment routes and design features that were studied in the AA, but not carried forward. Some comments mentioned other alignments, such as Alameda Street, which were included in prior connector studies, but were not studied in the AA because they did not meet the objective of connecting the light rail system through the central business district. Many commenters simply indicated a preference for particular alternatives without indicating reasons for their choices. Some comments citing potential environmental impacts (safety, noise, traffic circulation, etc.) as the basis for preference of an alternative are counted in both this section and Section 3.4.

3.3.1 No Build Alternative

Two comments mentioned the No Build Alternative. Both supported the No Build Alternative in light of the potential impacts of the other proposed alternatives.

3.3.2 TSM Alternative

Approximately five comments about the TSM alternative were received. One pointed out the shuttle buses' potential to improve circulation within the downtown area for senior citizens. One supported the TSM Alternative being implemented in conjunction with one of the LRT alternatives. The remaining comments did not mention any specific advantages or drawbacks.

3.3.3 At-Grade Emphasis LRT Alternative

Approximately 30 comments were received regarding the At-Grade Emphasis LRT Alternative. Less than 20 percent of the comments expressing an opinion about this alternative were in support of the At-Grade Emphasis LRT Alternative. Comments on this alternative included:

- Potential traffic impacts due to construction, reduced travel lanes as a result of the at-grade design, and the potential for stalled train operations to further disrupt traffic flows during operation
- Potential impacts to the regional system reliability from traffic congestion or potential collisions with cars or pedestrians which could interrupt service
- Potential safety concerns associated with at-grade train operations including the potential for emergency vehicle access to be hindered
- Potential impacts to rider mobility and inconvenient transfers due to the split station at 1st and Main and Los Angeles Streets
- Relative costs associated with operating the At-Grade Emphasis LRT Alternative compared to the Underground Emphasis LRT Alternative
- Potential impacts on vehicle access for specific buildings and the reduction in available turning radii with tracks running in the street.
- Potential visual impacts of at-grade LRT facilities
- Potential for the increased visibility of the at-grade system to attract more riders
- Potential economic impacts if the 2nd Street Tunnel becomes unavailable for filming
- Potential restriction of access to driveways and public buildings along 2nd Street

3.3.4 Underground Emphasis LRT Alternative

Metro received approximately 64 comments regarding the Underground Emphasis LRT Alternative. Over 80 percent of the comments expressed support for this alternative. Some commenters indicated specific concerns and/or potential benefits. These included:

- Potential for greater safety and reliability over an at-grade configuration
- Potential for fewer impacts on traffic circulation
- Potential for fewer impacts to downtown land uses and the potential for public/private joint development projects and other economic benefits to businesses on 2nd Street

- Potential for negative impacts on businesses in the Little Tokyo District and loss of businesses and parking at 1st and Alameda Streets
- Potential for negative impacts on traffic operations and intersection capacity at 1st and Alameda Streets as well as vehicle and freight access to buildings in this vicinity
- Several comments were related to the potential location and design of the station on 2nd Street
- Potential construction impacts associated with tunneling, such as detours for pedestrians and automobiles, noise, and loss of street parking
- Potential for easier pedestrian circulation compared to the other alternatives
- Potentially fewer visual impacts to the existing streetscape
- Discontinuation of direct service to East Los Angeles from Little Tokyo/Arts District Station
- Ability of the alternative to avoid disruption of Metro and LADOT DASH bus service
- Potential for the high volumes of trains at 1st and Alameda Streets to deter pedestrians and motorists from crossing, causing a division in the Little Tokyo neighborhood

3.3.5 Configuration

Approximately 25 comments were received regarding the potential configurations for the LRT tracks. Comments in this category did not specifically mention either of the build alternatives. Since both of the LRT alternatives include underground and at-grade segments, comments about configuration are relevant to both. Comments in this category were primarily related to the preference to grade separate the tracks from automobile traffic either by placing the system entirely underground or elevated. Commenters identified potential benefits to system reliability and speed and the potential to avoid impacts to traffic congestion or pedestrian circulation and safety from a grade separated configuration. Many comments suggest exclusively using one type of configuration (an entirely underground alignment, for example).

3.3.6 Station Locations and Connections

An approximate total of 25 comments suggesting new station locations were received, along with five comments about connections that the Regional Connector could make with other operating and planned transit services and activity centers at its stations. These comments relate to issues of accessibility and mobility within the project area and the regional system. The comments pertaining to station locations included:

- Suggestions for additional station locations:

- A second station at 1st and Alameda Streets, just east of the intersection, in order to facilitate transfers between the North-South and East-West LRT services.
- A station near 2nd and Spring Streets on the Underground Emphasis LRT Alternative
- At-grade station at Alameda and 7th Streets
- At-grade station at Alameda Street and Olympic Boulevard
- A station location close to the Civic Center
- A station at Temple and Judge John Aiso Streets on the At-Grade Emphasis LRT Alternative
- A station in the western portion of Little Tokyo
- A station near Weller Court
- An underground station on the Mangrove development site
- Alternate station location suggestions:
 - A station on 2nd Street between Los Angeles and San Pedro Streets instead of between Main and Los Angeles Streets on the Underground Emphasis LRT Alternative
 - Moving the station planned for 2nd and Hope Streets to 2nd Street and Grand Avenue
 - Replacing the existing Little Tokyo/Arts District Station with a larger underground station

Commenters suggested that the following connections be accommodated by the Regional Connector stations:

- Connection to the proposed Broadway Streetcar, potentially at the Underground Emphasis LRT Alternative station at 2nd and Los Angeles Streets
- Connections to the Grand Avenue Project and Historic Core
- Connections to additional bus service

- Convenient connections for bicycles and pedestrians at all stations

3.3.7 Other Alignments

Metro received approximately 11 comments suggesting alignments for the Regional Connector other than the At-Grade Emphasis LRT Alternative and the Underground Emphasis LRT Alternative. These suggested alignments are as follows:

- An alignment along 3rd Street from Flower Street to Little Tokyo
- An alignment following Alameda Street from Little Tokyo/Arts District Station to Washington Boulevard and then turning west to join the existing Metro Blue Line tracks
- An underground alignment on either 3rd Street or Temple Street instead of 2nd Street
- An alignment directly south from the Metro Gold Line bridge across the 101 freeway into a subway beneath 1st and Alameda Streets leading to the Underground Emphasis LRT Alternative's subway underneath 2nd Street

3.3.8 Design Features

Approximately 17 comments were submitted suggesting additional design features to be taken into consideration. Suggestions regarding design features were primarily related to issues of accessibility and mobility and potential visual and aesthetic impacts. These features include the following:

- Alternatives to the At-Grade Emphasis LRT Alternative's split stations at 1st and Main Streets and 1st and Los Angeles Streets to potentially reduce confusion and prevent missed connections
- Provide knock-out panels on the Underground Emphasis LRT Alternative to provide for future system connections at 2nd Street and Central Avenue to a southerly route on Central Avenue to Washington Boulevard, and at 2nd and Hope Streets to a route along Temple Street to Silverlake and Glendale
- Provide escalator access at CitiGroup Center Plaza into the proposed Underground Emphasis LRT Alternative station at 5th and Flower Streets
- Provide entrances and exits directly into nearby buildings at underground stations
- Building an underground split-level junction near 1st and Alameda streets instead of a single-level junction at-grade, so as to improve operations and avoid traffic impacts

- Double tracks (two tracks in each direction, for a total of four sets of tracks) or three sets of tracks to increase capacity
- Providing adequate capacity for transfers at Little Tokyo/Arts District Station
- Provide additional capacity beyond the provisions of either build alternative
- Include bicycle racks at stations
- Provide green space at stations
- Ensuring that the project complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act

3.4 Comments Related to Potential Impacts

Approximately 139 comments received pertained to specific potential impacts of the project. Commenters discussed a wide range of impacts, though the majority touched upon traffic circulation, safety, and construction impacts. The comments on each type of impact are summarized in the following subsections.

3.4.1 Transportation Impacts – Traffic Circulation

Metro received approximately 35 comments regarding potential transportation impacts and traffic circulation. Most of them expressed concern over the potential for increased traffic congestion as a result of construction and operation of at-grade LRT facilities. Comments included the following issues:

- Transportation impacts and traffic circulation comments pertaining to the At-Grade Emphasis LRT Alternative:
 - Potential impacts to traffic congestion on adjacent streets with the conversion of 2nd Street to primarily rail use under the At-Grade Emphasis LRT Alternative
 - Potential for the At-Grade Emphasis LRT Alternative to restrict access to driveways and public buildings along 2nd Street
 - Potential for at-grade LRT to worsen traffic congestion in the downtown area
- Transportation impacts and traffic circulation comments pertaining to the Underground Emphasis LRT Alternative:
 - Potential for worsened traffic due to the loss of parking on the lot bounded by 1st Street, Alameda Street, 2nd Street, and Central Avenue under the Underground Emphasis LRT Alternative

- Compatibility of the Underground Emphasis LRT Alternative with the encouragement of a pedestrian-friendly downtown
- Potential traffic capacity and operation impacts specifically to the intersection of 1st and Alameda Streets
- Transportation impacts and traffic circulation comments that do not pertain to a specific alternative:
 - Potential for the Regional Connector to alleviate traffic congestion in the downtown area
 - Potential impacts resulting in loss of both on and off-street parking
 - Potential to impact access to specific buildings for vehicle and freight due to changes in the current street capacity and configurations

3.4.2 Land Use and Development

Four comments about Land Use and Development impacts were received. The issues addressed in these comments include:

- Potential for the Underground Emphasis LRT Alternative to minimize long-term impacts on downtown land use, provide sites for possible public-private joint development projects, and compatibility with continued development of properties along 2nd Street
- Potential for transit-oriented development if an underground station is located on 2nd Street between Los Angeles and San Pedro Streets
- Foreclosing options for signature development in Little Tokyo neighborhood

3.4.3 Community and Neighborhood Impacts

Approximately ten comments were received concerning community and neighborhood impacts. The issues addressed by these comments included:

- Community and neighborhood impacts comments pertaining to the Underground Emphasis LRT Alternative:
 - Potential for the Underground Emphasis LRT Alternative to divide Little Tokyo at 1st and Alameda Streets due to the high volume of trains

- Potential deterioration of quality of life in Little Tokyo due to the loss of businesses on the block bounded by 1st Street, Alameda Street, 2nd Street, and Central Avenue under the Underground Emphasis LRT Alternative
- Potential for the Underground Emphasis LRT Alternative to reduce the developable size of Little Tokyo
- Community and neighborhood impacts comments that do not pertain to a specific alternative:
 - Potential impacts to the Little Tokyo and Arts District areas due to changes in traffic circulation and land use patterns
 - Potential for project facilities to force alteration of traditional parade routes
 - Potential for a grade separated alignment to have less of an impact on revitalizing neighborhoods than a non-grade separated alignment

3.4.4 Visual and Aesthetic Impacts

Approximately nine comments regarding visual and aesthetic impacts were received. Issues addressed by these comments include:

- Visual and aesthetic impacts comments pertaining to the At-Grade Emphasis LRT Alternative:
 - Potential for the high visibility of the At-Grade Emphasis LRT Alternative to attract more riders
 - Potential for at-grade LRT facilities to interrupt the streetscape to an unacceptable extent
- A visual and aesthetic impacts comment pertaining to the Underground Emphasis LRT Alternative:
 - Potential for the Underground Emphasis LRT Alternative to avoid visual street clutter
- Visual and aesthetic impacts comments that do not pertain to a specific alternative:
 - Potential impacts to the Little Tokyo and Arts District areas
 - Potential visual impacts of catenary poles on adjacent residences, particularly those located at the same level as the wires

- Request to incorporate sound urban design and public art into the project

3.4.5 Noise and Vibration

Approximately eight comments about noise and vibration were received. The issues addressed in these comments included potential noise impacts from train horns sounding when approaching grade crossings, noise and vibration from the trains moving along the tracks, potential damage to surrounding buildings due to construction vibration, and engine noise.

3.4.6 Historic Impacts

Four comments about historic impacts were received. The topics addressed by these comments included potential impacts to the historic Saint Vibiana Cathedral, the historic Higgins Building, and historic features along 2nd Street.

3.4.7 Parklands

Two comments regarding parklands were received. One suggested that parks be created adjacent to proposed stations, and another suggested converting the area above the proposed Alameda Street underpass to open space.

3.4.8 Economic and Fiscal Impacts

Approximately 11 comments concerning the economic and fiscal impacts of the project were received. These comments discussed the following issues:

- An economic and fiscal impacts comment pertaining to the At-Grade Emphasis LRT Alternative:
 - Potential for the At-Grade Emphasis LRT Alternative to eliminate revenue from filming in the 2nd Street tunnel due to the addition of tracks
- Economic and fiscal impacts comments pertaining to the Underground Emphasis LRT Alternative:
 - Potential loss of businesses due to construction of the portal at 1st and Alameda Streets for the Underground Emphasis LRT Alternative and subsequent potential effects on the long-term economic wellbeing of the Little Tokyo District
 - Potential for the Underground Emphasis LRT Alternative's removal of businesses and parking to devalue properties in Little Tokyo and lead to financial losses, and request for direct assistance to these businesses

- Potential for an underground configuration to avoid impacts to current and future businesses on 2nd Street
- Potential impacts to small businesses on 2nd Street between Los Angeles and Alameda Streets from potential traffic congestion and construction
- Economic and fiscal impacts comments that do not pertain to a specific alternative:
 - Potential impacts to retail business volume due to disruptions in pedestrian and vehicle flow patterns both during construction and post construction
 - Potential for the project to create jobs

3.4.9 Safety and Security

Approximately 27 comments related to safety and security were received. Topics addressed by these comments included:

- Safety and security comments pertaining to the At-Grade Emphasis LRT Alternative:
 - Potential for at-grade trains to collide with other vehicles or pedestrians
 - Potential for at-grade LRT facilities to compromise emergency vehicle and law enforcement access
 - Potential for the grade separated Underground Emphasis LRT Alternative to be safer than the At-Grade Emphasis LRT Alternative due to high volumes of motorists and pedestrians crossing 2nd Street
- A safety and security comment pertaining to the Underground Emphasis LRT Alternative:
 - Safety concerns for pedestrians and automobiles near the proposed Underground Emphasis LRT Alternative facilities at 1st and Alameda Streets
- Safety and security comments that do not pertain to a specific alternative:
 - Potential for overcrowding on station platforms or inadequate ingress and egress at Little Tokyo/Arts District Station due to increased ridership and additional transfers
 - Potential for security issues related to the proposed underpasses on each build alternative

- Potential security issues related to unauthorized pedestrian access into tunnel facilities
- Security considerations for public facilities near the potential stations and right-of-way
- Potential safety issues for vehicles and trucks turning in and out of buildings along streets with altered configurations and capacity
- Potential health risks posed by public transit vehicles
- Potential safety concerns of seniors and persons with disabilities
- Request that the hazard analysis study be complete and adequate

3.4.10 Construction Impacts

Approximately 18 comments about construction impacts were received. Topics covered by these comments included:

- Difficulty of making changes to an active revenue rail transit line without service disruptions and additional costs
- Potential impacts to traffic during construction
- Potential construction impacts from tunneling activities and the need to mitigate those potential impacts
- Potential impacts to building access during construction
- Potential impacts to businesses during construction
- Potential for construction vibration to damage buildings and property
- Order in which portions of the build alternatives are constructed

3.4.11 Growth Inducing Impacts

One comment about growth inducing impacts was received. It mentioned the potential for the Underground Emphasis LRT Alternative to generate public/private joint development opportunities.

3.4.12 Air Quality Impacts

One comment about air quality was received. The comment contains a request to analyze potential smog reductions generated by each proposed alternative.

3.4.13 Water Resources

One comment was received requesting that the analysis evaluate potential impacts to floodplains and that the project design be consistent with the National Flood Insurance Program requirements for new development.

3.5 Comments Related to Policy, Scoping, Operations, and Other Projects

Approximately nine comments pertaining to policy, the scoping process, operations, and other projects were received. Some of the topics covered by these comments included:

- Extending the operating hours of the Metro Rail system
- Revising Metro policies regarding transfers
- Creation of a downtown free fare zone
- Request for information about Metro Expo Line construction activities
- Request that the Scoping Report and EIS/EIR be adequate, respond to non-environmental comments, and be subject to critical review
- Request to maintain Metro Blue Line headways
- Suggestions for new rail projects

3.6 Comments Submitted by Federal, State, and Other Agencies

Seven agencies submitted comments during the scoping period. Most of the topics mentioned were also covered in the comments discussed in the previous sections. However, some of the agency comments presented new issues, including requests to ensure compliance with government-mandated policies, safety concerns, and warnings of potential access restrictions to various public buildings along the proposed alignments, among others. The agency comments are summarized in the following sections, and full text of the agency comments is provided in Appendix W. Many agencies also have regulatory authority over the design and construction of a rail project. The concerns of all the agencies will be addressed both through the DEIS/DEIR analysis and through on-going coordination with Metro.

3.6.1 Comments Submitted by Federal Agencies

The United States District Court submitted a comment that discussed topics listed in the previous sections as well as concerns about the At-Grade Emphasis LRT Alternative's impacts on access to the new Federal District Courthouse planned for the block bounded by 1st Street, Hill Street, Broadway, and 2nd Street.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) of the US Department of Homeland Security also provided comments related to the analysis that will need to be conducted in the DEIS/DEIR and the requirements for any proposed development within a floodplain. The Environmental Protection Agency provided additional comments regarding the issues to be analyzed.

3.6.2 Comments Submitted by State Agencies

The State of California Department of Transportation, the California Public Utilities Commission, and the California Native American Heritage Commission submitted comments discussing topics listed in the previous sections. They also emphasized the need to keep the public informed of the progress of the EIS/EIR study process and provided information on CEQA guidelines.

3.6.3 Comments Submitted by Other Agencies

The Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, the City of Los Angeles Department of Transportation, the Community Redevelopment of the City of Los Angeles, and the City of Pasadena submitted comments covering some of the topics mentioned in previous sections, as well as:

- Request for traffic impact analysis
- Design and placement guidelines for stations, the alignment, and the surrounding streets
- Request for anticipated train speeds to be included in the EIS/EIR
- Application of the Federal Rail Administration's grade crossing policy
- Security of the At-Grade Emphasis LRT Alternative during protests in the Civic Center area

3.7 Comment Database

Table 3-1 provides a summary of the comments received during the scoping period. Transcripts of the spoken comments submitted at the public scoping meetings and full text of all written public comments are provided in Appendix V. Agency comments are provided in Appendix W.



Table 3-1 Comment Summary

Purpose and Need	Better light rail system connectivity downtown More access between Los Angeles neighborhoods Attracting new riders with improved transit service Reducing downtown traffic congestion Reducing transfers and shortening trip times Revitalizing downtown Timeliness of the project				Promoting an alternative to driving Encouraging a pedestrian-friendly downtown Improving air quality Accommodating short headways on the LRT lines Focusing on transit system quality Addressing LRT system capacity constraints Expanding the rail transit system			
	Proposed Alternatives	Prefer No-Build (2) TSM (5) Prefer (50%) Do Not Prefer (50%)		At-Grade Emphasis LRT (30) Prefer (20%) Do Not Prefer (80%)		Underground Emphasis LRT (64) Prefer (80%) Do Not Prefer (20%)		
Other Alternatives Studied During AA Phase		Stations (23) 2 nd & Spring Bunker Hill 2 nd & LA-San Pedro Two stations on 2 nd Street Underground Little Tokyo Station		Connections (10) Broadway Streetcar Grand Avenue Project Historic Core Additional bus service Bikes and pedestrians		Alignments (11) 3 rd Street from Flower Street to Little Tokyo		Design Features (17) Bike racks Green space More capacity Escalator to CitiGroup Plaza ADA compliance
	Other Alternatives Studied During AA Phase	1 st & Alameda (transfer platform) Alameda & 7 th Alameda & Olympic 2 nd & Grand		Configuration (25) At-Grade Underground		Alameda Street from 1 st Street to Washington Boulevard		Knock-out panels at 2 nd & Central Knock-out panels near Bunker Hill Double tracks Underground split-level junction in Little Tokyo
Potential Impacts		Traffic Circulation (35) Land Use and Development (4) Community and Neighborhood Impacts (10) Visual and Aesthetic Impacts (9) Noise and Vibration (8) Historic Impacts (4)				Parklands (2) Economic and Fiscal Impacts (11) Safety and Security (27) Construction Impacts (18) Growth Inducing Impacts (1) Air Quality Impacts (1)		
	Other Impacts	Extending the operation hours of the Metro Rail system Revising Metro's transfer policies Creation of a downtown free fare zone Request for information about Metro Expo Line construction Request that Scoping Report and EIS/EIR be adequate and respond to non-environmental comments						

Note: Tallies and percentages are approximate