

4.17 Environmental Justice

4.17.1 Regulatory Framework and Methodology

4.17.1.1 Regulatory Framework

The applicable federal, state, and local regulations that are relevant to an analysis of the proposed project's environmental justice impacts are listed below. For additional information regarding these regulations, please see the Environmental Justice Impacts Report in Appendix AA of this Draft EIS/EIR.

Federal

- National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)
- Executive Order 12898
- Council on Environmental Quality Environmental Justice Guidance
- United States Department of Transportation Order 5610.2(a)
- FTA Circular 4703.1 (Environmental Justice Policy Guidance for FTA Recipients)
- Civil Rights Act

Local

- Metro Complete Streets Policy
- City of Los Angeles (City of Los Angeles Land Use/Transportation Policy, General Plan, Special Districts, and Targeted Neighborhood Initiatives)
- City of San Fernando (General Plan, San Fernando Corridors Specific Plan, Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Overlay Zone (Proposed))

4.17.1.2 Methodology

The following three steps were used to assess the project's impacts on minority and low-income populations in the project study area:

- Demographic information was collected for Census tracts and block groups within the project study area, as well as for the City and County of Los Angeles.
- Textual and visual representations of the data were provided through written descriptions, tables, and maps.
- An assessment of the project's impacts on minority and low-income populations was conducted.

An assessment of the project's impacts on minority and low-income populations was conducted by following the guidance and methodologies provided in the CEQ Environmental Justice Guidance, United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) Order 5610.2(a), and FTA Circular 4703.1. These guidance documents define the range of potentially significant effects on minority and low-income populations that could result from a project.

4.17.1.3 CEQA Significance Thresholds

Significance thresholds are used to determine whether a project may have a significant environmental effect under CEQA. CEQA requires state and local government agencies to identify the significant environmental effects of proposed actions; however, CEQA does not describe specific significance thresholds. According to the Governor's Office of Planning and Research, significance thresholds for a given environmental effect are at the discretion of the lead agency and are the levels at which the lead agency finds the effects of the project to be significant.

State CEQA Guidelines

The State CEQA Guidelines define "significant effect on the environment" as "a substantial, or potentially substantial, adverse change in any of the physical conditions within the area affected by the project including land, air, water, minerals, flora, fauna, ambient noise, and objects of historic or aesthetic significance" (CEQA Guidelines, 14 CCR Section 15382). The State CEQA Guidelines do not describe specific significance thresholds. Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines lists a variety of potentially significant effects; however, none of these effects are related to environmental justice, as CEQA does not specifically address environmental justice impacts.

4.17.2 Affected Environment/Existing Conditions

4.17.2.1 Study Area and Regional Setting

Study Area

The environmental justice study area is located in the San Fernando Valley area of Los Angeles and shown in Figure 4.17-1. The San Fernando Valley is a flat area consisting of approximately 260 square miles, and is bounded by the Santa Susana Mountains to the northwest, the Simi Hills to the west, the Santa Monica Mountains and Chalk Hills to the south, the Verdugo Mountains to the east, and the San Gabriel Mountains to the northeast. The project corridor is approximately 9.2 miles in length, and runs nearly the entire length of the valley floor.

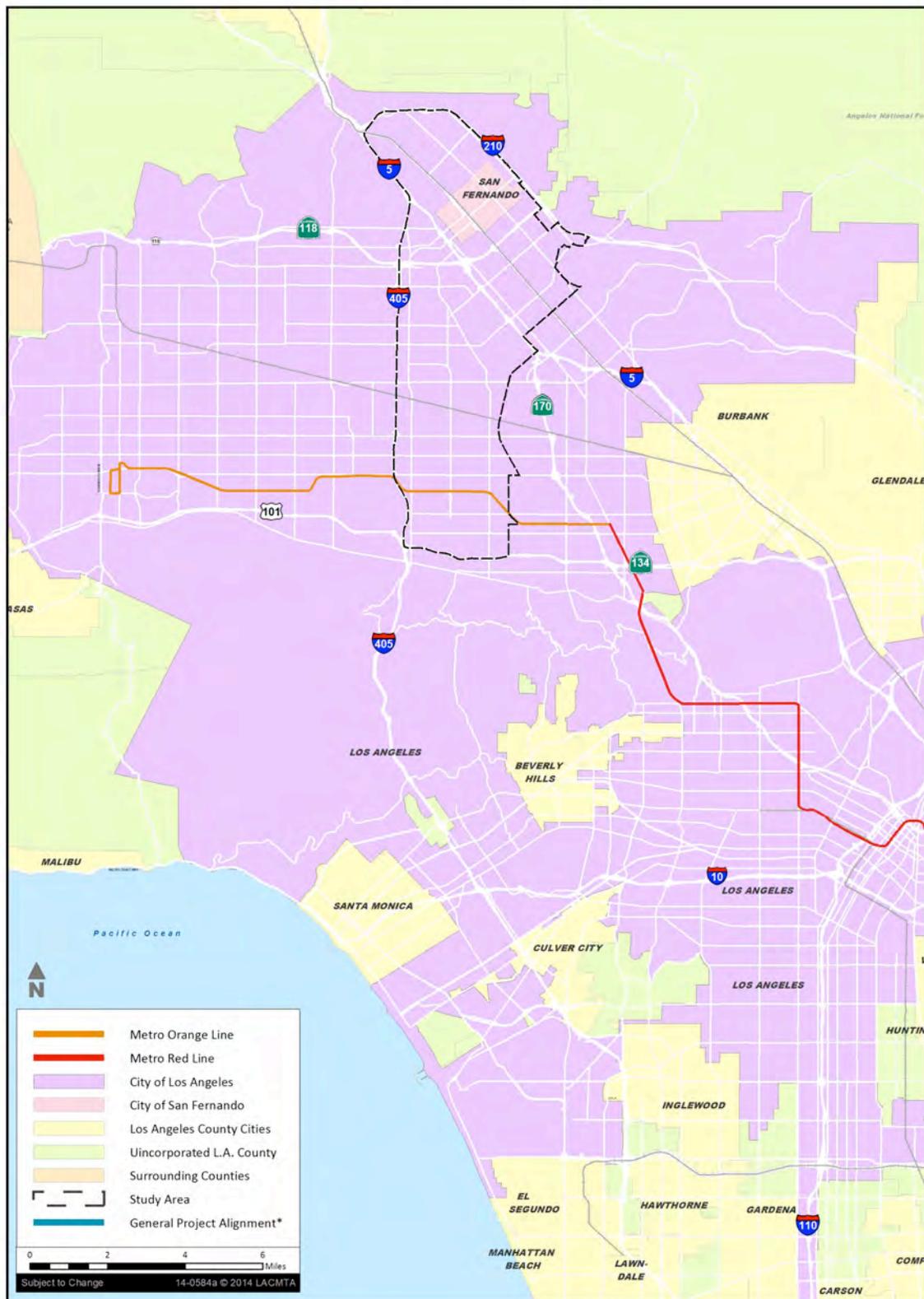
The project study area encompasses the area in which direct and/or indirect effects associated with the project could result. For this report, the project study area is generally bound by the San Diego Freeway (I-405) to the west, open space to the south (Deervale-Stone Canyon Park, Fossil Ridge Park, and Coldwater Canyon Open Space), Fulton Avenue and the Los Angeles River to the east, and the Foothill Freeway (I-210) to the north (see Figure 4.17-2).

The project study area was identified using information provided in the Purpose and Need Framework, site visits conducted October 2011 and February 2013, Google maps, and aerial photographs of the project corridor.^{1,2} Research was performed to identify physical characteristics, such as freeways, which serve to naturally delineate areas, neighborhood designations and specific planning areas, 2010 Census tract and block group boundaries, and available demographic information. Potential impacts, such as those related to construction and project operations, were also taken into consideration when determining the extent of the project study area.

¹ KOA Corporation. 2011. Van Nuys Boulevard Corridor Mobility Study, Purpose and Need Framework. Monterey Park, CA.

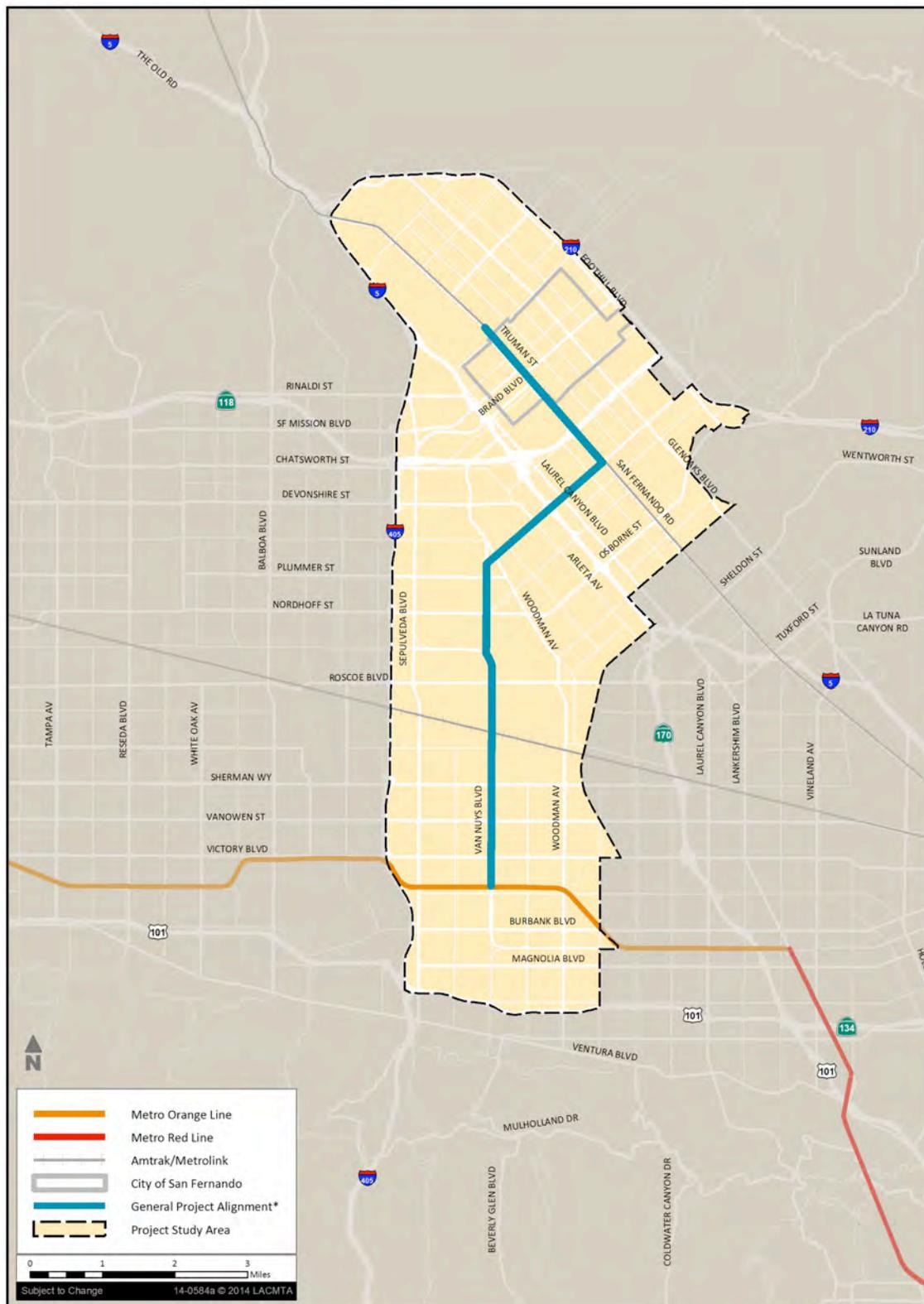
² Google, Inc. 2013. Google Maps. Available: <<http://maps.google.com/>>. Accessed: February 13, 2013.

Figure 4.17-1: Project Vicinity



Source: ESRI, 2013.

Figure 4.17-2: Environmental Justice Study Area



*Alignment generalized for clarity at this scale.

Source: ESRI, 2013; U.S. Census Bureau, 2010.

The project study area includes 108 Census tracts (2010 boundaries) as shown in Figure 4.17-2, and 256 block groups. The Census tracts in the project study area are shown in Figure 4.17-3, and the Census block groups are shown in Figure 4.17-4, respectively.

Regional Areas

An environmental justice study area is often compared with the surrounding region in order to gain perspective and identify similarities, differences, and relationships between the project study area and the region. Generally, a region is defined as the jurisdiction that is larger than, and includes, the project study area, although some circumstances may dictate deviations from this standard. For the purpose of this report, two regional areas have been used: the County of Los Angeles (County) and the City of Los Angeles (City). These regional areas are shown in Figure 4.17-5.

Community Outreach and Meetings with Environmental Justice Communities

Throughout the Alternatives Analysis and Draft EIS/EIR phases, a variety of informational documents was made available to communities surrounding the project corridor, most of which include environmental justice communities. These documents included project fact sheets, frequently asked questions, meeting notices, electronic newsletters/e-bulletins, and other collateral materials. In addition, a complete set of collateral pieces was developed and distributed at the various community meetings, stakeholder briefings, and public events or electronically when requested. These collateral materials were updated throughout the project development process and produced in English and Spanish. These materials are included in Appendix DD, Agency Coordination and Public Involvement, of this Draft EIS/EIR.

4.17.2.2 Minority Populations

In the United States 2000 and 2010 Census data used for this report, racial groups listed as White, Black/African American, American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander, Some Other Race, and Two or More Races are categorized as “Not Hispanic” (NH). Those listed as Hispanic or Latino are not reported as a race, but as an ethnic group, and are calculated as a proportion of all races.

In 2000, all racial categories in the project study area were a similar percentage or a lower percentage than the City and County, with the exception of the Hispanic or Latino ethnic category (see Table 3-2 in the Environmental Justice Impacts Report in Appendix AA). At that time, the project study area was comprised predominantly of Hispanic or Latino persons at 66.8 percent, which was 20.3 percent higher than the City and two percent higher than the County.

In 2010, all racial categories in the project study area were either the same percentage or a proportionately lower percentage than the City and County, with the exception of the Hispanic or Latino ethnic category (see Table 3-3 in the Environmental Justice Impacts Report in Appendix AA). The project study area was comprised predominantly of Hispanic or Latino persons at 71.7 percent, which was 23.2 percent higher than the City and 24.0 percent higher than the County.

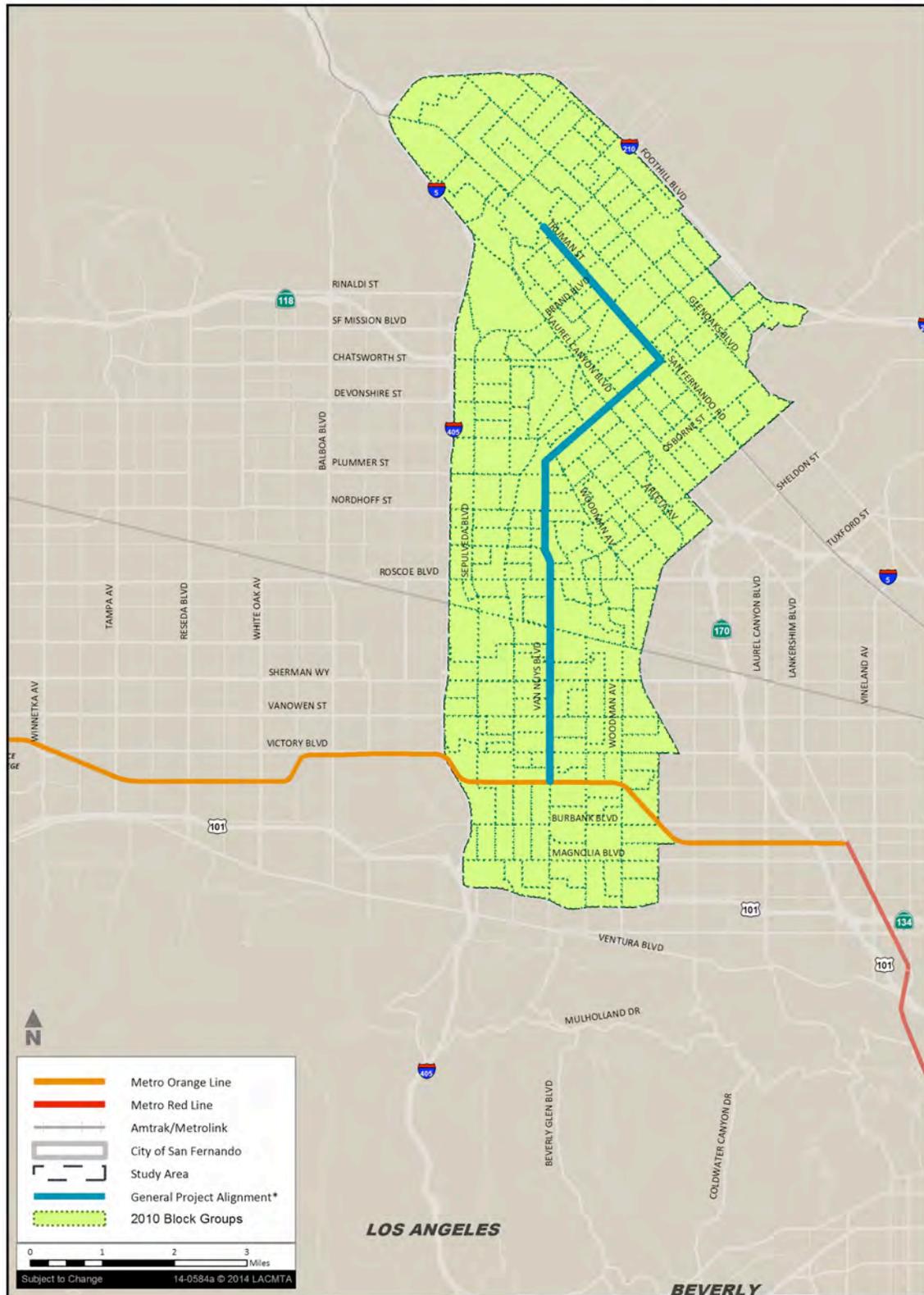
Figure 4.17-3: Census Tracts in the Environmental Justice Study Area



*Alignment generalized for clarity at this scale.

Source: ESRI, 2013; U.S. Census Bureau, 2010.

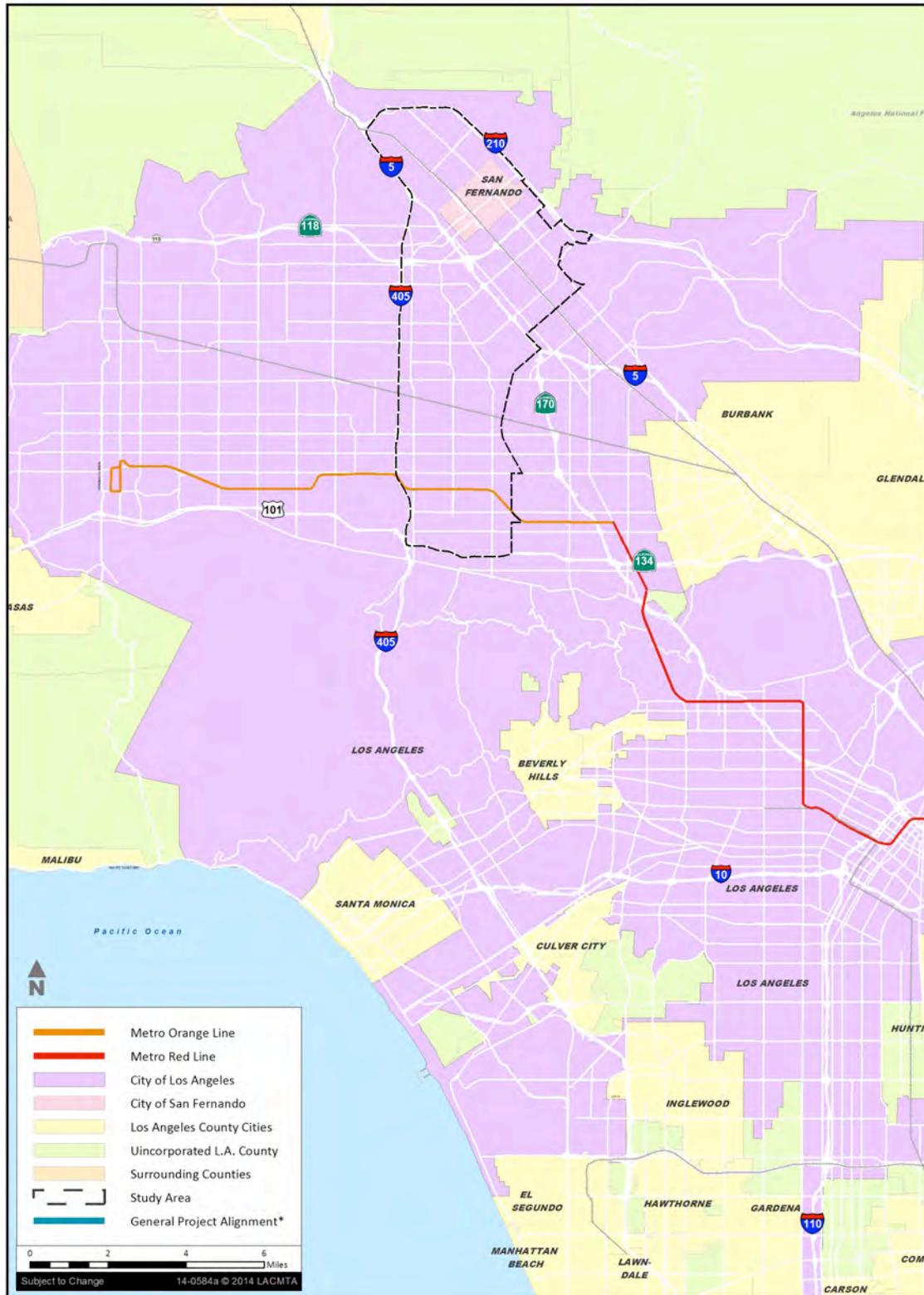
Figure 4.17-4: Census Block Groups in the Environmental Justice Study Area



*Alignment generalized for clarity at this scale.

Source: ESRI, 2013; U.S. Census Bureau, 2010.

Figure 4.17-5: Environmental Justice Regional Areas



*Alignment generalized for clarity at this scale.

Source: ESRI, 2013; U.S. Census Bureau, 2010.

Overall, between 2000 and 2010, there was a decrease in the proportion of Whites, Black/African Americans, American Indian/Alaska Natives, and individuals of Two or More Races in the project study area. During the same period, the proportion of Asians and Hispanic and Latino populations increased in the project study area, and the percentage of Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islanders remained the same. Similar trends can be seen in the City and County during that period.

All other minority categories in the project study area were at a similar or lower percentage than the same populations in the regional areas. However, according to FTA Circular 4703.1, a very small minority or low-income population (statistically “insignificant”) in the project study area does not eliminate the possibility of a disproportionately high and adverse effect on these populations. Therefore, this report addresses potential effects on all minority populations regardless of the size of the population in the project study area.

4.17.2.3 Low-Income Populations

Households Below Poverty Level

Households below the poverty level in 2000 are shown in Table 3-4 in the Environmental Justice Impacts Report in Appendix AA. Approximately 17.7 percent of households in the project study area were below the poverty level, which was 0.9 percent lower than the City and 2.6 percent higher than the County.

Households below the poverty level in 2010 are shown in Table 3-5 in the Environmental Justice Impacts Report in Appendix AA. Approximately 17.5 percent of households in the project study area were below the poverty level, which was 0.2 percent higher than the City and 3.5 percent higher than the County.

Between 2000 and 2010, the project study area, the City, and County experienced a decrease in the proportion of households below the poverty level, but the project study area experienced the smallest decrease (by 0.2 percent) compared to the City (a 1.3 percent decrease) and the County (a 1.0 percent decrease).

Low-Income Housing

While there are no mobile home parks adjacent to the 9.2-mile project corridor, there are five low-income housing developments:

- 12157 San Fernando Road (near Hubbard Avenue; adjacent to a TPSS Site for the Low-Floor LRT/Tram Alternative);
- 9628 Van Nuys Boulevard (near Vesper Avenue);
- 9640 Van Nuys Boulevard (near Vesper Avenue);
- 9618 Van Nuys Boulevard (near Vesper Avenue); and
- 9247 Van Nuys Boulevard (near Tupper Street).

4.17.3 Environmental Consequences, Impacts, and Mitigation Measures

4.17.3.1 No-Build Alternative

Construction Impacts

The No-Build Alternative would not involve new transportation or infrastructure improvements aside from projects currently under construction or funded for future construction. Therefore, the No-Build Alternative would not result in disproportionately high and adverse effects on minority and low-income populations with respect to construction.

Operational Impacts

Mobility and Access Impacts

The No-Build Alternative would not result in changes to existing mobility and access in the project study area. The No-Build Alternative would not result in changes to on-street parking, existing or planned pedestrian and bicycle access, access to public transportation, or vehicular access to businesses and community resources within the communities and neighborhoods in the project study area. Therefore, the No-Build Alternative would not result in any effects on minority or low-income populations with respect to mobility and access.

This alternative would not result in any actions to implement Metro's Complete Streets Policy. In addition, while this alternative would not result in effects on minority or low-income populations, it would not achieve the potential transportation benefits, such as improved circulation, transit equity, reliability, and access that would be expected to result from the proposed build alternatives. As detailed in the Transportation Impacts Report in Appendix G, the No-Build alternative establishes a baseline for comparison to evaluate potential traffic effects of the other alternatives. Daily vehicle traffic within the study area is projected to increase under future baseline conditions (and the No-Build Alternative), as compared to existing conditions. Community mobility would be expected to deteriorate with the increased regional traffic congestion anticipated between now and 2040, which could result in a long-term reduction in access to public transportation, businesses, and community resources, as well as reduced emergency vehicle access.

Social and Economic Impacts

The No-Build Alternative would not result in changes to social and economic conditions in the project study area. This alternative would not induce population growth, result in changes to businesses or employment rates, displace housing or people, or result in changes to community cohesion, interaction, quality of life, or social values. In addition, the No-Build Alternative would not result in the denial of, reduction in, or substantial delay in the receipt of benefits of USDOT programs, policies, or activities for minority or low-income populations. Therefore, the No-Build Alternative would not result in effects on minority or low-income populations with respect to social and economic conditions. More information on economic impacts is provided in the Economic and Fiscal Impacts Report in Appendix V.

While this alternative would not result in effects on minority or low-income populations, it would not achieve the potential circulation, transit equity, and access improvements that would be expected to result from the proposed build alternatives. Community mobility would be expected to deteriorate with the increased regional traffic congestion anticipated between now and 2040, which could limit local economic growth.

Physical Impacts

The No-Build Alternative would not result in changes to the physical environment, including changes in land use patterns or visual character, and would not result in safety impacts or introduce physical intrusions to communities and neighborhoods in the project study area. No geological, hazardous materials, water quality, public health, or community facility impacts are anticipated. The No-Build Alternative would not require street closures or result in reductions in community cohesion, reductions in access, or increased exclusion. Under this alternative, transportation facilities would operate entirely within existing transportation corridors, and no physical barriers would be introduced that would divide the existing communities surrounding the project corridor. This alternative would not decrease the performance or safety of public transit, bicycle, or pedestrian facilities. The No-Build Alternative would not require displacement of any housing, people, or businesses or require the acquisition of properties. Therefore, the No-Build Alternative would not result in effects on minority or low-income populations with respect to physical conditions.

While this alternative would not result in effects on minority or low-income populations, it would not achieve the potential circulation, transit equity, and access improvements that are expected to result from the proposed build alternatives. Community mobility would be expected to deteriorate with the increased regional traffic congestion anticipated between now and 2040, which could result in increased vehicle hours traveled, fuel (energy) consumption, air quality emissions, and generation of greenhouse gas emissions.

Cumulative Impacts

Per CEQA Section 15130 (b), the cumulative impacts analysis can consider either a “list of past, present, and probable future projects producing related or cumulative impacts” or “a summary of projections contained in an adopted local, regional, or statewide plan, or related planning document, that describes or evaluates conditions contributing to the cumulative effect.” The cumulative impacts analysis below is based on the approach that considers the cumulative projects listed in Table 2-3 of this EIS/EIR.

The study area for the cumulative impacts analysis consists of the communities and neighborhoods that would be affected by the proposed project. In general, the cumulative impacts study area encompasses the neighborhoods and communities adjacent to the project corridor.

The No-Build Alternative would not result in effects on minority or low-income populations; therefore, this alternative would not contribute to cumulative impacts on environmental justice communities.

Mitigation Measures

Construction Mitigation Measures

No construction mitigation measures are required.

Operational Mitigation Measures

No operational mitigation measures are required.

Impacts Remaining After Mitigation

NEPA Finding

No adverse effects under NEPA would occur.

CEQA Determination

There are no thresholds of significance in CEQA for environmental justice impacts. Therefore, no CEQA determination can be made for environmental justice impacts resulting from this alternative.

4.17.3.2 TSM Alternative

Construction Impacts

The TSM Alternative may include minor bus stop and roadway improvements as well as operational enhancements to the existing bus system. Given the very limited extent of potential physical improvements, construction activities would likely have no or very minimal impacts on the social, economic, and physical conditions of the communities and neighborhoods in the project study area.

These minor temporary effects are anticipated to affect all communities within the project study area comparably, regardless of the block groups' socioeconomic or demographic characteristics. Therefore, the TSM Alternative would not result in disproportionately high and adverse effects on minority and low-income populations with respect to construction.

Operational Impacts

Mobility and Access Impacts

The TSM Alternative would be expected to result in beneficial changes to existing mobility and access in the project study area. This alternative includes enhanced bus frequencies for the existing Metro Rapid Bus 761 and the Local 233 lines, which would provide additional mobility and access benefits for minority and low-income populations in the project study area. Additional bus service would be available to all communities throughout the project study area as well as communities adjacent to the project study area, regardless of socioeconomic or demographic characteristics.

The TSM Alternative would retain on-street parking, retain pedestrian and bicycle access, enhance access to public transportation through increased bus frequencies, and result in improved access to businesses and community resources within the communities and neighborhoods in the project study area. The TSM Alternative would be expected to improve transit service, result in an increase of approximately 14,500 daily transit boardings in an area with a large transit-dependent population, and could reduce regional traffic congestion, which could facilitate faster response times for emergency services.

This alternative would not result in any actions to implement Metro's Complete Streets Policy. In addition, as detailed in the Transportation Impacts Report in Appendix G, the TSM Alternative would not substantially affect traffic at any of the study intersections. Therefore, the TSM Alternative would not result in any effects on minority or low-income, or other minority populations with respect to mobility and access.

Social and Economic Impacts

The TSM Alternative would not be expected to result in substantial social and economic changes in the project study area. More frequent bus service may require additional drivers, providing employment opportunities; however, there is already a substantial employment base and residential population in the San Fernando Valley. Therefore, the potential employment opportunities would not be expected to induce substantial population growth in the project study area. Additional information on economic impacts is provided in the Economic and Fiscal Impacts Report in Appendix V.

The proposed improvements under this alternative would not displace housing or people, and would not be expected to result in substantial changes to community cohesion, interaction, quality of life, or social values. The TSM Alternative would not result in the denial of, reduction in, or substantial delay in the receipt of benefits of USDOT programs, policies, or activities for minority or low-income populations.

Under the TSM Alternative, enhanced bus frequencies would provide an increased availability of transit service, which could stimulate the local economy by facilitating access to local businesses. The additional bus service could result in a beneficial impact on low-income individuals that do not own a vehicle and that rely on public transportation. All businesses within the project study area would be affected comparably, regardless of socioeconomic or demographic characteristics. Therefore, the TSM Alternative would not result in disproportionate effects on, or fewer benefits for minority or low-income populations with respect to social and economic conditions.

While this alternative would not result in effects on minority or low-income populations, it would not substantially improve regional mobility, and community access would likely continue to deteriorate with increasing regional traffic congestion expected between now and 2040. Therefore, any social or economic benefits resulting from the TSM Alternative could eventually be cancelled out by increased traffic congestion, which could result in reduced operating speeds and service reliability, and a long-term reduction in access to local businesses.

Physical Impacts

The TSM Alternative would include traffic signalization improvements, new bus stop amenities and improvements, and bus schedule restructuring. This alternative would not be expected to result in substantial changes to the physical environment, including changes in land use patterns or visual character, and would not result in safety impacts, or introduce substantial physical intrusions to communities and neighborhoods in the project study area. Minor modifications to the roadway network would be expected to enhance the existing transportation network, would be compliant with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) guidelines, and would not be expected to result in pedestrian, bicycle, and/or vehicle safety impacts.

Numerous transit lines currently exist in the project study area. The new transit lines and bus stops would not be expected to substantially change noise and vibration conditions. The installation of new bus stops and signage would require minimal excavation and would not require right-of-way acquisitions or increase the amount of impervious surface; therefore, no adverse geological, hazardous materials, water quality, public health, or community facility impacts are anticipated.

New bus stops would be installed within the existing right-of-way, and street closures would not be required. The TSM Alternative would operate entirely within existing transportation corridors, and would not introduce physical barriers that would divide the existing communities surrounding the project corridor. The TSM Alternative would not result in impacts on community access or exclusion.

The proposed improvements under this alternative would not displace housing or people, and would not be expected to result in substantial changes to community cohesion, interaction, quality of life, or social values.

This alternative would not achieve circulation improvements within the existing community that would be expected as a result of the proposed build alternatives. The existing and projected transportation deficiencies would be experienced comparably among local and regional travelers, regardless of socioeconomic or demographic characteristics. Therefore, the TSM Alternative would not result in effects on minority or low-income populations with respect to physical conditions.

Cumulative Impacts

The TSM Alternative would not result in effects on minority or low-income populations; therefore, this alternative would not contribute to cumulative impacts on environmental justice communities.

Mitigation Measures

Construction Mitigation Measures

No construction mitigation measures are required.

Operational Mitigation Measures

No operational mitigation measures are required.

Impacts Remaining After Mitigation

NEPA Finding

No adverse effects under NEPA would occur.

CEQA Determination

There are no thresholds of significance in CEQA for environmental justice impacts. Therefore, no CEQA determination can be made for environmental justice impacts resulting from this alternative.

4.17.3.3 BRT Alternatives (Build Alternatives 1 and 2)

Alternative 1 – Curb-Running BRT

Construction Impacts

Mobility and Access Impacts

Construction of curb-running BRT stations and the transit alignment would require temporary sidewalk, lane, and road closures, and temporary removal of parking along Van Nuys Boulevard, San Fernando Road, Truman Street, and their cross streets. These closures could reduce pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicle access to areas along the project corridor during construction. These temporary effects are anticipated to affect all communities within the project study area and communities adjacent to the project study area comparably. To minimize potential impacts on pedestrians and cyclists, adequate pedestrian and bicycle accommodations would be made available during construction, including signage, construction barriers to reduce any conflicts with construction equipment and vehicles, and supervision of trained safety personnel. On-street bicycle detour routes

would be used to address temporary effects on bicycle circulation. In addition, signage would be posted, stating that “Bikes May Use Full Lane,” and/or alternative route signage would be provided. Uneven surfaces would also be clearly marked.

Road and sidewalk closures, and the addition of construction vehicles and equipment on major City of Los Angeles and City of San Fernando streets, could reduce public access to annual festivals and events in the various communities along the alignment. In addition, construction could disrupt traffic patterns and make public access to businesses and community resources more difficult. Lane closures, traffic detours, and designated truck routes associated with construction could also result in decreased access for emergency vehicles, which could result in a delay in response times. Lane and/or road closures would be scheduled to minimize disruptions, and a Traffic Management Plan (TMP) would be approved in coordination with both the Cities of Los Angeles and San Fernando prior to construction. For these reasons and because the lane and/or road closures and the potential for temporary effects associated with emergency vehicle response times would affect all neighborhoods along the alignment, regardless of origin, no disproportionate adverse effects on minority or low-income populations are anticipated.

Social and Economic Impacts

Construction of Alternative 1 would not be expected to result in substantial changes to the existing population in the project study area. A substantial employment base and residential population currently exist in the San Fernando Valley and are within commuting distance of the project corridor; therefore, employment opportunities would not be expected to result in substantial migration of additional residents to the project study area. In addition, because of the temporary nature of construction jobs, employment opportunities resulting from construction would not be expected to induce substantial population growth in communities and neighborhoods in the project study area.

Construction activities would likely result in a decrease in accessibility to many businesses and could reduce on-street and off-street parking, which may negatively affect business activity levels because the number of customers may temporarily decline. All attempts would be made to provide adequate detours and to minimize road closures; however, some consumers may avoid the area altogether, which could have an indirect effect on businesses within the project area. Construction activities would take place throughout the project corridor, and the temporary decrease in accessibility would affect all businesses comparably.

Displacement of Businesses, Housing, and People

Alternative 1 would be constructed within the curb lanes of an existing roadway, and would not result in the displacement of any housing, people, or businesses. Additionally, no displacements would be required for storage or staging areas for construction equipment and materials. This alternative would not require the construction or expansion of an MSF; therefore, no right-of-way acquisitions associated with an MSF would be required, and Alternative 1 would not result in any effects on minority or low-income populations with respect to displacement.

Physical Impacts

Construction of Alternative 1 would not likely result in changes to existing land use patterns or result in physical division of communities because construction would be short-term, and would not affect land use designations or introduce barriers that would divide communities. However, construction activities could result in several other physical impacts and intrusions, including noise, dust, odors,

and traffic delays resulting from haul trucks and construction equipment in public streets and staging areas. Local neighborhoods, businesses, and community facilities may be inconvenienced temporarily, and community activities could be disrupted by construction.

Construction of Alternative 1 may also result in several visual impacts within and surrounding the project corridor. Construction areas could be visible from residential land uses on some of the adjacent parcels, either directly through fencing, through entrance gates, or over fencing from second story and higher windows. Construction activities at staging areas and proposed stations may include the use of heavy equipment such as cranes and associated vehicles, including bulldozers, backhoes, graders, scrapers, and trucks, which could be visible from public streets, sidewalks, and adjacent properties.

Viewers in the construction area may be affected by the presence of this equipment, as well as stockpiled construction-related materials. In addition, mature vegetation, including trees, could be temporarily removed from some areas. Construction impacts associated with noise, air quality, visual quality/aesthetics, and traffic would be reduced or minimized through construction management and abatement measures, as detailed in the respective sections of this EIS/EIR and in the technical reports.

Construction of Alternative 1 could also have temporary effects on public safety and security within the project study area. During construction, motorists, pedestrians, and bicyclists would be exposed to additional safety hazards because of proximity to construction activities. The potential for safety and security effects would be minimized by compliance with Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), California Occupational Safety and Health Administration (Cal/OSHA), and Metro safety and security programs, which are designed to reduce potential construction effects. In addition, an adequate level of signage, construction barriers, and supervision of trained safety personnel would be provided to ensure that pedestrian and motorist safety is maintained during construction.

Incidents of crime adjacent to the project alignment would not likely increase during construction of the build alternatives. Construction machinery and materials could be stolen at construction sites; however, these incidents would be minimized through implementation of standard site security practices.

According to the Initial Site Assessment in Appendix P, right-of-way acquisitions and excavations would be required for construction of the project, and a Phase II Site Assessment would be recommended to evaluate individual locations.³ There are properties within the project area that are listed on hazardous waste databases, and/or are reported to have soil or groundwater contamination. The effects from potential hazardous materials would be reduced through construction management and abatement measures, as detailed in the Initial Site Assessment. In addition, the Phase II Site Assessment would include recommendations on how to treat or handle any hazardous materials that have the potential to be encountered during construction of the project.

Since the project would comply with regulatory requirements and measures would be implemented to mitigate construction impacts and because the potential effects are anticipated to affect all communities within the project study area comparably, regardless of the block groups' socioeconomic or demographic characteristics, Alternative 1 would not result in disproportionately high and adverse effects on minority or low-income populations with respect to construction.

³ Diaz Yourman & Associates. November 2014. Environmental Site Assessment: Eastern San Fernando Valley Transit Corridor.

Operational Impacts

Mobility and Access Impacts

Changes in Access to Public Transportation, Businesses, and Community Resources

Under Alternative 1, the rapid bus line would enhance connections to public transportation within the project study area and across the region in compliance with Metro's Complete Streets Policy. This alternative would permanently improve community mobility by providing a new means of transportation access that does not rely on driving, and the additional transit service would enhance access to public transportation, businesses, and community resources in the project study area. All existing motor vehicle turns into and out of cross streets and driveways would be maintained, and no changes would be made to existing turning movements. The curb-running BRT would be available to all communities throughout the project study area as well as communities adjacent to the project study area, regardless of socioeconomic or demographic characteristics.

Under this alternative, the Metro Rapid 761 bus would no longer operate on Van Nuys Boulevard from north of San Fernando Road to Foothill Boulevard, which is a 1.5-mile segment of roadway within the project study area. This entire segment of roadway is adjacent to block groups containing minority and low-income populations. Though the Rapid 761 bus would not operate along this segment of roadway, Metro Local Line 233 would continue to operate along the same segment of Van Nuys Boulevard after implementation of the alternative.

Local Line 233 operates Monday through Sunday, as well as holidays, at similar intervals and locations as Rapid 761. During early morning and late evening hours, Local Line 233 carries passengers along the 1.5-mile segment of Van Nuys Boulevard exclusively. Though Rapid 761 would no longer operate along the segment of roadway, public transportation would be available along the same roadway segment at similar intervals, however, it should be noted that the Local Line 233 has more frequent stops and a longer trip duration than the Rapid Line 761. Passengers using Local Line 233 would be able to use the same method of payment as with Rapid 761, fares between the two lines are comparable, and riders who qualify for Metro transportation subsidy programs would be able to utilize the subsidy regardless of which line they are using. Therefore, Alternative 1 would not result in disproportionate effects on, or fewer benefits for minority or low-income with respect to availability of public transportation.

Under Alternative 1, curbside parking along the entire 9.2 miles (in the northbound and southbound directions) of the project corridor would be prohibited, which could affect vehicle access to businesses and community resources. Of the block groups adjacent to this segment of roadway, 100 percent contain minority populations, and 100 percent contain low-income populations. On-street parking would still be available on all connecting streets where parking is currently permitted, and many businesses and community resources may have dedicated parking lots that would provide sufficient off-street parking. In addition, more people may use transit as a result of the project, which could reduce the need for parking.

According to the Transportation Impacts Report in Appendix G, the Van Nuys Boulevard corridor in the study area has a weekday parking demand of 481 on-street spaces and a Saturday peak parking demand of 589 on-street spaces. A parking analysis of adjacent locations was conducted; it was determined that the available adjacent on-street parking and/or off-street parking areas can meet the weekday and weekend on-street parking demand for the area. In addition, public transit would be enhanced under Alternative 1. The project could result in increased transit use, which could reduce the need for on-street parking. Therefore, Alternative 1 would not result in disproportionate effects on, or fewer benefits for, minority or low-income populations with respect to public transportation and reductions in parking (and any associated reduction in access).

Changes in Pedestrian and Bicycle Access

Alternative 1 would retain pedestrian and bicycle access along the project corridor in compliance with Metro's Complete Streets Policy. Existing pedestrian movements would be maintained, including all existing mid-block crossings. Portions of the sidewalks along the corridor would be widened, while sidewalks in other areas of the corridor would be narrowed under this alternative; however, all sidewalks would be at least 10 feet wide. In addition, all existing Metro Rapid Bus stops would be upgraded with ADA-compliant design enhancements, contingent upon the legal ability to upgrade because of the City of Los Angeles' exclusive contract with a bus stop advertising company. Other modifications required to accommodate the BRT improvements would also comply with ADA guidelines. For these reasons and because pedestrians within the project study area would be similarly affected regardless of demographic or socioeconomic conditions, Alternative 1 would not result in disproportionate effects on, or fewer benefits for minority or low-income populations with respect to pedestrian access.

The City's Bicycle Plan designates Van Nuys Boulevard as part of the "Backbone Bicycle Network," which plans an interconnected system facilitating mobility on key arterials.⁴ Under Alternative 1, the existing Class II bike lanes along Van Nuys Boulevard north of Parthenia Street would be removed. However, curbside lanes on Van Nuys Boulevard would be 12 feet wide or greater, except between Parthenia Street and Roscoe Boulevard where curbside lanes would be 11 feet wide. Curbside lanes on Van Nuys Boulevard would be restricted to buses and bicyclists, with other vehicles allowed in the lane only for right-turns; therefore, bicyclists would not need to share the lane with the general public. However, the removal of the Class II bike lanes under Alternative 1 would conflict with the City's Bicycle Plan because designated bicycle lanes on Van Nuys Boulevard would not be feasible with the implementation of this alternative, affecting future bicycle access within the project study area. The City's General Plan designates Van Nuys Boulevard as a transit priority street, and the transit improvements proposed under this alternative would only be feasible with the removal of the bicycle lanes. In addition, as stated in Metro's Complete Streets Policy, a number of streets might not provide accommodations for all modes of transportation due to physical right-of-way constraints, which is the case for this alternative. Nonetheless, the change from a Class II bike lane to a shared bicycle lane could result in safety impacts as discussed later in this section.

The City's Bicycle Plan includes planned bicycle lanes along Woodman Avenue (one-mile east of and parallel to Van Nuys Boulevard) between Ventura Boulevard and the Osborne Street and Nordhoff Street corridors. Bicycle lanes are also planned along the Osborne Street corridor and would connect to San Fernando Road. As detailed in the Transportation Impacts Report in Appendix G, mitigation for impacts on bicycle facilities would include the implementation of bicycle lanes on these parallel roadways; visual enhancement of the crosswalks at each proposed station location; completion of a community linkages study; and implementation of the study recommendations through coordination between Metro and the Cities of Los Angeles and San Fernando. To use the planned bicycle lanes on Woodman Avenue, bicyclists would need to travel one mile east of Van Nuys Boulevard, which may be an inconvenience for some bicyclists depending on their final destination. However, bicycle accommodations, including bicycle racks, would be provided at BRT stations and on buses so that passengers may leave their bicycles at the stations or bring them onto buses.

⁴ City. March 2011. 2010 Bicycle Plan.

The average distance of a bicycle trip in Los Angeles is four miles; affected bicyclists would be expected to travel from neighborhoods within and outside of the study area, which include block groups of varying socioeconomic and demographic characteristics.⁵ The changes to the Class II bike lanes along Van Nuys Boulevard would be expected to affect all bicyclists within an approximate four-mile radius comparably, regardless of socioeconomic or demographic characteristics. For that reason and because Alternative 1 would improve transit service and would include measures to mitigate potential bicycle impacts, Alternative 1 would not result in disproportionately high and adverse effects on minority or low-income populations with respect to bicycle access.

Changes to Circulation and Emergency Access

As detailed in the Transportation Impacts Report in Appendix G, Alternative 1 would be expected to improve transit service, result in an increase of approximately 12,500 daily transit boardings in an area with a large transit-dependent population, and could reduce regional traffic congestion, which could facilitate faster response times for emergency services. However, conversion of existing mixed-flow lanes to dedicated BRT lanes would decrease roadway capacity for mixed-flow traffic. As a consequence, this alternative would result in adverse effects on 16 of the 73 study intersections within the corridor. Localized traffic congestion impacts could reduce access for emergency vehicle response or interfere with emergency evacuation plans. However, significant increased delays to emergency vehicles are not anticipated since emergency vehicles could use the BRT lanes to avoid congestion and traffic queues. Additionally, because the project study area is within a roadway corridor, emergency vehicles and travelers in the project study area would be similarly affected by increased traffic, regardless of trip origin. Traffic impacts are anticipated to affect all emergency calls or travelers within the project study area comparably, regardless of socioeconomic or demographic characteristics. Therefore, Alternative 1 would not result in disproportionately high and adverse effects on minority or low-income populations with respect to emergency access and circulation.

Social and Economic Impacts

Population, Business, and Employment Growth

Alternative 1 is not expected to result in substantial changes to the existing population in the project study area. This alternative would not include the development of new housing or businesses that would directly induce population growth. Alternative 1 would include additional bus service and could therefore generate additional employment opportunities for bus drivers; however, there is currently a substantial employment base and residential population in the San Fernando Valley, and the employment opportunities would not be expected to result in substantial migration of additional residents to the project study area. Therefore, this alternative would not be expected to induce substantial population growth in existing communities and neighborhoods.

Alternative 1 could indirectly affect growth and development in the project study area by promoting planned development and redevelopment near station areas. The type of development expected around station areas would most likely be Transit-Oriented Development (TOD), which is mixed-use residential and commercial development designed to maximize access to public transportation. Alternative 1 may also attract businesses from other areas of the region to the immediate areas surrounding the proposed stations. This alternative would be located in an urban area containing a limited number of vacant or underutilized parcels; therefore, this alternative is not expected to result

⁵ Ibid.

in substantial changes to existing growth and development patterns. In addition, Alternative 1 would accommodate projected population growth in the region, and any development that could result around station areas is anticipated to be consistent with current growth projections.

Under Alternative 1, enhanced transit service could stimulate the local economy by facilitating access to local businesses. In addition, business viability could improve from the increase in pedestrian traffic near the proposed stations, which could provide new potential customers. The proposed stations would be situated relatively evenly throughout the project corridor, which could have the potential to provide improved economic conditions to all businesses located near station areas comparably. Therefore, Alternative 1 would not result in disproportionate effects on, or result in fewer benefits for, minority or low-income populations with respect to improved economic conditions. More information on economic impacts is provided in the Economic and Fiscal Impacts Report in Appendix V.

Changes in Community Cohesion and Interaction

Alternative 1 would increase connectivity within the eastern San Fernando Valley area, and would result in more unified communities within the project study area by providing additional transit services connecting these areas. Therefore, this alternative would be expected to enhance community cohesion and interaction. In addition, Alternative 1 would not result in the denial of, reduction in, or substantial delay in the receipt of benefits of USDOT programs, policies, or activities for minority or low-income populations.

Because the proposed stations would be spaced relatively evenly, transit connectivity would be improved throughout the entire project corridor. Therefore, Alternative 1 would not result in disproportionate effects on, or fewer benefits for minority or low-income populations with respect to community cohesion.

Changes in Quality of Life or Social Values

As discussed previously, under Alternative 1, existing mixed-flow lanes would be converted to dedicated BRT lanes, which could result in additional roadway congestion from decreased roadway capacity for mixed-flow traffic. However, Alternative 1 would be expected to result in a long-term overall improved quality of life for the communities and neighborhoods in the project study area resulting from the availability of enhanced transit access to businesses and between communities. Alternative 1 would permanently improve community mobility by providing a new means of transportation that does not rely solely on driving.

The BRT line would be expected to enhance connections to other neighborhoods within the project study area and across the region, and increased pedestrian traffic near the proposed stations would provide new potential customers and improve business viability. As a consequence, it's expected that this alternative would result in social and economic benefits for the communities and neighborhoods in the project study area. The proposed stations would be spaced evenly throughout the project corridor, and would improve access and business viability comparably. Therefore, Alternative 1 would not result in disproportionate effects on, or fewer benefits for, minority or low-income populations with respect to improved quality of life.

Physical Impacts

Changes in Land Use Patterns

Alternative 1 is not expected to result in substantial changes in land use patterns. While there would be some modifications to the project corridor (e.g., changes in bicycle lanes), the project corridor is an existing transportation route with existing bus transit service; therefore, the proposed BRT operations would be consistent with existing bus operations and land use patterns.

Alternative 1 could indirectly affect development in the project study area by encouraging housing, employment, and commercial development within walking distance of the proposed transit stations along the project corridor. However, because this alternative is located in an urban area containing a limited number of vacant or underutilized parcels, this alternative would not be expected to substantially change existing growth and development patterns. The proposed stations would be spaced evenly throughout the project corridor, and would affect land use comparably. Therefore, Alternative 1 would not result in disproportionate effects on minority or low-income populations with respect to land use.

Changes in Visual Character

This alternative would include new and upgraded bus stations, and the installation of dedicated BRT lanes. The BRT vehicles would be similar to existing Metro buses. The project corridor is an existing transportation route with existing bus transit service; the proposed BRT operations would be consistent with existing bus operations, and no substantial changes in visual character would result from this alternative. Station upgrades and sidewalk widening could also result in a more cohesive landscape along the corridor with canopies, additional street trees, and benches that would provide a more unified appearance in station areas. These proposed elements would be situated relatively evenly throughout the entire project corridor. Although Metro Rapid bus stops would be upgraded under this alternative, none of the local bus stops would be upgraded. The Metro Rapid bus stops would be visually accessible to all persons traveling along the project corridor regardless of socioeconomic or demographic characteristics. Therefore, Alternative 1 would not result in disproportionate effects on, or fewer benefits for, minority or low-income populations with respect to visual character.

Safety Impacts and Other Physical Intrusions

Alternative 1 is not expected to result in substantial physical intrusions (e.g., noise, dust, or odors) to the project corridor. While there would be some modifications to the project corridor (e.g., changes in bicycle lanes), the project corridor is an existing transportation route with existing bus transit service; the proposed BRT operations would be consistent with existing bus operations and physical conditions. Geological, hazardous materials, water quality, public health, or community facility impacts are not anticipated. Alternative 1 would not include permanent street closures or result in reductions in community cohesion, reductions in access, or increased exclusion of transit-dependent individuals from community facilities.

The development of new BRT facilities in the project corridor could result in security concerns because passengers may congregate at station areas, which could attract criminals and result in a higher potential for assault, robbery, or terrorist attacks. These concerns would be addressed both through design considerations (e.g., security cameras in station areas) and by coordinating with law enforcement personnel, including the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department Transit Services Bureau. In addition, potential bus improvements under this alternative would follow the

requirements of Metro's System Safety Program Plan, which are intended to ensure worker and passenger safety, reduce crime, and allow for an adequate emergency response. Therefore, Alternative 1 is not expected to result in a substantial increase in security risks in the project study area.

Alternative 1 would run in mixed-flow curb lanes along San Fernando Road and Truman Streets, which could increase the potential for conflicts between mixed-flow street traffic and other Metro bus operations. However, because existing bus service in the corridor currently operates in mixed-flow traffic, a substantial increase in accidents or collisions between buses and other motor vehicles is not expected to occur under this alternative.

Alternative 1 would be designed in compliance with Metro design guidelines to ensure pedestrian, motorist, and bicyclist safety; however, the removal of existing Class II bike lanes would increase the potential for conflicts between bicyclists and motor vehicles. The average distance of a bicycle trip in Los Angeles is four miles, and affected bicyclists would be expected to travel from neighborhoods within and outside of the study area, which include block groups of varying socioeconomic and demographic characteristics. Although this alternative could result in bicycle safety impacts along the project corridor; mitigation measures are proposed to reduce or avoid those impacts. Additionally, given the transit service benefits that would occur under this alternative and because the changes to the Class II bike lanes along Van Nuys Boulevard would be expected to affect all bicyclists within an approximate four-mile radius comparably, regardless of socioeconomic or demographic characteristics, disproportionately high and adverse effects on environmental justice populations are not anticipated.

Alternative 1 would be expected to increase the capacity of the regional transportation system as a whole and is anticipated to decrease emissions from passenger vehicles. According to the Air Quality Report in Appendix L, this alternative would not result in significant or adverse air quality impacts, including at intersections that would experience greater traffic congestion. Therefore, Alternative 1 would not result in disproportionate effects on minority or low-income populations with respect to physical impacts.

Physical Division of Communities

Alternative 1 would operate entirely within existing transportation corridors, and would not introduce physical barriers that would divide existing communities in the project study area. Therefore, Alternative 1 would not result in effects on minority or low-income populations with respect to physical divisions.

Cumulative Impacts

Although Alternative 1 would not result in disproportionately high and adverse effects on minority or low-income populations, past projects have resulted in disproportionately high and adverse effects on minority or low-income populations, and other planned or proposed projects in the corridor could result in adverse effects on environmental justice populations. However, Alternative 1 would improve transit service and connectivity benefitting environmental justice populations in the corridor; therefore, it is unlikely Alternative 1 would result in a cumulatively considerable contribution to any significant cumulative effects on environmental justice populations.

Mitigation Measures

Construction Mitigation Measures

The reader is referred to the following sections in this EIS/EIR for measures to reduce or avoid potential construction impacts on local communities, including environmental justice populations: Chapter 3-Transportation, Transit, Circulation, and Parking; Section 4.2-Real Estate and Acquisitions; Section 4.4-Communities and Neighborhoods; Section 4.5-Visual Quality and Aesthetics; Section 4.6-Air Quality; Section 4.8-Noise and Vibration; and Section 4.14-Safety and Security.

Operational Mitigation Measures

No operational mitigation measures are required for impacts specific to environmental justice populations.

Impacts Remaining After Mitigation

NEPA Finding

Alternative 1 would not result in disproportionately high and adverse effects on minority or low-income populations.

CEQA Determination

There are no thresholds of significance in CEQA for environmental justice impacts. Therefore, no CEQA determination can be made for environmental justice impacts resulting from this alternative.

Alternative 2 – Median-Running BRT

Construction Impacts

Construction impacts would be the same as those described in the previous section for Alternative 1. Temporary construction impacts are anticipated to affect all communities within the project study area comparably, regardless of the block groups' socioeconomic or demographic characteristics. Therefore, Alternative 2 would not result in disproportionately high and adverse effects on minority or low-income populations with respect to construction.

Operational Impacts

Operational impacts would be the same as those described in the previous section for Alternative 1, with the following exceptions.

Changes to Circulation and Emergency Access

Although Alternative 2 could have regional benefits on congestion and would improve transit service in an area with a large transit-dependent population, localized impacts could occur due to the conversion of the median lanes to a dedicated BRT guideway and resulting reduction in roadway capacity for mixed-flow traffic. The reductions in roadway capacity to accommodate the Alternative 2 alignment would result in localized adverse effects at 32 of 73 study intersections within the corridor. If the increased congestion at these affected intersections results in substantial delays for emergency vehicles, the impacts could be significant. Because the corridor contains a large minority population, the adverse impacts on emergency access would be predominantly borne by an environmental justice population, and as a consequence there could be a disproportionately high and adverse effect on that population. However, as previously noted, Alternative 2 would provide improved transit service and

connectivity within an area that has a relatively large transit-dependent population. The improved transit service would increase access to local medical facilities for the transit dependent and environmental justice populations in the corridor. As a consequence, the net effects on the environmental justice populations would not be disproportionately high and adverse.

Changes in Access to Public Transportation, Businesses, and Community Resources

Implementation of Alternative 2 would require restrictions on motor vehicle movements, which would be required to accommodate the median-running BRT facilities and eliminate conflicts between BRT vehicles and other traffic on the roadway. Left turns from Van Nuys Boulevard onto cross streets would be maintained at most of the currently signalized intersections; however, some dual left-turn lanes would be reduced to a single left-turn lane, and several left-turns in the Van Nuys Civic Center area, between Calvert Street and Hartland Street, would be prohibited to accommodate median bus stop platforms. Restricted left-hand turns would be required within approximately one mile (in both the northbound and southbound directions) of Van Nuys Boulevard between Calvert Street and Hartland Street. Of the block groups adjacent to this segment of roadway, 100 percent contain minority populations, and 100 percent contain low-income populations. Unless otherwise prohibited, U-turns would be allowed from signalized left-turn lanes on Van Nuys Boulevard; therefore, vehicles that need to turn left to access businesses and community resources would continue to have access through U-turn movements using the remaining signalized left-turn lanes. Travelers along the project corridor would be similarly affected by prohibited left turn lanes, regardless of trip origin. Therefore, Alternative 2 would not result in disproportionate effects on, or result in fewer benefits for, minority or low-income populations with respect to prohibited left turns (and associated changes in access).

Changes in Pedestrian and Bicycle Access

Alternative 2 would retain pedestrian access along the project corridor in compliance with Metro's Complete Streets Policy, even though there would be minor changes to pedestrian circulation to allow for the proposed improvements. Current pedestrian movements across roadways at existing signal-controlled crosswalks would be maintained; however, other pedestrian crossings along Van Nuys Boulevard at unsignalized intersections would be prohibited to avoid potential conflicts between pedestrians and median-running BRT vehicles. In addition, under this alternative, a fence would be installed along the length of the alignment to prevent illegal pedestrian crossings over the BRT guideway. However, fence openings would be included to maintain pedestrian access at intersection locations.

These modifications to pedestrian movements and sidewalk widths would not substantially interfere with pedestrian access along the project corridor because adequate pedestrian facilities, sidewalks, and crosswalks would be provided to ensure access and safety. In addition, all current Metro Rapid Bus stops would be upgraded and would include design enhancements that would be ADA compliant, contingent upon the legal ability to upgrade because of the City of Los Angeles' exclusive contract with a bust stop advertising company. All other modifications to the curb lanes to accommodate the BRT improvements would also comply with ADA guidelines.

As a consequence, Alternative 2 would not result in disproportionate effects on, or fewer benefits for, minority or low-income populations with respect to pedestrian access.

Impacts on bicycle access would be the same as those for Alternative 1.

Physical Division of Communities

Under Alternative 2, a barrier would be installed to prevent illegal pedestrian crossings of the BRT guideway along the entire roadway segment; however, fencing for pedestrian pathways would also be installed to ensure that pedestrian access is maintained. The installation of barriers and fencing could be considered a physical intrusion in communities and neighborhoods in the project study area. However, Alternative 2 would operate entirely within existing transportation corridors and would not introduce physical barriers that would substantially affect access between the existing communities and neighborhoods in the project study area. Therefore, Alternative 2 would not result in disproportionately high and adverse effects on minority or low-income populations with respect to physical divisions.

Cumulative Impacts

The cumulative impacts due to Alternative 2 would be the same as those described above for Alternative 1.

Mitigation Measures

Construction Mitigation Measures

The reader is referred to the following sections in this EIS/EIR for measures to reduce or avoid potential construction impacts on local communities, including environmental justice populations: Chapter 3-Transportation, Transit, Circulation, and Parking; Section 4.2-Real Estate and Acquisitions; Section 4.4-Communities and Neighborhoods; Section 4.5-Visual Quality and Aesthetics; Section 4.6-Air Quality; Section 4.8-Noise and Vibration; and Section 4.14-Safety and Security.

Operational Mitigation Measures

No operational mitigation measures are required for impacts specific to environmental justice populations.

Impacts Remaining After Mitigation

NEPA Finding

Alternative 2 would not result in disproportionately high and adverse effects on minority or low-income populations.

CEQA Determination

There are no thresholds of significance in CEQA for environmental justice impacts. Therefore, no CEQA determination can be made for environmental justice impacts resulting from this alternative.

4.17.3.4 Rail Alternatives (Build Alternatives 3 and 4)

Alternative 3 – Low-Floor LRT/Tram

Construction Impacts

Construction of Alternative 3 facilities would be more extensive, which would include the OCS, TPSSs, and an MSF, when compared to the BRT alternatives. Although construction impacts would be more extensive, they would be generally similar to those described in the previous section for the BRT alternatives, with the following exceptions.

Displacement of Businesses, Housing, and People

To assess the types of potential displacements resulting from Alternative 3, conceptual engineering plans for the proposed alignment, station options, and rights-of-way were reviewed. When an acquisition is required, it typically results in either a partial or full acquisition of a parcel. A partial acquisition would result if a portion of the parcel is required to accommodate the project. A full acquisition would result if either: (1) the majority of the property is required for the horizontal alignment due to insufficient right-of-way or the need to construct storage or maintenance facilities, or (2) a severe loss of access reduces the useful operation of the property.

The majority of the low-floor LRT/tram alignment would be constructed in the median of an existing roadway and would not require the displacement of businesses or residences along the majority of the project corridor. As detailed in the Real Estate and Acquisition Report in Appendix I, some areas of the project alignment, however, would require commercial property acquisitions to accommodate the low-floor LRT/tram facilities, including:

- At Van Nuys Boulevard and Bessemer Street,
- At the Van Nuys/San Fernando Station at Van Nuys Boulevard and El Dorado Avenue,
- At San Fernando Road and Pinney Street, and
- At the Paxton Station at San Fernando Road and Weidner Street (see Figure 4-1 in the Environmental Justice Impacts Report in Appendix AA).

Partial property acquisitions would also be required for TPSSs; these acquisitions would be located near potential stations or at the MSF site, primarily using vacant lots, parking lots, or commercial properties.

Property acquisitions may also be required for storage areas for construction equipment and materials. These storage or staging areas would be established near the project alignment and would be located within the right-of-way, parking lots, vacant land, or on the parcels for the proposed MSF site. During construction, the contractor would choose staging locations among the parcels along the alignment to be acquired as needed for construction of Alternative 3. However, some construction easements for this alternative may require additional permanent right-of-way acquisitions and may result in the permanent displacement of businesses.

Although some acquisitions would be required to construct the track and support facilities and to accommodate construction staging areas, most of the acquisitions that would be required to construct Alternative 3 would occur as a result of the construction of the MSF. The location of the proposed low-floor LRT/tram MSF has not been finalized; however, three potential locations have been selected for consideration along Van Nuys Boulevard at Aetna Street (MSF Option A), Keswick Street (MSF Option B), and Arminta Street (MSF Option C).

The Alternative 3 alignment with MSF Option A would require the full or partial acquisition of 90 parcels. The majority of the acquisitions would be from light manufacturing and commercial properties that are occupied by automobile repair, supply businesses, and other general commercial retail uses. Three residentially zoned parcels would be fully acquired under Alternative 3 with MSF Option A. While these parcels are zoned for residential use, they are currently developed with a single parking lot serving an adjacent warehouse. According to the Real Estate and Acquisition Report in Appendix I, one parcel (Assessor's Parcel Number (APN) 2241-025-014) zoned for industrial use is developed with approximately four housing units, which would be acquired and displaced under MSF

Option A. The displaced businesses (and residential units) are located in low-income and/or minority neighborhoods and could be supported by owners, workers, or customers from low-income or minority block groups that could be affected by the economic changes or job losses associated with these displacements. Under Alternative 3, MSF Option A, the minority population in the affected area is approximately 70 percent and the low-income population is approximately 15 percent. Therefore, the displacement impacts of Alternative 3 with MSF Option A would be borne predominantly by an environmental justice population; as a consequence, Alternative 3 with MSF Option A could result in disproportionately high and adverse effects on environmental justice populations.

The Alternative 3 alignment with MSF Option B would require the full or partial acquisition of 65 parcels. The majority of the acquisitions would be from light manufacturing and commercial properties, which contain businesses oriented toward automobile repair and supplies or raw materials supply and manufacturing. No residential acquisitions would be required for MSF Option B. These businesses are located in low-income and/or minority neighborhoods and could be supported by owners, workers, or customers from low-income or minority block groups that could be affected by the economic changes or job losses associated with these displacements. Under Alternative 3, MSF Option B, the minority population in the affected area is approximately 89 percent and the low-income population is approximately 27 percent. Therefore, the displacement impacts of Alternative 3 with MSF Option B would be predominantly borne by an environmental justice population; and as a consequence, Alternative 3 with MSF Option A could result in disproportionately high and adverse effects on environmental justice populations.

The Alternative 3 alignment with MSF Option C would require the full or partial acquisition of 68 parcels. As with Option B, a majority of acquisitions would be from light manufacturing and commercial properties oriented toward automobile repair and raw materials supply and manufacturing. No acquisitions from residential properties would be required for Alternative 3 with MSF Option C. Under Alternative 3 with MSF Option C, the minority population in the affected area is approximately 97 percent and the low-income population is approximately 22 percent. Therefore, the displacement impacts of Alternative 3 with MSF Option C would be predominantly borne by an environmental justice population; and as a consequence, Alternative 3 with MSF Option C could result in disproportionately high and adverse effects on environmental justice populations.

It should be noted that within the larger surrounding urban area, it is anticipated that there would be enough available properties to accommodate most, if not all, of the displaced businesses. As a consequence, construction of Alternative 3 would not be expected to result in substantial changes to the local economic conditions in the project study area. According to the Real Estate and Acquisitions Report in Appendix I, for businesses that must be relocated, it is anticipated that most of the jobs would be retained and there would be no net loss in the overall number of jobs in the study area. Therefore, no substantial adverse effects from job loss are anticipated. Nonetheless, the viability of some local businesses may be affected by the relocations as customers would need to access new businesses or old businesses at their new locations. As a consequence, the removal of some businesses from their local customer base may lead to the disruption and termination of the businesses, resulting in localized job losses.

Business displacements required for construction of Alternative 3 could also result in substantial changes to local neighborhood character, and potentially the social fabric of the local community. Neighborhood residents or visitors may be accustomed to accessing businesses in their existing locations, and the displacement of those businesses could be psychologically or socially disruptive, which could affect professional and social interactions. However, if relocation sites are available within

proximity to the existing business sites, disruptions to professional and social interactions may be temporary because residents would likely become accustomed to accessing the displaced businesses at their new locations.

To minimize potential impacts, coordination would be conducted with the appropriate jurisdictions regarding business relocations so that job losses are minimized to the extent feasible. In addition, joint-use agreements (allowing concurrent transportation and business uses) would be considered for land acquisitions required for stations and construction staging to avoid the displacement of businesses and potential job losses in these areas to the extent feasible. Metro would also conduct early and ongoing public outreach to discuss potential public concerns with affected property owners and community members.

Although the displacement impacts described above would be predominantly borne by environmental justice populations, all communities within the project study area would be affected and the impacts suffered by the environmental justice populations would not be appreciably more severe or greater in magnitude than the adverse effects that would be suffered by the non-environmental justice populations. Additionally, relocation assistance and compensation in accordance with federal and state regulations would be provided for all displaced businesses. With implementation of compliance and mitigation measures and given that Alternative 3 would provide improved transit service and connectivity in an area with large transit-dependent and environmental justice populations, the impacts on the environmental justice populations would not be disproportionately high and adverse.

Operational Impacts

The operational impacts of Alternative 3 would be the same as those described in the previous section for Alternative 2, the Median-Running BRT Alternative, with the exceptions noted below.

Changes in Access to Public Transportation, Businesses, and Community Resources

By providing transit stations and facilities along San Fernando Road, this alternative would be consistent with the proposed City of San Fernando TOD Overlay Zone, which would create a transit-oriented district along San Fernando Road between the Sylmar/San Fernando Metrolink Station and the San Fernando Mall (on San Fernando Road between Kittridge Street and San Fernando Mission Boulevard).

According to Metro fare policies, additional fares would not be required for transfers between Metro Rapid and Local buses to the low-floor LRT/tram. Therefore, the low-floor LRT/tram service would not be cost-prohibitive and would comply with Metro fare policies. Public outreach would be conducted to ensure that community and neighborhood concerns, including fare policies, are addressed.

Most left turns from San Fernando Road would be prohibited through the City of San Fernando where a median dedicated guideway for the low-floor LRT/tram vehicle is proposed between the Sylmar/San Fernando Metrolink Station and Wolfskill Street. In addition, in an effort to maintain the pedestrian-oriented retail character of San Fernando Road between San Fernando Mission Boulevard and Chatsworth Drive, through traffic would be directed off San Fernando Road on the block between Maclay Avenue and Brand Boulevard by means of turn restrictions. These changes on San Fernando Road would be expected to facilitate pedestrian access to local businesses, which could provide new customers and improved economic conditions. All existing turning movements would be maintained on San Fernando Road between Wolfskill Street and Van Nuys Boulevard where the low-floor LRT/tram would share travel lanes with motor vehicles. For these reasons and because these effects are anticipated to affect all communities within the project study area comparably, regardless of the

block groups' socioeconomic or demographic characteristics, Alternative 3 would not result in disproportionately high and adverse effects on minority or low-income populations with respect to changes in vehicle access.

Changes in Pedestrian and Bicycle Access

On Van Nuys Boulevard between the Metro Orange Line and El Dorado Avenue in the community of Pacoima, the existing 13-foot-wide sidewalks on each side of the roadway would be narrowed to 10 feet to accommodate the installation of the low-floor LRT/tram facilities, while providing two vehicle travel lanes in each direction. These modifications are not expected to substantially interfere with pedestrian access along the project corridor. In addition, all stations would be ADA compliant, and would be designed to meet accessibility requirements. For these reasons and because these effects are anticipated to affect all communities within the project study area comparably, regardless of the block groups' socioeconomic or demographic characteristics, Alternative 3 would not result in disproportionately high and adverse effects on minority or low-income populations with respect to changes in pedestrian access.

Impacts on bicycle access would be the same as those described above for Alternative 1.

Changes in Circulation and Emergency Access

As detailed in the Transportation Impacts Report in Appendix G, Alternative 3 would be expected to improve transit service, result in an increase of approximately 19,685 daily transit boardings, and reduce regional traffic congestion, which could facilitate faster response times for emergency vehicle services. However, because of the reductions in roadway capacity to accommodate the Alternative 3 alignment, this alternative would result in localized adverse effects at 16 (under Existing plus Alternative 3 scenario) or 32 (under future Alternative 3 scenario) of 73 study intersections within the corridor. If the increased congestion at these affected intersections results in substantial delays for emergency vehicles, the impacts could be significant. Because the corridor contains a large minority population, the adverse impacts on emergency access would be predominantly borne by an environmental justice population, and as a consequence there could be a disproportionately high and adverse effect on that population. However, Alternative 3 would provide improved transit service and connectivity within an area that has a relatively large transit-dependent population. The improved transit service would increase access to local medical facilities for the transit dependent and environmental justice populations in the corridor. As a consequence, the net effects on the environmental justice populations would not be disproportionately high and adverse.

Changes in Visual Character

The project corridor is an existing transportation route in an urbanized area with existing bus transit service, and the proposed low-floor LRT/tram operations would be consistent with existing transportation uses. The new proposed stations in the median and along the sides of the roadway would present new vertical features in the landscape that could affect existing visual character and quality by limiting views directly adjacent to, or within, the stations. New stations and sidewalk widening could also result in a more cohesive landscape design along the corridor with canopies, additional street trees, and benches that would provide a more unified appearance in station areas. This alternative would require several elements to support vehicle operations, including median fences, an OCS, TPSSs, signaling, and an MSF.

The median fences and OCS, in particular, would introduce additional vertical elements that could substantially change the existing visual character and quality within the project corridor, especially for residents, pedestrians, and bicyclists, who would be expected to have high viewer sensitivity to their surroundings. Alternative 3 would have substantial adverse effects on scenic views, scenic resources, and visual character in several areas within the project corridor, and would not have adverse effects on visual quality in several areas within the project corridor. This alternative would also result in minor beneficial impacts on visual quality related to the new stations. Changes in visual character resulting from Alternative 3 would be expected to be substantial in areas where sensitive viewers are located, and would require consideration during community outreach efforts.

These proposed elements would be situated relatively evenly throughout the project corridor and would result in comparative changes to visual characters. In addition, individuals traveling from outside the project study area would also be affected by these visual impacts. Therefore, Alternative 3 would not result in disproportionate effects on minority or low-income populations with respect to visual character. Potential impacts on visual character resulting from Alternative 3 are addressed in more detail in the Visual Quality and Aesthetics Impacts Report in Appendix K.

Safety Impacts and Other Physical Intrusions

Low-floor LRT/tram vehicles would not exceed the posted adjacent roadway speed limit, which is typically 35 miles per hour (mph). In addition, Metro would prepare grade crossing applications in coordination with local public agencies to further increase safety and reduce the potential for conflicts, accidents, and collisions.

Alternative 3 could result in several pedestrian safety concerns. Median stations could result in a potential for collisions between pedestrians and low-floor LRT/tram vehicles. In addition, the introduction of low-floor LRT/tram vehicles into mixed-flow traffic lanes on San Fernando Road, just north of Wolfskill Street, could result in a potential for similar collisions at intersection pedestrian crossings. Illegal crossings by pedestrians could also result in potential safety hazards.

Pedestrian traffic control and channelization techniques would be used to control pedestrian movements at intersections and encourage the use of designated pedestrian crossings. Metro would prepare grade crossing applications in coordination with local public agencies to further increase safety and reduce the potential for conflicts, accidents, and collisions. Therefore, Alternative 3 would not result in disproportionate effects on minority or low-income populations with respect to pedestrian safety.

Cumulative Impacts

Unlike Alternatives 1 and 2, Alternative 3 would result in disproportionately high and adverse effects on minority and low-income populations with respect to displacements required for right-of-way acquisitions and/or temporary construction easements. Alternative 3 would require between 65 and 87 acquisitions of commercial and industrial property within the project study area, depending on the MSF option selected. In addition, MSF Option A would result in the acquisition of one parcel that appears to include four housing units within a minority block group, potentially requiring relocation of four families.

Past projects have resulted in disproportionately high and adverse effects on minority or low-income populations, and other planned or proposed projects in the corridor could further result in adverse effects on environmental justice populations. However, as noted above relocation benefits and assistance would be provided to businesses displaced by the project and may also be provided

to businesses displaced by related projects. Additionally, it is anticipated that a majority of displaced businesses and residents could be relocated within the project study area or in surrounding communities. It is not anticipated that relocated businesses or residences displaced by the project and related projects would require construction of a substantial amount of commercial and industrial development or new housing that would result in substantial adverse indirect impacts. Furthermore, Alternative 3 would improve transit service and connectivity benefitting environmental justice populations in the corridor; therefore, it is unlikely Alternative 1 would result in a cumulatively considerable contribution to any significant cumulative effects on environmental justice populations.

Compliance Requirements and Design Features

Relocation assistance and compensation for all displaced businesses and residences will be provided, as required by the Uniform Act and the California Act. All real property to be acquired will be appraised to determine its fair market value. Just compensation, which shall not be less than the approved appraisal, will be made to each displaced property owner. Each business and residence displaced by the project will be given advance written notice and will be informed of their eligibility for relocation assistance and payments under the Uniform Act.

Mitigation Measures

Construction Mitigation Measures

The reader is referred to the following sections in this EIS/EIR for measures to reduce or avoid potential construction impacts on local communities, including environmental justice populations: Chapter 3-Transportation, Transit, Circulation, and Parking; Section 4.2-Real Estate and Acquisitions; Section 4.4-Communities and Neighborhoods; Section 4.5-Visual Quality and Aesthetics; Section 4.6-Air Quality; Section 4.8-Noise and Vibration; and Section 4.14-Safety and Security.

Operational Mitigation Measures

See MM-CN-1 in the Communities and Neighborhoods section (Section 4.4) of this EIS/EIR.

Impacts Remaining After Mitigation

NEPA Finding

Alternative 3 would result in disproportionately high and adverse effects on minority and low-income populations with respect to displacements. However, this alternative would also result in new transit opportunities that are anticipated to result in improved connectivity and transit equity. Compliance and mitigation measures would reduce or minimize the adverse effects, where feasible. After implementation of the proposed measures, adverse effects would not be substantial.

CEQA Determination

There are no thresholds of significance in CEQA for environmental justice impacts. Therefore, no CEQA determination can be made for environmental justice impacts resulting from this alternative.

Alternative 4 – LRT

Construction Impacts

Alternative 4 would require the most extensive construction of the four build alternatives because of the subway portion of the alignment. The LRT Alternative (Alternative 4) would also include construction of OCS, TPSSs, and MSF structures, which would not be required for the BRT alternatives. As a consequence, Alternative 4 would result in the greatest construction impacts compared to the other alternatives. As discussed below, the displacement impacts, under Alternative 4, would be slightly greater than the impact that would occur under Alternative 3.

Displacement of Housing and People

Alternative 4 would require full or partial right-of-way acquisitions ranging between 110 to 120 light industrial, manufacturing, and commercial properties for the construction of the MSF and connections to the MSF from the LRT alignment, depending on the MSF option selected. The displacement impacts would be predominantly borne by environmental justice populations; therefore, Alternative 4 would result in disproportionately high and adverse effects on environmental justice populations. However, as noted above for Alternative 3, relocation assistance and compensation would be provided for all displaced businesses and residences. Additionally, within the larger surrounding urban area, it is anticipated that there would be enough available properties to accommodate most, if not all, of the displaced businesses. It is not anticipated that construction of a substantial amount of new development would be required to accommodate the relocations. As a consequence of the implementation of compliance and mitigation measures and given Alternative 4 would provide improved transit service and connectivity in an area with large transit-dependent and environmental justice populations, the displacement impacts on the environmental justice populations would not be disproportionately high and adverse.

Operational Impacts

Operational impacts associated with Alternative 4 would be the same as those described above for Alternative 3, with the exceptions noted below.

Changes in Pedestrian and Bicycle Access

At the Van Nuys Civic Center between the Metro Orange Line and the planned subway portal north of Hartland Street, the existing 13-foot-wide sidewalks on each side of the roadway would be narrowed to 10 feet to accommodate the installation of the light rail facilities, while providing two vehicle travel lanes in each direction. Sidewalks would also be narrowed along Van Nuys Boulevard north of the subway portal near Rayen Street in Panorama City, where the LRT vehicles would resume a surface alignment in the roadway median and proceed to El Dorado Avenue in the community of Pacoima.

These modifications to pedestrian movements and sidewalk widths would not be expected to substantially interfere with pedestrian access along the project corridor. In addition, all stations would be ADA compliant and would be designed to meet accessibility requirements. A pedestrian bridge would be provided at the Sylmar/San Fernando Metrolink Station from the LRT platform to the parking lot. Of the block groups adjacent to the project corridor, 100 percent contain minority populations, and 100 percent contain low-income populations.

The City's Bicycle Plan designates Van Nuys Boulevard as part of the "Backbone Bicycle Network," which plans an interconnected system facilitating mobility on key arterials.⁶ Under Alternative 4, the existing Class II bike lanes on Van Nuys Boulevard north of Nordhoff Street would be removed. In addition, curbside lanes on Van Nuys Boulevard between the Metro Orange Line and San Fernando Road would typically be 11 feet wide, requiring motorists in the curbside lane to shift to the left to pass a bicyclist. These changes would conflict with the City's Bicycle Plan because designated bicycle lanes on Van Nuys Boulevard would not be feasible with the implementation of this alternative, affecting future bicycle access within the project study area. The City's General Plan designates Van Nuys Boulevard as a transit priority street, and the transit accommodations under this alternative would only be feasible with the removal of the bicycle lanes. In addition, as stated in Metro's Complete Streets Policy, a number of streets might not provide accommodations for all modes of transportation due to physical right-of-way constraints, which is the case for this alternative. The change from a Class II bike lane to a shared bicycle lane could result in safety impacts as discussed later in this section.

The bicycle path, also known as the Mission City Trail located in the City of San Fernando along the Metro-owned railroad right-of-way, would be maintained under this alternative because the right-of-way is sufficiently wide enough to allow the bicycle path to remain alongside a pair of LRT tracks and relocated tracks for Metrolink and Union Pacific trains. At the point where the LRT alignment crosses the bicycle path, near the intersection of Pinney Street and San Fernando Road, a signalized grade crossing would be provided. The bike path would be shifted from the east side of the railroad alignment to the west side of the tracks through the City of San Fernando to reduce the number of bike-rail crossings, reduce the amount of right-of-way acquisitions, and to provide a better alignment of the railroad and LRT tracks.

The City's Bicycle Plan includes planned bicycle lanes along Woodman Avenue (one-mile east of and parallel to Van Nuys Boulevard) between Ventura Boulevard and the Osborne Street and Nordhoff Street corridors. Bicycle lanes are also planned along the Osborne Street corridor and would connect to San Fernando Road. As detailed in the Transportation Impacts Report in Appendix G, mitigation for impacts on bicycle facilities will include the implementation of bicycle lanes on one or more of these parallel roadways. To use the planned bicycle lanes along Woodman Avenue, bicyclists would need to travel one mile east of Van Nuys Boulevard, which may be an inconvenience for some bicyclists depending on their final destination. However, bicycle accommodations would be provided at light rail stations to provide options for passengers to leave their bicycles at the stations or to bring them onto the light rail vehicles.

The average distance of a bicycle trip in Los Angeles is four miles, and affected bicyclists would be expected to travel from several neighborhoods within and outside of the study area, which include block groups of varying socioeconomic and demographic characteristics.⁷ The changes to the Class II bike lanes along Van Nuys Boulevard would be expected to affect all bicyclists within an approximate four-mile radius comparably, regardless of socioeconomic or demographic characteristics. Therefore, for those reasons and because Alternative 4 would improve transit service and would include measures to mitigate potential bicycle impacts, Alternative 4 would not result in disproportionately high and adverse effects on minority or low-income populations with respect to pedestrian and bicycle access.

⁶ City. March 2011. 2010 Bicycle Plan.

⁷ City. March 2011. 2010 Bicycle Plan.

Changes in Circulation and Emergency Access

As detailed in the Transportation Impacts Report in Appendix G, Alternative 4 would be expected to improve transit service, result in an increase of approximately 32,800 daily transit boardings, and reduce traffic congestion, which could facilitate faster response times for emergency service vehicles. However, existing mixed-flow lanes on Van Nuys Boulevard would be converted to a dedicated guideway for light rail vehicles and could result in additional roadway congestion from decreased roadway capacity for mixed-flow traffic and turning restrictions at unsignalized intersections. This alternative would result in adverse effects on 20 of 73 study intersections within the corridor, which could reduce access for emergency vehicle response or interfere with evacuation plans.

Because the corridor contains a large minority population, the adverse impacts on emergency access would be predominantly borne by an environmental justice population, and as a consequence there could be a disproportionately high and adverse effect on that population. However, Alternative 4 would provide improved transit service and connectivity within an area that has a relatively large transit-dependent population. The improved transit service would increase access to local medical facilities for the transit dependent and environmental justice populations in the corridor. As a consequence, the net effects on the environmental justice populations would not be disproportionately high and adverse.

Safety Impacts and Other Physical Intrusions

The LRT would run in a dedicated guideway along Van Nuys Boulevard between the Metro Orange Line and San Fernando Road, and then within the existing Metro-owned railroad right-of-way on separate dedicated tracks from Van Nuys Boulevard to the Sylmar/San Fernando Metrolink Station. Therefore, this alternative would not be expected to result in a substantial increase in accidents or collisions between light rail vehicles and other motor vehicles, and no adverse effects would result on minority or low-income populations.

Light rail vehicles would not exceed the posted adjacent roadway speed limit, which is typically 35 mph. The LRT Alternative would have an average speed of 30 mph when underground. In addition, Metro would prepare grade crossing agreements in coordination with local public agencies to further increase safety and reduce the potential for conflicts, accidents, and collisions.

The LRT Alternative could result in several pedestrian safety concerns. Pedestrian safety issues would mostly apply to proposed at-grade stations, and would apply less to the proposed underground LRT facilities as the latter can be designed to avoid these concerns. At-grade stations could result in potential collisions between pedestrians and light rail vehicles. In addition, a potential safety hazard could result if pedestrians attempt to cross streets and tracks illegally.

Pedestrian traffic control and channelization techniques would be used to control pedestrian movements at intersections, and to encourage the use of designated pedestrian crossings. A pedestrian bridge at the Sylmar/San Fernando Metrolink Station between the LRT platform and the parking lot is proposed under this alternative. Therefore, no adverse effects would result on minority or low-income populations.

Cumulative Impacts

The cumulative impacts that could occur due to implementation of Alternative 4 would be the same as those previously described for Alternative 3.

Compliance Requirements and Design Features

Please see the measures described above for Alternative 3.

Mitigation Measures

Construction Mitigation Measures

The reader is referred to the following sections in this EIS/EIR for measures to reduce or avoid potential construction impacts on local communities, including environmental justice populations: Chapter 3-Transportation, Transit, Circulation, and Parking; Section 4.2-Real Estate and Acquisitions; Section 4.4-Communities and Neighborhoods; Section 4.5-Visual Quality and Aesthetics; Section 4.6-Air Quality; Section 4.8-Noise and Vibration; and Section 4.14-Safety and Security.

Operational Mitigation Measures

See MM-CN-1 in the Communities and Neighborhoods section (Section 4.4) of this EIS/EIR.

Impacts Remaining After Mitigation

NEPA Finding

Alternative 4 would result in disproportionately high and adverse effects on minority and low-income populations with respect to displacements. However, this alternative would also result in new transit opportunities that are anticipated to result in improved connectivity and transit equity. Mitigation measures would reduce or minimize the adverse effects, where feasible. After implementation of the proposed mitigation measures, disproportionately adverse effects would not be substantial.

CEQA Determination

There are no thresholds of significance in CEQA for environmental justice impacts. Therefore, no CEQA determination can be made for environmental justice impacts resulting from this alternative.