

**Notice of Preparation
For Link Union Station (Link US) Project**

Joint Environmental Impact Statement and Environmental Impact Report

Date: May 27, 2016

To: All Interested Agencies, Organizations, and Individuals

Subject: Notice of Preparation of joint Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report

Project Title: Link Union Station (Link US) Project

From: Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority
Jeanet Owens, Executive Officer, Regional Rail
One Gateway Plaza (Mail Stop MS 99-13-1), Los Angeles, CA 90012

The Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) and Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) intend to prepare a joint Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (EIS/EIR) for the Link Union Station Project (Link US or Project). Metro will be the Lead Agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The EIR will be prepared in accordance with CEQA as amended Public Resources Code, Sections 21000-21178 and California Code of Regulations Title 14, Chapter 3, Section 15000-15387). FRA is the lead agency under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969; and is issuing a Notice of Intent (NOI) to announce their intent to prepare an EIS for Link US.

The purpose of this Notice of Preparation (NOP) is to notify agencies, organizations, and individuals that Metro is the Lead Agency pursuant to CEQA, and intends to prepare a joint EIS/EIR for the Project. This NOP provides a brief description of the Project, a description of the Project's location, Metro's goals and objectives for implementing Link US, and information on how public agencies and members of the public may comment on the Project.

Metro invites public and agency participation in the EIS/EIR process. From public agencies, Metro is requesting comments on the scope and content of the environmental information and environmental analysis to be performed that is related to each agency's statutory responsibilities, including information that would be useful in characterizing the baseline conditions; potential direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts (and projects) that should be considered; and mitigation measures and alternatives that may be capable of avoiding or reducing the significant effects of the Project. Metro is also requesting interested individuals' or organizations' comments on the scope and content of the environmental information to be included in the EIS/EIR.

PROJECT LOCATION

The Project is located at Los Angeles Union Station (LAUS), at 800 North Alameda Street, Los Angeles, California 90012. LAUS is generally bounded by U.S. 101 to the south, Alameda Street to the west, Cesar E. Chavez Avenue to the north, and Vignes Street to the east. The

Project extends north, south, and east of LAUS to encompass various Project elements. Figure 1 depicts the regional location and general vicinity of the Project. Figure 2 depicts the Project Study Area, which encompasses the anticipated extent of the environmental study associated with the major Project components.

PROJECT NEED

LAUS functions as the central hub for regional transit in Southern California and provides direct linkages for the Metro bus and Metro rail system (e.g., Red Line, Purple Line, and Gold Line), Southern California Regional Rail Authority's (SCRRA or commonly referred to as Metrolink) regional rail system, and Amtrak interstate rail system. LAUS is a stub-ended terminal station dating from 1939 and is approaching its operational capacity at peak transit periods. Based on ridership numbers forecasted to increase on multiple transit and rail lines, combined with the implementation of positive train control (PTC), LAUS's operational functionality is becoming increasingly limited; thereby, emphasizing the need for the Project.

The population in the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) region increased between 2000 and 2014 by two (2) million people (an approximate 12.3 percent increase). By 2040, employment and population growth within the SCAG region is forecasted to increase by 16 percent. According to data collected by Metro, there are approximately 110,000 passenger trips that currently travel through LAUS each weekday. Metro anticipates continued increases in population and employment will nearly double the demand on existing and planned modes of transportation; resulting in over 200,000 passenger trips through LAUS each weekday by 2040 (Transforming LAUS Summary Report, Metro 2015).

Metro operates multiple modes of transit including bus, subway (Red and Purple Lines), and light rail transit (Gold Line) routes in and out of LAUS. Metrolink and Amtrak are responsible for the operation of commuter and intercity rail services, respectively and maintaining a safe and reliable level of service on existing rail lines, including the Los Angeles-San Diego-San Luis Obispo (LOSSAN) railroad corridor (primarily commuter ridership).

By 2030, Metrolink and Amtrak operators estimate the need to nearly double the number of overall train operations to provide additional commuter train service throughout the region, which would include: an increase in "through" trains between Los Angeles and San Diego making all stops, an increase in both commuter and intercity service to Ventura and Santa Barbara counties, an increase in intercity service to San Luis Obispo, and a "through" service to San Francisco (California State Rail Plan, Caltrans 2013). Metro and FRA have identified Link US as a critical transportation project to respond to the forecasted ridership increases in the region.

Link US also represents a critical first step in the implementation of regional transportation solutions identified in the following SCAG planning documents:

- Federally Approved Transportation Improvement Program (2015);
- Regional Comprehensive Plan and Guide (2008); and,
- Regional Transportation Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy (2016).

PROJECT PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

Due to the forecasted increase in ridership on existing transit and rail modes combined with the potential for new passenger rail and high-speed rail (HSR) service in the future, the overall purpose of Link US is to improve the functionality and operational capacity of LAUS in a cost-effective manner while maintaining existing transit/rail operations during construction. In addition, the purpose of the Project is to improve mobility, travel times, and safety in a way that:

- Improve operational efficiencies and scheduling reliability for trains using LAUS by reducing train movement constraints that result from “stub-end” operation by constructing new “run-through” tracks and an operational loop;
- Improves pedestrian access to and functionality of, the passenger platforms while also improving connectivity with other transit serving amenities (retail, food service, and waiting areas) within an expanded passenger concourse;
- Increases the operational capacity of LAUS by over 40 percent to accommodate planned growth of Metrolink and Amtrak train services and potential HSR service, while not precluding other planned improvements at LAUS, such as the development of an expanded passenger concourse located below the elevated platforms;
- Preserves space and connections for future rail and transit options, including potential HSR service;
- Enhances accessibility provisions for passengers with disabilities to all transit modes;
- Minimize service disruptions to existing transit service during construction, such as Metrolink, Amtrak, Metro Gold Line, Red Line and Purple Line; and,
- Minimizes adverse effects to the environment, including historic properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP).

In addition, Link US would reduce green house gas emissions by over 40 percent and thereby meet the air pollution and greenhouse gas emission reduction targets as mandated under California Assembly Bill (AB) 32, known as the Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006, as amended, and, California Senate Bill (SB) 375, known as the California’s Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act of 2008. These two laws establish the basis for both SCAG and Metro to accommodate regional growth through increased and more frequent access to alternative modes of transit for local communities.

THE PROPOSED PROJECT

Metro is proposing Link US to transform LAUS from a “stub-end tracks station” into a “run-through tracks station” while increasing operational capacity to meet the demands of the broader rail system. The EIS/EIR will consider the No Action/No Build Alternative and potentially up to four (4) Build Alternatives for Link US. HSR is considered a related project to Link US; and therefore, the Link US Build Alternatives will potentially accommodate the construction of up to four (4) HSR tracks and up to two (2) HSR platforms as part of the Project. The Link US EIS/EIR will evaluate the physical improvements to potentially accommodate HSR service at

LAUS within the limits of the Project. FRA and CHSRA will evaluate the construction and operation of the HSR Burbank to Los Angeles and Los Angeles to Anaheim Project Sections in separate environmental documents.

Each of the Build Alternatives would result in enhanced operational capacity from Control Point (CP) Chavez in the north (near North Main Street) to CP Olympic in the south (near the Interstate 10/State Route 60/U.S.101 interchange). Figure 3 depicts the major project components.

- ***Throat and Elevated Rail Yard*** – New track and subgrade improvements to increase the elevation of the tracks leading to LAUS, known as the “throat,” and an elevated rail yard that would include new longer, and elevated passenger platforms and canopies.
- ***New Passenger Concourse*** – A new passenger concourse, up to 600,000 square feet (passenger circulation and waiting areas, passenger support functions and amenities, and building functional support areas), including up to 100,000 square feet of transit serving amenities to meet the demands of a multi-modal transit station. The Link US-related portion of the new passenger concourse would enhance Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessibility at LAUS and include new vertical circulation elements (stairs, escalators, and elevators) for passengers between the elevated platforms and the new passenger concourse under the rail yard.
- ***Run-Through Tracks*** – Up to 10 run-through tracks with a new viaduct or viaducts over U.S. 101 that extend run-through tracks for regional/intercity rail (Metrolink/Amtrak) and potentially HSR south along the west bank of the Los Angeles River. In addition, a separate overhead viaduct is required for a loop track(s) turning north to the existing Keller Yard.

The Project would also require: modifications to existing city street bridges to accommodate new elevated tracks; modifications to local streets (including potential street closures and vacations) to accommodate the run-through tracks overhead viaducts; railroad signal(s), PTC, communications-related improvements; modifications to the SCRRA West Bank main line tracks; modifications to the existing Keller Yard and BNSF West Bank Yard; modifications to the Amtrak lead track; provision of railroad right-of-way (ROW) access roadways; additional ROW; and utility relocations, replacements, and abandonments.

PROBABLE EFFECTS

The EIS/EIR will consider in detail the potential environmental effects of the Project alternatives. The following environmental issue areas will be analyzed in the EIS/EIR: Air Quality and Global Climate Change; Biological and Wetland Resources; Cultural and Historic Resources; Economic and Fiscal Impacts; Energy; Environmental Justice; Floodplains, Hydrology, and Water Quality; Geology, Soils, and Seismicity; Hazardous Waste and Materials; Land Use, Planning, and Communities; Noise and Vibration; Parklands, Community Services, and Other Public Facilities; Safety and Security; Section 4(f) Resources; Transportation; and Visual Quality and Aesthetics.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT AND AGENCY COORDINATION

A comprehensive public involvement program has been developed, including the preparation of a Public Outreach Plan and Agency Coordination Plan. The program includes a Project website (<https://www.metro.net/projects/regionalrail/scrip/>); outreach to local and county officials, and community and civic groups; a public scoping process to define the issues of concern among all parties interested in the Project; focused meetings with stakeholders; a public meeting during the Draft EIS/EIR comment period; and development and distribution of Project newsletters.

PUBLIC REVIEW PERIOD

This NOP is being circulated pursuant to California Public Resource Code Section 21153(a) and the CEQA Guidelines, Section 15082. Public agencies and the public are invited to comment on the proposed scope and content of the environmental information to be included in the EIS/EIR. Metro will make the NOP available for at least 30 days to allow for public review and comment. The comment period for the NOP extends from May 27, 2016 to June 27, 2016.

PROVIDING COMMENTS

Please provide your written comments, including specific statutory responsibilities of your agency, as applicable. Written comments on the NOP and the content of the EIS/EIR should be submitted no later than Thursday, June 27, 2016. Please send your comments via U.S. mail to Metro Headquarters, One Gateway Plaza (Mail Stop 99-13-1), Los Angeles, California, 90012; or via email to Mark Dierking at dierkingm@metro.net, with the subject line "Link Union Station – NOP Scoping Comments," and include the name of a contact person in your organization, if applicable.

PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING

CEQA Section 15083 provides for a Lead Agency to consult directly with any person or organization it believes will be concerned with the environmental impacts of the Project. The public scoping process will be helpful for Metro to identify a range of alternatives, mitigation measures, and potential significant impacts to be analyzed in depth in the EIS/EIR.

Metro and FRA have scheduled a public scoping meeting on Thursday, June 2, 2016 from 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM at Metro Headquarters, One Gateway Plaza, Los Angeles, California, 90012.

Scoping materials will be available at the meeting and on the Metro website: <https://www.metro.net/projects/regionalrail/scrip/>.

The format of the meeting will consist of a short presentation sharing the Project, Project objectives and existing conditions.

Public input is anticipated via comment cards provided at the meeting, but Metro will also accept letters and emails to the addresses above.

All Metro meetings are held in ADA accessible facilities. Spanish and Mandarin translation is provided. Other ADA accommodations and translations are available by calling 213-922-2524 at least 72 hours in advance. Metro requests public agencies' views on the scope and content of the environmental information relevant to your agency's statutory responsibilities. Please send your agency's written response to the address indicated above by June 27, 2016.

Figure 1. Project Location and Regional Vicinity

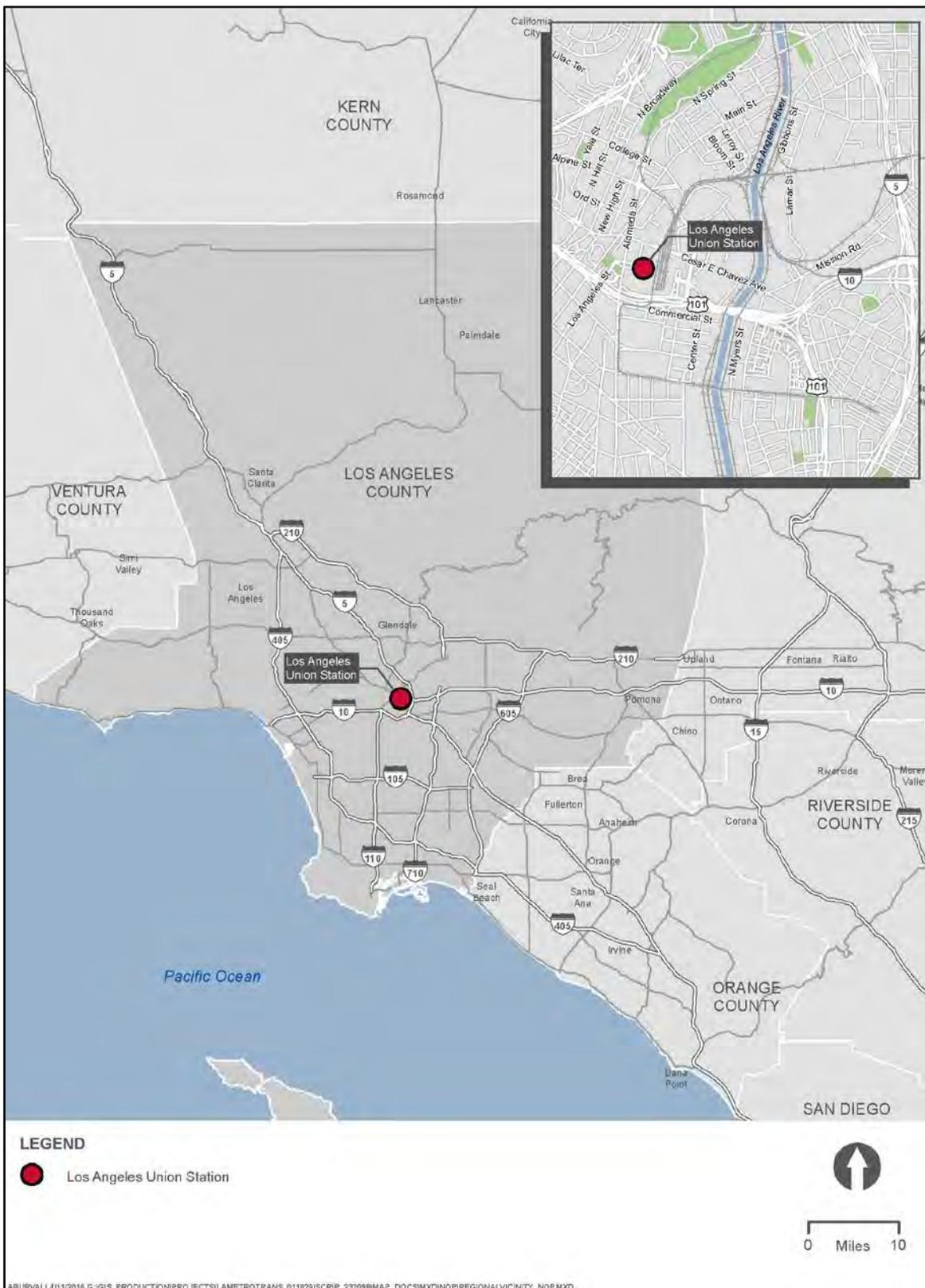


Figure 2. Link US – Project Study Area

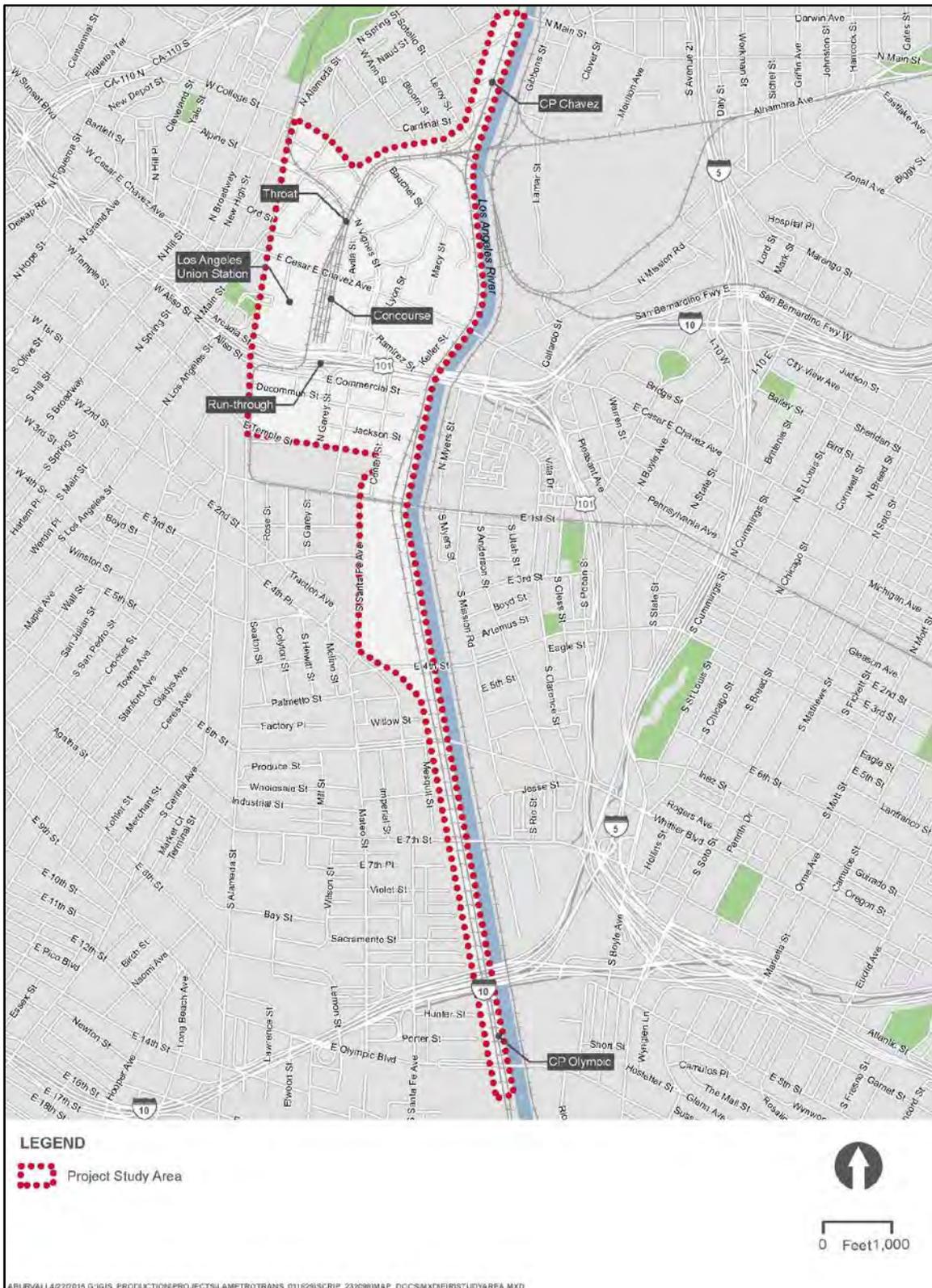


Figure 3. Link US – Major Project Components

