BLUE LINE

First/Last Mile: A Community-Based Process and Plan

March 2018

Metro

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ProForma

This report represents over a year of work by Metro and the project team. Special thanks to the Community Groups listed to the right, who were invaluable members of the project team.

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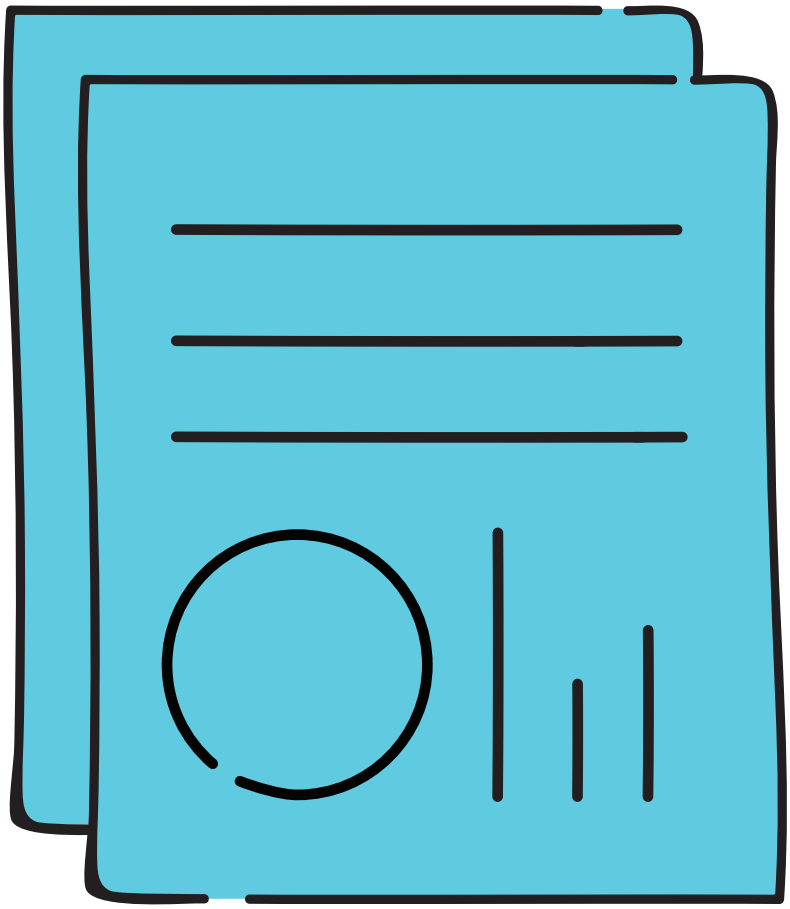
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



This First/Last Mile (FLM) Plan, prepared for all 22 stations on the Metro Blue Line (MBL), is a groundbreaking effort for Metro and its project team, composed of transportation planners and Community-Based Organizations (CBOs). While it represents a first-of-its-kind effort to plan comprehensive access improvements for an entire transit line, its greater innovation is in piloting an inclusive, equity-focused community engagement process. As part of the consultant team for this effort, Metro partnered with a coalition of CBOs to lead outreach efforts on the project, and to help shape the overall direction of this plan.

The coalition consists of:

- Los Angeles County Bicycle Coalition
- T.R.US.T. South LA
- Asian Pacific Islander Forward Movement
- Multicultural Communities for Mobility
- Ride On! Bike Co-op
- East Side Riders Bike Club
- Healthy Active Streets

Fehr and Peers served as the transportation consultant and prime contractor on the project. This structure achieved its original intent of enabling broad participation that identified community-driven concerns for transit riders accessing the system. It also emerged that this more open and inclusive outreach can potentially set new templates for Metro, especially as the agency increasingly underscores equity as a key consideration in planning and investment decisions. In order to realize that potential, however, it is also necessary to capture lessons learned from this effort, including opportunities and challenges in pursuing new working relationships. As such, this plan does not read like a typical planning document; it presents a variety of voices that are distinct from a typical Metro or public agency planning document. Several chapters ("Introduction", "Process", "Recommendations",) are generally more typical for public agency plans – describing underlying policy, techniques, results, and action steps. The "Context" and "Lessons Learned" chapters are presented in a unique voice written by our Community-Based Organization partners. Finally, appendices contain detailed findings, including ideas for specific project improvements, for each of the 22 stations on the MBL.

KEY FINDINGS OF THE PLAN

Key findings for the MBL First/Last Mile Plan include:

- There is great importance and further potential for innovative community engagement with CBO partners.
- There is pronounced need for FLM improvements along the MBL, with extensive project need identified through a community-based process around each station.
- There is a range of social, historical, and cultural issues that impact MBL communities including the day-to-day travel experiences within those communities.
- There are clear opportunities to fund, design, and implement first/last mile improvements along the MBL. These further steps must build on the inclusive, community-based process.

CONTENTS OF PLAN

The Plan includes the following sections:

Introduction

This chapter explains the reasons why FLM is important to Metro and its mission. The chapter describes and defines first/last mile planning, along with Metro's various first/last mile policies and commitments. It further summarizes the first/last mile issues and challenges associated with the Blue Line.

Context

This chapter describes the community and historical context along the Blue Line corridor, including a broad range of issues surfaced through community engagement and among the project team. Included in the discussion are issues of historic disinvestment and redlining, displacement and gentrification, and policing and security, among others. The chapter raises the importance of fully understanding the context of a place to be better able to engage on intersectional topics and carry out authentic and meaningful planning and design processes.

Process

This chapter describes the steps in creating the Plan, including walk audits, community events, and report preparation. Of note, this chapter describes the community coalition members' roles, the walk audit methodology, and detailed description of the community events. The 11 community events, in sum, entailed: community bike rides; giveaways such as bike raffles, free food, and TAP cards; live DJs; local artists and live painting; and interactive pop-up elements.

Recommendations

This chapter describes generally the pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure improvements recommended for the areas around MBL stations. The Recommendations chapter also describes the technical process for developing the Station Area Summaries, which are included as appendices.

Implementation

This chapter describes steps to move recommended infrastructure improvements through funding, design, and construction phases, largely focusing on coordination with local jurisdictions along the MBL corridor. The chapter further lays out ways to prioritize projects for implementation. Possible funding sources are also described and they include State Active Transportation Program (ATP), local return dollars from Measure R and M, FLM programs under Measure M, and other State discretionary (competitive) programs.

Lessons Learned

In this chapter, the authors describe strategies and techniques to promote meaningful community engagement and CBO partnerships in Metro planning efforts, reflecting key lessons learned through the experience on this project. Of particular importance, this chapter addresses how to ensure equity in future FLM plans and expands the lessons learned to larger topics such as capturing institutional memory and history of place; intersectionality and transportation funding; budgeting viable partnerships; displacement and community resources; safety considerations; sharing information of Metro actions within the study area; cross-sector approach; and Metro's legislative agenda.

Appendices

Appendices include the 22 Station Area Summaries capturing the Pathway Network and project lists. Further appendix information includes documentation on methodology, particularly related project cost assumptions.

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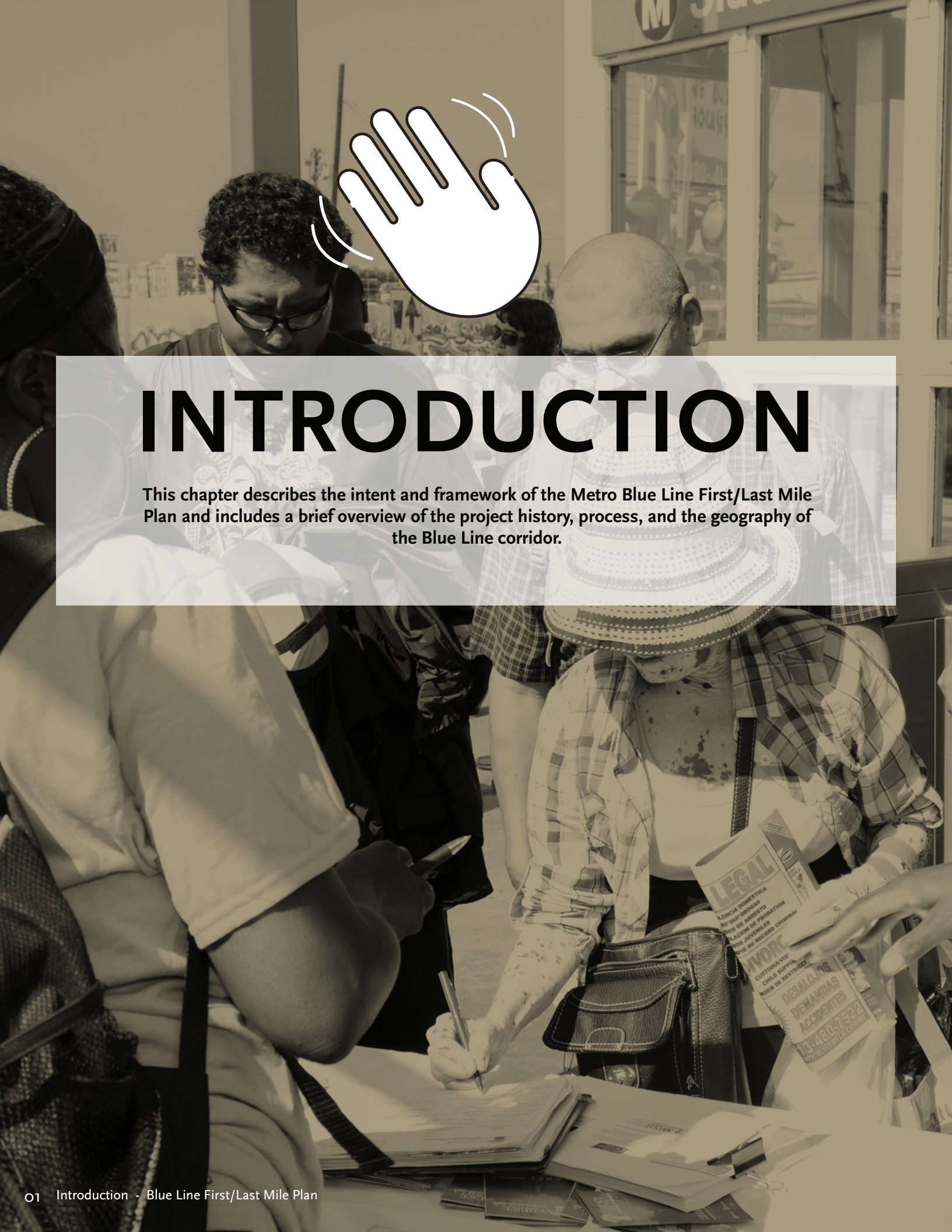


INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the intent and framework of the Metro Blue Line First/Last Mile Plan and includes a brief overview of the project history, process, and the geography of the Blue Line corridor.

To use the transit system, all transit riders must first make their way to a transit station and, after the transit ride ends, they must make their way to their destination. These portions of the journey are referred to as First/Last Mile (FLM). Addressing FLM challenges is important to Metro because the easier it is to access the system, the more likely people are to use it. Further, most Metro transit riders access the station by walking, biking, or rolling; therefore, FLM is crucial to serve existing riders.

By their very nature, first/last mile infrastructure can be the most neighborhood oriented element of a transportation system that a person uses. Sidewalks—or the lack of them—define the character of a local street. Bicycles are used by some children to go to local schools. Crosswalks and lighting can support a community's sense of safety and security, among other elements. As a consequence, identifying First/Last Mile (FLM) challenges and improvements becomes part of a much larger canvas of how a community defines its character. And that means the community needs to be engaged early in FLM planning, and the actual implementation of a plan's recommendations.

For this reason, it is necessary within FLM planning to involve community members in different and deeper ways than transportation projects have in the past. For communities along the Metro Blue Line (MBL) corridor this need is particularly pronounced. Many of the neighborhoods served by the line have experienced historic disinvestment and neglect from the public and private sector on a range of issues. As a result, government in general, and planning processes in particular, can be viewed with skepticism, without trust that planning can, or is even intended, to lead to positive outcomes for existing community residents.

This plan embodies a community-based collaboration distinct from past Metro efforts; an effort to both develop effective techniques for FLM planning and to engage authentically with communities to develop plans that reflect their concerns and values. Our Community-Based Organization (CBO) partners were instrumental in representing the voice of residents along the Blue Line, in ways that directly reflect their concerns historically and presently. Chapter 2 —"Context", and Chapter 4 —"Lesson Learned" were authored by the CBOs and present their perspectives not only for FLM improvements, but for ways that Metro and historically underserved communities can better partner going forward. The lessons learned from this effort should provide a foundation for other planning opportunities, and support Metro's recently adopted Equity Platform.

As a result, this Plan presents a variety of voices that are distinct from a typical Metro or public agency planning document. Several chapters (Introduction, Process, Recommendations,) are generally more typical for public agency plans – describing underlying policy, techniques, results and action steps. As noted above "Context" and "Lessons Learned" are presented in a unique voice written by our Community-Based Organization partners. Finally, appendices contain detailed findings, including ideas for specific project improvements, for each of the 22 stations on the MBL.

> "FLM improvements should serve the needs identified by those who live in communities where the improvements are located."

FIRST/LAST MILE DEFINED

What is first/last mile? An individual's trip is understood as the entire journey from origin to destination. Individuals may use a number of modes (types) of transportation to complete the journey; they may walk, drive, ride a bicycle, take a train, or in many cases combine several different modes. Bus and rail services often form the core of a trip, but transit riders complete the first and last portion on their own. For example, they must first walk, drive, or roll to the nearest station from their home or workplace. This is referred to as the first and last mile of the user's trip, or first/last mile (FLM) for short. Actual distances vary by trip.

Some examples of FLM improvements include:

- Infrastructure for walking, rolling, and biking (e.g. bike lanes, bike parking, sidewalks, and crosswalks)
- Shared use services (e.g. bike share and car share)
- Facilities to transfer or connect to a different mode of transportation for making modal connections (e.g. passenger drop off area and bus/rail interface)
- Information that eases travel, including signage, wayfinding, and technology (e.g. information kiosks and mobile apps)

Though the streets and infrastructure that comprise the first/last mile typically fall outside the boundaries of Metro's jurisdiction and control, they remain critical components of an effective public transportation system. All Metro riders must contend with the first/last mile challenge, and the easier it is to access the system, the more likely people are to use it. Most Metro transit users in Los Angeles walk or bike to their transit stations to complete multi-modal daily commutes. Unfortunately, the bicycle and pedestrian facilities are often inadequate and fail to meet the safety and convenience needs for all types of users.

VISION AND POLICY

Metro envisions a countywide network of streets radiating out from transit stations that facilitate safe, convenient, and pleasant journeys for transit riders and would-be riders. This vision for first/last mile improvements cannot be accomplished by Metro in isolation from communities and local jurisdictions; their input and engagement is crucial. First/last mile improvements should serve the needs identified by those who live in the communities where the improvements are located. Local city and county staff and elected officials are instrumental as well; they need to be at the table to concur on potential projects and commit to those projects being implemented within the street network they own.

The vision for FLM is supported by and based on expansive policy set by Metro. In May 2016, Metro committed to broad first/last mile planning and implementation, through the approval of Board Motion 14.1. Furthermore, local jurisdictions are now allowed to count first/last mile active transportation improvements toward the 3% local contribution for rail projects (Motion 14.2). Through these board motions, Metro is undertaking extensive actions on first/last mile implementation that will shape the county now and in the future.

More specifically, the policy commitment includes the following actions:

- Integrate the Countywide First/Last Mile Priority Network into the Long Range Transportation Plan.
- Integrate first/last mile into transit capital design and deliver first/last mile as part of transit capital projects, starting with Purple Line Section 2 and forward.
- For existing stations, conduct first/last mile planning countywide.
- Provide grant/funding technical assistance for first/last mile projects that local jurisdictions desire to implement.
- Establish a matching grant program in order to improve competitiveness of first/last mile projects to receive state and federal grants.

First/last mile planning for the Blue Line is at the forefront of this countywide program. As the first/last mile planning work begins for these transit projects, we will be looking to the approach, process, work products, and lessons learned from the Blue Line first/last mile efforts described in this document. Metro and other agencies will need to flexibly deploy first/last mile strategies to contend with widely varying environments throughout the county, while at the same time focusing on the user experience by supporting intuitive, safe and recognizable routes to and from transit stations. This countywide effort will require coordination among the many cities and jurisdictions that impact the public realm throughout the county. And, as we have discovered through this effort, real community collaboration is essential.

In April 2014, the Metro Board approved the First/Last Mile Strategic Plan & Planning Guidelines (FLM Strategic Plan). This nationally-recognized plan represents a broader view of planning for accessibility to transportation and responds to Metro's core challenge — improving the reach of transit and increasing transit ridership throughout the county. It also supports regional mobility, community health, and clean air policies, and builds on existing regional sustainable communities and transportation strategies.

The FLM Strategic Plan provides a toolkit and planning methodology with the goal to better coordinate infrastructure investments in station areas to extend the reach of transit, ultimately increasing transit ridership. The steps and approach in the FLM Strategic Plan identify barriers and improvements for the first/last mile portions of an individual's journey. It provides an adaptable vision for addressing first/last mile improvements in a systematic way, and provides data and information to justify taking those actions. Specifically, the FLM Strategic Plan defines the concept of the Pathway, which is an innovative model to rationally plan active transportation networks within walking and biking distance of the stations, promoting transit connectivity from one mode to another.

In a complex and multi-modal environment, these guidelines facilitate the integration of mobility solutions and provide a blueprint to address multiple challenges for accessing transit stations.

FIRST/LAST MILE AND THE BLUE LINE

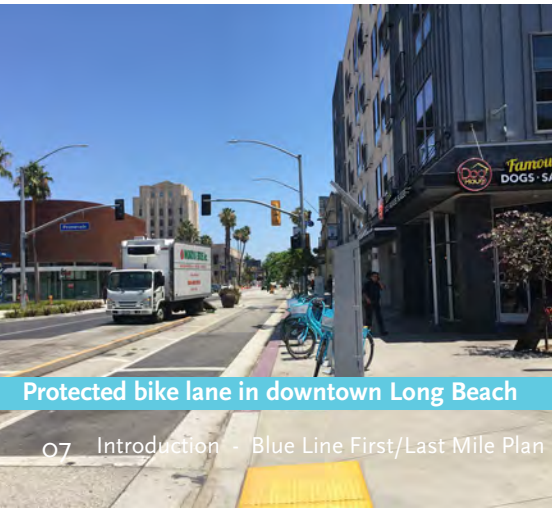
Metro sought grant funding and committed to preparing first/last mile plans for the Blue Line as the first comprehensive application of the first/last mile methodology. This decision was appropriate and fortuitous, but brought with it substantial challenge in seeking to address severe and complicated issues around Blue Line stations. In summary, among Metro rail lines, the Blue Line is most in need of concentrated attention and improvement for rider accessibility, safety, and experience, but has several factors that make it particularly difficult to identify and craft feasible improvements. This section describes the specific issues related to the Blue Line, its stations, and the planning context in which this work proceeded.

Oldest Line on the Metro Rail System

The Metro Blue Line opened for revenue service in 1990, making it the oldest line on the current Metro Rail system.[1] Upon opening, the demand for north-south travel between downtown Los Angeles and Long Beach was immediately evident in ridership, and generated greater than planned-for ridership[2], even prior to providing any connections to other rail service. As the first line on the system, planning decisions favored convenient and simpler routing, and as such largely followed existing rail right-of-way, notwithstanding the physical and communal barriers that come with it.

Long blocks and trucks on Alameda Corridor

Poor sidewalk conditions by Slauson Station


Protected bike lane in downtown Long Beach

High Ridership/Recent Declines

The Metro Blue Line has the highest ridership on any modern light rail line in the United States.[3] The line serves many low-income communities that rely heavily on public transportation. Ridership peaked in 2013 with nearly 88,000 daily weekday boardings.[4] Recent years have seen declines in ridership on the Blue Line, mirroring declines on the Metro system generally, along with the other older rail lines on the system (Green and Red). In 2016, the average weekday ridership was approximately 78,754.[5] Ridership declines are attributed to a variety of factors including security (real and perceived), operational issues including speed and reliability, and changing travel patterns. Metro has undertaken a series of activities to improve Blue Line safety and performance with the goal of increasing ridership, as described further below.

Safety

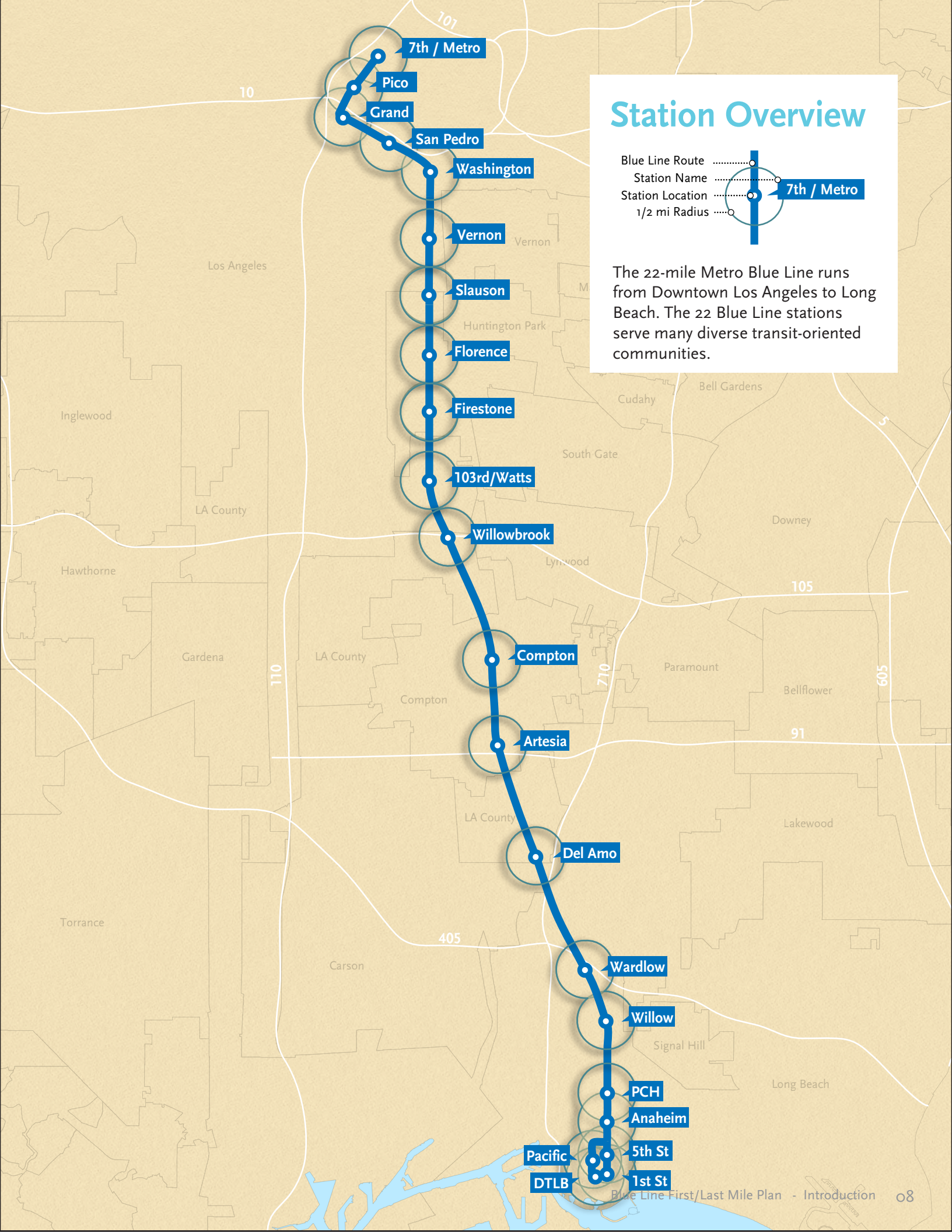
Collisions at at-grade crossings have been a significant issue for the Blue Line since the line opened.[6] A number of initiatives have been undertaken, beginning in 1990.[7] Since 1990, numerous safety enhancements were implemented, for example a "cyclops" light on all trains, additional flashing lights and bells at grade crossings, pedestrian gates, and swing gates, among others. During the period from 2002 to 2012, safety enhancements were implemented that resulted in a reduction of train/vehicle collisions. As part of the 2015 safety upgrade involving pedestrian gates, all crosswalks crossing both the MBL and UPRR freight tracks at the 27 crossings in the mid-corridor were repaved/upgraded with concrete crossing panels to eliminate tripping hazards/potholes, and improve the walking surfaces across the tracks.

Land Use and Station Orientation

The Blue Line stations exist in a wide variety of built environments. On the northern end of the line within downtown Los Angeles, stations fit within a street grid pattern with dense, mixed uses. Downtown Long Beach on the southern end is similar. Other sections of the line exist within areas oriented to freight and industrial uses, along with more suburban style auto-oriented street patterns with wide, fast moving arterials (e.g. Wardlow Road). As expected, the downtown Los Angeles and Long Beach stations have higher existing volumes of pedestrian activity around stations, and generally better safety and accessibility conditions.

Land Use Conflicts and Competing Priorities

First/last mile issues are affected dramatically by the land uses surrounding Blue Line stations. In particular, stations through the middle section of the line (e.g. Slauson, Florence, Firestone) pose a difficult juxtaposition of primarily residential neighborhoods (generally to the west of the rail line)



Station Overview

Blue Line Route
Station Name
Station Location
1/2 mi Radius
7th / Metro

The 22-mile Metro Blue Line runs from Downtown Los Angeles to Long Beach. The 22 Blue Line stations serve many diverse transit-oriented communities.

and light industrial and logistics/goods movement facilities to the east. This mix requires transit users to navigate numerous points of conflict such as sidewalks being interrupted by loading docks or tracks. Further, roadways near Blue Line stations are often configured to facilitate efficient movement of trucks, and feature substantial widths and high speeds. For stations in the middle section of the line (specifically Vernon Station to Artesia Station), the Alameda Corridor runs parallel to the Blue Line approximately ½ mile or less to the east. The presence of the Alameda Corridor creates exceptionally long blocks without crossing opportunities and functions as a hard barrier for residents to the east to access stations. Conditions for transit users on foot or bike are generally better to the west, where street patterns are typically in a grid configuration with smaller blocks.

Recent Improvements

The Metro Board of Directors has placed a high priority on overall improvements to Blue Line performance including improving operational speed and reliability, safety at crossing, and reconfiguration of some station platforms. Overall efforts to address Blue Line issues are captured and described in a July 2017 report to the Metro Board.[8]

Jurisdictions

Among the unique factors in planning for and addressing first/last mile conditions around Blue Line stations are the jurisdictional boundaries along the corridor. Four jurisdictions (City of Los Angeles, County of Los Angeles, City of Compton, and City of Long Beach) host the 22 stations along the line, but several others are within the ½ mile walk of stations including the cities of Huntington Park, Carson, Vernon, Lynwood, and Signal Hill. In the case of Slauson Station, there are four jurisdictions within ½ mile of the station (Los Angeles City and County, Huntington Park, and Vernon). As previously mentioned, when planning for and implementing first/last mile improvements, cooperation of local jurisdictions is necessary; the more entities that are involved, the more complex the process becomes.

Demographics

As noted elsewhere in this report, the Blue Line serves exceptionally

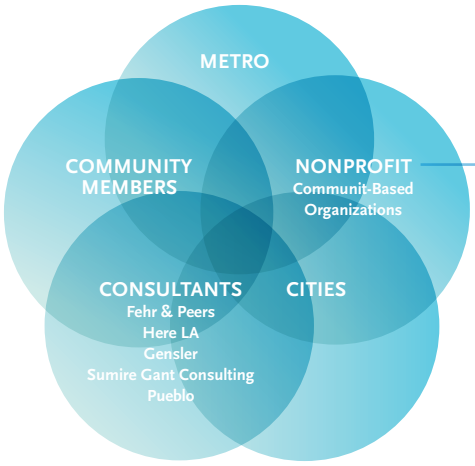
diverse communities.[9] Of particular note, the Blue Line corridor has a high concentration of top 5% Disadvantaged Communities as identified by CalEnviroScreen, which highlights severe socio-economic and health hardship. Because of this designation, the communities along the Blue Line are in a strong position to seek funding targeted to state-defined Disadvantaged Communities including the State Active Transportation Program and Cap-and-Trade program options. As highlighted in the next chapter, this history and present circumstances of these communities profoundly impact the perceptions and potential acceptance of transportation investment in their neighborhoods.

This Plan documents the process undertaken by the project team, including important social and historical context to frame the recommendations discussed herein.

The Plan is organized as follows:

- Introduction
- Context
- Process
- Recommendations
- Implementation
- Lessons Learned

PROJECT PARTNERS



LA County Bicycle Coalition
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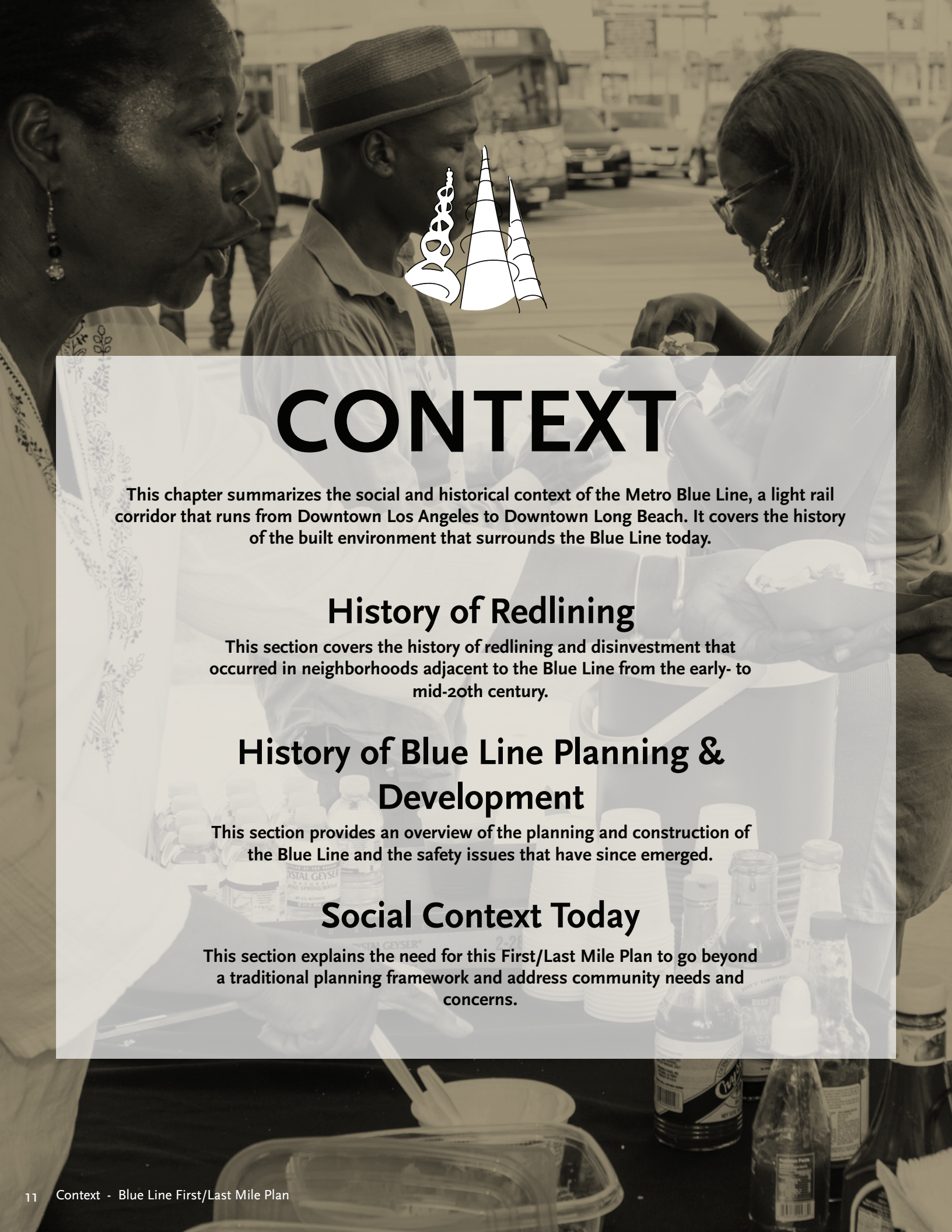


CONTEXT

This chapter summarizes the social and historical context of the Metro Blue Line, a light rail corridor that runs from Downtown Los Angeles to Downtown Long Beach. It covers the history of the built environment that surrounds the Blue Line today.

History of Redlining

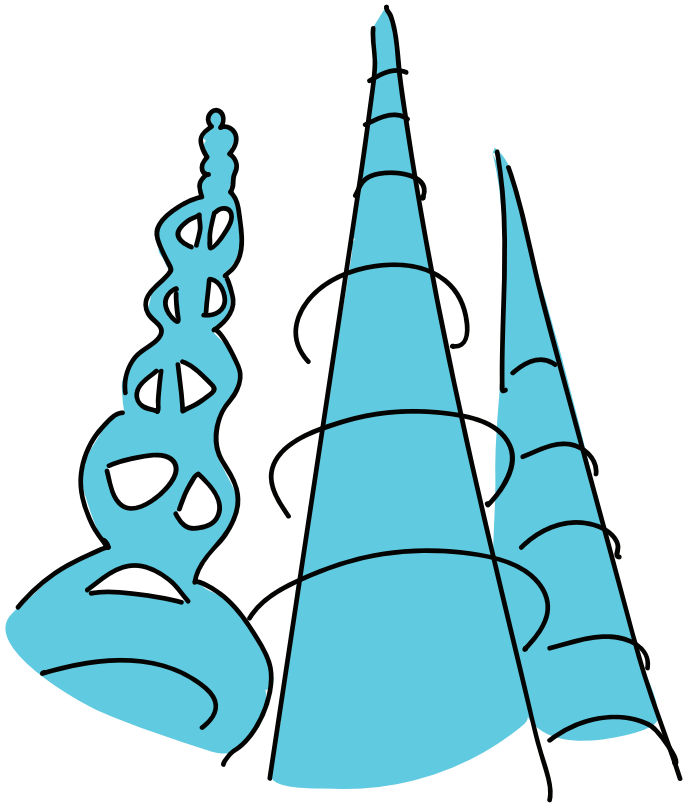
This section covers the history of redlining and disinvestment that occurred in neighborhoods adjacent to the Blue Line from the early- to mid-20th century.

History of Blue Line Planning & Development

This section provides an overview of the planning and construction of the Blue Line and the safety issues that have since emerged.

Social Context Today

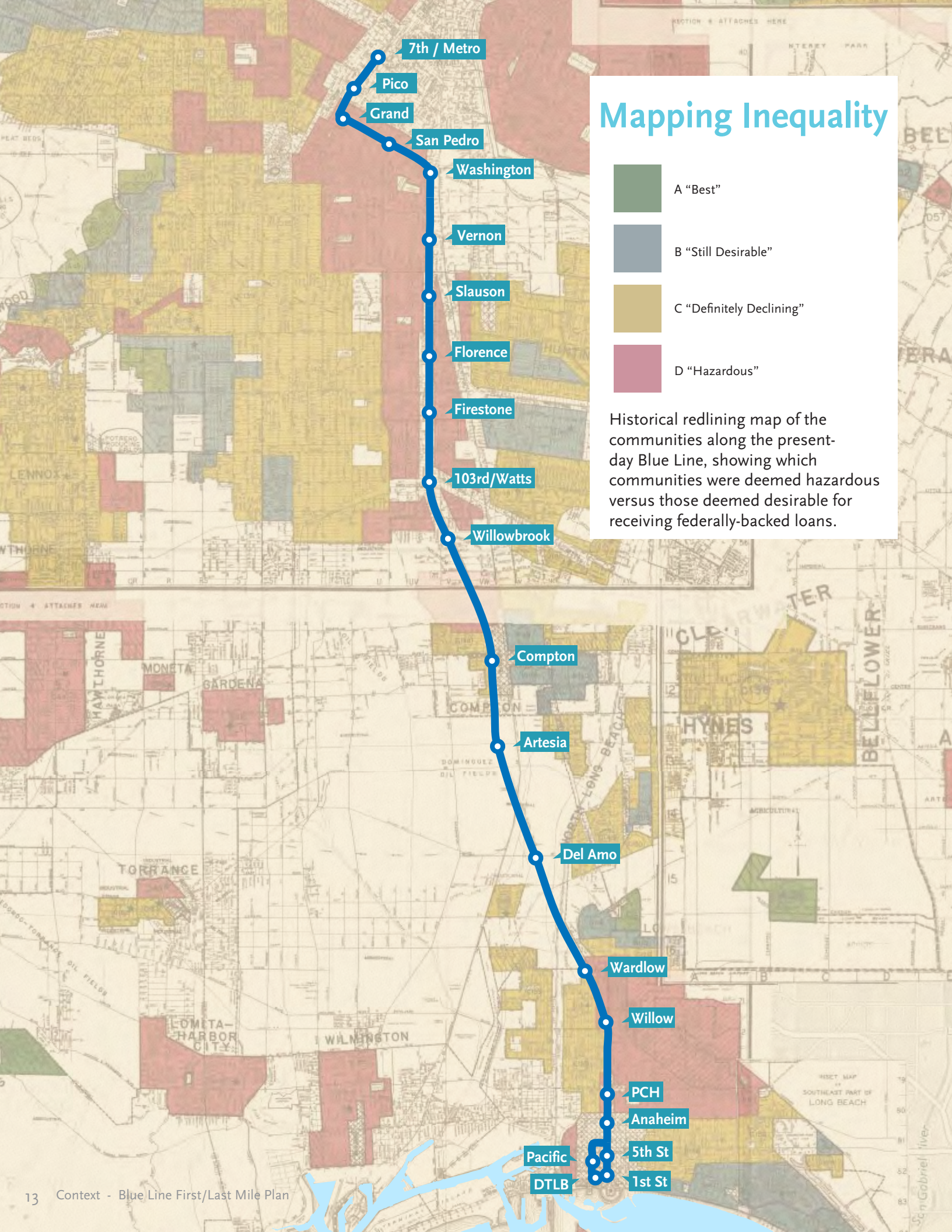
This section explains the need for this First/Last Mile Plan to go beyond a traditional planning framework and address community needs and concerns.



The history of a place and its planning legacy needs to be fully understood and acknowledged especially when planning with low-income communities or communities of color. An understanding of the history of the communities along the Blue Line will provide us with a better understanding of why it is important to engage in an intersectional manner when doing authentic participatory planning and design. The concerns of displacement, gentrification, access to employment and educational opportunities, and policing in communities along the Blue Line are not new concerns for residents. Community members have been expressing these concerns about their neighborhoods for over 70 years.

HISTORY OF REDLINING ALONG THE BLUE LINE

It is not a coincidence that the active transportation infrastructure along the Blue Line is amongst the worst in the County. A history of redlining and generations of disinvestment have made the built environment difficult and dangerous to navigate by bike or foot to the twenty-two different Blue Line transit stations. The Blue Line route directly mirrors the redlined communities of the early to mid-20th century. In a recent report by Ryan Reft, a reporter with KCET, he states that "Redlined communities struggled to receive federally backed home loans, making property ownership much more difficult for residents. Moreover, it made getting loans for home improvements – maintenance, upkeep, and renovation – though not impossible, very unlikely. Neighborhoods fell into a vicious circle of decline: the inability to access capital lead to disrepair and the physical decline of a community's housing stock, which in turn reinforced the redline designation. That redlining became equated with race and class led to the naturalization of segregation; white, working-class homeowners often



Mapping Inequality

Historical redlining map of the communities along the present-day Blue Line, showing which communities were deemed hazardous versus those deemed desirable for receiving federally-backed loans.

> "Redlined communities struggled to receive federally backed home loans... [They] also sat closer to industrial areas, vice districts, and environmentally compromised settings."

sought to exclude those populations seen as threatening to home values. Redlined communities also sat closer to industrial areas, vice districts, and environmentally compromised settings, exposing residents to health risks and crime."[10]

Redlined communities did not have access to high quality and efficient transportation systems in their community or good transit access to other non-redlined (white) communities to access job opportunities. A newspaper article published in 1966 documents that "A special Welfare Planning Council committee said a study showed it almost impossible for a worker in Watts to get public transportation from his home to a job outside the area in time to get to work in the morning, and without paying unreasonably high fares....It was charged that residents of the area have to spend up to 2.5 hours traveling on a number of buses to get to jobs in West Los Angeles or the San Fernando Valley, and pay 74 cents and more each way."[11] Furthermore, the lack of access to jobs and racial segregation led to high unemployment rates and economic decline of the communities along the Blue Line. Even when there were opportunities for employment in the 1960s, such as the 1,000 openings in the Neighborhood Youth Corps, many of these positions sat unfilled primarily because of a lack of transportation.[12]

Despite these histories of structural racism and disparities, we must not neglect the history of resilience of the communities along the Blue Line. These communities have always found ways to address the challenges they are facing through self-determination. For example, in the late 1960s in South Los Angeles, Black-led organizations, the National Economic Growth and Reconstruction Organization, and the Watts Labor Community Action Committee, provided bus service to the community.[13]

HISTORY OF BLUE LINE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

The Metro Blue Line was the first rail line planned and constructed under the leadership of the Los Angeles County Transportation Commission (LACTC), one of the predecessor agencies to LA Metro. Created by the state legislature, it's voting board was composed of the five county Supervisors; the Mayor, Council President, a citizen representative from the City of Los Angeles; and three City Council members from Long Beach, Rancho Palos Verdes, and Santa Monica. LACTC commissioners were elected by their respective jurisdictions and assigned by state legislation to oversee transportation in Los Angeles County. None were specifically elected to represent transit or transportation.

Significant engagement within the cities occurred on both ends of the corridor in Los Angeles and Long Beach,[14] as evidenced by the alternative selections and the design of the street running portions of the line. Less engagement was conducted along the middle of the corridor that runs through primarily low-income communities of color. Many different routes were considered on both ends, but alternatives in the mid-corridor addressed primarily one route option with different elements, e.g. at grade or below grade, to utilize the existing rail right-of-way.

In 1985, the City of Compton opposed constructing the Blue Line through the heart of its central business district without addressing the decades old challenge of two active parallel freight lines less than ¼ mile apart that sandwiched the downtown between Willowbrook Avenue and Alameda Street.[15] The Blue Line Final Environmental Impact Report noted that delays to emergency vehicles of 30 to 45 seconds that would result from the operation of the Blue Line in Long Beach were "significant" impacts.[16] Meanwhile in Compton, each of the existing two freight lines already operating resulted in regular traffic delays of ten minutes or more, sometimes one right after the other, impacting emergency vehicles as well as the traveling public. The proposed Blue Line would add another rail operation alongside the freight line on Willowbrook, which would further increase the ten minute delays to east-west travel on all Compton arterials. Compton officials requested that the Blue Line be constructed below grade to allow the free flow of east-west traffic to improve safety, and that it should include the consolidation of all freight onto Alameda to reduce those impacts. In fact, discussion was already underway to consolidate and relocate freight traffic below grade on Alameda Street to accommodate anticipated increases in cargo at the Ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles. Ultimately, neither of the concerns voiced by the City of Compton were addressed in the final construction of the Blue Line. The City advocated that the freight line be diverted to consolidate freight traffic on Alameda Street, and that the Blue Line be trenched; neither of their preferences were approved by Metro. As reported by the Los Angeles Times, "The [Compton] council majority refused to endorse the original proposal to place both, freights and trolleys at street level along the same downtown route, even as a backup plan."[17] An article in Streetsblog by Sahra Sulaiman entitled "At-Grade Crossings along Metro Blue Line Will See $30 Million in Pedestrian Safety Improvements" discusses the four lines running side by side throughout the mid-corridor and the safety challenges that creates. "Agreeing that the

> **"The FLM process provides a guide to comprehensively address negative physical barriers while honoring the communities that the Blue Line serves."**

upgrades were 'long overdue,' the Board approved the installation of $30,175,000 worth of Pedestrian Active Grade Crossing Improvements at the 27 intersections the Blue Line shares a right-of-way (ROW) with Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) without hesitation or discussion."[18]

Trains in the mid-corridor pre-empt traffic signals to travel at speeds of up to 55 miles per hour. When the Blue Line began operation, drivers and pedestrians in the surrounding community continued to go around the gates to "beat the train" as they were accustomed to doing with slow moving freight trains. In the first ten years of operation, Metro reports that 42 deaths resulted from 842 train collisions along the full alignment, 666 of which were collisions with a vehicle and 176 of which were collisions with pedestrians.[19] Metro has since installed safety upgrades, including installing four-quadrant crossings at intersections, reducing the height of fencing along the tracks so that train operators have a better view of cross-traffic, installing "cyclops" lights on trains to improve their visibility, and adding pedestrian gates at crossings.

Metro commissioned a Booz Allen Hamilton, Inc. study in 1998 to determine the causes of Blue Line collisions. The study cited high ridership leading to increased pedestrian traffic around stations, high population density leading to increased auto and pedestrian traffic around the tracks, the diverse socio-economic community living near the corridor resulting in literacy and language challenges for public education campaigns, driver frustration due to slow traffic speeds around the line leading to more risky behavior, and the shared right of way with freight traffic in the high speed Blue Line mid-corridor. From 2002 to 2012, the number of train/vehicle collisions on the Blue Line improved. During that same period, however, train/pedestrian collisions increased.[20] The Blue Line overall safety performance has remained a concern as evidenced by continued safety improvement projects.

Noise was also a negative impact, not only the escalating noise of steel wheels on tracks that increases with speed, but also the shrill honking of the horn on the approach to each intersection in the mid-corridor where train speed was highest. With homes in some sections of the mid-corridor only yards away from the train, the blaring horn was almost continuous with trains operating as early as 4 am as it crossed numerous intersections in both directions. Only one soundwall was built, located in the most affluent neighborhood along the corridor in Long Beach, and only there was the shrill horn not blown.[21]

As the first rail line in Los Angeles' new system, the Blue Line was constructed before Metro had developed standards and guidelines

for integrating safety and enhanced accessibility for all modes into initial rail and station designs. "The Blue Line was a real learning experience," according to a USC associate professor in transportation and urban planning, saying that the LACTC "figured it out as they went along."[22] Over time, safety and operational changes have been implemented to improve the experience of communities along the Blue Line corridor, and those lessons learned have been applied to other rail lines to reduce community impacts systemwide.

As a result, there are many physical barriers along this corridor in particular that remain, continuing to negatively impact accessibility and the overall experience of the communities that the Blue Line serves. The FLM process provides a guide to comprehensively address those barriers while honoring the communities that the Blue Line serves.

SOCIAL CONTEXT TODAY

Today, the Los Angeles Region finds itself in a time where voters have chosen to tax themselves for transportation planning and projects. This is an important time to institutionalize systems and processes that address crosscutting issues in order to ensure that public agencies do not perpetuate social injustices when making investments. Metro has an incredible responsibility to plan thoughtfully with the community and ensure through practice and policies that the same inequities do not persist.

Many elements have come together to create a space where communities distrust public agencies such as Metro, notably: economic, health, and social disparities resulting from historic disinvestment; unhealthy zoning policies; displacement of people and communities torn apart by freeway construction; and a history of aggressive law enforcement presence. Now with Metro's interest in investing in first/last mile connections in communities along the Blue Line, there is potential to redress these inequities. However, there is also great potential to further perpetuate inequities if planning and implementation of these investments are not done in an intersectional manner that acknowledges the history of structural racism and its current legacy, that understands the potential impact of these investments in accelerating displacement and gentrification, that recognizes the life-and-death ramifications of over-policing communities of color, and that looks for creative ways to support and not harm existing community resilience.

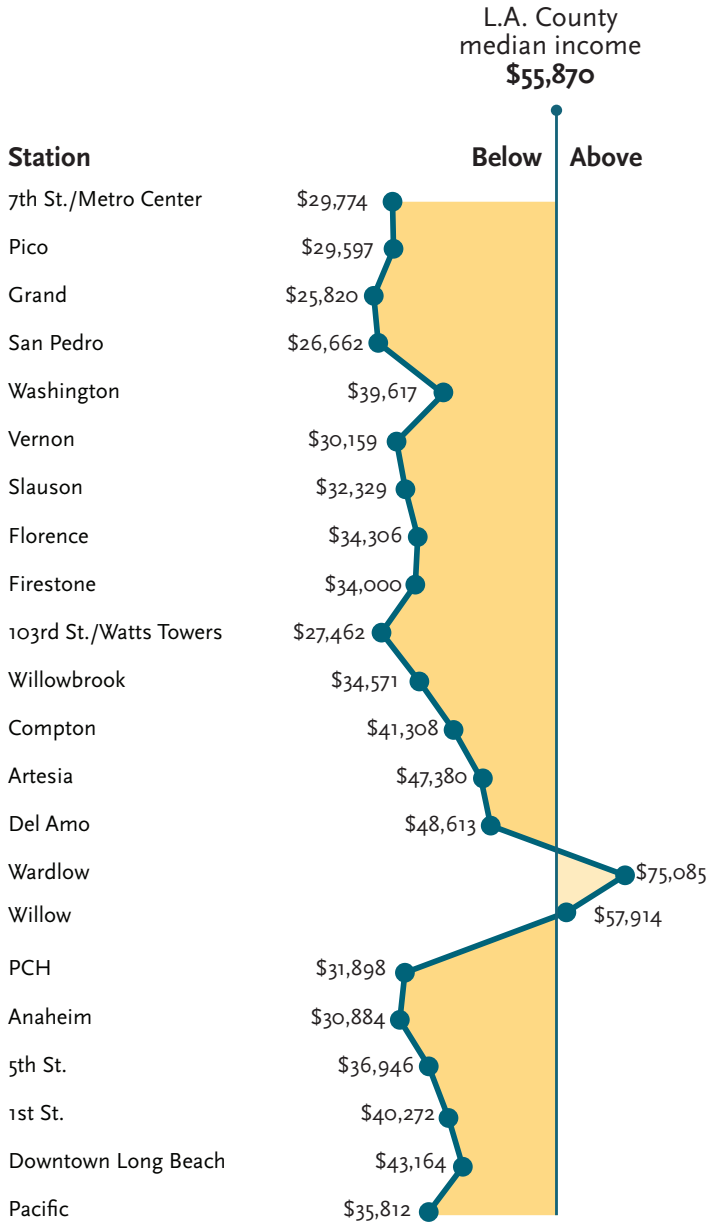
What we learned from the history of the communities near the Blue Line and the impact of the Blue Line once it was built, is that there has been a lot of physical and economic trauma. As planning and infrastructure improvements take place, Metro, municipal officials, and planning/engineering practitioners must be mindful of this trauma and proceed with extra caution to ensure that more harm is not inflicted upon the community. Considerations of gentrification, displacement, and law enforcement may be outside of the scope of traditional FLM planning; however, the history of the Blue Line and present-day community concerns require us to think beyond the traditional planning framework.

CBOs and community members highlighted throughout the process of developing this Plan that FLM planning is much more than simply identifying locations for a new crosswalk or bike lane. In order to improve access and safety en route to a transit stop, other factors must be considered. To communities along the Blue Line, security and access also means being able to afford to remain in their neighborhood once the recommended infrastructure is put in place and feeling safe at a transit station without the excessive presence of law enforcement.

Although this has yet to be formally quantified, some residents who engaged with CBOs shared that many folks are avoiding using rail, the Blue Line in particular, due to fears around documentation status

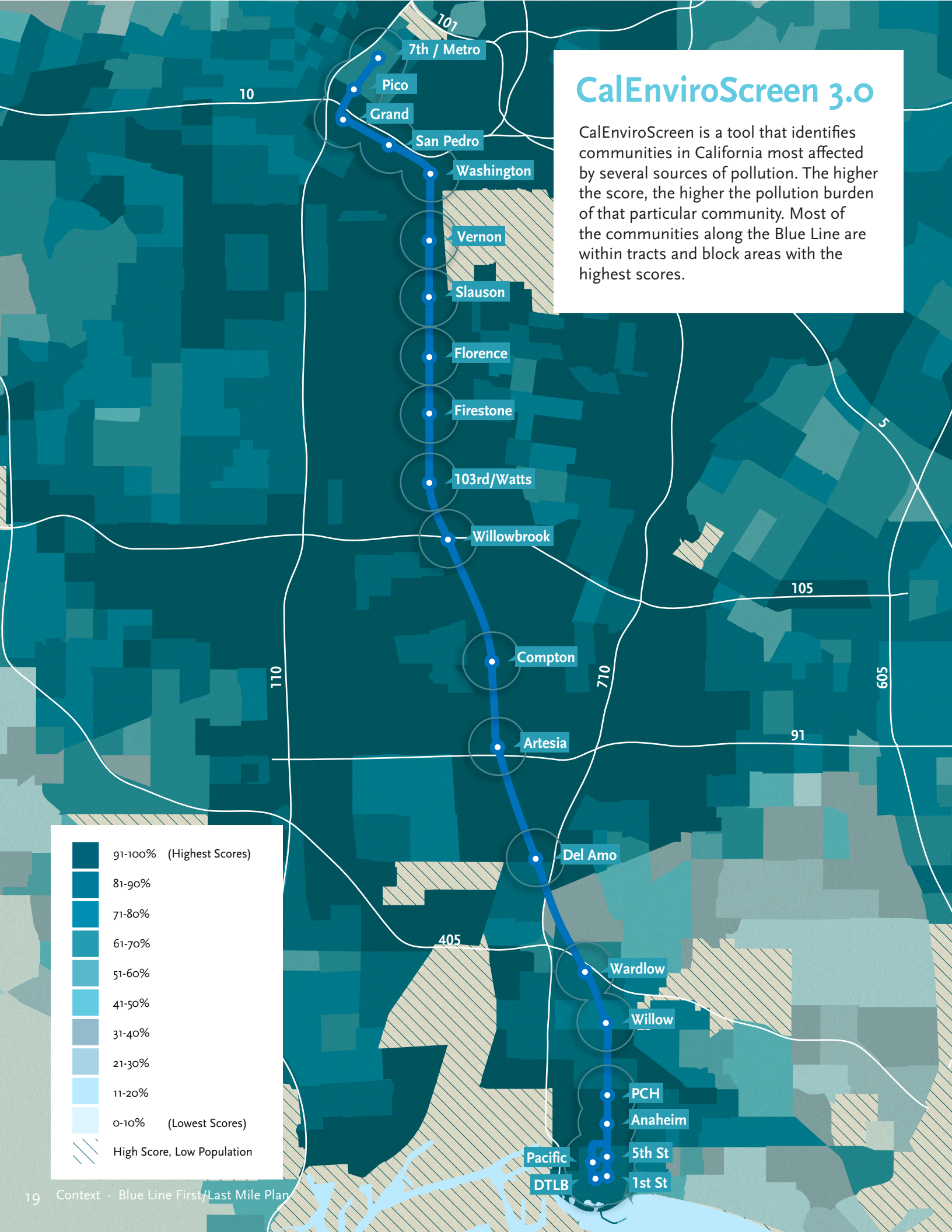
and the increased presence of law enforcement.

The Blue Line serves some of the poorest residents in Los Angeles County, and according to an LA Times article "Measuring Income Along LA's Metro Stations" (March 4, 2016), 20 of its 22 stations are in areas where median incomes are below the County median income, and neighborhood development along the Blue Line stations has been limited compared with other lines due to a mix of economic and zoning factors.[23] At the same time, housing costs and rents are increasing within the Blue Line corridor as in many of the most transit-accessible neighborhoods throughout Los Angeles County. These conditions and others create an inter-sectoral relationship between access to transportation, housing, health, and employment. In these communities, it is increasingly difficult to look only at transportation without considering the impacts of other influencing factors.



"Median household income estimates for each station were calculated by taking the aggregate number of people who fell in each income bracket for all U.S. Census tracts within a half-mile radius of a station. The 2014 five-year median income estimates from the Census were used. Some tracts were counted for two stations due to their proximity to both."

- Los Angeles Times



CalEnviroScreen 3.0

CalEnviroScreen is a tool that identifies communities in California most affected by several sources of pollution. The higher the score, the higher the pollution burden of that particular community. Most of the communities along the Blue Line are within tracts and block areas with the highest scores.

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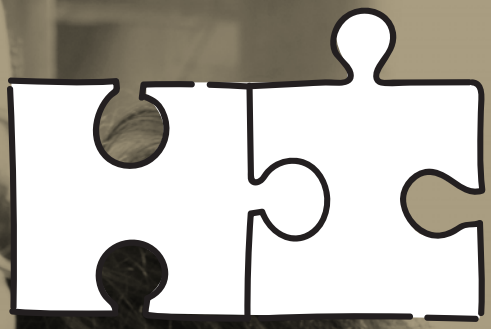


PROCESS

This chapter details the robust Blue Line First/Last Mile outreach strategy, which included an outreach partnership with a coalition of community-based organizations (CBOs). The strategy is described in four phases, each of which contributed to the development of the First/Last Mile project recommendations.

Phase 1: Walk Audits

This section describes the interdisciplinary teams that conducted a series of walk-audits around all twenty-two Blue Line Stations.

Phase 2: Community Events

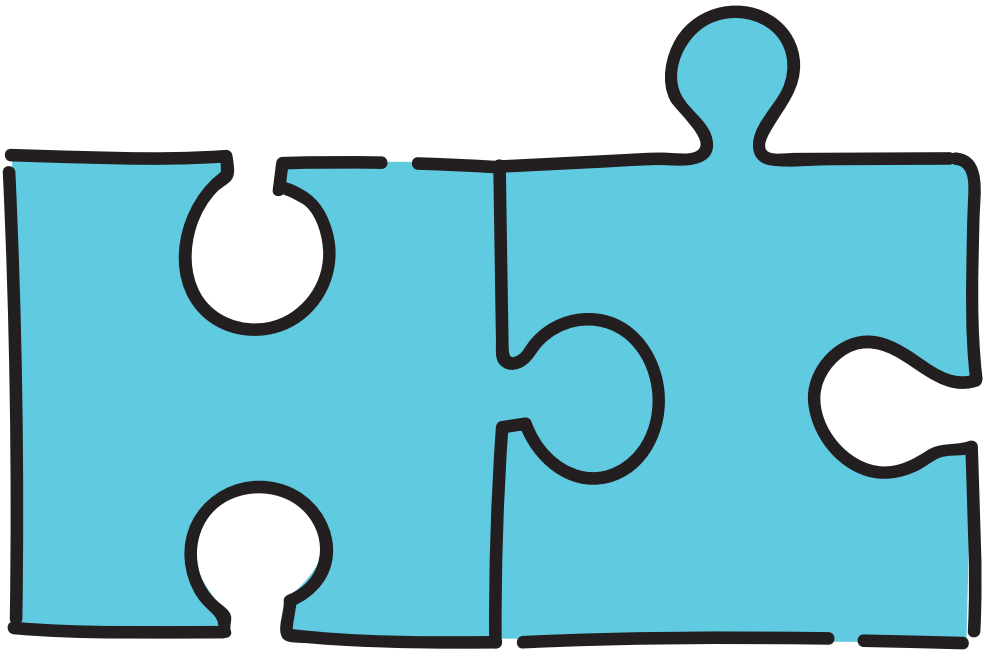
This section outlines the 11 community events that took place adjacent to the Blue Line stations in Summer, 2017.

Phase 3: Drafting the Report

This section describes the project team's approach to drafting the final Blue Line First/Last Mile Plan.

Phase 4: Sharing Findings

This section covers the additional community meeting that was added to the process to share the draft First/Last Mile project ideas with Blue Line community members.



Metro received a grant from Caltrans to develop this FLM Plan for the Blue Line using a participatory planning framework. In an effort to ensure that the communities along the Blue Line would be given opportunities to engage in the planning process, Metro procured a consultant team comprised of transportation planners, graphic designers, and community-based organizations (CBOs) to assist with the walk audits and outreach needed for the project. The integration of CBOs as Metro's partners in outreach rather than targets of engagement represented a departure from the standard approach, both for Metro and the CBOs. Despite having some initial concerns about the partnership, the CBOs joined the project because they saw the value of having community members engaged in the process and saw an opportunity to help influence the Plan in a manner that could meet residents' needs. These CBOs, who represent a wide range of constituents, include T.R.U.S.T. South LA, Ride On! Bike Co-op, East Side Riders Bike Club, Asian Pacific Islanders Forward Movement, Multicultural Communities for Mobility, Los Angeles County Bicycle Coalition, and Healthy Active Streets.

Partnering with trusted CBOs and leveraging their knowledge and existing relationships within the community allowed for more robust and inclusive engagement with residents in the surrounding neighborhoods. In the process of working within this new project team structure, broader issues were raised - typically considered outside the realm of FLM planning - that are nonetheless critically important to the community and relevant to the success of this planning effort. These considerations include environmental justice, equity, security and policing, housing, and displacement.

T.R.U.S.T. South LA and Los Angeles County Bicycle Coalition (LACBC) were initially engaged as project managers, and they invited other CBOs to join them in this participatory planning effort. LACBC and T.R.U.S.T. provided leadership in identifying other partners with strong community ties to join them based on their geographical locations and cultural relationships within communities along the Blue Line corridor. The following pages outline the missions of the participating CBOs and their roles.

PARTICIPATING CBOs	ROLE
API Forward Movement (APIFM)	API Forward Movement (APIFM): APIFM's mission is to cultivate healthy, long-lasting, and vibrant Asian and Pacific Islander communities through grassroots organizing. APIFM is invested in working on issues of public health and environmental justice. For this project, APIFM not only provided guidance on engaging Asian and Pacific Islander communities across all stations, but also led efforts to engage communities in Long Beach and Downtown Los Angeles.
East Side Riders Bike Club (ESRBC)	ESRBC's mission is to prevent kids from the influence of gangs and drugs, help those in need or less fortunate, and educate all who seek to enrich the community. An all-volunteer, grassroots bicycle club, ESRBC engages youth who have a desire to enrich the community through recreational activities, specifically focusing on bicycle riding and bike safety, healthy eating, and active living. ESRBC engaged with youth and the local community at the Rosa Park Station and 103rd Street Station.
Healthy Active Streets (HAS)	HAS supports mobility advocacy that engages the community, empowers more residents as advocates, and pushes for equitable resources and an inclusive environment from local government and transportation and health care agencies. HAS does this through providing free bike safety workshops, community bike rides, bike giveaways, and creating micro bike share programs. HAS engaged with youth and local stakeholders to conduct walking audits, lead bike rides, provide free bike repair and organize events to engage communities at all of the Long Beach Blue Line Stations.
Los Angeles County Bicycle Coalition (LACBC)	LACBC works to make all communities in LA County healthy, safe, and fun places to ride a bike through advocacy, education, and outreach. LACBC led walk audits at Compton and Artesia stations, and organized community events for Compton and Washington stations.
Multicultural Communities for Mobility (MCM)	MCM exists to improve the quality of life for underserved low-income communities of color by empowering and engaging community leaders at the local level to advocate and educate for safer bikeways, walkable communities, and access to mass transit for all. MCM led fun and dynamic bi-lingual outreach efforts at Roosevelt Park and at Vernon station. By providing bike mechanics and bike-blended smoothies, theirs was the most popular booth at the Summer Nights closing event. They also activated Vernon station to engage the community, providing a live DJ and healthy drinks. Eviction defense lawyers were also in attendance. MCM followed up with community members and produced a video that captures their stories. The video can be found here: https://youtu.be/kpn4ezhIEdg
Ride On! Bike Co-op	Ride On! aims to provide the tools, space, and a community environment to facilitate bike repair education. In addition to repair services, Ride On! also conducts workshops on bike safety and advocates for bicycle infrastructure equity in South-West Los Angeles. Ride On participated in the planning and execution of events at the Slauson and Grand/LATTC Stations.
T.R.U.S.T South LA	T.R.U.S.T. South LA formed in 2005 as a resident member-controlled Community Land Trust, that was organized by immigrant Latinas concerned about generations of infrastructure disinvestment in South Central LA, using a model taken from African Americans from the Civil Rights Movement, "We have to own the Land." T.R.U.S.T. recognizes biking and walking as a recreational activity, but also an economic necessity and social justice issue in mostly low-to-moderate income Black and Brown South Central LA. T.R.U.S.T. is dedicated to building the economic and political power of residents of South Central Los Angeles through permanent ownership of land as a strategy to stabilize neighborhoods, stop displacement and lead to resident-led development, including building safer streets. T.R.U.S.T. members have connected thousands of South Central LA residents to a vision of a South Los Angeles that is a healthier and safer place to travel on foot, bike, or public transit whether you're headed to work, school or to run errands. T.R.U.S.T. members and staff led activities at the Slauson and Grand/LATTC Stations.

THE FIRST/LAST MILE PROCESS

GATHER DATA

The Project Team compiled community information, analytical mapping, and input about when and where to perform the walking audits.

PERFORM WALKING AUDITS

Community "auditors" fanned out at each station area to observe the urban condition. How was the walking environment? What was it like to bike to and from the station?

LAYOUT PATHWAY NETWORKS

The team drafted Pathway Maps, showing which streets to prioritize for First/Last Mile improvements and where specific improvements are needed at each station area.

GATHER FEEDBACK

Through a series of 11 on-location Community Workshops, insightful input was gathered from community members at each station to inform the Pathway Networks.

FINALIZE RECOMMENDATIONS

All layers of input were compiled and detailed recommendations were made for infrastructure improvements at each station area.

PRIORITIZE & SUMMARIZE

The recommendations were summarized into this Plan, the intent of which is to document the station area needs and create a road map for implementation.

PHASE 1: WALK AUDITS

The first phase of the project included a walk audit of all twenty-two Blue Line stations. The walk audits took place over two months in winter 2016/17. Each CBO was responsible for organizing a group of residents to conduct the walk audits within a half mile walking radius of each transit station. Each person on the walk audit was equipped with a map of the ½ mile walking radius from the station in which residents could document access strengths, access barriers, observed behaviors, and locations for project ideas to improve safety, aesthetics, accessibility, and transfers. Additionally, there was a station area checklist to help rate and document safety, aesthetics, accessibility, and transfers.

In advance of the walk audits, a workshop was conducted by members of the project team who had developed and used the walk audit materials, to train the CBOs on how to use the materials and conduct a successful walk audit. Each walk audit had participants with clearly defined roles which included a photographer and an individual taking ownership of documenting each item on the checklist such as observations, barriers, strengths. The photos were labeled according to what they represented (barrier, strength, location, existing condition, etc.) and narrative accounts of each audit were conducted upon completion of the audit. All narrative information was collected, organized, and synthesized for each station by LACBC. The project team then used this information to develop recommendations to improve mobility to each station and develop a menu of potential infrastructure treatments to be shared with community members for feedback in phase two of the project.

ATTS HEALTH CENTER
ATTS HEALTH CENTER

R R
DO NOT
BLOCK
INTERSECTION
WE BUY
HOUSES
CA$H
PHOTO
ENFORCED
Long Beach Av

PHASE 2: COMMUNITY EVENTS

During phase two of the project, CBOs were tasked with coordinating a series of events in 11 of the 22 Blue Line station areas. CBOs collectively decided which of the 11 station areas to focus their public engagement efforts. From the walk audit summaries, the project team developed a menu of transportation treatments which residents could reference to determine which ones would be most relevant to meet their needs. At each event, these treatments were displayed on large poster boards and residents were given corresponding stickers to place on a large map of the station area where these treatments were needed.

4 of the 11 events featured "pop-up" engagement activities where similar questions were asked about infrastructure treatments, most frequently used pathways to the Blue Line stations, and general feedback about community members' experience using the Blue Line. At the "pop-up" events, examples of some infrastructure treatments, such as wayfinding signage and street furniture were temporarily rolled out into the space where they might be recommended in the final Plan.

CBOs coordinated these engagement activities by plugging into already planned community events, such as the Jazz Festival, or locating them near highly populated areas such as a busy transit station or a park. At each event the CBOs created a festive atmosphere to attract residents to participate, including a live DJ, food, giveaways from Metro, community bike rides, tables with community resources, and artists creating artwork inspired by the location and the event in real time. Creating a festive environment brought many people into the engagement process in an inviting manner and CBOs engaged more people and a greater diversity of people than could have been reached through traditional planning methods.

Input from the walk audits and the community events were directly used to inform the Station Area Summaries in Appendix A. More information about the process of developing these Station Area Summaries and the FLM projects that are included in those summaries is detailed in the Recommendations chapter. A summary of the input from the community events is shown on the following three pages.

Community Events

FIRST/LAST MILE AT GRAND/LATTC
(Covered 7th Street/Metro Center, Pico, Grand/LATTC, and San Pedro station areas)
September 19, 2017
T.R.U.S.T. South LA

WASHINGTON STATION SUNDAY FUNDAY RIDE & COMMUNITY PARK PARTY
September 3, 2017
LA County Bicycle Coalition

VERNON STATION POP-UP
August 27, 2017
Multicultural Communities for Mobility

SLAUSON STATION POP-UP
August 23, 2017
T.R.U.S.T. South LA

FIRST/LAST MILE AT "PARKS AFTER DARK" - ROOSEVELT PARK
(Covered Florence and Firestone station areas)
August 3, 2017
Multicultural Communities for Mobility

103RD/WATTS POP-UP AT WATTS JAZZ FESTIVAL
September 30, 2017
Riders

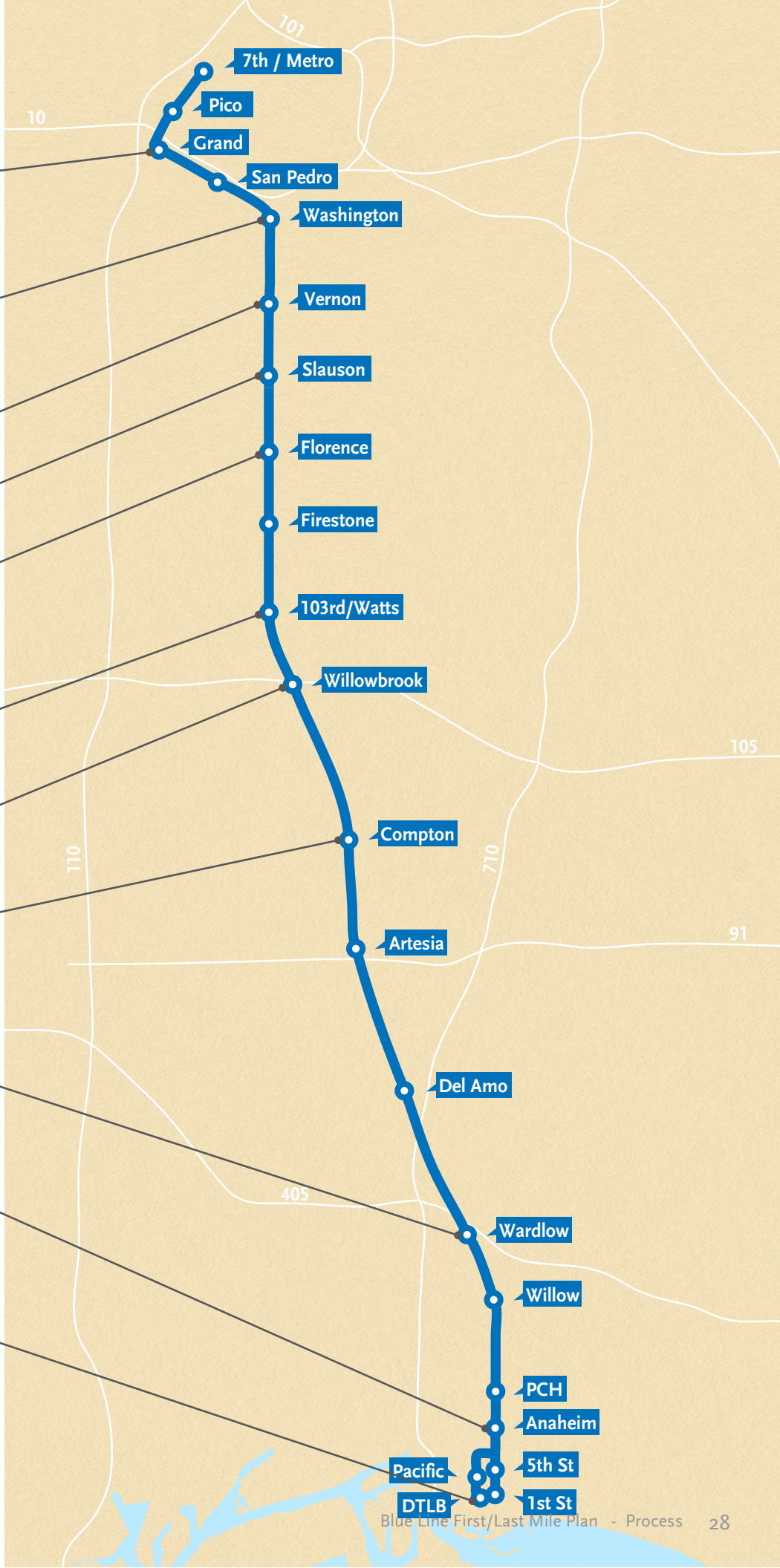
EAST SIDE RIDERS COMMUNITY PICNIC & BIKE RIDE
September 24, 2017
Eastside Riders

COMPTON COMMUNITY RESOURCE FAIR
(Covered Compton and Artesia station areas)
August 24, 2017
LA County Bicycle Coalition

LONG BEACH - BEACH STREETS
(Covered Del Amo, Wardlow, and Willow station areas)
October 28, 2017
Healthy Active Streets

I <3 CAMBODIA TOWN FESTIVAL
(Covered Pacific Coast Highway and Anaheim station areas)
August 13, 2017
Asian Pacific Islander Forward Movement

DTLB BIKE TO THE BEACH & POP-UP
(Covered 5th Street, 1st Street, Long Beach Transit Mall, and Pacific Street station areas)
August 6, 2017
Healthy Active Streets



11

COMMUNITY EVENTS

FREE FOOD

4

COMMUNITY BIKE RIDES

BIKE RAFFLE GIVEAWAYS

LIVE DJS

600

FREE TAP CARD DAY PASSES

4

INTERACTIVE POP-UPS

BIKE REPAIR STATIONS

6

LOCAL ARTISTS & PHOTOGRAPHERS

> "The integration of CBOs as Metro's partners in outreach rather than targets of engagement represented a departure from the standard approach."

COMMUNITY INPUT SUMMARY

Stickers Placed on Maps

1,096

Most Popular Sticker Category

Crosswalks

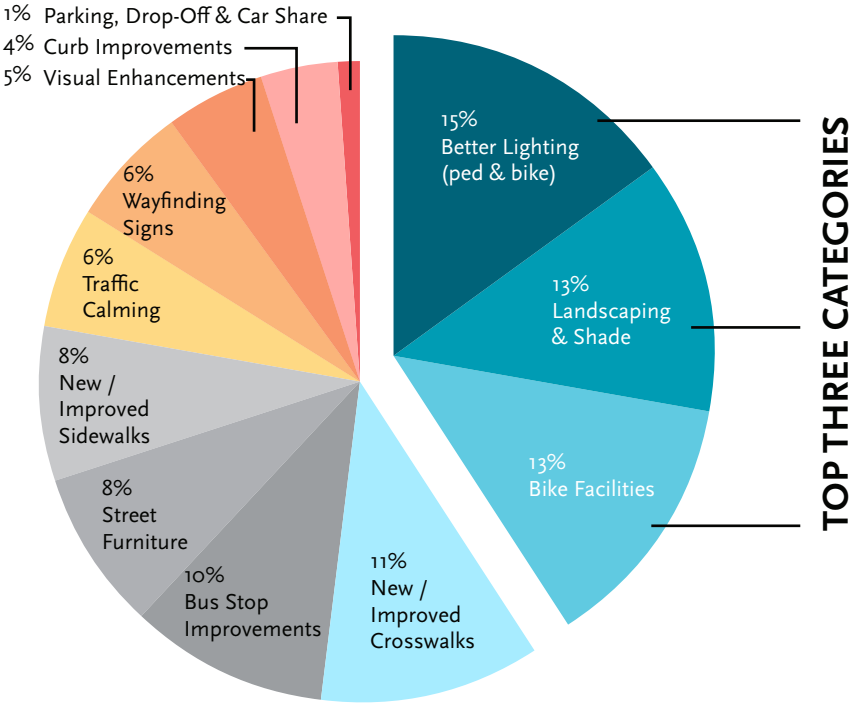
Community Events

11

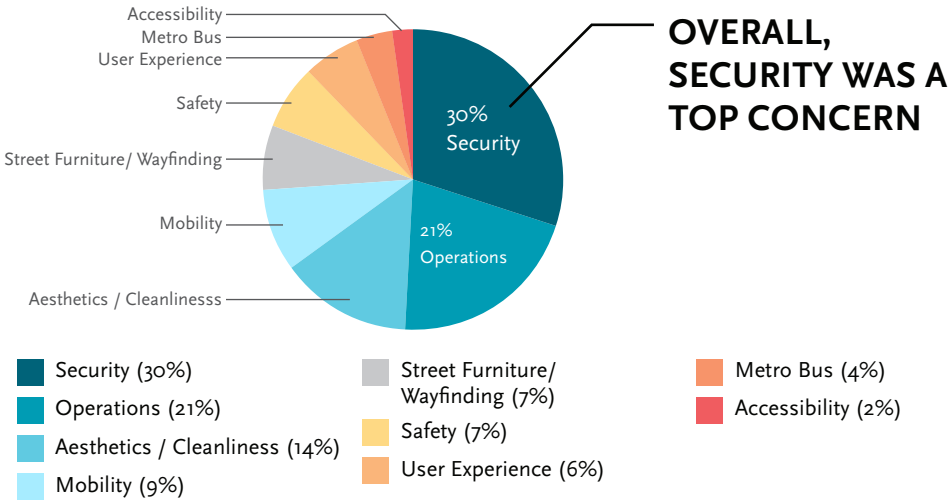
Comment Cards Received

1,077

First/Last Mile Comments - Topics



All Comments - Topics



Comments received during the workshops were varied & diverse. Comments related to First/Last Mile issues focused on better lighting, addition of shade, & bike facilities.

COMMUNITY VOICES

"I think the Blue Line Station needs more benches."

"Thanks for being concerned about the train and our issues because it is really needed. We need more benches, more shade for everyone, but especially those who need it most are disabled people. Thanks."

"Put more shade at bus stops. Pick up the trash. Put more lamps."

"We need more traffic lights and space for bicycles. We need to respect everyone's right of way."

"Security on the train could be a lot better. I feel the focus should be more on protecting & securing the patrons instead of just checking ticket and or violations."

"More lights and security so people can feel safer."

PHASE 3: DRAFTING THE FINAL REPORT

Having CBOs participate in drafting the final report was not in the original scope of work. However, CBOs thought it was important to not only collect information from the community, but also be a part of helping shape how that information is discussed and used. Additionally, CBOs thought it was important to document the new participatory planning approach in which they each had been an active participant.

When it was time to write the final report, many CBOs lacked the capacity to meet the short timeline. The CBOs requested that two trusted community planning consultants help draft the report on their behalf. The consultants, Monique López with Pueblo and Sumire Gant with Sumire Gant Consulting, interviewed at least one representative from each organization in person or over the phone. During these interviews, the consultants asked about what they thought would be important to highlight in the report, their overall experience with the participatory planning process, what they had learned from the process, and how they saw the process could be improved moving forward.

The physical FLM improvements that are summarized in the Recommendations Chapter and detailed in Appendices A & B are a product of the walk audit data, community event input, and preliminary planning-level synthesis conducted by the transportation consultants on the project team. The recommendations are intended to improve accessibility and safety, and have been reviewed by the project team to ensure that it reflects the needs and desires of the community.

PHASE 4: SHARING FINDINGS WITH THE COMMUNITY

Based on input from the CBOs, a final event was added to the scope of work for this project. CBOs thought that in order to fully engage residents in a participatory planning process, they must return to the community with the final recommendations in order to:

- Share with residents the intent of next steps
- Continue to engage residents in dialogue regarding their thoughts about FLM improvements along the Blue Line.

Therefore, an additional community event is being planned in order to share FLM improvement recommendations, to be held in the late winter of 2018.

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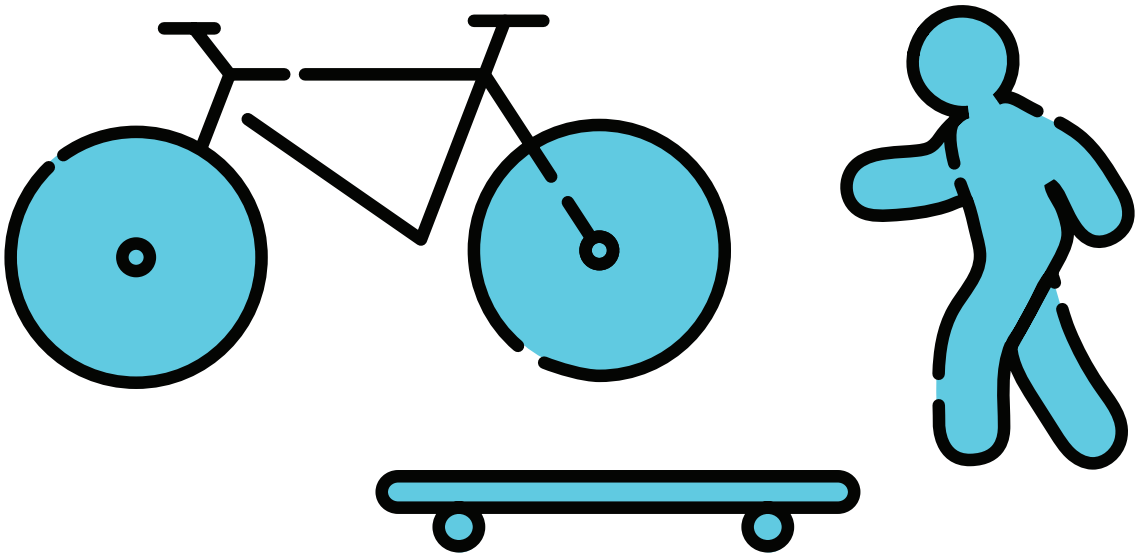
RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter provides an overview of the recommended FLM improvements detailed in the Station Area Summaries, found in Appendix A.



Following the process established by the Metro First/Last Mile Strategic Plan, Pathway Network collectors and arterials were identified based on patterns of usage and their importance as key paths to the station. The Pathway Network was developed based on walk audit observations, discussions with the CBOs and community members, and an assessment of where the most requests for infrastructure improvements were made during community events. Each station area has at least one north/south and east/west Pathway Arterial identified, as well as several Pathway Collectors.

The projects recommended for implementation along the Pathway Network are based the toolbox of treatments identified in the Active Transportation Strategic Plan, with additional key improvements added based on the needs identified by community members and the CBOs.

The project team synthesized the observations made during the walk audits and the needs as identified during the community events, to propose corridor-scale and intersection-level improvements that would improve safety and accessibility within the station areas. The chart on the following page illustrates the toolbox of treatments that are included in the Station Area Summaries and recommended for implementation within the Blue Line station areas.

The full set of FLM improvements for each station area along the Blue Line are documented in detail in Appendices A & B. Each Station Area Summary includes maps of existing conditions and community input based on the walk audits and the community events, as well as some narrative detail about the conditions specific to that station area. Each Summary also includes a Recommendations map displaying the full set of FLM projects identified for the ½-mile radius around each station. Each summary concludes with a project list that itemizes every FLM project identified through the participatory planning process.

FIRST/LAST MILE TOOLBOX

- New or Improved Sidewalks
- New or Improved Crosswalks
- Street Furniture
- Curb Improvements
- New Connections across Barriers
- New or Improved Bike Lanes
- Bike Parking and Repair Stations
- Bike Share Station
- Bus Stop Improvements
- Drop-Off & Pick-Up Location
- Park & Ride Lot
- Carshare Location
- Landscaping & Shade
- Signs with Directions to Destinations
- Lighting for People Walking and Biking
- Visual Enhancements
- Underpass & Overpass Improvements
- Traffic Calming to Slow Speeds

MOST FREQUENTLY REQUESTED IMPROVEMENTS

BETTER LIGHTING

SIDEWALK WIDENING REPAIR

CROSSWALK IMPROVEMENTS

HIGH-QUALITY LOW-STRESS BIKE FACILITIES

WAYFINDING SIGNS

Sample First/Last Mile Pathway Map

The example map below shows how the station area is mapped with "Collectors," "Arterials," and "Cut-Throughs" (lines) to create a Pathway of access to and from the station, along with specific pinpointed locations for improvements (circles).

Pathway Collector
Pathway Arterial
Pathway Cut-Through
To Regional Bus Network

Destination
Parking
Wayfinding
Bike Share
Car Share
Bus Stops

Overall, the key improvements that surfaced in nearly every station area include:

- More lighting for people on foot and on bike
- Sidewalk widening, sidewalk repair, or installation of new sidewalks
- Crosswalk improvements, including high visibility striping, curb ramps with tactile warning pads, pedestrian beacons or rectangular rapid flashing beacons
- More high-quality, low-stress bicycle facilities
- Wayfinding and signs that direct people to the Metro station and to key locations throughout the community
- Streetscaping, landscaping, street trees, and installation of shade structures
- Visual enhancements that reflects the unique characteristics of each community

In some station areas, critical barriers are present that prevent access to the station, such as freeways, rail lines, and industrial developments. In these areas, where possible, new crossings and cut-through paths have been identified.

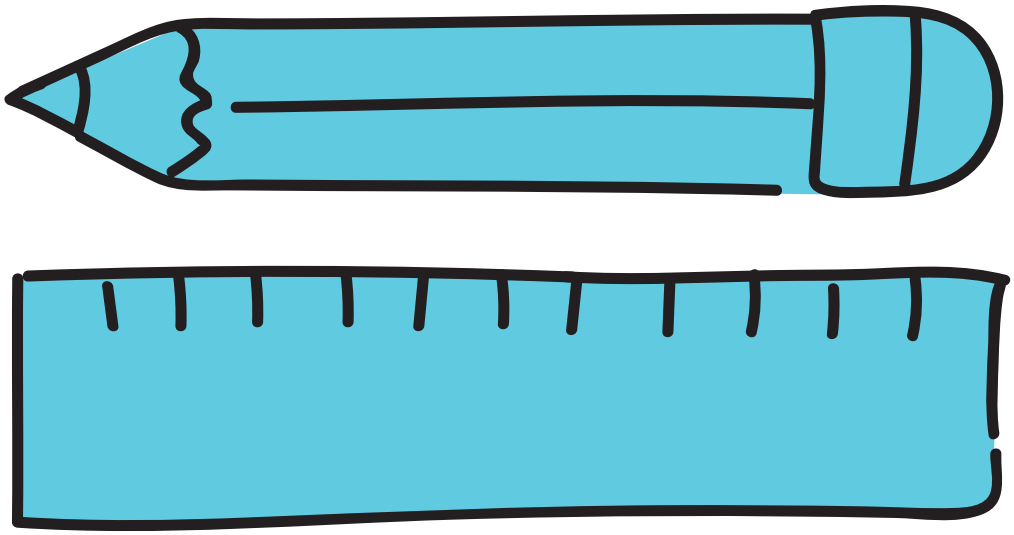
Each Station Area Summary has an associated project list and planning-level cost estimate. In some cases, corridors and the improvements located along those corridors fall within more than one station area. Therefore, the total cost of FLM improvements located along a station area's corridors is not equal to the sum of each Station Area Summary total cost. Rather, each Station Area Summary total cost provides a planning-level estimate of the costs that would be associated with building out all the FLM improvements for that specific station area.

In addition, the cost estimation process made assumptions about the extent and feasibility of the types of treatments that would be typically included in each improvement, using a high-end estimate of what might be necessary to build out the highest-quality and most resource-intensive option. For example, crosswalk improvements assumed a standard square footage of new paint that would be necessary for a long crosswalk, and a standard number of new signs and signal components, although signal components might not be necessary at every location.

This process was intended to produce a maximum cost to build out all FLM improvements, rather than an average cost which may underestimate the necessary resources to fully implement FLM improvements in some locations. The methodology and assumptions are documented in Appendix B.

IMPLEMENTATION

This chapter describes how the Plan's recommendations will be implemented and prioritized.



The process of implementation for these FLM improvements will need to involve each jurisdiction along the line, as well as key Metro departments. With Metro's involvement, each city or jurisdiction will need to be an engaged partner for project development, engineering, funding, and implementation for each station area within their jurisdiction. Coordination is already underway between Metro and the jurisdictions along the Blue Line.

In addition, through the implementation process, the adjacent cities and jurisdictions should take opportunities to coordinate with each other on the design and specification of facilities that extend beyond their station areas. In particular, the following major corridors surfaced as key Pathway Network collectors or arterials that passed through several station areas:

- Figueroa Street
- Flower Street
- Washington Boulevard
- Compton Avenue
- Long Beach Avenue
- Alameda Street
- Graham Avenue
- Willowbrook Avenue
- Wilmington Avenue
- Santa Fe Avenue
- Pacific Avenue
- Long Beach Boulevard
- Atlantic Avenue

The identification of funding sources, and the success in securing that funding is essential to implementing the Blue Line First/Last Mile Plan. In partnership with the implementing agencies, Metro intends to submit a package of relevant FLM infrastructure projects across all Blue Line station areas in a single grant application for the state-wide Active Transportation Program (ATP), anticipated in mid-2018.

However, the cost of implementing every improvement documented in each Station Area Summary would significantly exceed the maximum funding available the ATP, and many projects identified in the Station Area Summaries - such as park and ride facilities or carshare locations - do not qualify under the scope of the ATP. Other potential sources of funding include local return dollars provided to LA County jurisdictions and/or Measure R and M; other local sources assigned to Public Works improvements that could be directed to local street improvements; FLM programs under Measure M; state discretionary / competitive programs such as the Active Transportation Program and Cap and Trade programs; and certain federal programs available for bike improvements. In all cases, however, priorities must be made among the comprehensive list of Blue Line FLM improvements, and will pivot in part on the timing and eligibility requirements attached to those funds.

As part of the process in developing a recommended approach to implementation and prioritization, input from the CBOs was solicited to determine how best to prioritize projects for inclusion into the ATP application, and how best to allocate limited funding if a partial funding award is made.

The CBOs proposed an approach which prioritizes each station based on the extent of needed FLM improvements, funding those station areas with the greatest need first.

For example, the Willow Street Station was designed in cooperation with an adjacent public-private partnership between Metro, the City, and a private developer to include a parking structure, secure bicycle parking, pedestrian lighting, convenient access to connecting transit, bicycle and pedestrian accessibility, transit-serving retail, and public charging stations for electric vehicles.

The Willow Street Station area could therefore be deprioritized from the initial funding allocation, as compared to the many other Blue Line stations that lack some or all of these amenities both at the station and within the surrounding station area. This option was the most widely supported by the coalition of CBOs.

Other options that were considered by the CBOs included:

- Prioritizing specific types of improvements that should be addressed at a minimum at all stations. These improvements would be prioritized based on expressed need, so that the improvements most often requested across the Blue Line station areas would be implemented systemwide at the stations where they currently do not exist.

  For example, if pedestrian lighting were seen as a priority at most stations, all stations without pedestrian lighting would receive pedestrian lighting before the next highest priority would be addressed at any station.

- Prioritizing improvements based on traffic safety within the ½ mile radius of each station, based on collisions between cars, bicycles, and pedestrians. Those stations with the largest number of collisions would receive the highest priority in securing limited funding particularly in regard to safety improvements.

Additional consideration must be given to the process of prioritizing station areas and FLM improvements with the implementing agencies guiding the decision. Their involvement is critical to identifying alignment with local goals and planning efforts already underway, as well as to identify other available local funding options.

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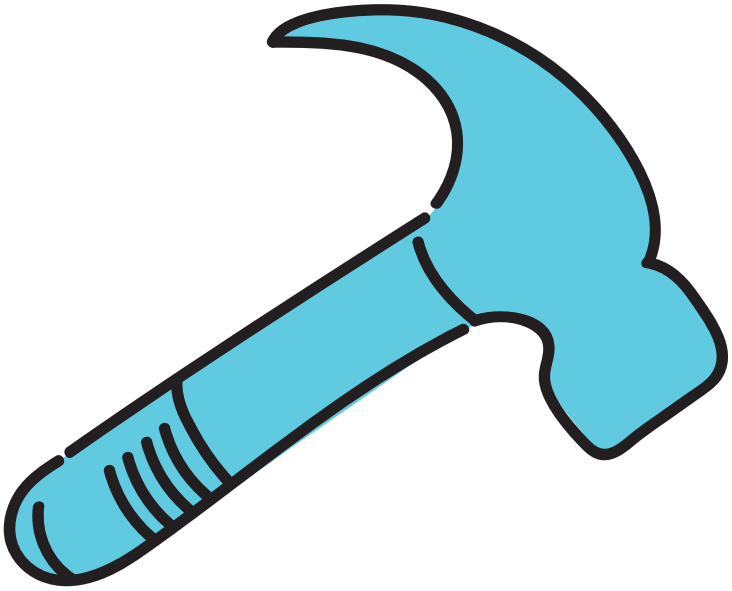
LESSONS LEARNED

For Deep Community Engagement Processes

This chapter outlines community-recommended strategies to ensure that future planning efforts provide adequate resources and appropriate collaboration with community members and Community-Based Organizations.

Ensuring Equity in Future Plans

This section includes a number of recommendations to support meaningful partnerships between Metro and Community-Based Organizations. Some recommendations include funding intersectional planning, budgeting viable partnerships, and effective strategies to coordinate communication.



This participatory Blue Line FLM planning process has catalyzed an exciting opportunity for Metro to demonstrate regional leadership and better serve the communities along the Blue Line. Throughout this process, the CBOs and community members continued to raise important issues and concerns that generally fall outside the realm of traditional transportation planning. By engaging with this set of broader issues and seeking win-win solutions that address wider community concerns, Metro has the opportunity to address the needs and concerns of the community holistically and avoid perpetuating longstanding historical inequities in the area. Through creative partnerships and financing, Metro's investment in transportation infrastructure can serve as a guide to attract investment in affordable housing, public health interventions, and other areas of concern within these impacted corridors, especially around issues of displacement. Too often, public investment in transit dependent communities results in increased rents that price out the very communities the improvements were financed to serve. Metro's engagement in this issue as well as the development of thoughtful policies around alternative enforcement and public safety strategies that complement infrastructure improvements can serve as a positive force to avoid these harms, for this project and beyond.

ENSURING EQUITY IN FUTURE FIRST/LAST MILE PLANS

Capturing Institutional Memory and History of Place

The CBOs on the project team emphasized the importance of capturing the institutional memory about what was learned in this process, so that these lessons

would not be lost and the process could be further improved. The documentation of this process throughout this Plan and in the Blue Line: Lessons Learned document (available in the future)can serve as one way to preserve institutional memory about the participatory planning process. If this institutional memory is lost or ignored in the future, the great amount of time and emotional labor that each entity poured into this process would be squandered and the challenges faced during this process would unnecessarily be experienced again. In the long term, this could harm relationships between CBOs and the communities they serve, as well as CBOs and Metro, and it would undercut the participatory planning process undertaken for this Blue Line FLM Plan.

Additionally, CBOs emphasized the importance of ensuring that the history of a place is well documented, researched, and understood at the start of every participatory planning process. Without understanding the historical, cultural, and social context of a place, inequities can be perpetuated when planning decisions are made.

Incorporating social and historical research at the beginning of a participatory planning process and discussing this history with CBOs helps the various partners engage in meaningful dialogue about the intersectional issues that are a part of transportation planning and projects that impact communities. Additionally, a discussion about the social and historical context of the communities in the project scope can help shape how the work should be carried out. Metro's Dorothy Peyton Gray Transportation Library and Archive can serve as a resource for planning firms to do this research. In addition, there is an opportunity for the Metro Library to review the archives in order to ensure social justice narratives of the past are included and incorporate the stories of residents engaging in participatory planning processes today into these archives to be referenced for future planning efforts.

Intersectionality and Transportation Funding

Historically, transportation planning processes have reflected the singular focus on providing an efficient and effective transportation system and have reflected that in budgets by including public outreach to satisfy legal requirements, but not necessarily deep community engagement. By comparison, the Blue Line FLM process specifically included CBOs as part of the project team to ensure deep community engagement. This process also surfaced many issues not specific to transportation that the community identified as intertwined with first/last mile improvements. At Metro, the concept of supporting Transit-Oriented Communities was launched in the past few years. The TOC lens looks beyond the transportation infrastructure to the whole community including considering issues of affordable housing, assisting small businesses, local hire initiatives, and processes to ensure joint development design aligns with community desires. Additionally, Metro is approaching concerns about equity vis-à-vis transportation investment through the upcoming development of the Long Range Transportation Plan, which will make equity a critical lens applied throughout the document and long term planning recommendations.

Funding sources can restrict eligible uses and can limit opportunities for meaningful engagement. This participatory planning experience has exposed that limitation and presents a challenge to Metro, its CBO partners, and other agencies to address. We recommend addressing this limitation by expanding the net to include other partnering agencies and gain access to less restrictive funding that allows community concerns to be addressed holistically. This is not a new concept - the public health sector has begun to provide funding to promote active transportation improvements as a means to encourage healthy activity such as walking and biking, and to improve neighborhood access to healthy foods.

The state Cap and Trade Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities Program provides one opportunity to address this challenge going forward by providing

funding for affordable housing development and transportation improvements. This funding encourages partnerships to increase the availability of affordable housing while improving residents' access to transit and active transportation opportunities to meet its goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Senate Bill 535 also requires that at least 50 percent of these Cap and Trade dollars be spent on programs that benefit disadvantaged communities such as those along the Blue Line corridor, which fits well with Metro's FLM efforts to improve access to the communities that surround Blue Line as well as other rail and bus facilities.

Budgeting Viable Partnerships

CBOs, due to their relationships and deep understanding of the communities they work alongside, are important in ensuring successful participatory planning processes and their worth and contribution should not be undervalued. Metro's project budgets regularly provide funding for outreach, and these funding amounts are generally sufficient to provide for a robust outreach and engagement process. If Metro would like to pursue a truly participatory planning process with low-income communities of color, which will yield high quality community engagement, Metro should consider making efforts to support inclusion of CBOs as the outreach lead or as subconsultants to outreach teams, with meaningful participation.

Equity starts with appropriate resources. Project budget development must include meaningful community engagement to adequately plan for staff time, materials, and resources for community outreach, community stipends, and interpretation and translation services is paramount in ensuring a successful participatory planning process. CBOs may have unique skills related to community engagement tasks and that needs to be appropriately accounted for in scoping and budgeting a project. The project budget should assume funding for CBOs to support meaningful community engagement. Additionally, incorporating a process with regular check-ins and adjustments to the budget is critical to ensure viable partnerships. These budgetary adjustments were able to happen within this process following the identification of additional budget needs by the CBOs to support meaningful community engagement events.

Since this was the first attempt to use this type of participatory process, there were many valuable lessons learned. In particular, CBOs and Metro learned through experience how much time it takes to plan and execute these types of engagement activities. Each CBO documented the amount of staff time and resources they committed to this process. This documentation should be used as a starting point to reference along with CBOs when planning the next budget for such a process. Metro may also consider implementing a policy to require that a minimum percentage of contract cost be allocated to the community engagement effort, with additional consideration for proposals that exceed the minimum requirement.

Several CBOs also experienced staff transition during the course of this project that they had not anticipated, and which affected continuity.

Displacement & Community Resources

Displacement is a real challenge in areas where there is a high rate of renting versus home ownership, leaving the most transit dependent populations the most vulnerable to increasing property values. This is a growing concern particularly around Metro rail stations as more potential homeowners seek to purchase lower-priced homes in and around Los Angeles in areas that are rail accessible. Renters are displaced as property values increase when physical improvements to the surrounding neighborhoods are implemented, and in response property owners increase rents to reflect those increased property values. CBOs have called on Metro to consider this unintended consequence as they plan for FLM improvements along the corridor. While physical improvements resulting from this effort will benefit current riders from the

surrounding neighborhoods, those benefits are lost if they also result in displacement of those who currently live in these communities.

Historically, investor speculation begins raising the market value of homes when there are major transit projects or improvements to the built environment, thus making rents too high for some residents to remain in place. Many of the CBOs could see the benefits of improving corridors connecting to the Blue Line stations for people walking and biking. However, they expressed the concerns they had heard in the community regarding the potential to be displaced and increased law enforcement presence to protect the new people living in their neighborhoods and the new amenities. CBOs worried that their involvement in this project would help usher in these potential consequences of improved first and last mile corridor improvements.

CBOs also found it important that Metro acknowledge this history and the potential implications of such a planning endeavor. Additionally, CBOs felt strongly that residents be made aware during the community engagement process that these consequences could result from such improvements, and worked to provide those resources at several events both verbally and in writing.

Additionally, community engagement events present an opportunity for Metro and CBOs to provide resources regarding tenant rights, rights when engaging with law enforcement, etc. Organizations that are working on these issues (i.e., Legal Aid, ACLU, Inquilinos Unidos, etc.) should be invited to these events to distribute information and resources to participating residents.

Safety & Security Considerations

Public safety and security have also been discussed at length due to the history of interactions between law enforcement and communities of color. While security is a concern for many communities along the corridor, concerns were raised about whether increasing the presence of armed police officers on platforms and trains would result in an increased sense of security for current riders, or whether they would feel less safe as a result of the increased interactions. The Blue Line has been described as the most heavily policed of all Metro lines, where African American men make up only 19% of Blue Line riders yet are disproportionately ticketed (50%) and arrested (60%)[24] CBOs pointed out that the security of current transit users should be the priority, and that traditional enforcement strategies and increased police presence may result in current riders feeling less safe.

During the community outreach events, over 250 comments were received from community members that directly related to issues of security and safety concerns. More than half of the comments included specific requests for more security presence. About one quarter of the comments mentioned the desire for an improved sense of security or safety, but did not specifically identify the need for increased security presence. About one eighth of the comments requested less security presence, or requested that security be more focused and responsive than they currently observed.

Concerns about the negative effects of heavy policing could be addressed by strategies that increase the level of Metro staff presence along the line, in the capacity of ambassadors, customer service agents, or unarmed officers. This issue cannot be adequately addressed within the context of this project alone. A continuing dialogue between Metro, the CBOs, and the community is required to address this issue and to develop alternative strategies to improve community safety and security.

Sharing Information of Metro Actions within the Study Area

Many CBOs found it disturbing that, during their partnership on the Blue Line FLM planning process, Metro failed to inform them about a new policy to increase law enforcement presence on the Blue Line.[25] This occurred after the community walk audits and right before the series of community engagement events that were to take place in

the communities along the Blue Line. Additionally, the worst fears of some CBOs of increased law enforcement were confirmed during the community engagement phase of the project when Cesar Rodriguez was stopped for "fare evasion" at a Long Beach Blue Line station and was chased by police officers on the platform where he was then pinned and killed by an oncoming train.[26]

Some CBOs, who had heard from residents first-hand about how they felt unsafe with increased law enforcement presence due to documentation status or being surrounded by armed people, believed that their relationships with community members would be jeopardized and that through their participation in the project they would be perceived as legitimizing and supporting a decision which many did not agree with because of their alignment with community concerns. Moving forward, it is important to notify CBOs partnering with Metro in participatory planning efforts of any potential projects, policies, or budget decisions that will impact communities within the project study area.

Cross-Sector Approach

CBOs raised the concern of the siloed approach to plan making, especially when it comes to transportation planning, and stated the need for a more intersectional approach. CBOs conveyed that it is important that affordable housing developers, existing small businesses in the corridors, tenant rights organizations, and a variety of government agencies involved in housing and transportation decisions, along with CBOs, convene a working group centered on equity to ensure that planning decisions that are made do not perpetuate the same type of inequities as other planning efforts have historically.

The approach Metro is now taking to its Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) is to integrate equity throughout the plan. An advisory body can provide an important forum and opportunity to ensure that the lessons from efforts like the Blue Line FLM are preserved and amplified for future Metro planning processes. Among other elements staff consulted with equity thought leaders to advise how community concerns can be better integrated in planning. The Board's recently adopted Equity Platform Framework includes a recommendation to establish a dedicated advisory group.

Metro's Legislative Agenda

Moving forward, it is important to address the challenges related to redressing unintended consequences of transportation investment, such as displacement and gentrification risks that can arise related to new transportation infrastructure in disadvantaged communities. Consideration can include improved funding, effective partnerships with other agencies, and policy coordination. As an example, consideration could be given to the inclusion of rent stabilization policies and right to return clauses for housing and affordable housing projects built in partnership with transit and transportation improvements. Additionally, even though Metro does not have direct jurisdiction over housing policies, it does own a substantial amount of property that is currently being developed or has the potential to be developed for housing. On July 23, 2015, the Metro Board adopted an updated Joint Development Policy that includes a new objective that 35% of all housing units in Metro joint developments, portfolio-wide would be for affordable housing.[27] This highlights that Metro can help shape affordability near transit, at least when it comes to their own properties.

FOOTNOTES

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