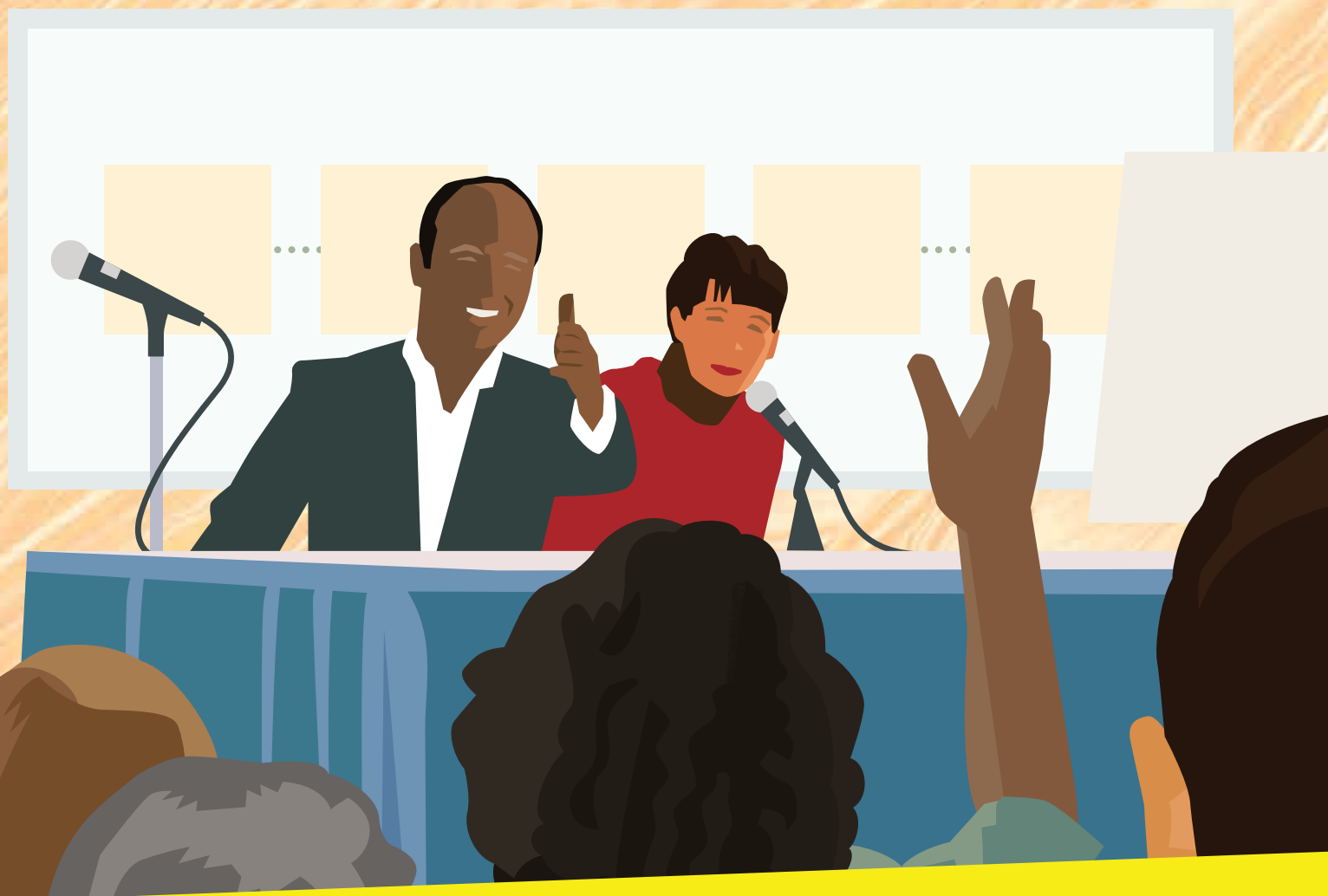


# Next stop: planning projects together.

## ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

### Fact Sheet



**Metro**<sup>®</sup>

### From Concept to Reality: How a Transportation Project is Planned Before It's Built

Planning and building new transportation projects is complex. The time involved may seem long and frustrating – but the process is important. This fact sheet will provide an overview of the planning process and how the public can help shape the project at each step of the way.

# Overview of Key Milestones in the Process

## STEP 1: SCOPING

Developing an EIR/EIS always begins by issuing a Notice of Preparation (for CEQA) and Notice of Intent (for NEPA) that officially kicks off a minimum 30-day “scoping period,” during which project planners identify existing issues a new project will address and alternatives that will be considered. These alternatives include the possibility of not building the project at all (No Build), completing low-cost and less intensive improvements that do not build the proposed project, as well as constructing a new project and evaluating other project variables, such as different routes, technologies and/or how the project might operate (e.g. sharing the road with other cars, on a dedicated lane that could be elevated, in a subway/tunnel, etc.). **At this early step, criteria are identified that will be used to evaluate the project alternatives.**

Metro will host one or more “scoping meetings” where the public will have an opportunity to help shape the project. Metro will also provide other ways for the public to share comments, ask questions and get information, such as via email, online tools and social media.

The public has the broadest impact during this step in the environmental review process. During scoping, Metro will seek feedback from the public about:

- > What it thinks of the alternatives being considered
- > How the alternatives might be enhanced or modified
- > Other alternatives that should be evaluated
- > Issues and concerns with the project plans
- > Questions that should be answered as part of the study

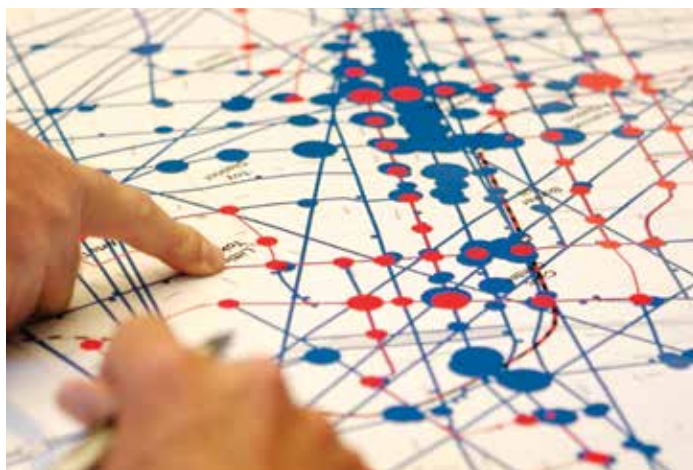
At the conclusion of the scoping period, planners will produce a report detailing the comments received and the issues raised during this step in the process. This report shapes the environmental analysis and outlines the various studies to be completed, as well as next steps in the process.

## STEP 2: PREPARING THE VARIOUS STUDIES

While the various studies that are part of the environmental process are being completed, Metro planners will not work alone. **Planners will collaborate with cities where the project is located and other public agencies to get data and input to fully study each project alternative.** These agencies could include the County of Los Angeles, Caltrans, Southern California Association of Governments, Air Quality Management District, public utility companies (including gas, water, sewer, electric and communications), Water Quality Control Board, federal agencies, school districts, etc. Planners will also consult with other key stakeholders relevant to the project, such as major institutions, businesses or business associations, or residents near the project.

Metro will keep the public informed as the environmental document is drafted. Planners will provide updates about study developments at key study milestones or when there is new information to share. Information could include comparing the performance of the alternatives being studied, such as ridership, cost, travel time, construction methods being explored, etc.

Information may be shared in a variety of ways, including meetings, emails, newsletters, presentations to city councils and community groups, etc. During this information sharing, the public is always encouraged to ask questions and provide comments about the information presented.



### STEP 3: DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENT REVIEW AND PUBLIC HEARINGS

When all needed studies are completed and a draft environmental document is ready for public review, Metro will issue a Notice of Availability (for CEQA) and Notice of Completion (for NEPA) that officially kicks off a minimum 45-day public review period. The Draft EIR (EIS) fully describes the project and summarizes the findings of all environmental impacts/benefits and other technical studies, including:

- > Results of the analysis for the project alternatives
- > How each alternative performs against the criteria identified during scoping
- > How well each alternative responds to the purpose and need of the project
- > Analysis of costs and benefits of all project alternatives
- > Financial feasibility of each alternative
- > Impacts of each alternative and, if needed, strategies to avoid or mitigate the impacts

**As with scoping, this step in the process allows another formal “review period” where the public is invited to comment on the draft environmental document.** During this step, Metro will host one or more public hearings where the public will be able to provide comments and ask clarification questions regarding the content of the findings and overall project plans.

The environmental document can be large, highly technical and typically contains many appendices. However, an Executive Summary is always prepared that highlights the key findings of the studies.

Metro planners will also provide an overview of the document at the public hearing(s) and through other project information channels, such as a project website, printed materials and social media.

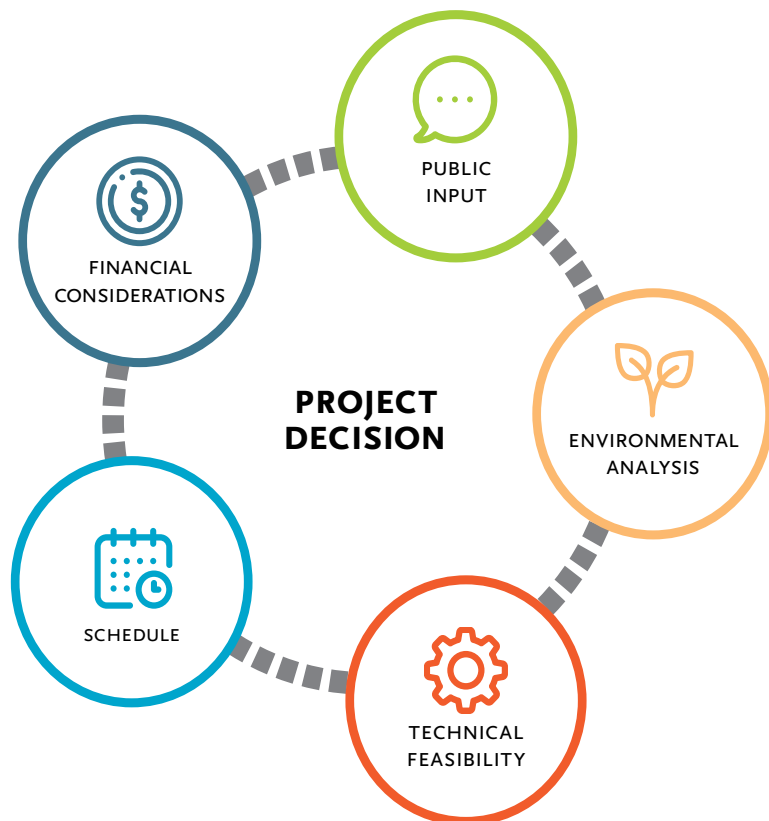
Public feedback is encouraged during the review period verbally at the public hearing(s) or in writing. Information about where to send comments is provided when the document is released for public review. It is important to note that responses to comments and questions received during this formal review period will not be provided during this step in the process. Comments and questions will be responded to at a later step in the process (see Step 5).

### STEP 4: SELECTING THE PROJECT ALTERNATIVE

Metro planners will identify the project to be recommended for final environmental review. This recommendation is based on a number of factors, including the project’s purpose and need, the criteria established during scoping, the analyses and comments received. If Metro is the lead agency, the recommendation is presented to the Metro Board of Directors at a public meeting where the public is welcome to attend and to share views and comments about the project.

**Once the project is selected, either by Metro or the final decision-making agency, for further review, it is known as the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA).**

### Factors Driving Project Recommendations



## STEP 5: FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENT REVIEW

Once the LPA has been identified, the EIR/EIS is further refined with studies focused on addressing outstanding issues with the selected alternative. This is also when written responses are developed to comments received during the Draft EIR/EIS public review period. **When these studies and responses are completed, they will be incorporated into a Final EIR/EIS issued for one final 30-day public review.** This document will include a **“Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan” (MMRP)**. The MMRP documents measures the lead agency is committed to implement to address project impacts identified in the environmental document.

The Metro Board of Directors will be asked to certify the Final EIR, at which point a Notice of Completion will be issued to inform the public that the EIR has been completed and certified. For projects that are also seeking federal funds through a completed Final EIS, the designated federal agency will sign the document and issue a **Record of Decision (ROD)** signifying the successful completion of the federal environmental review process.

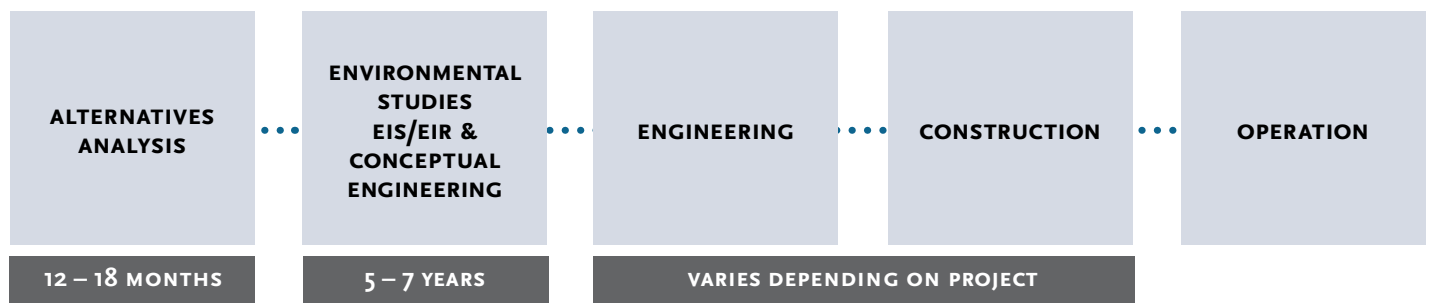
## Now that the project is approved – what’s next?

Even after extensive and detailed studies, many items still need to be finalized before construction can begin on a planned project, including:

- > Securing state and/or federal funds for the project, if needed
- > Completing final design for the project
- > Reviewing bids and selecting the contractor to build the project
- > Acquiring needed private property and easements that can either be permanent or temporary
- > Relocating utilities (water, power, sewer, communications, etc.) so that services will not be interrupted for customers during construction and operation of the project
- > Developing agreements for how construction will proceed with the cities involved
- > Securing permits from other regulatory agencies, including from the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC), if the project includes grade crossings
- > Educating the public about next steps and how to be safe during construction and operation of the project

Taking cues from the best, most innovative agencies around the world, Metro is looking for new ways to deliver projects better, faster and more affordably. Public-Private Partnerships (P3) are a possible strategy for some projects. P3s are collaborations between a public agency and a private partner to deliver a public service, project or facility that can maximize performance, minimize cost, mitigate risks and speed timelines. The public and the private partner each play a critical role where the skills and assets of each sector are optimized, and potential pitfalls and rewards are shared. In some cases, a P3 partner could be included during the environmental review for the project.

## Project Development Process



# What We Have to Do Before a Project is Built

Before a new transportation project is built, policy makers, civic leaders and/or the media often discuss what it could be. However, before a project moves forward, certain studies need to be completed.

**These studies are intended to meet state and federal requirements, as well as ensure all relevant issues are explored in shaping the project and allow community members to provide input.**

For local and state funded projects, the planning process is governed by the **California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)**. Projects that seek federal funds also need to comply with the **National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)**. Both laws (CEQA and NEPA) determine the type and scope of study that is required, including the public participation, to help shape the proposed project.

Smaller projects, such as a modification to an existing highway or rail line, may need only one study. Other projects, such as a new highway or rail line, will require a series of studies that are compiled in what is called an “environmental document.” Studies for these more complex projects analyze various options, or “alternatives,” for the projects, as well as the potential benefits and impacts.

**Issues to be analyzed include how the project might affect traffic, air and water quality, noise, vibration, historical structures, adjacent properties, or other items related to the natural and built environment. Other analyses may evaluate engineering issues, capital and operating costs, station design, etc.**

For projects following CEQA guidelines, Metro will usually serve as the “lead agency” and conduct the environmental analysis for bus and rail projects that the agency will own and operate. In some cases, Metro will also conduct the environmental analysis for projects where other agencies are the owner/operator. This could happen for highway projects where the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) is the owner operator, or for railroad projects on behalf of Amtrak, Metrolink and the freight railroads.

**When Metro is leading the effort and a full environmental document is needed, Metro is tasked to complete an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) in accordance with CEQA. If the project seeks federal funding, an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is completed by the appropriate federal agency, in accordance with NEPA.**

The federal agency is determined by the scope of the proposed project:

- > Federal Transit Administration (FTA) for bus and rail projects
- > Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) for highway projects
- > Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) for railroad projects (Amtrak, Metrolink, freight trains)

There are many steps required with a full environmental review process. During the initial stages, many options, known as “project alternatives,” are presented for public review and feedback. At each subsequent step in the process, the range of alternatives is narrowed based on technical analysis and public feedback. As the evaluation progresses, more detailed studies are completed for the remaining alternatives. The public has opportunities to provide input throughout the effort.

For more information about Environmental Review, visit [metro.net/enviroreview](http://metro.net/enviroreview).

## Stay Informed and Involved

Throughout the entire project development process and during construction, there will be many ways to learn the latest, get involved and provide feedback. These include:

- > Getting on the project mailing list to receive updates and news
- > Monitoring information on the project website
- > Following the project's social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.)
- > Attending project-related meetings
- > Contacting Metro staff working on the project via phone, mail and/or email