



U.S. Department  
of Transportation  
**Federal Transit  
Administration**

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December 30, 2011

Mr. Arthur T. Leahy  
Chief Executive Officer  
Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority  
One Gateway Plaza  
Los Angeles, CA 90012-295

RE: Environmental Record of Decision for the  
Crenshaw/LAX Transit Corridor Project

*Art*  
Dear Mr. Leahy:

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) has completed its review of the public and interagency comments on the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the Crenshaw/LAX Transit Corridor Project. In compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the FTA has issued the enclosed Record of Decision (ROD) for the Project. As stated in the ROD, the Project must incorporate all the mitigations of adverse effects presented in the FEIS and the ROD. These mitigation actions include, but are not limited to all commitments to further consultation on specific issues.

If the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (LACMTA) contemplates any change to the Project, the LACMTA must notify the FTA immediately and refrain from taking any action related to the proposed change until the FTA has determined what, if any, additional environmental analysis is necessary, and that analysis has been completed and approved by the FTA. For example, if the LACMTA wishes to make a change to the mitigation measures in the FEIS, the ROD, or a change to the Project that would cause new or changed environmental or community impacts not presented in the FEIS, then the LACMTA must notify the FTA in writing of the desire to make a change.

Any such change will be reviewed in accordance with FTA environmental procedures (23 C.F.R. 771.130) on supplemental documentation. The FTA will determine the appropriate level of environmental review for this or any other proposed change (i.e., a written re-evaluation of the FEIS, an environmental assessment of the change, or a supplemental environmental impact statement), and the NEPA process for this supplemental environmental review will conclude with a separate NEPA determination, or, if necessary, with an amendment to this ROD.

Upon the FTA's issuance of the ROD, the LACMTA is authorized to take the following Project actions without prejudice to the FTA's future financial assistance for these actions:

- the acquisition of any real property or real property rights identified in the FEIS or ROD as needed for the Project;
- the relocation of persons and businesses on that property;
- the relocation of utilities affected by the Project;
- and the acquisition of rail vehicles for the Project.

This pre-award authorization is not a real or implied commitment by the FTA to provide any funding for the Project or any element of the Project. However, if the FTA were to provide grant funding for the Project, the cost of the actions listed above, performed after the ROD issuance, would be eligible expenses. No other Project action has pre-award authorization at this time. To maintain the Project's eligibility for Federal assistance, all real property acquisitions, and the relocation of persons and businesses thereon, must be conducted in accordance with the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act and its implementing regulation (49 CFR Part 24) and any other applicable Federal law or regulation. The acquisition of vehicles must also be in accordance with the FTA Buy America requirements to maintain eligibility for reimbursement of vehicle acquisition costs.

Please make the ROD and supporting documentation available to affected government agencies and the public. Availability of the ROD should be published in local newspapers and should be posted on the Project website. The ROD also should be provided directly to affected government agencies, including the State Inter-governmental Review contact established under Executive Order 12372.

We look forward to continuing to work with you to bring this important Project to fruition. Should you have any questions on the ROD, please contact Mr. Ray Tellis of our Los Angeles Metropolitan Office at (213) 202-3956.

Sincerely,



Leslie T. Rogers  
Regional Administrator

**Record of Decision  
on the  
Crenshaw/LAX Transit Corridor Project  
in  
Los Angeles County, California  
by the  
Federal Transit Administration**

**Decision**

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) has determined that the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) and related Federal environmental statutes, regulations, and executive orders have been satisfied for the Crenshaw/LAX Transit Corridor Project (the Project) located in Los Angeles County.

This environmental Record of Decision (ROD) applies to the fixed guideway transit alternative from the Metro Green Line to the Exposition Line via the Harbor Subdivision and Crenshaw Boulevard, which was described as the Project (defined as the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) and refinements) and evaluated in the *Crenshaw/LAX Transit Corridor Project Final Environmental Impact Statement*, dated September 2011 (FEIS). The Project sponsor, the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (LACMTA), seeks financial assistance from FTA for the Project. If FTA provides financial assistance for the final design or construction of the Project, FTA will require that LACMTA design and build it as presented in the FEIS and this ROD. Any proposed change by LACMTA must be evaluated in accordance with 23 CFR § 771.130 and must be approved by FTA in writing before the agency requesting the change can proceed with the change.

**Background**

The Project is an 8.5-mile fixed guideway rail system that begins from a southern terminus at the Metro Green Line, and follows the Harbor Subdivision Railroad right-of-way, adjacent to Aviation Boulevard and Florence Avenue and continues northeast to Crenshaw Boulevard where it would travel north largely within the Crenshaw Boulevard right-of-way to the Exposition/Crenshaw Station, adjacent to the Exposition Line currently under construction. Grade separations would occur adjacent to the LAX south runway complex, aerial across Century Boulevard, Manchester Avenue, and La Cienega Boulevard, and below grade across La Brea Avenue, between Victoria Avenue and 60<sup>th</sup> Street, and between 48<sup>th</sup> Street and Exposition Boulevard. The Project will include six transit stations, a vehicle maintenance storage facility near Arbor Vitae Street and Bellanca Avenue, park-and-ride lots at the Florence/La Brea, Florence/West and Crenshaw/Exposition Stations, traction power substations, and the acquisition of rail vehicles and maintenance equipment.

As the Project sponsor and potential recipient of FTA financial assistance for the Project, LACMTA served as a co-lead agency with FTA in conducting the environmental review process. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) served as NEPA cooperating agency.

## **Planning for the Project**

The Project will improve transit service within the Crenshaw/LAX Transit Corridor (Corridor) and increase regional connectivity throughout the Los Angeles County Region. The Crenshaw/LAX Transit Corridor is a heavily traveled north-south oriented corridor in Los Angeles County, California. Since 1967, the inadequacies of connectivity and mobility within the corridor have been the subject of numerous regional transportation and transit studies. They concluded that transportation within and from the corridor was constrained, congested, and urgently in need of system improvements. Implementation of an effective north-south transportation network within the corridor is vital to alleviate current and projected connectivity and mobility problems affecting corridor residents and businesses by providing essential linkages from residential areas to commercial, activity, employment, and institutional centers within and adjacent to the corridor. The major themes and underlying needs supporting transit improvements in the corridor include peak hour congestion within the Corridor, transit accessibility and availability, land use integration and economic development, growing demand for transit service, and benefits for the environment.

FTA published the Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an EIS for this Project in the *Federal Register* on October 2, 2007, and the EIS scoping process was concluded in November 5, 2007. The *Crenshaw/LAX Transit Corridor Project Alternatives Analysis/Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Draft Environmental Impact Report (AA/DEIS/DEIR)* was completed in August 2009 and evaluated six full corridor build alternatives. In accordance with FTA guidance, the Alternatives Analysis evaluated and screened a range of transit modes and general alignment alternatives in terms of their cost, benefits, and impacts. After review of the Alternatives Analysis and consideration of comments received from the public, LACMTA identified a Light Rail Transit Alternative as the Locally Preferred Alternative on December 10, 2009. FTA and LACMTA proceeded with the NEPA review of this proposed action. The Notice of Availability (NOA) of the DEIS was published in the *Federal Register* on September 11, 2009 and was circulated to the public for comment over a 45-day review period that concluded on October 26, 2009.

A Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS) was issued in March 2011 that evaluated the identification of new potential maintenance sites and a Section 4(f) Evaluation of parklands and historic resources based on the refined LPA. The NOA was published in the *Federal Register* on February 25, 2011 and was circulated to the public for comment over a 45-day review period that concluded on April 11, 2011.

FTA approved distribution of the FEIS on August 31, 2011, and the NOA of the FEIS was published on September 9, 2011 in the *Federal Register*. The review period for the FEIS concluded on October 10, 2011.

## **Alternatives Considered**

FTA and the LACMTA considered a broad range of alternatives in various studies prior to the initiation of the NEPA process and continuing through the Draft and Final EIS. The planning and project development process involved analyzing the alternatives to determine which alternatives would be studied in the AA/DEIS and carried through the FEIS. These analyses typically result in alternatives being eliminated from further consideration during the project

development phases. Alternatives can be eliminated from further consideration during the planning process, before the NEPA process is initiated, or after the NEPA process is initiated (e.g., during NEPA scoping or early coordination activities, as part of the planning process). This alternatives analyses process results in the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) being selected.

Prior to the initiation of the AA/DEIS/DEIR, three corridor transportation studies occurred over the last 13 years which identified the need for high-capacity transit system improvements. In 1994, the *Crenshaw-Prairie Corridor Preliminary Planning Study* identified the need for high-capacity transit improvements. The options were studied further in the *Crenshaw-Prairie Corridor Route Refinement Study* (2000). The *2003 Crenshaw-Prairie Corridor Major Investment Study (MIS)* made a determination for a set of four alternatives that included No-Build, Metro Rapid Bus, Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), and Light Rail Transit (LRT). This set of alternatives was based on extensive public and stakeholder outreach, and fatal flaw level technical and environmental analysis. The MIS recommended the light rail alternative be carried forward over the heavy rail alternative for several reasons. Heavy rail had limited connection opportunities, since there were no longer extensions of heavy rail to the study area contemplated and would have required a stand-alone system with no connection opportunities and requiring its own maintenance facilities. Light rail was already present in the area, especially in the form of the Metro Green Line, which provided for better connection opportunities and travel time and ridership benefits to the Crenshaw/LAX LRT Alternative and other lines. In addition, the profile of demand (ridership potential) and development in the corridor did not require the ridership capacity provided by heavy rail.

Significant planning and screening efforts were then conducted throughout the NEPA process to identify which alternatives met the Project's purpose and need. Identified alternatives were advanced and analyzed through the process, thereby resulting in a Project definition (LPA and refinements). The screening, evaluation and public involvement effort included:

1. An initial screening of the potential reasonable transit modes, alignments, and station locations occurred before the public and agencies scoping meetings. This screening resulted in the conceptual alternatives presented for comment at the scoping meetings.
2. A detailed screening of the conceptual alternatives determined the alternatives that were discussed, analyzed, and evaluated in the AA/DEIS and presented for public comment.
3. A final alternatives screening in the AA/DEIS, resulting in the Project definition that included the LPA and refinements. The Project was identified and analyzed in the FEIS and presented for public comment.

At each phase a more detailed level of analysis was employed. At the end of each phase, the alternatives selected for advancement and further evaluation were those that demonstrated the best combined performance according to the evaluation criteria. This included those alternatives that best met the project's purpose and need, corridor transportation needs, were feasible from a cost and financial perspective, provided benefits to the community, and had the least impact on the environment. For all alignments, two modes were considered for the build alternatives – bus rapid transit (BRT) and light rail transit (LRT).

### **Alternative Alignment Segments Considered and Eliminated**

The initial alternatives screening resulted in alignment sections and alignment configurations being eliminated from further analysis as referenced in the Final Alternatives Screening Report (September 2008). Alignment configurations under consideration included horizontal (street route) and vertical (at-grade, below-grade, and aerial) alignments. The initial alignment segments eliminated are listed below:

*Prairie Avenue between the Harbor Subdivision and the Metro Green Line* was eliminated because (1) there is inadequate right-of-way between Florence Avenue and Manchester Boulevard for an at-grade or aerial LRT alignment or a dedicated BRT lane; (2) there are engineering problems connecting to the Metro Green Line Hawthorne Station over the I-105 Freeway; and, (3) potential adverse visual, noise, and land use impacts.

*Crenshaw Boulevard between the Harbor Subdivision and the Metro Green Line* was eliminated because the right-of-way is inadequate and the engineering problems associated with the curves between Crenshaw Drive and Manchester Boulevard. In addition, there are significant grade and roadway elevation changes on Crenshaw Boulevard between Florence Avenue and 80th Street, the landscaped median would have to be removed, there are no activity centers or major trip generators between the Harbor Subdivision and Manchester Boulevard, and public support is lacking.

*Century Boulevard between Crenshaw Boulevard and Aviation Boulevard* was eliminated because the right-of-way cannot accommodate an at-grade alignment; acquiring right-of-way would affect existing businesses; and there is inadequate distance to transition from an aerial alignment to a below grade alignment east of the I-405 Freeway. In addition, there are limited station location options.

*Hawthorne Boulevard between the Metro Green Line and El Segundo Boulevard* was eliminated because there is not a viable station terminus at Hawthorne/El Segundo Boulevards, there are no activity centers, and there is low density development.

The initial alternatives screening resulted in conceptual BRT and LRT alternatives that were analyzed in more detail. The Crenshaw/LAX Transit Corridor were divided into three sections to facilitate detailed screening:

- Section A: Wilshire Boulevard to Exposition Boulevard – This segment consisted of three alignment alternatives – (1) Wilshire/La Brea to Crenshaw/Exposition, (2) Wilshire/Western to Crenshaw/Exposition, and (3) begin at Crenshaw/Exposition.
- Section B: Exposition Boulevard to Harbor Subdivision/Florence Avenue.
- Section C: Harbor Subdivision/Florence Avenue to the Metro Green Line – This segment had two alignment alternatives – (1) via the Harbor Subdivision only to Aviation Boulevard/Imperial Highway or (2) via the Harbor Subdivision/La Brea Avenue/Hawthorne Boulevard to Hawthorne Boulevard/ I-105 Freeway.

The Section A, B, and C alignment options were combined to develop six full corridor alternatives extending from the three northern termini (Wilshire Boulevard/La Brea Avenue, Crenshaw/Wilshire Boulevards or Crenshaw/Exposition Boulevards) to the two southern termini.

Key considerations and criteria used in the screening of the alternatives included potential ridership, connectivity with planned and existing Metro transit lines, right-of-way availability, cost effectiveness, community and environmental impacts, compatible land uses and connections to Downtown Los Angeles. Criteria for location of stations included proximity to activity centers, regional connectivity, technical feasibility/right-of-way availability, community compatibility and urban design issues. For all alternatives, a key factor was safety considerations along the entire alignment and for station locations, as embodied in LACMTA's "Policy for Grade Crossings for Light Rail Transit (adopted December 4, 2003).

Of the six full corridor alternatives, four were eliminated and two were incorporated into the two Build Alternatives. Alternatives that served the Hawthorne Boulevard/I-105 Freeway Alternative (Alternatives 3, 4, and 6) were eliminated due to weaker ridership and the requirement for an indirect transfer to connect to the Metro Green Line and LAX. Alternatives 1 and 3, both of which started at Wilshire Boulevard and La Brea Avenue were eliminated due to the fact that the Metro Purple Line connection is not yet in place to justify the extension to this location.

The remaining Alternatives 2 and 5 were advanced as the two alignment alternatives for inclusion in the DEIS. The BRT Alternative (Alternative 2) alignment starts at Wilshire Boulevard and Western Avenue, runs south on Crenshaw Boulevard and on the Harbor Subdivision right-of-way to the Metro Green Line's Aviation/LAX station at Aviation Boulevard and Imperial Highway.

The LRT Alternative (Alternative 5) was also included in the DEIS due to its shorter route and greater cost effectiveness compared to Alignment Alternative 2. The LRT Alternative's alignment starts at Crenshaw and Exposition Boulevards, runs south within the Crenshaw Boulevard right-of-way and along the Harbor Subdivision to the Metro Green Line's Aviation/LAX Station at Aviation Boulevard and Imperial Highway.

In addition to these the build alternatives (BRT and LRT), the AA/DEIS evaluated other refinements and design options to the LRT alternative including a Crenshaw/Vernon station. A No Build Alternative and a Transportation Management (TSM) Alternative were also thoroughly evaluated in the AA/DEIS. The DEIS was circulated to the public for a 45 day review period from September 11 to October 26, 2009.

Following the issuance of the DEIS and after consideration of comments received, in December 2009 the LACMTA Board selected the LRT Alternative 5 and three design options as the LPA. This selection was based on consideration of the benefits of each alternative studied in the DEIS, public and agency comments received on the DEIS, and previous LACMTA Board action identifying the LRT Alternative as the Project. The LACMTA Board did not include the Crenshaw/Vernon station as part of the LPA.

At this meeting the Metro Board directed that a special analysis be completed that examined the constructability, safety, environmental and economic development, and cost and schedule issues

associated with a below grade segment between 48<sup>th</sup> and 59th Streets on Crenshaw Boulevard. The results of the report, defined as the *Park Mesa Heights Grade Separation (PMHGS) Analysis (June 2010)*, is discussed later in this document.

A supplemental process was also conducted to re-analyze maintenance facility sites in addition to proposed Maintenance Facility Sites B and D considered in the DEIS. (Two others sites previously considered and eliminated in a screening process were not included in the DEIS). During circulation of the DEIS, these sites elicited comments from municipal officials, elected representatives, and abutting business and property owners. To try to address and resolve these concerns, the LACMTA Board directed that Sites B and D be removed from further consideration and that additional alternative maintenance facility sites be evaluated.

The new analysis identified a total of 18 new sites for consideration. These sites were screened using the same criteria that were used to evaluate the original four sites as well as additional criteria developed from public input at community outreach meetings. This evaluation and screening process resulted in the selection of four sites that were analyzed in a SDEIS. The following four Maintenance Facility Site locations were evaluated in the SDEIS:

- Site #14 – Arbor Vitae/Bellanca
- Site #15 – Manchester/Aviation
- Site #17 – Marine/Redondo Beach
- Division 22 Northern Expansion

The SDEIS was circulated to the public for a 45-day review period from February 25 to April 11, 2011. The evaluation led the LACMTA Board of Directors on April 28, 2011 to identify Site #14 – Arbor Vitae/Bellanca Alternative as the preferred maintenance site. This alternative is also discussed in Chapter 5.0 of the FEIS.

The FEIS analyzed a refined version of the LRT Alternative as the Project including Site #14 as the maintenance facility. This Project is the subject of this ROD. The FEIS included additional information and analyses, as well as minor revisions to the Project that were made from design refinement and to address comments received from agencies and the public on the DEIS.

On May 26, 2011, the LACMTA Board also took further action on the Crenshaw/Vernon station design option that was considered in the DEIS and carried through the FEIS. The LACMTA Board directed that the Crenshaw/Vernon Station be included as a construction bid option (separate from the base Project Definition) during the procurement of design-build contracts. A determination of whether the station will be included will be made if proposed costs can be met with available project funding.

On September 22, 2011, the LACMTA Board approved the project definition, which included the LPA as defined in its December 2009 action as well as several changes after consideration of the FEIS and supporting analysis including the *Park Mesa Heights Grade Separation Analysis*.



## **Description of the Project**

The project as described in the FEIS is the subject of this ROD. Final Design and construction of the Crenshaw/LAX Transit Corridor is scheduled to begin in 2012, with operation commencing in 2018. The Project would operate using high-floor articulated vehicles, electrically powered by an overhead wire, and operating along rail tracks located in both exclusive and semi-exclusive rights-of-way. The LRT alignment would be double-tracked and would be comprised of at-grade street, at-grade railroad, aerial, and below-grade sections. The project would include six stations, three park-and-ride lots, bus transfer facilities at the stations, a vehicle maintenance and operations facility, and traction power substations.

Route. The project would ultimately extend approximately 8.5 miles from the Metro Green Line Aviation/LAX Station to the Exposition LRT line at the Exposition/Crenshaw Boulevards intersection. From a southern terminus at the Metro Green Line, the alignment would follow the Harbor Subdivision Railroad right-of-way, adjacent to Aviation Boulevard/Florence Avenue and continue northeast to Crenshaw Boulevard where it would travel north within the Crenshaw Boulevard right-of-way to the Exposition/Crenshaw Station, adjacent to the Exposition Line currently under construction.

Stations. Stations are located at: Aviation/Century (aerial), Florence/La Brea (at grade), Florence/West (at grade), Crenshaw/Slauson (at grade), Crenshaw/Martin Luther King Jr. (below grade), and Crenshaw/Exposition (below grade).

Grade Separations. Grade separations include the following:

- Adjacent to the LAX south runways (below grade trench of which a 1,600 foot segment is fully-covered)
- Aerial across Century Boulevard
- Aerial across Manchester Avenue
- Aerial across La Cienega Boulevard/I-405
- Below grade across La Brea Avenue
- Below grade between Victoria Avenue and 60th Street
- Below grade between 48th Street and Exposition Boulevard

Eighty-one comments cited general support for a below-grade separation in the Park Mesa Heights neighborhood, which includes the alignment between 48<sup>th</sup> and 59<sup>th</sup> streets along Crenshaw Boulevard and the station at Crenshaw and Slauson. Some commenters stated opposition to the entire project if this project feature is not included. A below-grade alternative from 48th Street to 59th Street has been studied and considered throughout the planning and design phases during the Crenshaw/LAX Transit Corridor Project.

Grade separation decisions are determined by consideration of a number of factors related to technical design or environmental criteria. To provide a standard methodology for determining whether grade crossings along light rail lines should be grade separated or at-grade, the Metro Board adopted and published a "Policy for Grade Crossings for Light Rail Transit" on December 4, 2003. The policy established consistent criteria for evaluating operational, safety, institutional and financial issues. It also recognized that decisions about grade crossings are made under complex circumstances that include the interests of local, state and federal governments,

communities near the rail line, and LACMTA. The policy established a process of several steps where individual grade crossings are evaluated in progressively greater detail to determine the conditions under which light rail trains may operate through a crossing efficiently and safely at-grade.

The determination of the horizontal and vertical alignments (at-grade or below-grade) at all grade crossings including those in the Park Mesa Heights neighborhood was made based on application of the Policy for Grade Crossings for Light Rail Transit. Before making its final determination for each grade crossing, LACMTA completed a number of studies, including early studies for the Crenshaw-Prairie Transit Corridor (1994), the “2003 Crenshaw Prairie Corridor Major Investment Study (MIS),” the “Crenshaw/LAX Transit Corridor Project Alternatives Analysis/Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Draft Environmental Impact Report (AA/DEIS/DEIR)” (August 2009), and the “Crenshaw/LAX Transit Corridor Park Mesa Heights Grade Separation Analysis” (June 2010) (PMHGS Analysis). Discussions of this process and the above studies have been shared with the community through a series of public meetings and dialogue. As a result of these studies, the proposed alignment includes below-grade and at-grade separations along the entire alignment (see illustration at page ES-19 of FEIS/FEIR).

At its May 26, 2011 meeting, the LACMTA Board considered but chose not to pursue a below-grade grade separation in the Park Mesa Heights Neighborhood (between 48th and 59th Street).

Park and Ride Facilities. Park-and-ride facilities would be located at the Florence/La Brea, Florence/West, and Crenshaw/Exposition Stations.

Maintenance Facility. A maintenance facility would be located at Arbor Vitae/Bellanca (Site #14). This 17.6-acre site is located in the City of Los Angeles.

#### Incorporated Design Options to the Project Definition

Partially-Covered LAX Trench Option - The LPA is located near the eastern limit of LAX Runways 7L/25R and 7R/25L. During the preliminary engineering phase of the project, LACMTA proposed an alternative LPA configuration design of a depressed and partially-covered trench adjacent to the LAX south runways. The design of the partially-covered trench will not preclude future provisions to allow covering of the remaining open section. The FAA has agreed to allow a Partially-Covered LAX Trench Option as a temporary initial development option in order to meet LACMTA budgetary constraints. The analysis in the FEIS evaluated the potential for environmental impacts for the LPA fully-covered, below-grade trench and also the Partially-Covered LAX Trench Option, and determined that no environmental impacts would result from either of the designs.

#### Other Design Options Relevant to the Project Definition

Two other design options that may be incorporated into the project definition (based on potential for cost savings and reduction in environmental impacts, in one case, and based upon Board action in the other.) These options will further be explored through the preliminary engineering phase and during the procurement of design build contracts.

*Alternate Southwest Portal at Crenshaw/King Station Option.* This option involves an alternate portal at the southwest corner of the Crenshaw Boulevard/Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard intersection. This portal and the environmental impacts associated with it were considered and fully evaluated in the FEIS. While the Board action did not incorporate the optional station into the project definition, this design option may be incorporated into the project definition, if negotiations with the mall owners allow for it.

*Below-Grade Crenshaw/Vernon Optional Station.* Since the adoption of the LPA, the LACMTA Board, at its May 26, 2011 meeting, directed the below-grade Crenshaw/Vernon Station to be considered as a construction option within the procurement of design-build contracts. This station and the environmental impacts associated with it were considered and fully evaluated in the FEIS. While the Board action did not incorporate the optional station into the project definition, it placed an emphasis on carrying the design forward for the design-build procurement process. It may be implemented if bids for the project including this design option fall within the project funding amount.

### **Basis for Decision**

FTA has determined that the Project meets the Purpose and Need of the proposed action as discussed below.

*Peak Hour Congestion within the Corridor* - The Project would improve corridor mobility within the congested corridor. Transit ridership will increase by approximately 4,000 trips per day by 2030 and would result in a 31 percent reduction in travel time reduction when compared to an equivalent Metro Rapid route.

*Transit Accessibility and Availability* - The Project would improve transportation accessibility and availability in the study area by connecting with two regional rail lines and provide a high-capacity north-south linkage enhancing corridor and regional connectivity, and providing needed intra- and inter-corridor linkages and services. This high-capacity transportation system improvement would connect to the Metro Green Line at the southern end and the Exposition LRT Line (under construction) at the northern end with a connection to West Los Angeles, Downtown Los Angeles, and the Metro Blue Line. The Project would also provide a connection to existing Metro Rapid bus service in the study area. Predictable travel time for transit riders will increase substantially as trips are moved from buses operating on streets in mixed traffic and congested freeways to the fixed guideway. Transit trips on the exclusive fixed guideway will not be subject to traffic delay.

*Land Use Integration and Economic Development* - The Project will support development and redevelopment around stations by enhancing access and supplying a daily influx of transit riders and potential customers for businesses. The project serves redevelopment areas within the Cities of Los Angeles and Inglewood that have had historically high unemployment rates and slower economic growth. Although the construction of the Project does not directly cause development to occur, the Project would offer the opportunity for land use plans and policies to encourage new development and be located near transit stations to take advantage of the transportation infrastructure and increased accessibility afforded by the Project. When operational in 2030, the Project will provide transit service to approximately 60,000 additional residents and 27,000 new jobs anticipated to be located within walking distance of the Project's stations.

*Growing Demand for Transit Service* - Transit usage within the corridor is high and operating at or over capacity. Forecasts show a growing transit-dependent population, with a projected 55 percent increase in corridor residents that rely on or will rely on the study area's transit system. The Project will provide service in a transit-dependent corridor. The Project will connect areas that have the highest transit dependency, which includes communities with low-income and minority populations.

*Benefits for the Environment* - The Corridor is fully contained within the South Coast Air Basin, which has the worst air quality in the nation. The Project would provide transportation and transit improvements that would potentially provide the study area with an efficient way of reducing the number of vehicles on roadways and freeways and increasing the number of non-motorized and transit trips. Therefore, the Project would contribute to the improvement of the region's local air quality during the life of the project.

### **Measures to Mitigate the Adverse Effects of the Project**

Measures to mitigate the effects of the Project were considered during the Project's development in coordination with the interested agencies. All reasonable means to avoid and minimize the adverse effects of the Project have been adopted. The mitigation commitments are briefly described in the *Mitigation Monitoring Program* to ensure fulfillment of all environmental and related commitments in the FEIS (see Attachment A). Any change in such mitigation from the description in the FEIS will require a review in accordance with 23 CFR § 771.130 and must be approved by FTA in writing.

### **Public Involvement and Outreach**

A robust and extensive public outreach and involvement program was implemented throughout the development of the Project and the NEPA process using different venues and techniques for encouraging participation by the public, including members of environmental justice communities, and other agencies.

A broad media campaign was pursued to distribute information about meetings and project updates. Regular e-mail blasts were sent to the large stakeholder as well as other groups within the corridor. Flyers were distributed to elected officials, agencies, local jurisdictions, community organizations, churches, and schools. Information about public hearings and other ongoing project activities was available via the project hotline at (213) 922-2736.

All meetings were located within various parts of the corridor that were accessible by public transit. All announcements provided the specific transit routes that could be used to attend the meetings. Individual meetings and briefings were also held with numerous community leaders and organizations.

The varying formats of the public meetings and workshops allowed attendees the opportunity to review project information in different forums including one on one conversation with the project team as well as formal presentations, question and answer periods, and formal comment periods.

LACMTA also distributed bus pamphlets and placed postings in community and council district newsletters. Initial public comments were received during a 30-day public scoping period that were documented and reviewed in the preparation of the document. LACMTA initiated a second round of public comments with the release of the DEIS. During the 45-day public review period for the DEIS, the document was placed in local public libraries and other repository sites, and made available on the LACMTA website ([www.metro.net/crenshaw](http://www.metro.net/crenshaw)). Public hearing testimony and written comments on the DEIS were compiled during the public review period. In addition to the foregoing outreach, LACMTA initiated additional public outreach and a formal comment period for the SDEIS that was conducted for the evaluation of new maintenance facility sites.

In the Fall of 2009, the LACMTA Board considered public comments as part of its selection process for the LPA for the Crenshaw/LAX Transit Corridor. LACMTA also conducted community briefings and presentations with more than 40 different groups in the Crenshaw/LAX Transit Corridor. Introductory briefings were conducted with each of the jurisdictions located within the project corridor. City, county, state and congressional representatives and their staff were invited to participate in working groups during the development of the Project. Legislative briefings were conducted with the Cities of Inglewood and Los Angeles. Monthly technical advisory committee meetings were held, in which key stakeholders from the cities' planning, utilities and transportation departments were presented with project updates and input was solicited on advanced design concepts.

LACMTA maintained a contact list of stakeholders located throughout the project area and those located adjacent to the potential maintenance facility sites or who could be directly affected by implementation of the project. Stakeholders were notified of public station planning workshops, focused on urban and streetscape design concepts and station area planning for the proposed stations along the project corridor. Workshop participants were involved in group discussions and were given the opportunity to provide feedback to the project team. Responses to public comments received during the circulation period were incorporated into the FEIS. A Statement of Overriding Considerations and a Mitigation Monitoring Program was prepared and the LACMTA Board certified the FEIS on September 22, 2011.

In complying with Section 6002 of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), FTA and LACMTA identified other Federal and non-Federal agencies that may have had an interest in the project. SAFETEA-LU increases the transparency of the environmental process and provides opportunities for participation. Fifty-nine participating and cooperating agencies were sent letters and offered the opportunity to be briefed on the Project and given an opportunity to comment on preliminary copies of both the DEIS and FEIS.

### **Determinations and Findings**

#### **Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act**

All historic properties listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) and known archaeological resources would not be affected by the Project. As a result, the FTA determined that the Project would not have an adverse effect on cultural resources within the study area. Mitigation measures for treatment of undiscovered archaeological resources and paleontological monitoring are included in the Mitigation Monitoring Program will be implemented during the project as necessary.

### Air Quality Conformity

The Project is an electrically-powered mass transit system that will not increase diesel traffic on the local roadway system. The system will also be served by one of the largest bus fleets that operate on natural gas. The Project will increase regional transit ridership and decrease congestion on local roadways in the corridor. The Project will include small park-and-ride facilities. These facilities will mainly be utilized by passenger vehicles. Buses that stop at the facilities will almost exclusively be operated by LACMTA and powered with compressed natural gas. Therefore, the park-and-ride facilities will not increase local exposure to diesel particulate emissions.

The Project is not considered a Project of Air Quality Concern as defined in USEPA's Transportation Conformity Guidance. The Project would not increase the percentage of diesel vehicles on the roadway, does not involve a bus or rail terminal that significantly increases diesel vehicles, and is not identified in the SIP as a possible PM<sub>2.5</sub> or PM<sub>10</sub> violation site. The regional Transportation Conformity Working Group approved this finding on August 23, 2011 and provided written concurrence on August 24, 2011.

### Section 4(f) Findings

The project would not result in the direct, constructive or temporary use of any 4(f) resources as identified in the study area for either construction of or operation of the Project. The three parklands identified as 4(f) resources were evaluated for potential constructive use based on the nature of the use and their proximity to the alignment. The Project would not result in the direct use of any historic resources. There are no wildlife or waterfowl refuges in the Project area.

The Alternate Southwest Portal at the Crenshaw/King Station would result in a de minimis use to one Section 4(f) resource, the Broadway building (Walmart) at the Baldwin Hills Crenshaw Plaza. Pursuant to 23 CFR Part 774.3, the FTA has determined that the use of the property, including any measure(s) to minimize harm (such as any avoidance, minimization, mitigation, or enhancement measures) committed to by the applicant, will have a de minimis impact, as defined in §774.17, on the property.

### Endangered Species Act

There are currently no sensitive species or habitat located directly within the project area. Due to lack of suitable habitat, none of the sensitive species listed by the California Natural Diversity Database are anticipated to occur in the study area. Because of the lack of suitable habitat, no formal consultation with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service was required. Therefore, no adverse effects pursuant to the Endangered Species Act would occur.

### Section 404 of the Clean Water Act and Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act

No local surface water bodies are located in the immediate vicinity of the corridor. The project will comply with Title III and Title IV of the Clean Water Act and NPDES standards during and following construction. To comply with the NPDES General Construction Permit, a Notice of Initiation would be filed with the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) prior to construction. The Project would include preparation of a Storm Water Pollution

Prevention Plan (SWPPP) that includes the identification and implementation of applicable Best Management Practices (BMPs) to control erosion and to ensure that dirt, construction materials, pollutants or other human-associated materials are not discharged from the project area into surface waters or into areas that would eventually drain to storm drains. The SWPPP also includes a monitoring program to ascertain the effectiveness of the prescribed BMPs. Upon completion of construction, a Notice of Termination would be filed with the Los Angeles RWQCB. The construction and permanent BMPs included as part of the Project shall be developed and implemented in compliance with the Los Angeles RWRCB, LACMTA storm water standards and shall be developed in cooperation with the Cities of Los Angeles, Inglewood, and the County of Los Angeles. Prior to approval of grading permits, an appropriate drainage control plan, such as a Standard Urban Stormwater Mitigation Plan (SUSMP) in accordance with City of Los Angeles standards, that controls construction and operational on-site and off-site runoff and drainage in a manner acceptable to LACMTA and Los Angeles RWQCB for the specific project site shall be implemented. Therefore, no adverse effects are anticipated related to surface water bodies for the Project.

#### Executive Order 11988: Floodplain Management

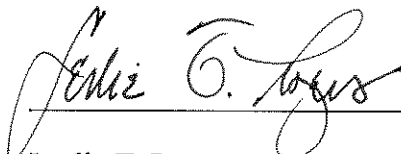
The Project is not located within any 100 or 500 year flood zones and, therefore, no modifications to any established floodplains would result from the implementation of the proposed project. The alignment is located in an area already developed with impervious surfaces as well as well-developed drainage infrastructure and would not increase the risk of flooding. No adverse effects to Executive Order 11988 (Flood Plain Management) would occur.

#### Executive Order 12898: Environmental Justice

The study area for the Crenshaw/LAX Transit Corridor Project traverses several communities within Los Angeles County. These include the Cities of Los Angeles, Inglewood, Hawthorne, El Segundo, and unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County. In the City of Los Angeles, the study area includes several City-designated communities/neighborhoods, including Mid-City, Crenshaw, and Jefferson Park. Approximately 69 percent of the Los Angeles County population is minority, whereas the study area has a minority population in excess of 93 percent. The percentage of populations below the poverty level for Los Angeles County is 18 percent, compared to 23 percent in the study area. All of the station areas and corridor segments have minority populations meaningfully greater than Los Angeles County and all but the optional stations (Crenshaw/Vernon and Aviation/ Manchester) include low-income populations in a greater percentage than that of the county. Thus, the project's adverse effects on human health and the environment will be predominately borne by a minority and/or low income population. However, the Project includes a number of measures to avoid, minimize or mitigate these adverse effects, as set forth in the FEIS/FEIR and Attachment A to this ROD. Accordingly, FTA has concluded, in accordance with Executive Order 12898, *Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations*, that the environmental justice community would not be subject to disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects as a result of the Project.

**Environmental Finding required by Federal Transit Law [49 U.S.C. 5324(b)]**

The environmental record for the Project consists of all technical analyses, the DEIS, FEIS, and this ROD, which includes the mitigation monitoring program (Attachment A). This environmental record for the Project includes: the environmental impacts of the Project; the adverse environmental effects that cannot be avoided; alternatives to the Project; and irreversible and irretrievable impacts on the environment. FTA has reviewed the public and agency comments on the DEIS, SDEIS and FEIS and the transcripts of the hearings submitted under 49 U.S.C. § 5323(b). Attachments B and C to this ROD includes and responds to public and agency comments received on the FEIS since the circulation of the FEIS. There were no comments relating to new environmental issues that had not been previously addressed and resolved in Appendix K of the FEIS. FTA finds that an adequate opportunity to present views was given to all parties having a significant economic, social, or environmental interest in the project. FTA finds that the preservation and enhancement of the environment and the interest of the community in which the Project is located were considered. FTA finds that, with the execution of the mitigation monitoring program in Attachment A, all reasonable steps are being taken to minimize the adverse environmental effects of the Project, and where adverse environmental effects remain, no feasible and prudent alternative to such effects exists.

  
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Leslie T. Rogers  
Regional Administrator  
Federal Transit Administration, Region IX

DEC 30 2011  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Attachments:**

- Attachment A: Mitigation Monitoring Program
- Attachment B: Comments on the FEIS and Responses
- Attachment C: Relevant Correspondence