1.0 HISTORY/PURPOSE AND NEED

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This section provides a background and history of the events and actions that have led to the evaluation of the alternatives considered in this EIS/EIR. In addition, this section provides the purpose and need for transit service in the Mid-City/Westside area. For a detailed description of Alternatives Considered, the reader is referred to Section 2.0, which immediately follows this chapter of the document.

1.2 BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

The need for high-capacity transit service improvements has been long recognized in the Mid-City/Westside area of Los Angeles ("Study Area" or the "Mid-City/Westside Study Area"). Since the 1970's, the MTA and its predecessors the Southern California Rapid Transit District (SCRTD) and the Los Angeles County Transportation Commission (LACTC) have conducted numerous transportation planning and environmental impact studies that have established the need for, and environmental impacts resulting from, improved east-west oriented transit service in various parts of the Study Area. Several planning and environmental studies prepared in the late 1980's and early 1990's identified the potential for the westward extension of the Metro Red Line system, which currently terminates at Wilshire Boulevard and Western Avenue.

1.2.1 Wilshire Boulevard Corridor

The original Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA), adopted in 1983, for the Mid-City/Westside Study Area was an 18.6-mile heavy rail subway line extending from Los Angeles Union Station to North Hollywood. Due to budget constraints, the Urban Mass Transit Administration (UMTA), precursor to the present-day Federal Transit Administration (FTA), was unable to provide funding for the entire LPA alignment. In 1984, a 4.4-mile minimum operating segment (MOS), extending from Union Station to a station at Wilshire/Alvarado, was chosen and a full funding contract for this segment was signed into legislation on December 19, 1985. Construction of this segment began in 1986.

In 1985, a "naturally-occurring" methane gas fire at a Ross "Dress-For Less" store, located along the selected LPA alignment, resulted in an investigation by a special City of Los Angeles Task Force. Conclusions from this investigation lead to a Congressional prohibition on federal funding for subway construction within the designated Methane Gas Risk Zone, as determined by the Task Force's 1985 report on subsurface conditions in the region. As mandated by the Congressional prohibition, a Congressionally Ordered Re-Engineering (CORE) study was conducted. The intent of this study was to determine an appropriate alignment through which to link the Los Angeles Central Business District, the San Fernando Valley and the Wilshire Corridor. Over 40 candidate alignments were reviewed and 6 alignments studied in detailed environmental reports.

In July 1988, a new LPA was chosen (see Figure 2.2). This new LPA, building from the previously adopted MOS currently under construction, would travel from Los Angeles Union Station to Wilshire Boulevard/Vermont Avenue and split into two separate lines, one traveling west to

Wilshire Boulevard/Western Avenue and the other proceeding north to Hollywood and North Hollywood. The branch to Wilshire/Western was opened in 1996. The branch to North Hollywood was opened for service in June, 2000.

The 1990 approval of Proposition C created a new local funding source for Southern California Rapid Transit District (SCRTD) and further study of a Metro Red Line extension to the west was conducted in 1992. The 1992 Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement/Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Report (FSEIS/FSEIR) adopted LPA for the Mid-Cities segment showed the construction of a subway from the existing Wilshire/Western station to Pico/San Vicente (Figure 2.3).

In 1993, geotechnical tests conducted to provide detailed information concerning the nature and extent of hydrogen sulfide gas along the Mid-City Segment LPA alignment found concentrations much greater than preliminary tests had identified. This discovery prompted the 1994 Metro Red Line Segment 3/Mid-City Extension Reassessment Study that identified possible vertical alternative alignments for the LPA to mitigate impacts from the hydrogen sulfide gas. The conclusions of this study initiated a new Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement/Supplemental Environmental Impact Report (SEIS/SEIR) in 1996 to assess the environmental impacts of shallow cut-and-cover and aerial configurations along the original Crenshaw Boulevard alignment.

The environmental process determined that the impacts of this alignment were highly negative to the community. In an effort to mitigate these impacts, the March 1996 Mid-City Alternative Alignment Gas Exploration Study was conducted to investigate a deep-bore tunneling option along the Wilton Place/Arlington Avenue alignment, approximately one-quarter mile east of the current LPA (Figure 2.4). Results of geotechnical tests done along this alignment produced significantly lower hydrogen sulfide levels. As a result, the Draft SEIS/SEIR underway for the Mid-City Segment added a Wilton/Arlington alignment.

In 1998, MTA conducted a restructuring plan to document its ability to complete the North Hollywood rail construction and meet the terms of the Bus Consent Decree adopted by the MTA Board of Directors on May 13, 1998. The FTA approved this restructuring plan on July 2, 1998. This plan documented that MTA did not have sufficient local matching funds to finance heavy rail subway projects in the Eastside and Mid-City study areas that was necessary to meet the requirements of the original Full Funding Grant Agreements for these projects and work on these projects was subsequently suspended. As a provision of this plan, MTA was to study "viable and effective options" throughout Los Angeles County, emphasizing study areas containing suspended heavy rail projects.

1.2.2 Exposition Right-of-Way (ROW) Corridor

The Exposition ROW Corridor is located just south of downtown Los Angeles and extends approximately 12 miles to the west along the former Southern Pacific Railroad right-of-way, purchased by MTA in 1990, to 17th Street in downtown Santa Monica. This corridor has been recognized as a possible transit corridor and was included within MTA's 30-Year Integrated Transportation Plan.

The Exposition Right-of-Way Preliminary Planning Study was completed by BRW in May of 1992 to identify the transportation improvement alternatives available along this corridor. The transit

alternatives evaluated for development in this corridor were light rail transit (LRT), trolley bus technology, a transitway facility, and a bicycle path. Four alignments utilized by various modes were recommended and future steps for further study were developed.

A follow-up study, Exposition Right-of-Way Final Draft Phase I Summary Report, was completed for the Exposition Right-of-Way Corridor in December 1994. This study took the recommendations of the 1992 Preliminary Planning Study and more clearly defined the alternatives under consideration. Specific items covered by this study were design enhancements for both the busway and light rail alternatives recommended for further analysis.

1.2.3 Additional Mid-City/Westside Studies

Several studies have been conducted that are contained within the Mid-City/Westside study area. These studies range in scope from a system-wide analysis to alternatives available for a particular corridor to options associated with a specific mode of transportation.

System-wide Studies

To evaluate new fixed guideway projects, the MTA commissioned the Regional Transit Alternatives (RTAA) Study. The RTAA Study accomplished several important objectives for the MTA. First, the RTAA study identified the amount of funding available for new projects between FY 1999 and FY 2004. Secondly, it developed several funding allocations and established a framework for further fixed guideway development within the Eastside, Mid-City/Westside and San Fernando Valley study areas. Finally, the study provided a preliminary evaluation of fixed guideway alternatives in the three study areas and recommended that a Major Investment Study be conducted to provide more detailed information of these alternatives.

On November 9, 1998, the results of the RTAA study were presented to the MTA Board. The Board approved the recommended rapid bus plan, which would be conducted in a demonstration project for three rapid bus lines serving the Eastside, Mid-City/Westside and San Fernando Valley study areas. The Board also reaffirmed its commitment to fund fixed guideway transit improvements in the suspended rail corridors. Also, a funding commitment of $220 million through FY 2004 was made a priority for the Eastside and Mid-City/Westside study areas.

As a necessary parallel step in obtaining greater flexibility in project definition for the Eastside and Mid-City/Westside Study Areas, the MTA sought to expand the definition of Segment 3 of the Metro Red Line, which was defined in both Intermodal Surface Transportation & Efficiency Act (ISTEA) and the Segment 3 Full Funding Grant Agreement as "heavy rail subway." With the cooperation and assistance of the Los Angeles congressional delegation, the MTA obtained revised definitional language in the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century, which was signed into law by the President on June 9, 1998. This action was taken with the specific intent of being able to utilize the Segment 3 funding balance in the future for any type of fixed guideway project in the Westside and Mid-City Study Areas. The TEA-21 legislation expanded the definition of the Segment 3 project to include "any fixed guideway project" (not just heavy rail subway) in the transportation corridors to be served by the three extensions of Segment 3. It also authorized the start of final design and construction for the Segment 3 project during the FY1998-2003 funding cycle under section 5309 (new starts funding).

The second legislative action was the passage of Proposition A Ballot Initiative. Voters approved this new County law on November 3, 1998. This initiative contained the provision that Proposition A County sales tax revenues and Proposition C County sales tax revenues could not be utilized in funding the cost of planning, design, construction or operation of any New Subway. "New Subway" was defined as any subway other than the Metro Red Line Segments 1,2 or 3 (North Hollywood). Under this initiative, sales tax revenues cannot be used to fund subway development in the Westside or Mid-City/Westside study areas. The initiative does not prohibit the use of sales tax revenue to develop light-rail, at-grade rail, elevated rail systems or busways in either of these study areas. Also, the initiative does not prevent the use of State or Federal revenues or local revenues other than sales tax to design, construct or operate a new subway in either area.

Mode-Specific Studies

The Westside Bus Improvement Study, completed in March 1998, examined existing bus operations in the area bounded by Hoover/Hyperion, the Pacific Ocean/Malibu, Mulholland Drive, and the I-10 Freeway/Culver City southern boundary/Jefferson Boulevard. Key conditions identified by the study were: patron overcrowding on specific lines/times; slow arterial bus operations; and lack of continuity of service due to bus stockpiling. The study developed recommendations for greater service through use of "Metro Rapid bus" service and high capacity vehicles; creating greater coordination with Metro Red Line openings; providing greater continuity and connections; eliminating duplicate service lines to reduce congestion; and creation and implementation of a "seamless" fare structure.

The 1999 Mid-City Bus Transit Restructuring Study was a follow-up to the 1993 Inner City transit Needs Assessment Study and contained the goal of increasing ridership, operations and integration while improving cost-efficiency and cost-effectiveness of the transit system. Study area boundaries for this study were: the I-105 Freeway, the Pacific Ocean/La Cienega Boulevard, Slauson Avenue/Marina Freeway, and Alameda Street. This study recommended that a three-tier restructuring strategy be implemented that would address the needs of the following service sectors: core service on basic routes; inter-community connectors; and local shuttles, feeders and demand responsive services.

As a result of MTA's RTAA Study, the Los Angeles Metro Rapid Bus Demonstration Program was developed in March 1999. This program was created to address the need for faster travel service for existing bus riders. The first two lines of this service were opened in June, 2000 and are described more fully in Chapter 2.0. One of the two demonstration lines, the Wilshire-Whittier Metro Rapid Bus, directly serves the alternatives under consideration in this DEIS. Ridership of the Wilshire-Whittier and underlying local bus services along Wilshire and Whittier Boulevards in July, 2000 was more than 102,000 boardings per day. This high ridership figure further underscores the critical need for transit services along the Wilshire Boulevard corridor.

Expansion of the Metro Rapid program to a countywide level is to be based upon performance results and public acceptance obtained from the demonstration corridors. Further expansion of the program could include the Exposition Right-of-Way as a transitway corridor.

1.3 PURPOSE AND NEED OF THE PROJECT

The purpose and need for the proposed project was presented in detail in the *Mid-City/Westside Transit Corridor Major Investment Study (MIS)*, released in February, 2000, which is incorporated by reference herein and summarized below. This study primarily focused on the Wilshire Boulevard Corridor for the development of a BRT exclusive busway to connect activity centers such as downtown Santa Monica, Westwood, Century City, Beverly Hills, Miracle Mile, Wilshire Center, and downtown Los Angeles. A second corridor along Exposition Boulevard was also studied for both BRT and Light Rail Transit (LRT) services. The BRT alternative would connect downtown Los Angeles to downtown Santa Monica using the Exposition Right of Way (ROW), currently owned by MTA. The LRT alternative would connect downtown Los Angeles to downtown Santa Monica using the same route as the BRT along the Exposition ROW. Section 1.4 (below) provides a detailed description of the alternative screening process the MTA undertook, which resulted in the alternatives being evaluated in this Draft EIS/EIR.

1.3.1 The Mid-City/Westside Study Area Location and Demographics

The Study Area is located in western Los Angeles County and encompasses approximately 112 square miles, and is roughly bounded by the Pacific Ocean on the west; Sunset Boulevard and the Hollywood Freeway (US 101) on the north; Hope Street and Figueroa Street on the east; and Slauson and Manchester Boulevards on the south. Portions of the City of Los Angeles, unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County (e.g., Baldwin Hills) and the cities of West Hollywood, Beverly Hills, Santa Monica, and Culver City are within the Study Area.

Approximately 16 percent of the population and 24 percent of the jobs in Los Angeles County are concentrated in the Study Area. According to a market trend analysis conducted by Grubb & Ellis, 27 percent of Los Angeles County's 161 million square feet of new office space is located on the Westside, which makes it the largest office market in the County (Grubb & Ellis, Office Market Trends, Third Quarter, 1999). The Mid-City/Westside Study Area represents one of three corridor Study Areas where potential expansion of the Los Angeles fixed-guideway system is being evaluated, as illustrated in Figure 1-1.

The existing Metro Red Line system has four basic segments:

- Segment 1 (Union Station to Westlake/MacArthur Park) was competed and opened for service in 1993;
- Segment 2A (Westlake/MacArthur Park to Wilshire/Western) was completed and opened for service in 1996;
- Segment 2B (Wilshire/Vermont to Hollywood/Vine) was completed and opened for service in June 1999;
- Segment 3-North Hollywood (Hollywood/Vine to North Hollywood) was completed and opened for service in June 2000.

The other two regional Study Areas include the Eastside and the San Fernando Valley. These two Study Areas are being evaluated under separate studies and are not included in this report. All of these study areas are part of the MTA's long range planning activities and will be coordinated to

Figure 1-1 MTA System Map With Expansion Study Areas

provide a comprehensive transit system. However, each of these extensions has its own purpose and utility for the location in which it is placed.

Regional transportation planning for southern California's five counties area is the responsibility of the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG), the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the area. In 1998, SCAG Regional Council adopted the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) entitled "Community Link 21" to establish the goals, objectives and policies for the transportation system and establish the implementation plan for transportation investments over the next 20 years. The RTP includes regional performance indicators with objectives against which specific transportation investments can be measured. The performance indicators illustrate that travel conditions on the Westside will worsen by 2020 and the area will not meet regional objectives for mobility, accessibility, reliability, or safety, without the implementation of additional transportation improvements, as illustrated by Table 1-1.

TABLE 1-1
MID-CITY/WESTSIDE RTP PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Performance Indicator	Measurement	Objective	1990 Results	2020 Baseline Forecast
Mobility	Average Work trip travel time	22 minutes	23 minutes	29 minutes
	PM peak hour highway speed	33 mph	25.2 mph	22.6 mph
	Percent of Peak travel in Delay	33%	32%	40%
Accessibility	Work Opportunities Within 25 Minutes	88%	56%	61%
Environment	Meet Federal & State Standards	Meet Air Plan Emission Budgets	82 tons per day ROG	16 tons per day ROG
Reliability	Percent Probability of On-Time Arrival	63% Transit 76% Highway	100% 100%	74% 52%
Safety	Fatalities per Million Passenger Miles	0.008	n.a.	0.010

Source: SCAG, Regional Transportation Plan, 1998.

Average travel time to work (mobility indicator) will increase by 26 percent over 1990 conditions to 29 minutes and will exceed the regional objective of 22 minutes by 32 percent. Average travel speeds on all parts of the highway network (arterials and freeways) will decline to 22.6 mph, 32 percent below the regional objective. Approximately, 40 percent of travel in peak hours will be wasted due to delay.

The percentage of job opportunities within 25 minutes of employees' homes (accessibility indicator) will improve in the subregion due to the high employment growth, but 39 percent of the workers on the Westside will have to travel more than 25 minutes to work, compared to the regional objective of 22 minutes. The continued implementation of reduced emission vehicles (environment indicator) will reduce the amount of reactive organic gases produced on the Westside, but the reliability of the transportation system will decline. A commuter probability of arriving at a destination on time (reliability indicator) will decrease to 74 percent if riding transit and to 52 percent if traveling by car, illustrating how unpredictable travel will become as increased congestion will cause the subregion to exceed the regional safety objective.

1.3.2 Major Themes Supporting Transit Need in the Study Area

Given the RTP forecasts and the data provided in the MIS for the Proposed Project, several themes emerge regarding the need for transportation improvements in the Study Area. These themes are described below.

The Need for Transit Improvements has been Established in Previous Studies

Providing high capacity transit service improvement has been long recognized in the Mid-City/West Area. Since the 1970's, the MTA and its predecessors (SCRTD, LACTC) have conducted numerous transportation planning and environmental impact studies that established the need and feasible locations for either bus, light rail, and/or heavy rail east-west service in various parts of the Study Area.

Study Area Contains A Major Concentration of Activity Centers and Destinations

The area contains the largest concentration of major activity centers and destinations within the Los Angeles metropolitan region. Many of these centers are located within the most congested portion of the Study Area north of the Santa Monica Freeway (I-10) and east of the San Diego Freeway (I-405). Of all the areas within the Los Angeles metropolitan area, the Mid-City/Westside Study Area best exemplifies the centers concept. These centers represent more specific destinations in the Study Area. These destinations correspond with, as well as add to, the location and number of activity centers identified in the Centers Concept. As shown in Figure 3.5-2 (which is presented in Section 3.5, Land Use/Neighborhoods and Communities, of this document), a large concentration of activity centers is located in the Study Area. Over 60 locations have been identified.

Not only does the Study Area encompass the western portion of the traditional/historical downtown area, but it also encompasses the most well known employment, entertainment, educational/cultural activity centers in the region, including USC, UCLA, Santa Monica College, Los Angeles Trade Tech College, Rodeo Drive/Beverly Hills, Westwood Village, Hollywood Boulevard, Sunset Strip, Century City, Westside Pavilion, Paramount and Sony Studios, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Page Museum, Petersen Automotive Museum, Wilshire Miracle Mile, Santa Monica Pier, Third Street Promenade, Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum, Los Angeles Convention Center, and the newly-opened Staples Center. Currently, the portion of the Metrorail system built or under construction to date only interconnects a small portion of the centers in the eastern portion of the Study Area, such as downtown to Hollywood to Universal City and to Mid-Wilshire. The remaining centers are served by two major freeways (Interstate 10 - Santa Monica Freeway, and Interstate 405 - San Diego Freeway), as well as by less than a dozen major east-west and north-south arterials. As discussed later in this chapter, as growth continues to be concentrated in the existing centers and a few emerging Westside centers (such as Playa Vista and Culver City) in the future, there is a finite limit to the physical and operational capacity of these highways and arterials to meet travel demands generated by the centers.

The "Centers Concept" Land Use Policy is Transit Based

Land use planning in the Los Angeles area has traditionally viewed the urban area not as a central downtown served by adjacent areas, but rather a collection of urban centers. These centers are "little downtowns" in and of themselves. The Centers Concept Plan, originally formulated for the

Los Angeles area in the 1960's and 1970's by Calvin Hamilton (Director for the Department of Los Angeles City Planning Department) and Norman Murdock (Director for the Los Angeles County Regional Planning Department), acknowledged there were urban centers of various types throughout the region that represented concentrations of economic activity or a mix of economic activities and higher density housing (refer to Figure 1-2). The Centers Concept envisioned that the centers would be interconnected via an infrastructure of transit. The City of Los Angeles General Plan Framework, revisited and reconfirmed the Centers Concept. The Framework more clearly defined targeted growth areas, mixed use centers, and mixed used corridors that would serve centers that were envisioned to be interconnected via the emerging Metrorail transit system. The City of Los Angeles, in working directly with the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority, developed a series of Transportation and Land Use Guidelines, which specifically tied the size, and intensity of centers to the supporting transit infrastructure and transit station locations.

There is an Existing Concentration of Transit Supporting Land Uses

The existing activity centers in the Study Area are a central part of a large concentration of land uses that are considered to be transit supporting (high-density housing, commercial, and retail), as illustrated by Figure 1-3. In fact, roughly 30 percent of the land area within the Study Area falls into this category. These transit related uses tend to be concentrated in three major corridors in the Study Area: a northern corridor approximating Santa Monica Boulevard; a central corridor represented by Wilshire Boulevard; and a less well-defined southern corridor centering along Venice Boulevard. Currently only the eastern portions of these land use corridors are served by the Metrorail System. The remaining high density areas are served by conventional bus service from LACMTA, Culver City, LADOT and Santa Monica.

High Study Area Population and Employment Densities Support Transit

Population and employment densities in the Study Area are the highest within the metropolitan region, averaging approximately 13,883 persons per square mile and 9,167 employees per square mile. (3.4-1 and 3.4-2 respectively, located in Section 3.4, Socioeconomics.) The more densely populated areas are concentrated in the east and northeastern portion of the Study Area, while the greatest employment densities are in the western and northwestern portion of the Study Area.

According to the West Los Angeles Transit Corridor Technical Report prepared by SCAG in 1998, "the population density in the SCAG Study Area in 1990 was about 9,600 persons per square mile, which was more than four times the County." Population density for the MTA Study Area in 1997 was approximately 13,883 persons per square mile, over 6 times that of the LA County 2,300 persons per square mile. According to SCAG's forecasts, the population density will increase to over 17,000 persons per square mile by the year 2020, compared with 3,017 persons per square in the County.

Employment densities are also higher than the County. In 1997, the Study Area employees per square mile were 9,167, compared with a County employment density of 1,070 employees per square mile. These densities will increase by the year 2020 to 10,829 employees per square mile in the Study Area and 1,433 employees per square mile in the County.

Figure 1-2 Los Angeles Centers Concept

Figure 1-3 Transit Supporting Land Use

The West Los Angeles Transit Corridor Technical Report, prepared by Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG), as part of the 1998 RTP Transit Restructuring Study provides information on the current overall usage of transit services in the Study Area.

The two study area corridors have been identified as having significant transit usage, and the preliminary analysis in the RTP identified a deficiency of service. In fact, the total transit usage as a percentage of all trips is greater within the Study Area as a whole than it is along these corridors. The reason may be an accessibility problem. Table 1-2 illustrates the existing transit mode choice at the Study Area level and at various distances from the corridors:

TABLE 1-2
SUMMARY OF MODE CHOICE

Level	All Modes	Drive Alone	Carpool	Transit	Others
1/4 Mile of Corridors	100.00%	63.82%	12.76%	11.89%	11.53%
1/2 Mile of Corridors	100.00%	62.88%	12.96%	12.35%	11.81%
1 Mile of Corridors	100.00%	61.63%	12.87%	13.70%	11.80%
Study Area	100.00%	62.37%	13.58%	13.64%	10.41%

Source: 1990 Census Transportation Planning Package (CTPP)

Mid-City/Westside transit ridership is best summarized using the Census Transportation Planning Package (CTPP) transportation data collected as part of the 1990 Census. Based on the census data, 41 percent of all work transit trips in Los Angeles County originate in the Study Area. The remaining 59 percent originate at various points in the County and may potentially run through the Study Area. West L.A. (as defined by this report) contains 18 percent of Los Angeles County's population, implying that the transit needs of West L.A. are higher than the service presently provided. In addition to the high transit mode split of 14%, the Study Area has a significantly higher use of transit than the rest of Los Angeles County. This demand warrants a much higher percentage of transit investment than it has received in the last fifteen years.

Local Redevelopment Plans Depend Heavily On Transit Improvements

Figure 3.5-3 (Section 3.5, Land Use/Neighborhoods) illustrates a composite picture of the location of redevelopment areas, enterprise zones and other investment areas targeted by local jurisdictions within the Study Area. There are almost 20 such areas within the Study Area. The ultimate success of redevelopment and revitalization of these areas largely rest on transportation accessibility and links to transit. Some improvements and strategies being employed – such as Santa Monica Boulevard improvements in West Hollywood and in Santa Monica – focus on increasing pedestrian amenities, and reducing or eliminating vehicular traffic, which places increasing demand on increased transit access and level of transit service to help support existing and future land use development objectives.

There is a History of Transit Usage in the Study Area

Existing transit usage within the Study Area is proportionally higher than any other area in Los Angeles County (13.6 percent for the Study Area versus 6.8 percent for the County). Because there is a large base of existing transit service and transit patrons, increasing the transit mode share through increased service would represent a natural extension of existing patterns and trends.

Because the Study Area represents a significant concentration of educational, cultural entertainment, and office centers, and because the area is the most densely populated area within the region (over 13,883 persons per square mile), there has traditionally been a substantial amount of transit service and transit use. According to the SCAG Transit Corridor Technical Report, "the proportion of workers who took the bus [in the Study Area] was double that of the County [13.64 percent for the Study Area versus 6.8 percent for the County]. This is further substantiated by the Census Transportation Planning Package (CTPP), transportation data collected as part of the 1990 Census. This data indicates that "41 percent of all work transit trips in Los Angeles County originate in the Study Area."[1]

There is a Significant Transit Dependent Population in the Study Area

Part of the underlying reason for high transit usage in the Study Area is that a significant number of households are autoless and have low incomes. According to the 1990 Census, approximately 18.3 percent of households in the Study Area are without a vehicle compared to 10.9 percent for the County. The majority of these households are concentrated in the east and northeastern portion of the Study Area, as illustrated by Figure 3.4-5 in Section 3.4 (Socioeconomics). Figure 3.4-4 illustrates that 20.9 percent of the population of the Study Area was below poverty status compared to 14.7 percent in the County, and households in the Study Area had a weighted income of $5,451 less than that of Los Angeles County.[2]

The Study Area Is Expected to Continue to Capture a Large Share of Regional Population and Employment Growth

As reflected by Table 1-3, population and employment forecasts to the year 2020 adopted by SCAG clearly suggest that the Study Area will capture a disproportionate share of growth over the next 20 years, thereby placing further demands on transit service and resulting in increased congestion on local roadways and regional highways serving the Study Area.

According to SCAG's most recent adopted forecast (April 1998), the Study Area is expected to grow by 356,265 (18.85 percent increase) persons and 186,200 (15.35 percent increase) employees between 1997 and 2020. The forecast strongly suggests that both the Mid-City and West Los Angeles portions of the Study Area are expected to attract significant growth.

TABLE 1-3
POPULATION & EMPLOYMENT FORECAST

Year	1997	2010	2015	2020	1997-2020
Population					
MTA Study Area	1,555,005	1,725,512	1,813,919	1,911,270	18.85%
LA County	9,524,890	10,868,869	11,513,385	12,249,104	22.24%
% of LA County (MTA)	16.28%	15.88%	15.75%	15.60%	
Employment					
MTA Study Area	1,026,685	1,134,474	1,170,729	1,212,885	15.35%
LA County	4,345,926	5,223,383	5,511,845	5,817,654	25.30%
% of LA County (MTA)	23.62%	21.72%	21.24%	20.85%	

Source: SCAG Forecast, April, 1998.

1 SCAG West Los Angeles Transit Corridor Technical Report, 1998, pp. 15 and 18, respectively.
2 Op. Cit., p. 10.

Continued Growth in the Business Services Sector (Entertainment and Media Related) Underlies the Future Development Potential in the Study Area

Growth in the Study Area will continue to be fueled by the fact that entertainment and media related businesses are concentrated in the western part of the Study Area. As further indicated in the Grubb & Ellis report, other sectors in the Westside economy contribute to regional, as well as statewide economic growth: "in the 1980s and 1990s five sectors emerged to propel California economic base forward: foreign trade, high tech manufacturing, professional services, tourism, and entertainment. The West Los Angeles market is home to most of these industries which have been a principal catalyst to economic growth, and a driving force for the office market."[3] Over the past decade there has been an ever increasing number of these businesses located in West Los Angeles/Century, Santa Monica, and Culver City. Although the specific "Dreamworks Studio Campus" at Playa Vista has been put on hold, it is anticipated that there will be a significant increase in production and postproduction type businesses on the Westside. Many of the current office and warehouse space vacancies are featuring references to the availability of "creative space" rented in 10,000+ square feet increments.[4]

Growth in the Study Area will continue to be fueled by the fact that entertainment and media related businesses concentrating in the western part of the corridor. US Census County Business Patterns data indicate that these new service businesses are locating in West Hollywood, Beverly Hills, West Los Angeles, Culver City and Santa Monica, as shown in Figure 3.4-3. Real estate analysts expect that the demand for production and creative spaces will continue to be robust. The industries and businesses that are attracted to the Study Area are those that are expected to be the foundation of the local and regional economy for many years into the future.

In addition the Mid-City/Westside area is the center of approximately one-third of all new office construction underway in LA County.[5]

Existing and Projected Travel Demand Patterns and Justification for Transit Services

The Study Area attracts thousands of trips each day from all areas of the Los Angeles region. Growth levels in both population and employment documented above will further exacerbate travel demand. Based on the output of the LACMTA Transportation Model, there are currently strong interaction patterns between the Study Area and the West and East San Fernando Valleys, as well as from the South Bay.

Over 45 percent of daily work trips generated by the Study Area are internal trips that have both the origin and the destination within the Study Area. This includes almost 5 percent to and from downtown and over 41 percent within the remaining parts of the Study Area. The San Fernando Valley is one of the most predominant origin/destinations for works trips to and from the Study Area, with 9.4 percent of the total. When north Los Angeles County and the Glendale area are added to this group, areas to the north of the Study Area represent over 17 percent of all work-trip

---

3 Ibid.

4 Creative space indicates both the creative use of buildings built with a standard utilization in mind, and a tenant profile catering to expensive and skilled labor force companies want to nurture in the workplace." Grubb & Ellis, 2000 Real Estate Forecast, 1999, p. 7.

5 Grubb & Ellis Office Market Trends, West Los Angeles, Third Quarter 1999, p. 1.

interactions. Another predominant origin/destination outside the Study Area is the South Bay/Long Beach area with nearly 15 percent of the total work trips. San Gabriel/Pomona Valleys with 7.5 percent and the southeast County area, with 8.3 percent of the total work trips are also significant origin/destination points.

Nearly 19 percent of the work trips to/and from the Westside portion of the Study Area are internal. There is a strong interaction between the west and north parts of the Study Area (20.5 percent of all work trips). Over 16 percent of the work trips related to the west-side are to/from San Fernando Valley and points north.

The interaction of work trips between the northern portion of the Study Area (areas generally north of the Santa Monica Freeway and including Downtown) and other communities indicate that nearly 30 percent of the work trips to/and from this area are internal. This part of the Study Area has the strongest interaction with San Fernando Valley and points north, with over 22 percent of the total work trips to/from this area. The work-trip interaction between this area and other parts of the Study Area are between 8 to 9 percent of total work trips.

The interaction of work trips between the southern portion of the Study Area (areas generally south of the Santa Monica Freeway) and other communities indicate that only 13.4 percent of the work trips to/and from this area are internal and the subarea has a strong interaction with the Westside, at 10.7 percent, and with the north side (including Downtown), at 22.6 percent of the total work trips. The southern part of the Study Area also has a strong interaction of work trips with South Bay and Southeast, with almost 33 percent of the total work trips to/from this area. On the other hand, the work-trip interaction between this area and San Fernando Valley and points north is relatively less, with only 10.6 of the total work trips.

Based on the overall interaction patterns between the Study Area and surrounding areas a simplified "spider network" was constructed to identify potential corridors of travel patterns and the magnitude of travel activity. The thickness of the lines on the network is proportional to the identified level of travel demand for home-to-work trips between the two adjacent communities. The level of travel also includes potential through travel from other communities that would use major routes connecting the two adjacent communities.

The 1997 data identifies heavy work-travel demand between the Mid-City/Westside Study Area and the San Fernando Valley along both the Sepulveda and Cahuenga passes. Work-travel demand is also heavy to the south-east and east along the San Bernardino and Golden State freeway corridors. Within the Mid-City/Westside Study Area, three distinct parallel east-west corridors can be observed, which connect Downtown Los Angeles to points west of the San Diego Freeway: a northern corridor approximating Santa Monica Boulevard; a central corridor represented by Wilshire Boulevard; and a less well-defined southern corridor on, or south of the Santa Monica Freeway.

The 2020 conditions reveal that work-travel demand along every corridor is expected to increase significantly in the future. This is the case for trips between communities in the Study Area, as well as travel to and from the San Fernando Valley and the east side. Several east-west corridors within the Study Area show travel demand well in excess of 200,000 daily two-way work-trips. The pattern of three distinctive east-west corridors within the Study Area is again apparent for 2020 conditions, with all community-to-community movements showing significant increases in demand.

The spider network for 1997 and 2020 conditions both indicate there is strong east-west travel demand along major east-west corridors: Santa Monica Boulevard, Wilshire Boulevard, Santa Monica Freeway and Exposition/Venice Boulevards. None of these corridors are currently served by a high capacity transit system.

Travel growth projection characteristics for the Mid-City/Westside Study Area were obtained and summarized from the Los Angeles County MTA's travel demand model.[6] Three of the most meaningful categories of travel characteristics are:

- **Total Daily Person Trips** - the number of one-way trips made by all persons within a 24-hour period
- **Daily Home-Work Person Trips** - the number of one-way trips made by all persons between home and work location within a 24-hour period
- **Daily Transit Person Trips** - the number of one-way trips made by all persons on transit (bus and rail) within a 24-hour period

A summary of these statistics compiled for 1998 and 2020 are presented in Table 1-4. Statistics related to the entire region are shown on the left side of the table, whereas the information on the right side pertains to the Study Area.

All Trips

As seen in the first section of the table, in 1998 there were a total of approximately 50.7 million daily person trips made in the five-county region. As the second row of figures shows, 10.3 million, or 20.3 percent of these total daily trips are two-way home to work trips, and almost 1.6 million of the daily trips, or 3.2 percent are made on transit. As the table also illustrates, there are nearly 8.5 million daily person trips made in the Study Area, of which 2.3 million, or 27.5 percent are home to work trips, and over 675,000 trips, or 8 percent are made on transit.

When compared to the region as a whole, it can be seen that the Study Area has a higher percentage of work trips (by 7 percentage points) of all daily trips. This is a reflection of relatively higher population density as well as abundance of employment opportunities in the Study Area. The more notable observation, is the significantly higher transit percentage for Study Area trips compared to the overall regional transit percentage. The Study Area's 8 percent transit mode split is 2.5 times higher than the regional 3.2 percent mode split. This is a clear indication of two characteristics related to the Study Area: high transit dependency in certain Study Area communities and relatively high levels of transit services, which are provided in the Study Area.

The significance of the Study Area's travel characteristics compared to the region is shown on the third row of the table. This part of the table has some revealing facts. Whereas, the Study Area's total daily person trips account for 16.7 percent of the total trips in the region, more than one out of every five home-work trips in the region (22.7 percent), are related to the Study Area. This again,

[6] The travel demand model provides statistics, which describe the magnitude and overall travel characteristics of the five County southern California area in general, and Los Angeles County in particular. The model can be used to get information about existing travel patterns as well as to develop future travel forecasts. The model provides data on total daily and peak hour travel by various modes, including personal vehicle (single occupant or carpool) and transit (bus and rail). This model is used to develop travel forecasts on highways and patronage (ridership) forecasts for transit services.

points to the higher population and employment opportunities in the Study Area. The Study Area's share of regional transit trips is extremely significant. The statistics show that 42.2 percent (more than 2 out of every 5) daily transit trips made in the region have either an origin or a destination in the Study Area.

Internal Trips

Travel statistics, which are presented in Table 1-4, are related to all trips that either originate or are destined to the Study Area. The last three rows of Table 1-4 provide information about Study Area's internal trips. Internal trips are those, which have both ends of the trip (origin and destination) entirely within the Study Area. As can be seen, in 1998 there were a total of 4.4 million daily trips, which stayed entirely within the Study Area. Over 652,000 of these, or 14.7 percent, were work trips, and 411,000, or 9.3 percent of the total internal trips, were transit trips.

TABLE 1-4
SUMMARY OF PERSON TRAVEL CHARACTERISTICS - MID-CITY/WESTSIDE STUDY AREA

	Region			Corridor		
Person Trips and Growth, 1998-2020	**1998***	**2020**	**% Growth**	**1998**	**2020**	**% Growth**
Total Daily Person Trips	50,705,715	65,952,425	30.1%	8,479,289	9,596,260	13.2%
Daily Home-Work Person Trips	10,271,754	13,092,874	27.5%	2,328,448	2,666,914	14.5%
Daily Transit Person Trips	1,597,598	2,018,584	26.4%	674,979	815,057	20.8%
	Region			**Corridor**		
Home-work and Transit Trips as a Percentage of Total Trips	**1998**	**2020**		**1998**	**2020**	
Total Daily Person Trips	100.0%	100.0%		100.0%	100.0%	
Daily Home-Work Person Trips	20.3%	19.9%		27.5%	27.8%	
Daily Transit Person Trips	3.2%	3.1%		8.0%	8.5%	
Corridor Trips as a Percentage of Regional Trips				**Corridor**		
				1998	**2020**	
Total Daily Person Trips				16.7%	14.6%	
Daily Home-Work Person Trips				22.7%	20.4%	
Daily Transit Person Trips				42.2%	40.4%	
Corridor Internal-Internal Trips and Growth				**Corridor**		
				1998	**2020**	**% Growth**
Total Daily Person Trips				4,438,461	4,878,137	9.9%
Daily Home-Work Person Trips				652,708	681,254	4.4%
Daily Transit Person Trips				411,736	449,720	9.2%
Internal-Internal Home-work and Transit Trips as a Percentage of Total Trips				**Corridor**		
				1998	**2020**	
Total Daily Person Trips				100.0%	100.0%	
Daily Home-Work Person Trips				14.7%	14.0%	
Daily Transit Person Trips				9.3%	9.2%	

TABLE 1-4
SUMMARY OF PERSON TRAVEL CHARACTERISTICS - MID-CITY/WESTSIDE STUDY AREA

Internal Trip Retention Percentage in the Corridor				Corridor		
				1998	2020	
Total Daily Person Trips				52.3%	50.8%	
Daily Home-Work Person Trips				28.0%	25.5%	
Daily Transit Person Trips				61.0%	55.2%	

Key: Region = Five-County Southern California MTA Modeling Area
Corridor = Mid-City/Westside Study Area

*Note: According to SCAG's 1997 regional model, the total daily person trips are estimated at 52 million, daily HBW person trips are 8.8 million. The MTA model is being revised and the data is higher in both categories.

Source: Compiled by Meyer, Mohaddes Associates from LACMTA Travel Demand Model Trip Tables.

When comparing the internal trips to total trips generated by the Study Area, it can be seen that a relatively large portion of the total trips, more than half (52.3 percent) stay within the Study Area. This is an indication of availability of travel opportunities (both home and work) for all trips in the Study Area, which results in high trip retention. However, the percentage of retention for work trips is significantly lower at less than one out of four (28.0 percent). This shows that many residents commute to work destinations outside the region. When analyzing the internal capture of transit trips, the trends are even higher than all trips, showing 61 percent of all transit trips generated by the Study Area staying entirely within the Study Area's boundaries.

Future Trends

Forecasts of travel statistics were also made available form the MTA model for 2020. These data are also presented in Table 1-4, in conjunction with the corresponding 1998 information. Comparison of 1998 and 2020 data for each category, both for the region and the Study Area, provides information about expected growth in magnitude of travel and the relative significance of this growth when compared to the expected regional growth.

The region's 50.7 million total daily trips are expected to grow by 30.1 percent to nearly 66 million by 2020. Home to work trips will grow similarly by 27.5 percent, from 10.3 million to 13.1 million. The expected growth in regional transit trips is also relatively consistent, at 26.4 percent, from 1.59 million to just over 2 million. There is, however, a notable difference between the Study Area and the region as it relates to growth in travel. Overall, the three travel indicators show lower growth for the Study Area, compared to the region as a whole. This is a reflection of relative maturity and built-out nature of the Study Area. While the 1998 to 2020 growth of the regional statistics were between 26 and 30 percent, the Study Area' are in the 13 to 21 percent range. In the 23-year span, total daily trips in the Corridor are expected to grow by 13.2 percent, from 8.5 million to 9.6 million. The growth in home-work trips is slightly higher, at only 14.5 percent, from 2.3 million to 2.7 million. However, the Study Area's transit trips are expected to increase at a much higher rate than total trips, by 21 percent, from the 1998 level of 675,000 to 815,000 by 2020.

As seen in the second row of tables, the share of daily home-work and transit trips as a percentage of the total trips is expected to remain very similar to 1998 trends, both for the region and the Study Area. However, as the overall regional transit mode split shows a slight decrease (from 3.2 to 3.1

percent), while the Study Area's transit mode split is expected to increase slightly (from 8 to 8.5 percent).

With the expected high regional growth levels, share of Study Area trips as a percentage of total regional trips show declines in all categories in 2020 compared to 1998. All daily trips will be 14.6 percent, home to work trips will drop to 20.4 percent, and transit trips will fall slightly to 40.2 percent. It should be pointed out that regardless of these declines, the Study Area's share of regional travel would still be fairly significant in all categories.

It was discussed earlier that the Study Area's total trips in all categories lagged behind the region in projected growth, when the growth in internal trips is analyzed, the Study Area shows similar trends. Total internal trips are expected to grow at only 9.9 percent. Internal home-work trips are projected to grow by 4.4 percent. Internal transit trips are expected to grow by 9.2 percent.

The last two rows of tables also point to the fact that in 2020, home to work and transit trips will make up slightly lower percentage of total daily trips compared to 1998, and the percentage to retention for each trip category will decrease slightly.

Several key highlight points can be concluded from the above statistics:

- The Mid-City/Westside Study Area is a highly significant origin and/or destination point for trips in Southern California, especially for transit trips, over 42 percent of which have one end in the Study Area;
- The Study Area has a significantly higher transit mode split than the region as a whole, and the trend is expected to increase (from nearly 2.5 to 2.7 times the regional mode split); and
- The Study Area currently has a very high internal trip retention (over half of all trips), and despite growth in regional trips, is expected to maintain these high internal trip retention percentages.

Another primary indicator of changing travel patterns in the Study Area is traffic volume along the Santa Monica Freeway (refer to Table 1-5). This facility bisects the Study Area and is the primary transportation facility serving east-west travel between downtown Los Angeles and Santa Monica.

The travel patterns on the freeway illustrate how longer-distance trips in the Study Area may be oriented. Over the last 20 years those patterns have significantly changed as well. In the 1970's commute patterns were heavily oriented from the Westside toward downtown Los Angeles. The freeway was heavily congested in the eastbound direction in the morning peak hours and in the westbound direction in the afternoon peak hours. With the significant increase in jobs on the Westside, the commute patterns have reversed. The Santa Monica Freeway is now more congested in the westbound direction in the morning and the eastbound direction in the evening, and traffic volumes are very heavy in both directions all day long. Existing conditions are illustrated in photographs taken of the Santa Monica Freeway. Many of the commute trips to the Westside originate east of downtown.

While the total daily traffic volume on the Santa Monica Freeway has remained relatively constant over the last ten years, the peak hour volumes have increased significantly at the two ends of the freeway in the Study Area near the San Diego Freeway and near Downtown. In the Mid-City

section, the traffic volume has generally decreased during the last ten years. Table 1-5 provides a comparison of volumes between 1989 and 1998 on Santa Monica Freeway within the Study Area.

TABLE 1-5
TRAFFIC VOLUME TRENDS ON SANTA MONICA FREEWAY

Segment	1989 Traffic Volumes		1998 Traffic Volumes	
	Peak Hour	Daily Volume	Peak Hour	Daily Volume
West of I-405	14,900	230,000	16,700 (+12%)	231,000 (+0.4%)
Overland to I-405	14,700	266,000	19,100 (+30%)	272,000 (+2%)
La Brea to Crenshaw	20,000	314,000	20,300 (+1.5%)	293,000 (-7%)
Hoover to I-110	18,500	337,000	22,000 (+19%)	325,000 (-4%)

Source: MMA, 1999.

Peak Hour Congestion on Study Area Roadways Underlies the Need for Transit Improvements

There is substantial peak hour congestion in the northern portion of the Study Area. Vehicular travel to the East and West San Fernando Valleys must ultimately by-pass through the Sepulveda or Cahuenga passes. Access patterns in to these routes are congested during the peak travel hours as motorist attempt to pass northward at either the western or eastern ends of the Study Area.

The majority of congested segments are concentrated north of the Santa Monica Freeway and east of the San Diego Freeway. The densest concentration of congested segments is located in the northeastern portion of the Study Area, and reflects Study Area traffic flowing toward access points to the eastern San Fernando Valley, Glendale and Burbank. The other major area of congestion occurs on the San Diego Freeway and Wilshire Boulevard area where travel to the western San Fernando Valley is concentrated.

Total morning and evening peak hour freeway and arterial traffic volumes in the peak direction were compared to the total available capacity. This was done for both existing 1997 and future 2020 conditions. The following paragraphs summarize some of the key observations.

Existing Conditions (1997)

- North-south travel demand on all facilities crossing Wilshire Boulevard is currently 15 percent over the available capacity.
- North-south travel demand on all facilities crossing Venice Boulevard is 10 percent over the available capacity.
- East-west travel demand on all facilities crossing La Cienega Boulevard is 10 percent over the available capacity.

Future (2020) Conditions

- All corridors within the Study Area (north-south and east-west) show increase in travel demand compared to existing conditions.
- All corridors show either no change or significant increases in overall highway capacity deficiency compared to existing conditions.

- Most significant increases in travel demand are expected to be for north-south travel across Jefferson Boulevard and for east-west travel across Vermont Avenue.
- North-south travel demand across Wilshire Boulevard will be 14 percent over the available future capacity.
- North-south travel demand across Venice Boulevard will be 21 percent over the available future capacity.
- East-west travel demand across Vermont Avenue will be 21 percent over the available future capacity.

Local Policies are Oriented Toward Demand Management and Transit Solutions rather than on Physical Roadway Improvements

Because of the level of buildout and density within the Study Area, local jurisdictions have generally determined through their local policies that congestion relief improvements should focus on travel demand management and increase ride sharing and transit usage rather than on highway/arterial physical improvements, such as road widening or new roadways. In a number of cases, local communities, which desire to eliminate cut through and neighborhood traffic to support more livable downtown or commercial areas are supporting initiatives to limit roadway capacity or slow traffic flow, leaving transit improvements as the only viable alternative to reduce traffic volumes and congestion-related delays.

To assist in the implementation of the Regional Comprehensive Plan and the associated Regional Transportation Plan, SCAG has decentralized local jurisdiction participation into specific subregions. The Study Area is encompassed by the Westside Cities Subregion (Santa Monica, West Hollywood, Beverly Hills and Culver City), as well as by the Los Angeles Subregion (consisting solely of the City of Los Angeles).

In each of the cities on the Westside, policy makers have taken strong positions against the wholesale widening of streets and narrowing of sidewalks to accommodate more travel lanes. Localized transportation system management (TSM) improvements, such as additional turn lanes or signal phasing changes, have been supported, but the Mid-City/Westside arterial network is essentially built out. In this highly urbanized area, the types of transportation improvements that have the support of the policy makers are transit improvements, intelligent transportation systems projects, and livable communities programs. Future increases in travel demands will have to be accommodated by making the existing highway network work better, to the limited extent that it can, but more likely through increased usage of transit and other (i.e., non-motorized) modes of transportation. Throughout the Westside, efforts are also underway in all of the jurisdictions to make it harder for automobile traffic to seek alternate routes through residential neighborhoods. These traffic calming programs will further concentrate commute traffic on the already congested arterial streets.

1.4 ALTERNATIVES SCREENING PROCESS

One of the most important aspects of the environmental review process is the identification and assessment of reasonable alternatives that have the potential for avoiding or minimizing the impacts of a proposed project. In addition to mandating consideration of the No Action Alternative, both NEPA Regulations (40 CFR 1502.14) and CEQA Guidelines (Section 15126(d) emphasize the

selection of a reasonable range of technically feasible alternatives and the preparation of a comparative analysis of these alternatives to allow for adequate consideration by decision-makers. NEPA Regulations (Section 1502.14(c)) provide for the inclusion of reasonable alternatives including those that may not be within the jurisdiction of the lead agency. CEQA Guidelines state that the discussion of alternatives shall focus on alternatives capable of eliminating or reducing significant adverse environmental effects of the proposed project, even if these alternatives would impede to some degree the attainment of the project objectives, or would be more costly. Finally, CEQA Guidelines declare that an EIR need not consider an alternative whose effect cannot be reasonably ascertained and whose implementation is remote or speculative.

To better understand how and why alternatives were selected for or eliminated from further consideration, the process used to develop the alternatives is presented below. The development of the alternatives involved a lengthy, multi-stepped process, and included:

- An alternatives identification and screening process conducted during the MIS phase of study (as described above in Section 1.3 above);
- Actions taken by the MTA Board based on findings from the MIS (as described below in Section 1.4.2); and
- Design modifications based on input provided by the public during the EIS/EIR scoping period (as in Section 6.0 of this EIS/EIR).

1.4.1 Alternatives Screening Methodology

As mentioned above, the development of the alternatives involved an extensive screening process. The screening process serves two overall purposes:

1) To eliminate alternatives that do not conform to NEPA/CEQA requirements; and
2) To distinguish alternatives to the project from other EIR elements (such as suggested mitigation measures).

Alternatives to the proposed project were initially selected for this study based on the planning efforts that have occurred prior to this study (as described in Sections 1.2 and 1.3 above), input from the public during the EIS/EIR scoping hearings, agency suggestions, and public comments on the draft MIS. The alternatives screening process consisted of the following steps:

- Develop project objectives;
- Determine significant impacts to be avoided;
- Develop broad list of alternatives;
- Develop screening criteria for feasibility;
- Screen alternatives;
- If alternative is determined to be infeasible, eliminate from further consideration and provide explanation for its elimination; and
- If alternative is determined to be feasible, carry alternative forward into the next, more detailed evaluation in the EIS/EIR.

Infeasible alternatives and alternatives that clearly offered no potential for environmental advantages were removed from further consideration and analysis. In the final phase of the screening analysis, the advantages and disadvantages of the remaining alternatives were carefully weighed with respect to potential for overall environmental advantage, technical feasibility, and consistency with project and public objectives. These criteria are discussed in the following subsections.

Potential to Eliminate Significant Environmental Effects

If an alternative clearly does not provide any environmental advantages as compared to the proposed project, it is eliminated from further consideration. At the screening stage, it is not possible to evaluate potential impacts of the alternative or the proposed project with absolute certainty. However, it is possible to identify elements of an alternative that are likely to be the sources of impact and to relate them, to the extent possible, to general conditions of the subject area or to other concepts which encompass the bounds of the issue which the alternative is intended to address.

Feasibility

For the screening analysis, the technical and regulatory feasibility of various potential alternatives was assessed at a general level. Specific feasibility analyses are not needed for this purpose. Infeasibility was defined more by kind than by degree. The assessment was directed toward reverse reason, that is, was anything about the alternative infeasible on technical or regulatory grounds.

Consistency with Project Objectives

The objectives of the project are described in Section 1.3 (Purpose and Need) above. For the screening purposes, the following general project objectives were taken into consideration:

- Provide high capacity transit service to the Westside;
- Develop high capacity transit system at a relatively low cost;
- Build upon successes of Rapid Bus currently operating in the Wilshire/Whittier corridor; and
- Develop high capacity system that incorporates many of the elements found in the Curitiba rapid bus system, which has many of the components envisioned for the Mid-City/Westside Transit Corridor.

The screening analysis does not focus on relative economic factors of the alternatives (as long as they are feasible) since the CEQA Guidelines require consideration of alternatives capable of eliminating or reducing significant environmental effects even though they may "impeded to some degree the attainment of project objectives or would be more costly." NEPA (40 CFR Part 1502.23) requires that the merits and drawbacks of the various alternatives need not include a monetary cost-benefit analysis, and states that economic concerns should not overshadow qualitative considerations. Likewise, the question of market demand is not considered.

1.4.2 Summary of Screening Results

Proposed alternatives identified by the MTA (Lead Agency), other affected public agencies, and the members of the general public are listed below according to the determination made for analysis.

Alternatives Evaluated in the Mid-City/Westside Transit Corridor Study Re-Evaluation/Major Investment Study (MIS)

As discussed in Sections 1.2 and 1.3 (above), the alternatives evaluated in the Mid-City/Westside MIS evolved over a seventeen year time span and reflect a certain evolutionary process influenced by expanded knowledge of the existing geotechnical conditions, improved methods of construction developed from on-going Metro Rail experience, and greater community awareness and understanding of general transit needs. This process was derived from previous studies of the selected LPA associated with the Wilshire Corridor and the emergence of the Exposition right-of-way (ROW), currently owned by MTA, as a viable future transit improvement opportunity.

Based on the previous study efforts conducted for the Study Area, a set of alternatives were selected for screening in the MIS phase prior to the preparation of this EIS/EIR. The alternatives evaluated in the MIS, and the recommendation to either study an alternative further or eliminate it from further consideration are described below.

- Wilshire Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) – This alternative has the potential as an interim solution to feed Metro Red Line and serve high volume Wilshire Corridor at a low cost. The Wilshire BRT allows faster speeds than Metro Rapid Bus in future as congestion grows. Further detailed analysis warranted and recommended.
- Exposition Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) – This alternative offers significant long-term transportation benefits and provides connection to Downtown Los Angeles, USC, Exposition Park and Harbor Freeway Transitway from key centers in Santa Monica, West Los Angeles, and Culver City. This alternative achieves similar ridership to LRT at less cost. Further detailed analysis warranted and recommended.
- Exposition Light Rail Transit (LRT) – This alternative offers significant long-term transportation benefits and provides connection to Downtown Los Angeles, USC, Exposition Park and Harbor Freeway Transitway from key centers in Santa Monica, West Los Angeles, and Culver City. This alternative has less frequent disruption of intersections and adjacent properties when compared with the BRT and has the capacity to serve post-2020 demand. Further detailed analysis warranted and recommended.
- Wilshire Heavy Rail Transit (HRT) (via Pico/San Vicente Boulevards) – This alternative provides a longer route to the Westside than the Wilshire Corridor and travels in a corridor with lower density and serves fewer activity centers than the Wilshire Corridor. This alternative is also not currently feasible due to funding restrictions of heavy rail transit. Therefore, this alternative is deleted from further consideration.
- Wilshire Heavy Rail Transit (HRT) Subway – This alternative has an underground gas issue, which may have technical solutions that would permit construction of a subway at a later date. However, this alternative is also not currently feasible due to funding restrictions and the Methane Gas Prohibition Zone. Further analysis of this alternative should be undertaken in the Long Range Plan due to high densities and transit use. However, for purposes of this study, this alternative is deleted from further consideration.
- Wilshire Heavy Rail Transit (HRT) Aerial – This alternative achieves the same ridership at a lower cost than the subway alternative, but would alter the character of Wilshire Boulevard in a permanent and unacceptable manner. Monorail option would have similar negative

environmental consequences and would attract fewer riders than HRT. This alternative was deleted from further consideration.

The MIS conclusions and recommendations listed above were then forwarded to the MTA for their consideration.

MTA Board Action Regarding Alternatives

At the MTA's regular February 2000 Board meeting, the Wilshire BRT alternative was selected for environmental clearance, from Mid-City to Downtown Santa Monica. The Board also raised questions regarding the ridership potential of the Exposition Corridor during the February meeting and passed a motion stating that the Exposition ROW could not supplant Wilshire Boulevard as the primary Mid-City/Westside transit route.

The Exposition ROW was addressed in a March 17, 2000 document entitled "Comparative Ridership Potential of Exposition Corridor." Subsequently, during the MTA March 2000 Board meeting, the Exposition BRT and LRT alternatives from Downtown Los Angeles to Downtown Santa Monica were also selected for environmental review along with the previously selected Wilshire BRT. The MTA Board also eliminated the westerly segment of the Exposition ROW (from Venice/Robertson to Exposition/Sepulveda Boulevards) from further consideration in the evaluation of the Exposition BRT or LRT alternatives. In addition, the Board also directed consideration of a subway configuration along the Exposition Corridor between Figueroa and Vermont.

In June 2000 the MTA Board directed that the Wilshire BRT should be submitted to FTA with a request for rating and a request for permission to enter preliminary engineering. The Board deferred requesting a rating for the Exposition ROW until after the Draft EIS/EIR was completed.

The alternatives being considered and evaluated in this EIS/EIR are described in the following section (Section 2.0, Alternatives Considered).