

5.0 Public Outreach Summary

What was the public outreach process undertaken for the project?

A robust public participation program was undertaken to educate stakeholders regarding the proposed project and potential alternatives related to mode and alignment that are being considered. During this initial (Alternative Analysis) phase, the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro), in collaboration with the City of Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT), in cooperation with the City of San Fernando sought feedback from stakeholders regarding alternatives being considered for the East San Fernando Valley Transit Corridor project.

The East San Fernando Valley Transit Corridor Study began in 2011 as the Van Nuys Boulevard Transit Corridor Study. The objective of the study is to evaluate ways to improve north-south transit opportunities in east San Fernando Valley. After the first series of community meetings were held in October 2011, based on an analysis of community comments, the project team concluded that it was necessary to expand the study to examine the possibility that Sepulveda Boulevard may also present a viable option for a new north-south transit system. Additionally, the study was also expanded to include the Sylmar/San Fernando Metrolink Station as a potential northern terminus/origination point.

The study has been underway for over a year. During this time, three rounds of community meetings, consisting of 11 separating meetings were, held – October 2011, April 2012 and October 2012. The outreach team focused activities on engaging and informing stakeholders about the overall project and study process.

Public outreach for the project occurred on a multitude of levels – postcard mailers, stakeholder e-mail blasts, take-ones, social media channels such as Facebook and Twitter, newspapers, a project website, community events, farmers markets, neighborhood council meetings, and neighborhood and business organizations. Metro staff also briefed representatives from the offices of federal, state, and local elected officials.

The comments have been considered in the screening of alternatives process as part of the community input evaluation criteria.

5.1 PUBLIC OUTREACH – SUMMARY OF MEETINGS

5.1.1. Community Meetings

There were three rounds of community meetings consisting of 11 separate meetings between October 2011 and October 2012. The meeting dates, locations, and attendances were as follows:

- Three community meetings were held in the Van Nuys Boulevard corridor:
 - October 24, 2011 at Panorama High School (47 stakeholders signed in)

- October 25, 2011 at Pacoima Neighborhood City Hall (45 stakeholders signed in)
- October 26, 2011 at Van Nuys Civic Center (58 stakeholders signed in)
- Three community meetings were held in the Sepulveda Boulevard corridor:
 - April 12, 2012 at San Fernando Regional Pool Facility (43 stakeholders signed in)
 - April 17, 2012 at St. Mary Byzantine Catholic Church (36 stakeholders signed in)
 - April 18, 2012 at Valley Presbyterian Hospital (22 stakeholders signed in)
 - May 1, 2012 at Mission Community Police Station (38 stakeholders signed in)
- Four community meetings were held in the project study area:
 - Tuesday, October 2 at Sepulveda Middle School in Mission Hills (35 stakeholders signed in)
 - Thursday, October 4 at San Fernando High School in San Fernando (44 stakeholders signed in)
 - Saturday, October 6 at Panorama High School in Panorama City (40 stakeholders signed in)
 - Tuesday, October 9 at Marvin Braude Civic Center in Van Nuys (56 stakeholders signed in)

5.1.2. Legislative Briefings

The three rounds of community meetings included briefings to the San Fernando Valley Elected Officials' Staff – October 6, 2011, March 29, 2012, and September 28, 2012. During these briefings, Metro presented information updates on the project. Some of the Elected Official offices that took part in the briefings included:

- Congressman Brad Sherman
- Senator Alex Padilla
- Senator Carol Liu
- Assemblyman Felipe Fuentes
- Assemblyman Bob Blumenfeld
- Assemblyman Mike Feuer
- Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa
- Councilman Tony Cardenas
- Councilman Richard Alarcon
- Councilman Paul Krekorian
- City of San Fernando

5.1.3. Stakeholder Briefings

Along with the community meetings and legislative briefings, stakeholder briefings occurred throughout the outreach process and were as follows:

- Seventeen stakeholder meetings occurred between October 6, 2011 and November 19, 2011
- Four stakeholder meetings occurred between March 29, 2012 and April 18, 2012
- Seventeen stakeholder meetings occurred between July 19, 2012 and November 12, 2012

5.1.4. Public Outreach Materials

Public outreach materials were prepared to inform, educate and engage stakeholders at the open houses and beyond. These provided background on the project, information on the meeting format, as well as provided avenues for stakeholders to provide their input and ideas to Metro for consideration in project planning. The outreach materials included:

- Fact Sheet (bilingual)
- Frequently Asked Questions (bilingual)
- Contact card
- Comment Sheet (bilingual)
- Survey (bilingual)
- Welcome Road Map (bilingual)
- PowerPoint Presentation

5.1.5. Digital Engagement

Digital engagement employed the utilization of social networks to disseminate the project information and connect with the online public. A Facebook page and Twitter account were created and titled Metro Van Nuys to provide information to followers. The pages were eventually updated to reflect the expansion of the study area. As of October 2012, the East San Fernando Valley Transit Corridor Facebook page had 591 Likes and East SFV Transit Twitter page had 91 followers receiving real-time information updates for the new study area.

5.1.6. Notifications

The community meetings were noticed via:

- A postcard mailer to more than 150,000 occupants within the project area and key stakeholder groups
- Take-ones on San Fernando Valley Bus routes
- E-mail blasts sent to the stakeholder database
- Drop-ins and material distribution to key groups in the project area
- Delivered posters to area businesses and centers of activity along the Van Nuys Boulevard and Sepulveda Boulevard corridors
- Distributed flyers throughout the study area
- Elected officials' offices and their website calendars

- Online media channels, including:
 - Facebook at MetroVanNuys and EastSFVTransit
 - Twitter @metrovanuys and @eastsvtransit
 - Metro.net/vannuys and Metro.net/eastsvtransit
 - The Source Blog
 - LA Streetsblog
 - Transit Coalition Blog
 - Daily News Blog
 - EveryBlock Blog
- Newspaper Display Ads on:
 - Los Angeles Daily News
 - San Fernando Valley Business Journal
 - La Opinion (Spanish-language)
 - El Sol (Spanish-language)
 - Azbarez (Armenian-language)
- Community Events

5.1.7. Community Meeting Stations

The meetings were conducted utilizing an open house format allowing participants to drop in at any time and learn about the project. The last round of meetings included a presentation allowing participants to learn and speak directly to study team members and get an overview regarding the project during the meeting timeframe. Project team members were available to walk attendees through a series of information boards, answer questions and receive feedback. The meetings generally included the following stations that served to explain the project:

- Sign-in/Registration
- Project Overview – provided a video overview of the project along with boards presenting: Where are we in the process? What is being studied? What is the study area?
- Purpose & Need/Screening Criteria – highlighted the project’s goals and criteria for screening down the alternatives presented
- Study Area Characteristics – provided demographics information about the corridor
- Mode Options – showcased the proposed modes: Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), Streetcar, and Light Rail Transit (LRT)
- Alternatives Under Consideration – What type of system is being considered? How do they compare against each other? What do you think makes more sense?
- Screening Process – How will a decision be made as to what is further studied? What is an EIR/EIS? How do my comments help that process?
- Interactive Model – allowed participants to create their vision of transit on Van Nuys Boulevard using blocks, toys and other materials
- Corridor Map – allowed participants to write their comments regarding specific areas of the corridor on an oversized corridor map

- Interactive Map – allowing attendees to show where they live, work and play by placing dots on the study area map
- Comments – allowed participants to share their comments via:
 - Comment Forms
 - Online Questionnaire
 - Video Commentary Recordings

5.1.8. Summary of Comments

The comments have been considered in the screening of alternatives process as part of the community input evaluation criteria. Nearly 1,400 comments were received over the course of the three comment periods. The general comments regarding the project included:

- **Mode** – There were comments supporting all three modes, but they were mainly focused on BRT and LRT. The stakeholders showed support for BRT as a safe, low cost option similar to the MOL which would also support local businesses, and provide more direct routes than rail. LRT is another favored mode as it is considered faster and carries more people in one trip, with the capacity to hold bicycles and wheelchairs, than other modes of transit. General mode related comments included:

BRT comments

- BRT is least expensive and more efficient
- Prefer bus only lanes similar to Wilshire Boulevard
- BRT is a “band-aid” and is not faster

Streetcar comments

- Utilize the streetcar on original PE ROW
- Streetcar is the wrong vehicle given the length of the corridor

LRT comments

- LRT is faster and carries more people in one trip than other modes
- Increase rail options for the Valley
- LRT is better for businesses and the local communities
- Stakeholders and the east San Fernando Valley deserve the best and most efficient mode
- LRT is too expensive

- **Alignment** – The stakeholders preferred Van Nuys Boulevard as there are more activity centers such as government facilities, institutional, and commercial centers and better ridership in the corridor. Other comments included providing connections to the Sylmar/San Fernando Metrolink Station and the future Sepulveda Pass Corridor project. Concerns were raised over an alignment on Brand Boulevard as it would adversely impact its historic character, and with a potential LRT alternative on Van Nuys Boulevard south of the MOL which would create challenges for auto dealership operations in the area. Other alignment related comments included:
 - Provide connections to the MOL, Amtrak stations, and Mission College

- Consider utilizing Rinaldi Street instead of Brand Boulevard to avoid impacting the single family residences
 - Use Brand Boulevard and San Fernando Mission Road as a turn around to connect back to Sepulveda Boulevard
 - Utilize San Fernando Mission Road instead of Brand Boulevard
 - Consider Laurel Canyon Boulevard instead of Sepulveda Boulevard to San Fernando Mission Boulevard
- **Project Alternatives** – Of the six build alternatives presented to the stakeholders at the last round of community meetings, the LRT alternatives were favored over the BRT alternatives with Alternative 2L appearing as the favorite. Of the BRT alternatives, Alternative 6B and 7B were slightly favored over Alternative 2B and 4B. Alternative specific comments included:

No Build Alternative comments

- There is already a lot of traffic on Van Nuys Boulevard and another mode of transit would just increase traffic hazards
- Transit options will only bring crime to businesses and residences nearby
- New modes will take away lanes for cars and add to traffic
- The No Build options is not an option - the east San Fernando Valley deserves a new public transit system

TSM Alternative comments

- Need traffic signal synchronization
- Improve overall service by adding Metro Rapid Bus and added Metro Lines along Van Nuys Boulevard

Alternative 7L (referred to as LRT-1 at the community meetings) comments

- Leaves out major ridership connections on Van Nuys Boulevard
- A hybrid between LRT-1 and LRT-2 would better serve the ridership needs of the study area
- Follows the old Pacific Electric (Red Car) Line which makes sense

Alternative 2L (referred to as LRT-2 at the community meetings) comments

- Van Nuys Boulevard would have more ridership than the Sepulveda Boulevard alignment
- Avoids Brand Boulevard, which contains single-family housing, that are opposed to building in the median
- Would be the best option for moving residents locally and beyond

Alternative 7B (referred to as BRT-1 at the community meetings) comments

- Support for this alternative along Sepulveda Boulevard south of MOL and north of Parthenia Street

Alternative 2B (referred to as BRT-2 at the community meetings) comments

- Preferred for cost, speed of construction, and flexibility

Alternative 6B (referred to as BRT-3 at the community meetings) comments

- Most economical and quickest option to develop

Alternative 4B (referred to as BRT-4 at the community meetings) comments

- Cost efficient with multi-use of MOL
- Has shortest time between both termini

- **Bus Operations** – General comments received included:
 - Increase bus service frequencies, especially Metro Rapid Line 761
 - Improve bus benches and shelters
 - Suggestions for an off-street payment system to speed up boarding process and utilizing all doors for boarding would improve speed and create efficiencies
 - Provide platform-level boarding for bus making it easier for the elderly, children and wheeled entry and exit

- **Bicycles/Bike Lanes** – General comments received included:
 - Consider bus, light rail options with opportunity for biking and walking
 - Bike racks and lockers at every transit stop since the average travel to transit by bike is two miles per a Metro study as bikers need the option of leaving their bikes behind
 - Include bicycle buffered/protected lanes along the route
 - Bike lanes must be included with any project moving forward
 - Bicycles and wheelchairs are better accommodated on LRT
 - Bikeway is preferred versus street parking if having to make a choice
 - There is no room on Van Nuys Boulevard for bicycles

- **Pedestrians** – General comments received included:
 - Provide pedestrian priority at traffic signals
 - Make wider sidewalks for pedestrians
 - Encourage a pedestrian experience

A summary of the public comments are provided in Appendix A along with meeting materials and notifications.