

**NOTICE OF PREPARATION
FOR WESTSIDE EXTENSION ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT**

DATE: March 27, 2009

TO: All Interested Agencies, Organizations, and Individuals

SUBJECT: Notice of Preparation of Environmental Impact Report (EIR)

PROJECT TITLE: Westside Extension Transit Corridor

FROM: Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (LACMTA)
David Mieger, Project Director (telephone number 213-922-3040)
One Gateway Plaza, Los Angeles, CA 90012

The Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (LACMTA) will be the lead agency in the preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The EIR purpose is to address the social, economic, and environmental issues associated with proposed transit improvements within the Westside Extension Transit Corridor. In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will be prepared as a joint document with the EIR. The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) is the lead agency for the EIS.

The purpose of this Notice of Preparation (NOP) is to notify agencies, organizations, and individuals that the LACMTA plans to prepare a Draft EIR (DEIR) and to request input on the environmental analysis to be performed. From public agencies, we are requesting comments on the scope and content of the environmental information which is germane to each agency's statutory responsibilities with regards to the proposed project. We are also requesting interested individuals' or organizations' view on the scope of the environmental document.

Scoping

Public scoping meetings to accept comments on the scope of the EIS/EIR will be held on the following dates:

- Monday, April 13, 2009, from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., at Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 5905 Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA 90036.

- Tuesday, April 14, 2009, from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., at Plummer Park, 7377 Santa Monica Boulevard, West Hollywood, CA 90046.
- Thursday, April 16, 2009, from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., at Beverly Hills Public Library, 444 N. Rexford Drive, Beverly Hills, CA 90210.
- Monday, April 20, 2009, from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., at Westwood Presbyterian Church, 10822 Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA 90024.
- Thursday, April 23, 2009, from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., at Santa Monica Public Library, 601 Santa Monica Boulevard, Santa Monica, CA 90401.

An interagency scoping meeting will be held on Monday, April 13, 2009 from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. at the LACMTA, in the Windsor Conference Room, 15th Floor, One Gateway Plaza, Los Angeles, CA 90012.

The project's purpose and need, and the description of alternatives for the proposed project will be presented at these meetings. Scoping materials will be available at the meetings and on the LACMTA website (www.metro.net/westside). Paper copies of the scoping materials may also be obtained from Ms. Jody Litvak, Community Relations Manager, LACMTA at 213-922-1240, or litvakj@metro.net.

The buildings used for the scoping meetings are accessible to persons with disabilities. Any individual who requires special assistance, such as a sign language interpreter, to participate in a scoping meeting should contact Ms. Jody Litvak at least 72 hours prior to the meeting at 213-922-1240..

The Proposed Project

The proposed subway extension project is in western Los Angeles County and includes portions of five jurisdictions: the Cities of Los Angeles, West Hollywood, Beverly Hills, Santa Monica, as well as portions of unincorporated Los Angeles County. The project is generally bounded by the Santa Monica Mountains along Hollywood, Sunset and San Vicente Boulevards, east to the Metro Rail stations at Hollywood/Highland and Wilshire/Western, south to Pico Boulevard, and west to the Pacific Ocean. Project length for the Wilshire Boulevard Alignment Heavy Rail (Alternative 1) is 12.5 miles extending from the Metro Purple Line Wilshire/Western Station to 4th Street and Wilshire Boulevard in Santa Monica and would include 10 stations and 1 optional station. Wilshire/Santa Monica Boulevards Combined HRT Subway (Alternatives 11) includes the full Wilshire Boulevard HRT Subway and adds a second line extending west from the Metro Red Line Hollywood/Highland Station via Santa Monica Boulevard to join the Wilshire Line in Beverly Hills. The total combined line is 17 miles long and

includes 14 stations and 1 optional station. Population and employment densities in the Project area are among the highest in the metropolitan region, averaging approximately 13,100 persons per square mile and 12,500 jobs per square mile. These high population and employment concentrations make the Project Area one of the densest places to live and work in the county.

The proposed Westside Extension project would offer a viable alternative to driving in the heavily congested Project Area. The mobility improvements offered by such a system will improve job accessibility for transit-dependent residents within, as well as outside, the Project Area, as well as greater Los Angeles, and improve transportation equity for all population groups. The high-quality transit solution will complement existing transit-supporting land uses and present new opportunities for mixed-use and high-density development in the Project Area.

The various alternatives to be considered for the Westside Extension project generally traverse Wilshire Boulevard from the Metro Purple Line Wilshire/Western station to 4th Street and Wilshire Boulevard in Santa Monica (Alternative 1), and a second line extending west from the Metro Red Line Hollywood/Highland Station via Santa Monica Boulevard to join the Wilshire Line in Beverly Hills (Alternative 11).

Purpose and Need for the Project

The purpose of the project is to address the mobility needs of residents, workers, and visitors traveling to, from, and within the highly congested Westside Extension Study Area by providing faster and more reliable high-capacity public transportation than existing services which operate in mixed-flow traffic. This proposed subway improvement will bring about a significant increase in east-west capacity and improvement in person-mobility by reducing transit travel time. On a county-wide level, the project will strengthen regional access by connecting Metro bus, Metro rail, and Metrolink networks to a high-capacity transit serving the Study Area. The overall goal of the project is to improve mobility in the Westside Extension Transit Corridor by extending the benefits of the existing Metro Purple/ Metro Red Line rail and bus services beyond their current termini near Western Avenue and/or Highland Avenue in Los Angeles as far as Ocean Avenue in Santa Monica.

Mobility problems and the need for improvements in the Westside Extension Transit Corridor have been well documented in many studies, including the numerous Metro Red Line planning studies, Southern

California Association of Governments (SCAG) planning studies, the Mid-City/Westside Transit Corridor Re-Evaluation/Major Investment Study (2000), the Metro Rapid Demonstration Project (2000), the Mid-City/Westside Transit Corridor Draft EIS/EIR (2001), the American Public Transit Association Review of Wilshire Corridor Tunneling (2005), and in the Southern California Association of Governments Regional Transportation Plan (2008). The proposed Westside Subway Extension project is included as one of the projects to be partially funded by Measure R, the countywide sales tax initiative approved by the Los Angeles County voters in November 2008.

Most recently, an Alternatives Analysis (AA) Study for the Westside Extension Transit Corridor was completed and adopted by the LACMTA Board of Directors on January 22, 2009 and is available for review on the project website at www.metro.net/westside.

Alternatives

The Westside Extension proposes to extend the Metro Rail heavy rail technology westward from the terminus of the Metro Purple Line at the Wilshire/Western station and potentially a second leg from the Metro Red Line at the Hollywood/Highland station. The Alternatives Analysis (AA) Study was completed in January 2009. The process began with the identification of initial conceptual alternatives and early public and agency scoping. Then a set of 17 initial conceptual alternatives was identified, screened, and narrowed down to a most promising set of five alternatives. These five alternatives were then evaluated at a more detailed level and as a result, the following two subway alignment alternatives plus the No Build and Transportation Systems Management (TSM) alternatives were recommended to be carried forward for analysis in the EIR:

Wilshire Boulevard Alignment Heavy Rail Transit (HRT) Subway: This alternative alignment extends underground from the Metro Purple Line Wilshire/Western station to 4th Street and Wilshire Boulevard in Santa Monica. It has 10 stations and 1 optional station. The alignment is generally under Wilshire Boulevard with various route alignments between Century City and Santa Monica.

Wilshire/Santa Monica Boulevard Combined HRT Subway: This alignment alternative extends underground from the Metro Purple Line Wilshire/Western station and from the Metro Red Line at the Hollywood/Highland station to 4th Street and Wilshire Boulevard in Santa Monica. It has 14 stations and 1 optional station.

This alternative has two alignment options in the Beverly Center area. One option follows San Vicente Boulevard from Santa Monica Boulevard to La Cienega Boulevard, where it curves south and then west to meet the Wilshire Boulevard alignment. The second option follows La Cienega Boulevard from Santa Monica Boulevard, past the Beverly Center, and curves west at Wilshire Boulevard.

Minimum Operable Segments: A total of four Minimum Operable Segment Alternatives will be included for analysis including the following: 1) Wilshire Boulevard HRT Subway from Wilshire/Western to Fairfax (3 miles); 2) Wilshire Boulevard HRT Subway from Wilshire/Western to Century City (6.5 miles); 3) Wilshire Boulevard HRT Subway from Wilshire/Western to Westwood/UCLA vicinity (8 to 9.5 miles); and 4) MOS #3 plus Metro Red Line HRT Subway from Hollywood/Highland via Santa Monica Boulevard (12.5 to 14 miles).

No Build Alternative: This EIR will also consider the No Build Alternative that includes all existing highway and transit services and facilities and the committed highway and transit projects in the current LACMTA Long Range Transportation Plan and the current 2008 Southern California Association of Governments' Regional Transportation Plan. No new infrastructure would be built within the Study Area, aside from projects currently under construction, or funded for construction and operation by 2030 by the recently approved Measure R and identified in the LACMTA Long Range Transportation Plan. Proposed major highway improvements affecting the Westside Extension Transit Corridor between now and 2030 include completing missing segments of high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes on Interstate 405 (I-405) Freeway. From a rail transit perspective, the No Build Alternative includes the Metro Purple and Metro Red Lines along the eastern and northeastern edges of the study area. This alternative also includes a rich network of local, express, and Metro Rapid bus routes that will continue to be provided, with both bus route and additions and modifications proposed.

Transportation System Management (TSM) Alternative: The EIR will also consider the TSM Alternative which enhances the No Build Alternative and improves upon the existing Metro Rapid Bus service and local bus service in the Westside Extension Transit Corridor study area. This alternative emphasizes more frequent service and low cost capital and operations improvements to reduce delay and enhance mobility. Although the frequency of service is already very good, this alternative considers improved bus services during peak periods on selected routes.

In addition to the alternatives described above, other transit alternatives not previously considered in the Alternatives Analysis Study and brought forward during the public and agency scoping process will be evaluated for potential inclusion in the EIR.

Response to this NOP

Written comments will be accepted until May 7, 2009, 5:00 p.m. Please send written comments to Mr. David Mieger, AICP, Project Director and Deputy Executive Officer, Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (LACMTA), One Gateway Plaza, Los Angeles, CA 90012. Your comments may also be sent by fax to 213-922-3060 or by email to miegerd@metro.net. (Please include the name of the project in the subject heading.)

LACMTA requests public agency's views on the scope and content of the environmental information relevant to your agency's statutory responsibilities. Please send your agency's written response by May 7, 2009 to the address indicated above.