



Metro

Eastside Transit Corridor Phase 2

Scoping Outreach Report

Final Report—June 2010



Submitted by
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

In January 2010, the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) initiated the preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Statement /Environmental Impact Report (Draft EIS/EIR) for the Eastside Transit Corridor Phase 2 Project in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The proposed Eastside Transit Corridor Phase 2 Project would extend rail transit services to communities farther east of East Los Angeles and provide an opportunity to connect with the Metro's Gold Line Eastside Extension and the rest of Metro's regional transit network.

Project Area

The Eastside Transit Corridor Phase 2 Project is located in eastern Los Angeles County and is generally bounded by Pomona Boulevard and State Route 60 (SR-60) Freeway to the north, Peck Road and Painter Avenue to the east, Olympic and Washington Boulevards to the south, and Atlantic Boulevard to the west. The project area consists of portions of eight jurisdictions, including the cities of Commerce, Montebello, Monterey Park, Pico Rivera, Rosemead, Santa Fe Springs, South El Monte, Whittier and portions of unincorporated Los Angeles County (see Appendix A for project area map).

Alternatives

In 2007, Metro initiated an Alternatives Analysis (AA) for the Eastside Transit Corridor Phase 2 Project. The AA screening process resulted in 47 initial alternatives being screened down to 17 alternatives, to five alternatives, and ultimately to four build alternatives. In 2009, these four alternatives were further refined, and two build alternatives were recommended for environmental evaluation together with the standard No-Build and Transportation System Management (TSM) Alternatives.

No-Build Alternative

The No-Build Alternative would maintain existing transit service through the year 2035. No new transportation infrastructure would be built within the project area aside from projects currently under construction, or funded for construction and operation by 2035 by the recently approved Measure R sales tax. This alternative will include the highway and transit projects in the current Metro Long Range Transportation Plan and the 2035 Southern California Association of Governments Regional Transportation Plan.

TSM Alternative

The TSM Alternative would include the provisions of the No-Build Alternative and additional enhancements to the baseline transit network. The TSM Alternative would emphasize transportation system upgrades, such as intersection improvements, minor road widening, traffic engineering actions, bus route restructuring, shortened bus headways, expanded use of articulated buses, reserved bus lanes, expanded park-

and-ride facilities, express and limited-stop service, signalization improvements, and timed-transfer operations.

SR-60 Alternative – Light Rail Transit (LRT)

The SR-60 Alternative would extend east at-grade from the existing Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension terminus at Pomona and Atlantic Boulevards and transition to an aerial configuration along the southern boundary of the SR-60 Freeway right-of-way. The alignment is approximately 6.9 miles and has four proposed stations: SR-60/Garfield Avenue, SR-60/The Shops at Montebello, SR-60/Santa Anita Avenue, and SR-60/Peck Road.

Washington Boulevard Alternative – LRT

The Washington Boulevard Alternative would extend east at-grade from the existing Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension terminus at Pomona and Atlantic Boulevards and transition to an aerial configuration along the southern boundary of the SR-60 Freeway right-of-way before turning south and continuing in an aerial configuration along Garfield Avenue. The aerial alignment would extend south on Garfield Avenue before turning east along Washington Boulevard towards Montebello and terminating just east of Lambert Road in the City of Whittier. The alignment is approximately 9.3 miles and includes six proposed aerial stations: SR-60/Garfield Avenue, Whittier Boulevard/Garfield Avenue, Greenwood Avenue/Washington Boulevard, Rosemead/Washington Boulevards, Norwalk/Washington Boulevards, and Lambert Road/Washington Boulevard.

SCOPING PROCESS

To initiate the Draft EIS/EIR process, Metro hosted five scoping meetings - one agency scoping meeting at Metro Headquarter and four public meetings within the project area. In addition to scoping meetings, Metro also participated in various city and stakeholder events as requested by respective groups to enhance the outreach effort and increase awareness of the initiation of the environmental process.

Initiation of Scoping (Notice of Intent/Notice of Preparation)

To initiate the scoping period, Metro completed notification to comply with state and federal requirements. Metro provided a public comment period of 80 days, accepting comments beginning January 25, 2010, through April 14, 2010.

Agency Scoping

Participating Agencies

Metro prepared and mailed participating agency invitation letters on February 4, 2010, to approximately 177 agency representatives. A total of 24 agencies have affirmatively accepted to become a participating agency for the Eastside Transit Corridor Phase 2 Project.

Cooperating Agencies

Three agencies affirmatively accepted to become a cooperating agency for the Eastside Transit Corridor Phase 2 Project, including California Department of Transportation, United States Army Corps of Engineers, and United States Environmental Protection Agency.

Agency Scoping Meeting

One agency scoping meeting was conducted with 21 attendees. Two written comments were submitted at the meeting. The agency meeting was held February 18, 2010, at Metro Headquarter.

State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) Coordination

FTA sent a Letter of Initiation to the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) that initiates consultation under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and delegates the authority for Metro to consult directly with SHPO. The letter also included the Area of Potential Effects (APE) maps for the build alternatives and requests SHPO's concurrence with these maps. Metro will be contacting local historic groups, Native American groups, and other stakeholders that may have an interest in the project. An inventory of properties within the APE and listed in the National Register of Historic Places as well as those potentially eligible for listing is being conducted.

Public Scoping

Notification for the public scoping meetings was accomplished through various communications tools including: printed materials, public signage, social media and briefings. Advertisements were conducted in English, Spanish and Chinese languages. The following summarizes the notification process:

Notification Databases

Project Master Database

For notification of the scoping meetings, Metro used the Eastside Transit Corridor Phase 2 master project database, assessor parcel information, environmental resource agency list and other project related data files to ensure the notification was comprehensive and accurate. The database is comprised of 1,713 records.

Parcel Data

In an effort to ensure communication with the communities surrounding the proposed alternatives, a supplemental parcel database of 48,401 records was compiled within ¼-mile of the four alternatives identified in the AA Addendum Study.

Agency Database

The agency contact list was provided by the Joint Venture and was used for notification of Agency Scoping meeting as well as the other four public scoping meetings. The agency database consists of 177 records.

Other Databases

As part of the scoping outreach, City of Commerce requested that Metro send scoping meeting invitations to approximately 3,200 residents and 36 owners' parcels.

Printed Materials

Direct Mail Notices

Metro mailed 51,000 bilingual English/Spanish, full-color invitation postcards to a diverse cross-section of stakeholders the week of February 1, 2010.

Take One's

To take advantage of Metro's existing transit services in the area, 42,700 bilingual English/Spanish, full color five-fold notification pamphlets (Take One's) were inserted on trains and bus routes. An additional 8,000 Take One's were placed strategically throughout the study area on public counters at city halls, libraries, community centers, chambers of commerce and elected district offices.

School District Meeting Flyer

Approximately 15,090 flyers were delivered to schools along the two build alternatives.

Public Signage

Street Banners

Metro coordinated with project cities to place six roadside banners along some of the major arterials in the study area and at the Gold Line Eastside Extension terminus at Atlantic Station and County of Los Angeles District Office of Supervisors Gloria Molina and Don Knabe.

Electronic Boards

Scoping meeting details were placed on the electronic boards of Pico Rivera and Montebello.

Media

A variety of local and regional daily and weekly newspapers were chosen for placement of meeting advertisements and press releases. The following summarizes the use of media for notification of the scoping period:

Newspaper Advertisements

A total of three legal ads and 19 display ads were placed in regional and local newspapers. The legal ads reached a circulation of approximately 1,088,000 people. The display ads reached a circulation of approximately 497,700 people.

Online Advertisements

Three online advertisements were placed, including the Whittier Daily News, Facebook and West Valley Journal.

Earned Media

Metro sent project press releases to newspapers that cover the project area. As a result, four articles were published.

Social Media

A social media ad and marketing campaign was conducted to promote the Metro Eastside Transit Corridor Phase 2 Public Scoping meetings. This social media campaign was implemented in February 2010 and utilized a combination of Metro and local city Websites, Facebook Ads, Facebook Updates to existing fans, and outreach to Los Angeles and Los Angeles-transit oriented blogs.

Websites

Metro contacted and coordinated with all 14 jurisdictions in the study area and Chambers of Commerce to provide links to the project website.

Facebook

Meeting notices and project information was placed on the Eastside Transit Corridor Phase 2 Facebook site and linked to the Metro Los Angeles Facebook page. The project Facebook site had 196 fans prior to the scoping notification period and increased to 347 fans at the end of the scoping period.

Blogs

Four blogs provided highlights of the Eastside Transit Corridor Phase 2 Project during the scoping period.

E-Blasts

Seven rounds of e-blasts were electronically sent to the list of e-mail records in the project database. Each subsequent e-blast included additional contacts from the meeting attendees and people providing comments. Therefore, the e-blast list grew from 863 to 1,318 records since the initiation of scoping.

Stakeholder Briefings

As a follow-up to individual requests, Metro participated in approximately 31 additional stakeholder meetings and events, including tours, community events, coalition meetings, City Council briefings and Chamber of Commerce and legislative briefings.

Additional Outreach

Project Helpline

During the scoping period, a bilingual (English/Spanish) message was recorded providing meeting information and how to provide comments or obtain more project information. The message also encouraged the caller to leave comments or questions.

Cable Channels

Many cities have a local cable channel to broadcast city news and functions. Metro prepared and distributed cable slates for all project area cities. Phone calls were made to each city as a follow-up to encourage placement of the cable slates on their local cable channels.

Public Scoping Meetings

Metro hosted four public scoping meetings that were well attended with over 300 participants and 118 verbal and written comments collected at the meeting, including:

- February 22, 2010 – City of Pico Rivera, Pico Women’s Center
- February 24, 2010 – City of South El Monte, Senior Center
- February 25, 2010 – City of Montebello, Senior Center at City Park
- February 27, 2010 – City of Whittier, Salvation Army

Public Meeting Format

All public scoping meetings were formatted the same with an open house session followed by a presentation and formal comment period. All verbal comments were documented by a certified court reporter. Interpreters were available at the four meetings to provide simultaneous Spanish translation.

Public Meeting Materials

Meeting handouts, display boards, PowerPoint presentation were prepared for each of the scoping meetings.

Comments Received

During the 80-day scoping period for the Eastside Transit Corridor Phase 2 project, which extended from January 25 through April 14, 2010, Metro provided a variety of options for the public to learn about the project and provide input, including:

- Verbal – At scoping meetings or on the project helpline.
- Written – Comment cards at scoping meetings or letters.
- E-mail – Via e-mail to yuki@metro.net.
- Metro Website – Via the Metro project website at www.metro.net/eastsidephase2.

SUMMARY OF SCOPING COMMENTS

Summary of Substantive Comments

A total of 527 verbal and/or written public comments were received from both agencies and the public, including: elected officials, residents, grassroots organizations, chambers of commerce, developers, hospitals, agencies, educational institutions and businesses.

In reviewing all the comments received, there is substantial support for each of the two LRT alternatives, SR-60 and Washington Boulevard. Common themes also included the importance of transit connectivity, service to colleges and universities, providing service to underserved areas, concerns regarding environmental and engineering challenges along the two alignments, as well as potential economic opportunities for the cities.

Comments were categorized and sorted by a total of twenty-four environmental topics and then grouped into six major categories, including:

- Comments related to Purpose and Need
- Alternatives
- Configuration
- Stations
- Economic Development
- Potential Impacts

The following subsections summarize the comments received:

Comments Related to Purpose and Need

Comments related to the Purpose and Need for the Eastside Transit Corridor Phase 2 Project were generally positive. People commenting confirmed that connectivity to the Metro transit network is very desirable and an important need to underserved communities. The need and benefit of connecting neighboring communities together with employment, entertainment and medical facilities was a strong topic as well as intermodal and future connections with other transit systems.

Comments Related to Alternatives

More than three-quarters of comments received indicated some type of support for a particular alignment.

SR-60 Alternative - LRT

The SR-60 Alternative received considerable support with approximately 111 positive comments from elected offices, SR-60 Coalition, businesses, school districts, stakeholders, chambers of commerce, colleges and high school students.

Supportive comments mentioned the benefits of the surrounding area's upcoming mixed-use developments and destinations; the positive design features of the route, including low cost, minimal impacts to residential and business communities, higher ridership per mile; and the potential to alleviate traffic on the heavily traveled SR-60 Freeway.

Concerns raised for the SR-60 Alternative included the following:

- Low land use density and lack of walkable, pedestrian-friendly destinations will contribute to the route serving as a commuter rail line instead of a light rail system that connects local communities together
- Low ridership
- Potential disturbances to the wildlife at Whittier Narrows
- Potential release of hazardous materials from the OII Superfund site in Monterey Park

Washington Boulevard Alternative - LRT

The Washington Boulevard Alternative received considerable support with 348 positive comments from community members, grassroots organizations, elected offices, developers, hospitals, chambers of commerce, school districts, businesses and universities/colleges.

Supportive comments described the alternative as a destination oriented route that could strengthen local economies with meaningful city to city connections. Stakeholders pointed out that the Washington Boulevard Alternative could potentially reduce traffic on the Interstate 5 (I-5) Freeway and improve air quality. Comments also mentioned the Washington Boulevard Alternative is highly supported due to its longer route, low cost per mile, high ridership and service to high employment districts along the route.

Concerns for the Washington Boulevard LRT alternative included the following:

- Potential impacts to residential and business communities, including visual, right of way and construction
- Potential safety issues with students in nearby schools and safe routes to school
- Potential gang vandalism in Pico Rivera
- Seismic concerns regarding the Whittier fault line
- LRT may cause traffic disruption and congestion to the existing industrial truck corridor on Washington Boulevard

No Build

Two comments received supported the No Build Alternative.

TSM

One comment was received supporting the TSM Alternative.

Other Alternatives

Five comments suggested other alternatives.

Comments Related to Configuration

Approximately 22 comments were submitted regarding the configuration of the Washington Boulevard Alternative. The majority of these comments mentioned the alternative should remain aerial to increase pedestrian and traffic safety in nearby communities. Six of the comments suggested an underground system on Washington Boulevard to not only increase safety but facilitate future connections to Orange County. One comment suggested bringing the alignment to street level.

Comments Related to Stations

Metro received approximately 47 comments related to the Eastside Transit Corridor Phase 2 stations. The topics of the comments ranged from design treatments to adding new station locations and modifying existing plans.

Comments Related to Economic Development

A large number of comments agreed that the two build alternatives would serve as an economic catalyst providing real benefits to the local business communities.

Comments Related to Potential Impacts

A total of 320 comments were recorded raising concerns for impacts related to community neighborhoods, parkland, business and economic impacts, traffic, safety, construction and others. The comments on each major category are summarized in the following subsections.

Community and Neighborhood Impacts

Community and neighborhood impacts centered mainly on the Washington Boulevard LRT Alternative. Residents from local communities along the route were very concerned about the proximity of the LRT to their homes, especially in Pico Rivera.

Parkland Impacts

Most of the parkland impact comments were focused on the SR-60 Alternative and proposed station location at Santa Anita Avenue adjacent to the Whittier Narrows Recreation Area.

Business and Economic Impacts

A significant number of comments received mentioned the concern for the potential negative economic impact the Eastside Transit Corridor Phase 2 project could have on the local businesses during the construction phase of the project. Comments suggested Metro work as a partner with local merchants to mitigate any potential impacts.

Traffic Impacts

Approximately 70 comments addressed the potential impacts on traffic. The majority of these suggested that the Eastside Transit Corridor Phase 2 could potentially relieve traffic on I-5 and SR-60 freeways; however, comments also noted the traffic impacts during construction would be difficult to tolerate.

Safety and Security

Approximately 27 comments were related to the safety and security of the Eastside Transit Corridor Phase 2 project. The majority of these comments raised concerns for pedestrian safety, especially school children that cross Washington Boulevard at major intersections.

Construction Impacts

Approximately 100 comments were related to the potential construction impacts, including traffic, loss of business, noise, dust and air quality.

Comments Submitted by Federal, State, and Local Agencies

During scoping, seven federal, six state and 19 local agencies provided comments.

Responses to Comments

The purpose of scoping is to provide an opportunity for agencies and the public to comment on the purpose and need, the range of alternatives proposed for analysis, and to help Metro and the Federal Transit Administration identify issues that should be evaluated in the Draft EIS/EIR analysis. Metro received a record amount of comments for the Eastside Transit Corridor Phase 2 from agencies, community residents and stakeholders within the project area compared to other current Metro Corridor Studies. All comments will be taken into consideration and examined during completion of the Draft EIS/EIR and are included in this Scoping Report.

The input received during the scoping period and summarized in this report will be used by Metro to help develop and refine the project, including refinement of alternatives and options considered for further environmental evaluation. Following the completion of the Draft EIS/EIR, another round of public meetings/hearings will be held to review the findings of the draft environmental documents and solicit public comments. Those comments will be responded to in the Final EIS/EIR and become part of the formal document.