Regional Connector Transit Corridor
Draft Environmental Impact Statement/
Draft Environmental Impact Report

APPENDIX E

PURPOSE AND NEED REPORT

State Clearinghouse Number: 2009031043

Regional Connector Transit Corridor
Purpose and Need Report

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Prepared for

Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority

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ACRONYMS

AA	Alternatives Analysis
AVTA	Antelope Valley Transit Authority
CALTRANS	California Department of Transportation
CBD	Central Business District
CRA	Community Redevelopment Agency
DASH	Downtown Area Short Hop
DFD	Design For Development
EIR	Environmental Impact Report
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
HRT	Heavy Rail Transit
JANM	Japanese American National Museum
LADOT	Los Angeles Department of Transportation
LOS	Level of Service
LRT	Light Rail Transit
Metro	Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (LACMTA)
MOCA	Museum of Contemporary Art
MPO	Metropolitan Planning Organization
OCTA	Orange County Transportation Authority
PEIR	Preliminary Environmental Impact Report
RTP	Regional Transportation Plan
SCAG	Southern California Association of Governments

SCRRA	Southern California Regional Rail Authority
SR	State Route

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This report describes the purpose and need for transportation investments in the Regional Connector Transit Corridor project area. The project area is located at the crossroads of the region's transportation system. However, there is currently a gap in the light rail system in downtown Los Angeles between the 7th Street/Metro Center Station and Union Station that forces riders to make transfers to reach many destinations.

1.1 Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project is to improve the region's public transit service and mobility by connecting the light rail service of the Metro Gold Line to the Metro Blue Line and the Metro Expo Line. This link would serve communities across the region, allowing greater accessibility while serving population and employment growth in downtown Los Angeles.

The Regional Connector is a transit project planned by the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) with the goal of improving travel times, reducing transfers, reducing traffic congestion, improving air quality, and creating a sustainable light rail transit system that serves people throughout the region as well as in downtown Los Angeles. The vision is to connect the spokes of the regional system and provide a "one seat ride" from Long Beach to Azusa and from East Los Angeles and the San Gabriel Valley to Santa Monica.

There are currently no direct trains for Metro Blue Line light rail passengers from Long Beach travelling to the Metro Gold Line to Pasadena or East Los Angeles. These passengers must transfer to the Metro Red or Purple Lines for travel between 7th Street/Metro Center Station and Union Station. At Union Station, passengers must transfer again, moving to platforms on different levels, to reach the Metro Gold Line. When the Metro Expo Line from Culver City to the 7th Street/Metro Center Station opens in 2011 its riders will also need to transfer at 7th Street/Metro Center Station to reach the Gold Line.

The Regional Connector would extend the shared Metro Blue/Expo Line tracks from their present terminus at 7th Street/Metro Center Station to a junction with the Metro Gold Line near the Little Tokyo/Arts District Station with continuing service to Union Station, Pasadena, East Los Angeles, and beyond. This would provide a one-seat ride for Metro Blue Line passengers travelling from Long Beach to Pasadena. Metro Expo Line passengers would also be able to ride from Washington/National Station in Culver City to East Los Angeles without transferring.

The Regional Connector would also provide increased transit coverage of the downtown area with new stations serving the Civic Center, Bunker Hill, Historic Core, Little Tokyo, and Financial Core along its route from 7th Street/Metro Center Station to the Metro Gold Line.

See Figure 1-1 for a map of the project area and Figure 1-2 for an overview map of the Metro Rail system, including projects currently under construction.

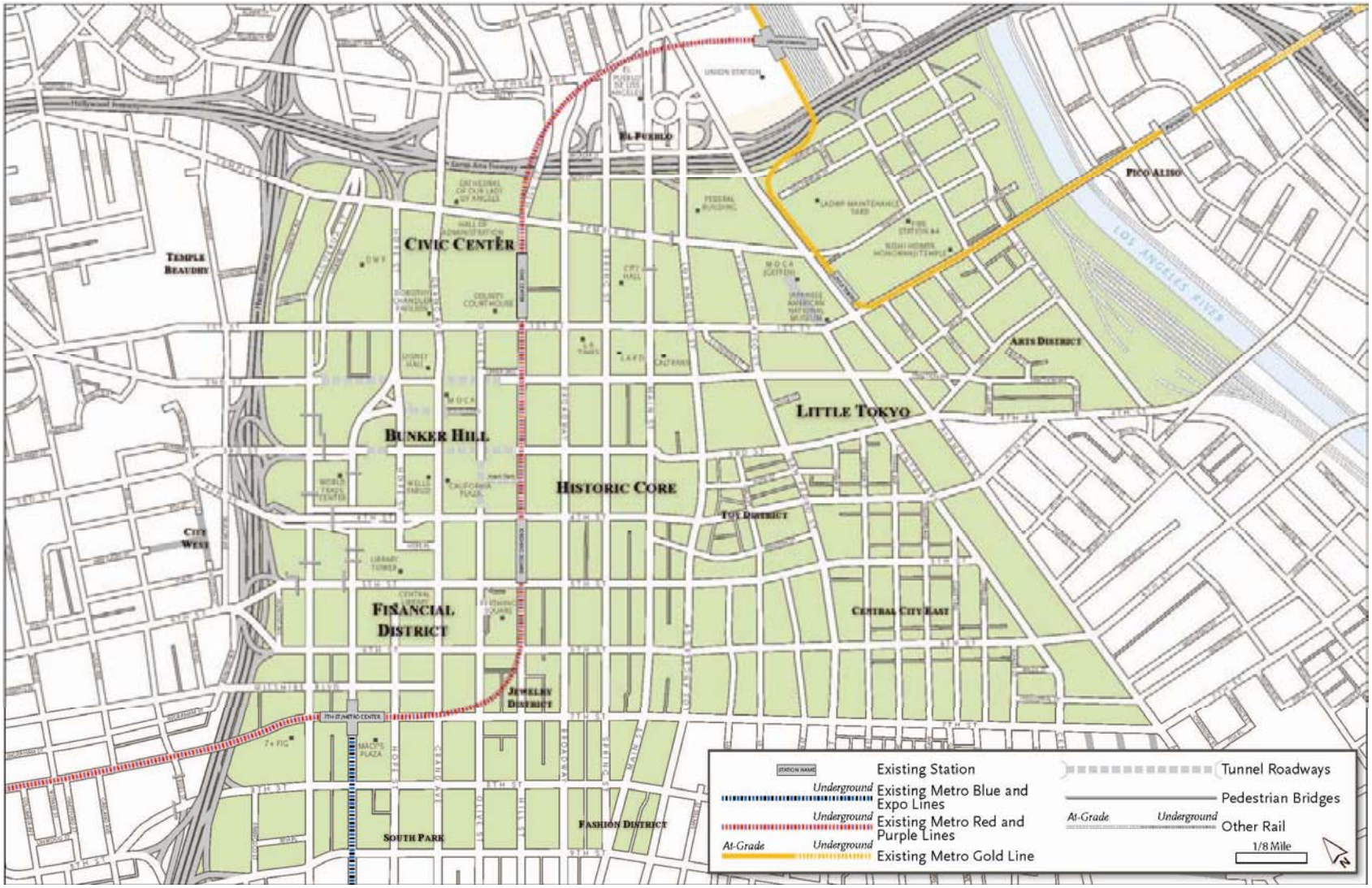

Figure 1-1. Project Area

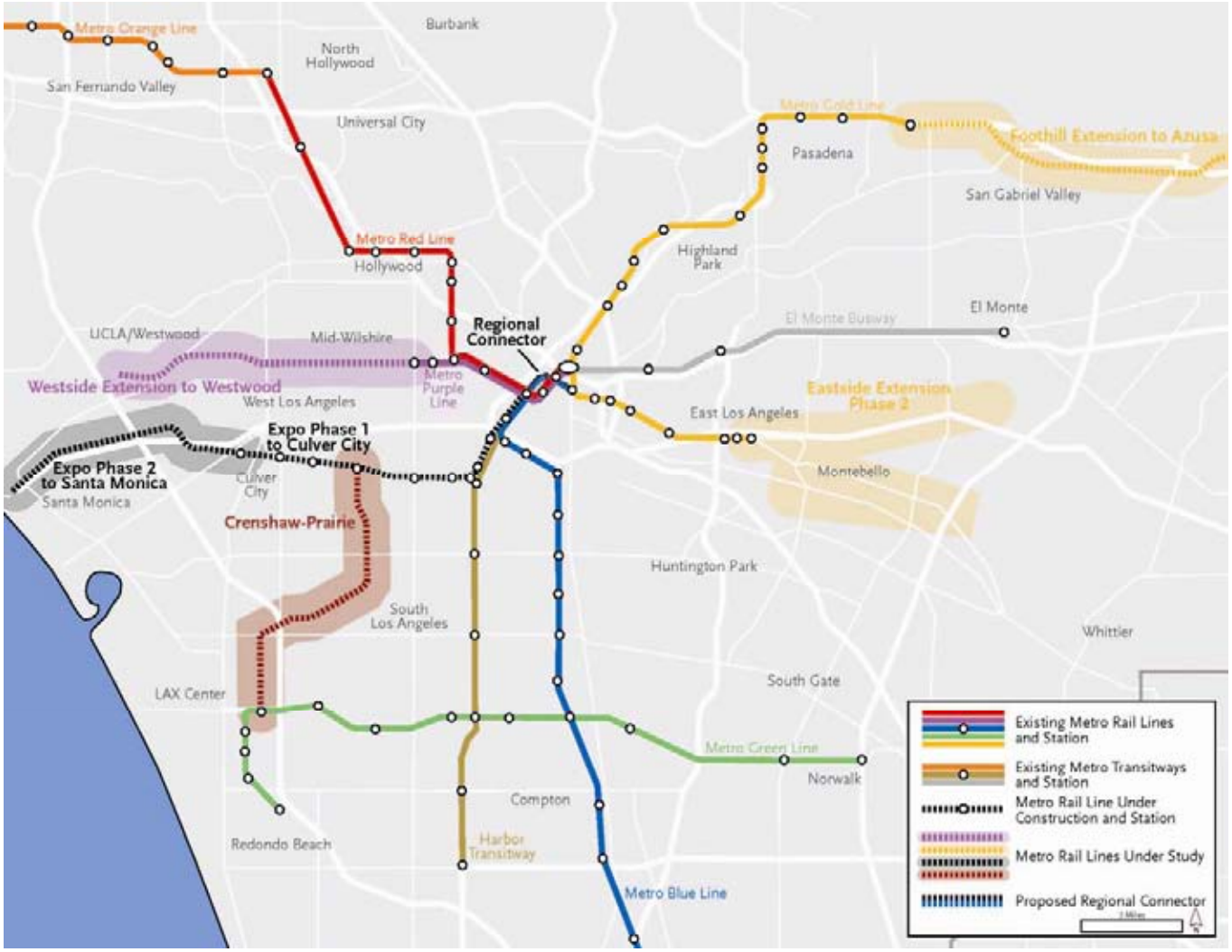

Figure 1-2. Regional Metro Rail Lines (2035)

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 Location

The project area is located in downtown Los Angeles. It is bounded on the west by State Route (SR) 110 (Harbor Freeway); on the north by US 101 (Hollywood Freeway); on the south by 7th and 9th Streets; and on the east by Alameda Street between 7th and 4th Streets and the Los Angeles River between 4th Street and US 101.

The project area is the largest regional employment center in Los Angeles County, and is densely developed with multi-family residences, industrial and public lands, commercial and retail establishments, government office buildings, and high-rise office towers. The corridor crosses several distinct community areas including the dense urban core of the Financial District; the residential high rises and regional entertainment centers of Bunker Hill; the Civic Center with a concentration of federal, state, and local government offices; residential and retail uses located in the historic structures of the Historic Core; and the culturally unique, mixed uses of Little Tokyo.

Given the density of employment within the project area, downtown Los Angeles has the highest concentration of transit service of any area in the County. Regional bus and commuter rail operators have routes that service the project area during peak hours from Los Angeles, Orange, San Bernardino, and Ventura Counties. Both Metro and the Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT) operate local bus service throughout the day.

The southwest portion of the project area at the 7th Street/Metro Center Station is served by the Metro Blue Line to Long Beach and the Metro Expo Line to Culver City. The eastern edge of the project area (Union Station and the Little Tokyo/Art District Station) is served by the Metro Gold Line which currently connects Pasadena to East Los Angeles. These regional lines are connected by a variety of bus lines and the short east-west Metro Red Line but multiple transfers are required for longer north-south or east-west trips through the project area.

Due to its central location at the heart of the regional transit system, investments in the Regional Connector Transit Corridor project area have the potential to affect schedule reliability of the entire system. As the Metro Expo Line and Metro Gold Line to East Los Angeles are completed, this lack of regional connectivity will become even more apparent.

2.2 History

Rail transit in Los Angeles dates to 1872, when Southern Pacific began construction on a passenger rail line from downtown to San Pedro, with the intent of eventually monopolizing the regional transportation system. By the 1920s, the Southern Pacific and Pacific Electric systems had nearly 800 cars in service and hundreds of miles of tracks. Los Angeles Railway also operated a local streetcar system serving the downtown core and the nearby

neighborhoods, which carried the bulk of Los Angeles' urban ridership. Notable busy lines included the Aiso Street service to Boyle Heights, the Temple and 2nd Street cable cars on Bunker Hill, and the Angels Flight funicular railway. Pacific Electric's Hollywood, Glendale, and San Fernando Valley trains entered the one-quarter-mile long Belmont Tunnel at the tail end of their trips to the Subway Terminal Building at 4th and Hill Streets in downtown Los Angeles.

Despite the extensive track and power infrastructure, Los Angeles' rail transportation system would last only four more decades. Americans traded streetcars for private automobiles with record speed and moved to neighborhoods beyond the railroads' reach. Rail transit's final zenith came during World War II, when fuel, metal, and rubber rationing briefly forced millions of Americans back onto streetcars to get to their jobs.

With the end of the war came a period of economic and industrial prosperity and the pent-up demand for new automobiles could finally be met. With few rail riders remaining and new diesel bus technology offering a cheap substitute for streetcar service, cash-strapped transit operators nationwide began canceling routes and removing tracks. The Los Angeles system closed entirely, with the last train making its trip from downtown to Long Beach in 1963.

Freed by the heightened mobility that private cars offered, people began working in increasingly suburbanized settings, and the old downtown core plunged into decline for several decades. In recent years, with traffic congestion mounting, the mobility that supported geographically-dispersed job and housing patterns has become increasingly constrained. Longer commute times, ever-climbing gas prices and increased concern about vehicle greenhouse gas emissions leading to climate change have prompted many Los Angeles residents to seek a return to the transit-friendly urban form of decades past. Downtown Los Angeles has seen a recent surge in development and many residents are rediscovering the forgotten urban core.

During the mid-1980s, the Los Angeles County Transportation Commission and Southern California Rapid Transit District began piecing together the railroad rights-of-way abandoned decades earlier with the intent of bringing rail transit back to Los Angeles.

Today, the Metro Rail system consists of over 79 track miles and downtown Los Angeles is once again served by a radial network of rail transit lines. The Metro Red Line has assisted in the resurgence of the downtown area, including the project area, by improving accessibility and facilitating movement between various districts.

In addition, the Southern California Regional Rail Authority has gradually purchased its own right-of-way and developed a 512-mile commuter rail system over the course of the past two decades, linking commuters throughout the region to their downtown jobs.

2.3 Past Studies

Early studies from 1988 to 1993 focused on extending the light rail line from Long Beach to Los Angeles (Metro Blue Line) through downtown to Pasadena. A light rail line from downtown west to Santa Monica (Metro Expo Line) was not yet planned at the time and the light rail Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension was first fully approved as an extension of the Metro Red Line, a heavy rail subway system that was re-scoped to the currently operating Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension light rail system. Therefore these earlier studies did not account for the benefits of a cross-county east-west light rail service, and instead focus on the north-south route from Long Beach to Pasadena. The Regional Connector, however, would provide the benefits of both routes. The later studies from 2004 onward, including the recent Alternatives Analysis (AA) (Appendix H), focus on both the north-south and east-west routes, as described in the following subsections.

2.3.1 Pasadena – Los Angeles Light Rail Transit Project EIR

After the study was completed in 1993, the Board of Directors delayed the pursuit of the segment between 7th Street/Metro Center Station and Union Station due to funding constraints. The Pasadena-Los Angeles Light Rail Transit Project, now the Metro Gold Line, was constructed and began operations in 2003. The Metro Gold line ran from the Sierra Madre Villa Station in Pasadena to Union Station until an extension to East Los Angeles opened in 2009 allowing for continued operations between Pasadena, Union Station and East Los Angeles. As an interim solution for not having a direct light rail connection between the Long Beach and Pasadena lines, passengers must transfer to the Metro Red and Purple Lines to travel from Union Station to 7th Street/Metro Center.

It was specifically indicated in the study that a direct light rail connection is possible between Union Station and 7th Street/Metro Center Station to reduce transfers between the Metro Red, Purple, Gold and Blue Lines.

2.3.2 Blue Line Connection Preliminary Planning Study

In 1993, Metro completed a preliminary planning study to analyze alternatives for connecting the Long Beach Blue Line, already in operation, to the Pasadena Blue Line (now the Metro Gold Line), which was not yet under construction at that time. Although the Metro Gold Line provides a viable service as stand-alone transit from downtown Los Angeles to Pasadena, a potential capacity problem for the Metro Red Line was identified, as it was the sole rail connection between Union Station and the 7th Street/Metro Center Station. Metro officials recognized that building a connection between the Long Beach and Pasadena light rail lines would alleviate the capacity issues, and increase the overall usefulness of the system.

2.3.3 Los Angeles Eastside Corridor Final Supplemental EIR/EIS

At the time of the Blue Line Connection Preliminary Planning Study, an extension of the Metro Red Line to Boyle Heights was also being considered. The preferred alternative was a 3.1-mile long heavy rail transit (HRT) subway with four stations. After funding concerns in the mid-late 90's, all planned corridor projects were halted and re-evaluated in 1998.

In February 2002, Metro approved the Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension, using LRT in lieu of the previously identified HRT Metro Red Line Eastside Extension. The extension opened for revenue service in November 2009 with twice as many stations and twice a long as the original planned project. Running from Union Station to the Atlantic Station in East Los Angeles, this six-mile, eight-station extension traverses Alameda Street, 1st Street, Indiana Street, and 3rd Street. A new bridge connects Union Station to the eastern edge of downtown in Little Tokyo by crossing south over the US 101 freeway to the intersection of Alameda and Temple Streets. The route runs at grade on the eastern side of Alameda Street from Temple Street to 1st Street. An at-grade station at 1st and Alameda Streets (Little Tokyo/Arts District Station) is located at the northeast corner of the intersection.

This project reaches the eastern edge of the project area, but does not complete the gap across downtown Los Angeles to the transit lines that extend south and west.

2.3.4 Mid-City/Exposition Transit Corridor EIS/EIR

Also part of the re-scoping of projects, the Metro Expo Line was identified as a new light rail transit system providing service from Santa Monica to a shared terminus with the Metro Blue Line at 7th Street/Metro Center Station in downtown Los Angeles. The project was approved in 2005. A first phase from downtown Los Angeles to Culver City is currently under construction. A second phase extending to Santa Monica was approved in early 2010 and is expected to be in operation by 2015. This project reaches the southern edge of the project area and will bring additional transit riders to downtown, but it does not complete the gap across the project area to Union Station.

2.3.5 Regional Light Rail Connector Study

Based on new alignment opportunities created by the approval and construction of the Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension and the under construction Metro Expo Line, Metro completed an engineering feasibility study in 2004 to identify potential alignment, station and configuration alternatives for a new light rail transit (LRT) connection between the Metro Blue, Expo and Gold Lines. The new alternatives connected the Metro Gold Line in the vicinity of the Little Tokyo/Arts District Station at 1st and Alameda Streets to the 7th Street/Metro Center Station.

Forty-one initial alternatives were developed and initial screening reduced the number of alternatives to 16. The screening was based on alignment characteristics, service area, cost,

complexity of engineering, and other similar criteria. No public input process was performed, and no preferred alternative was identified in this study.

2.3.6 Regional Connector Transit Corridor Alternatives Analysis Report

Building on the findings of the Regional Light Rail Connector Study, the Alternatives Analysis (AA) Report, initiated in June 2007 and completed in January 2009 identified 36 conceptual alternatives for study. Initial environmental analysis, engineering, and public outreach activities including an FTA Early Scoping notice, were performed to assist preliminary study of the alternatives. The screening processes during the AA study produced two final recommended build alternatives, along with a No Build Alternative and TSM Alternative, which were subsequently carried into the EIS/EIR scoping process. The full AA Report is incorporated into this Draft EIS/EIR as Appendix H.

2.3.7 Adoption of the Regional Connector Transit Corridor Project

The Regional Connector Transit Corridor project was authorized by the Metro Board of Directors to proceed into the Draft EIS/EIR phase in February 2009. Regional plans and funding measures that identify the Regional Connector include the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) Regional Transportation Plan, the Metro Long Range Transportation Plan, and Measure R.

2.3.7.1 SCAG Regional Transportation Plan

SCAG's *2008 Regional Transportation Plan* includes the Regional Connector as a strategic transit system expansion project with implementation expected prior to 2035. As the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for Los Angeles, Riverside, San Bernardino, Ventura, Orange, and Imperial Counties, SCAG provides coordination between transit projects across the Southern California region.

2.3.7.2 Metro Long Range Transportation Plan

Metro's *2009 Long Range Transportation Plan* includes the Regional Connector among the projects planned for implementation by 2035 (possible opening date of 2019). The other projects outlined in the plan are also included in the baseline year 2035 conditions assumed for the regional transportation analysis presented in this Draft EIS/EIR.

2.3.7.3 Measure R

In November 2008, Los Angeles County voters approved a half-cent sales tax (Measure R) that will be used to fund approximately $40 billion worth of transportation projects in Los Angeles County over the next 30 years. Due to the uncertainty of the passage of Measure R during the development of the AA, projects identified in Measure R were not included in the AA Report, as they had not yet been identified as funded in the *Long Range Transportation Plan*. With the passing of Measure R, identified funded projects to be completed and operational by 2035

are incorporated in the analysis conducted for this Draft EIS/EIR, as part of the No Build Alternative.

3.0 PROJECT AREA DEMOGRAPHICS

3.1 Data Sources and Methodology

Demographics in the project area were examined to establish a baseline for assessing the potential benefits of adding improved transit service. Data presented in this section were obtained from the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG, 2009) and the U.S. Census Bureau (2000). Data are representative of demographic conditions at the time of data-gathering and are used as the basis of evaluation in the Draft EIS/EIR.

The project area is currently undergoing significant changes in terms of housing and demographics. Within the last five years, new market-rate condominium towers have been completed, historic buildings have been converted to loft housing, and new entertainment centers have been approved for construction, bringing renewed interest to downtown. These activities continue to bring about demographic changes that may not be reflected in data from 2005 or earlier.

Some data was not available or not relevant for certain portions of the project area, so field reconnaissance was substituted for the missing data. The project area encompasses portions of several census tracts requiring block-level data to get an accurate representation of each neighborhood. Some tracts are relatively homogeneous which allows data for the whole tract to represent the portions. Other tracts have different characteristics throughout, and attempting to represent one neighborhood with data from the entire tract would be inaccurate. For this characterization of the project area it is more meaningful to show that available census data is not applicable and substitute field reconnaissance rather than inaccurately represent portions of the project area.

For these reasons, the data presented here may be slightly different than the data presented in the Environmental Justice and the Community and Neighborhoods Technical Memoranda.

3.2 Population and Employment

The Regional Connector project area covers 2 square miles, or 0.04 percent of the 4,752 square miles of the County. The total residential population of the project area is 19,396, or 0.19 percent of the total County population. The average population density within the project area is 9,968 per square mile, 3.76 times that of the County.

Despite its small size and residential population, the Regional Connector project area offers 3.82 percent of the County's total employment of 171,750 jobs. Employment density in the project area is 85,875 employees per square mile which is more than 85 times the County-wide employment density.

Table 3-1 summarizes the project area and County population and employment information for 2008. Population and employment growth are discussed further with respect to transit dependency in Section 3-4.

Table 3-1. Population and Employment

Demographics	Project Area	L.A. County	Percent of County
Population	19,396	10,449,838	0.19%
Population Density (people/sq. mi.)	9,698	2,573	NA
Total Employment	171,750	4,498,598	3.82%
Employment Density (jobs/sq. mi.)	85,875	1,108	NA

Source: SCAG, 2008

3.3 Project Area Ethnicity

According to the most recent Census data, the project area has higher proportions of Asian and African-American residents than the County. African-American residents compose 28.5 percent of the population of the project area, compared with 9.6 percent of the County; they reside in the project area primarily east of Hill Street and south of 1st Street.

Asian residents, who live primarily between 1st Street and 5th Street, compose 23.8 percent of the project area, compared with 11.9 percent of the County.

According to the most recent census data, the project area has significantly lower compositions of White and Hispanic populations when compared to the County.

Table 3-2 shows the racial and ethnic breakdown of the project area. Figures 3-1 through 3-6 illustrate the population's racial and ethnic distribution throughout the project area.

3.4 Transit Dependency

Transit dependent populations are those groups that rely on public transit to meet their mobility and access needs to a greater degree than the general population. Within the project area, transit dependent populations include low income households, seniors, and zero car households

Table 3-2. Racial and Ethnic Composition				
Demographics	Project Area		Total LA County	
	Number	%	Number	%
Race				
Total Population	19,396	100%	9,519,338	100%
White	5,564	28.7%	4,622,759	48.6%
Black/African American	5,534	28.5%	916,907	9.6%
American Indian	206	1.1%	68,471	0.7%
Asian	4,612	23.8%	1,134,263	11.9%
Pacific Islander/Hawaiian	40	0.2%	27,221	0.3%
Some other race	2,433	12.5%	2,262,925	23.8%
Two or more races	1,007	5.2%	486,792	5.1%
Ethnicity				
Total Population of Project Area	19,396	100%	9,519,338	100%
Hispanic or Latino (regardless of race)	4,700	24.2%	4,242,213	44.6%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Summary File 3, 2000; SCAG 2008

Residents in the project area are categorized within the US Census Data as either below or above the poverty level. In 2000, there were 3,575 households in the project area below the poverty level. Income projections to 2035 for the project area are currently unavailable.

Based on the 2000 data, 38% of the households in the project area are below the poverty level.

Table 3-3. Project Area Income Status		
Demographics	Project Area	Percent (%)
Total Households	9,648	100
Households Below Poverty Level	3,575	38.2

U.S. Census Bureau, Table P92, 2000

According to data presented in Table 3-4, only 6.1 percent of the population in the project area is age 18 or younger, compared to 29.4 percent of the population of the County. The project area also has a higher percentage of elderly residents (19.6 percent) compared to the County (9.7 percent).

Table 3-4. Population Age				
Age	Project Area	Percent (%)	L.A. County	Percent (%)
18 and under	1,188	6.1	2,798,604	29.4%
65 and over	3,795	19.6	926,670	9.7%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Summary File 3, 2000; SCAG, 2005

The young and the elderly have a higher propensity for using public transportation, since these groups are less likely to have driver's licenses or access to private automobiles.

Project area residents use transit more than people in other areas of the County. Eleven percent of the households (or 1,121 households) with people age 16 and older who both live and work in the project area commute via public transportation, compared to seven percent of the entire County.

Figure 3-7 shows the distribution of public transportation users within the project area. They tend to live in areas where there are high percentages of zero-vehicle households, as shown in Figure 3-8. A much higher proportion of households in the project area lack vehicle access (67 percent) than in the County as a whole (12 percent).

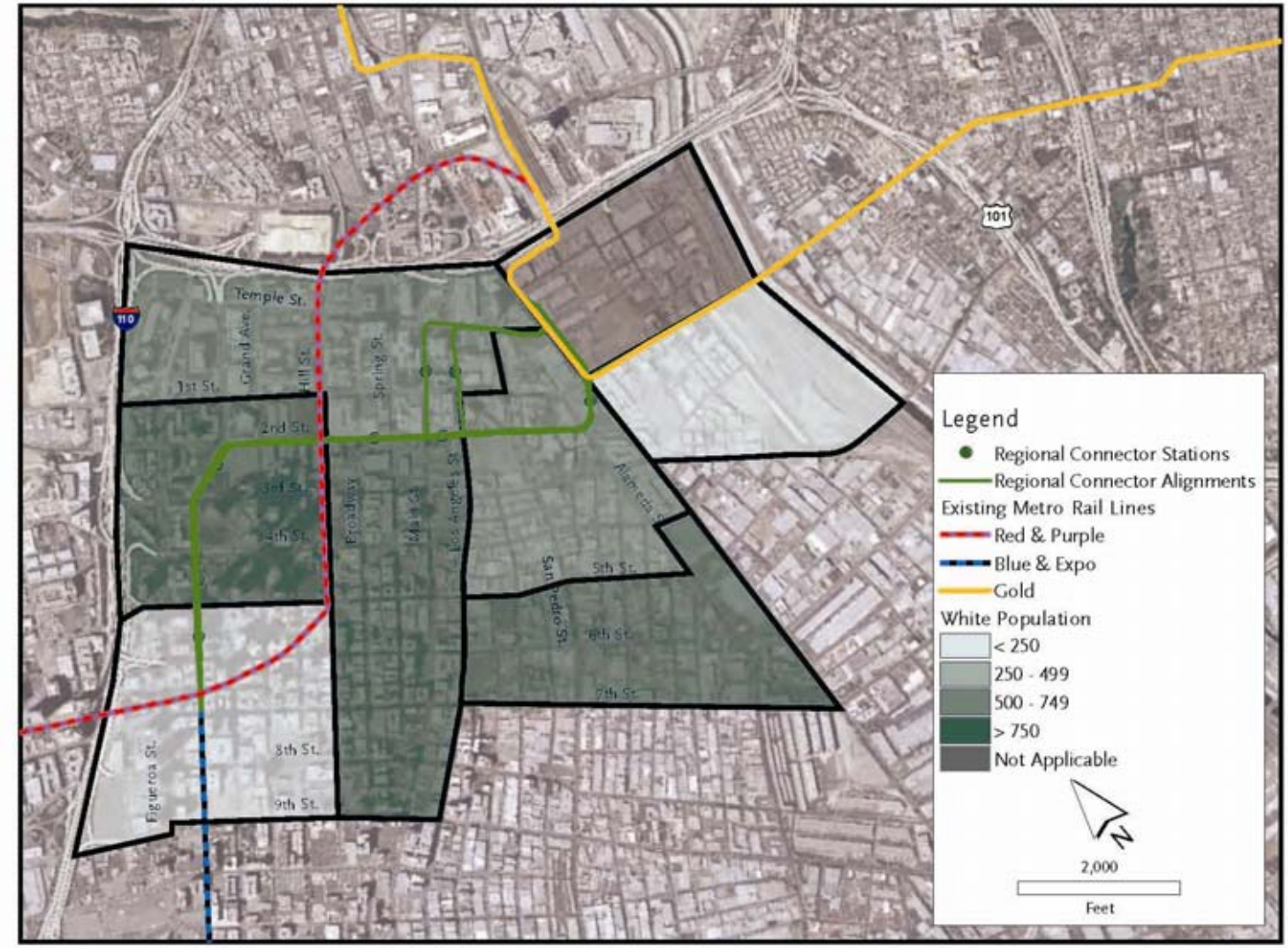

Figure 3-1. Ethnicity, White Population in Project Area

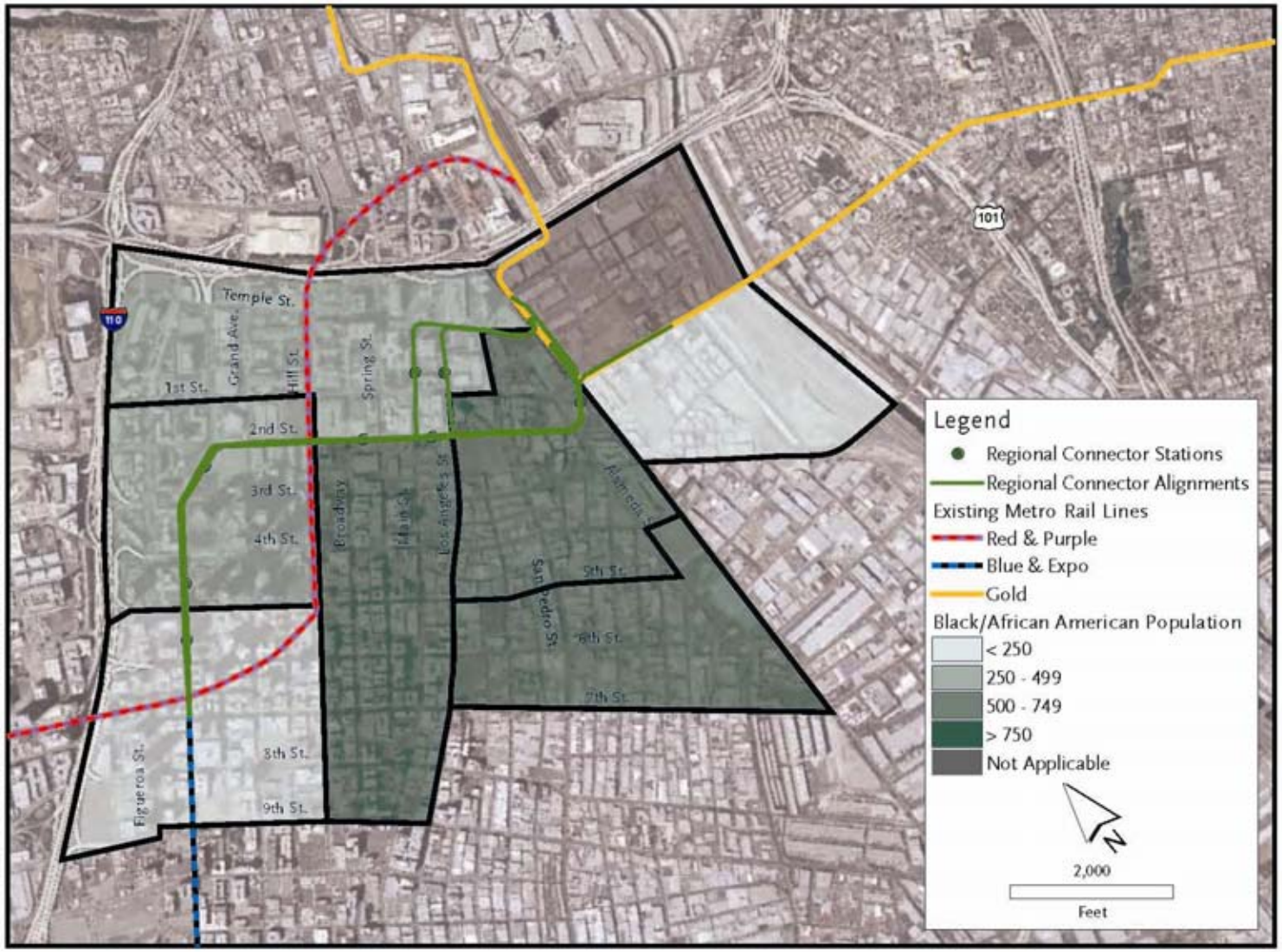

Figure 3-2. Ethnicity, Black/African-American Population in Project Area

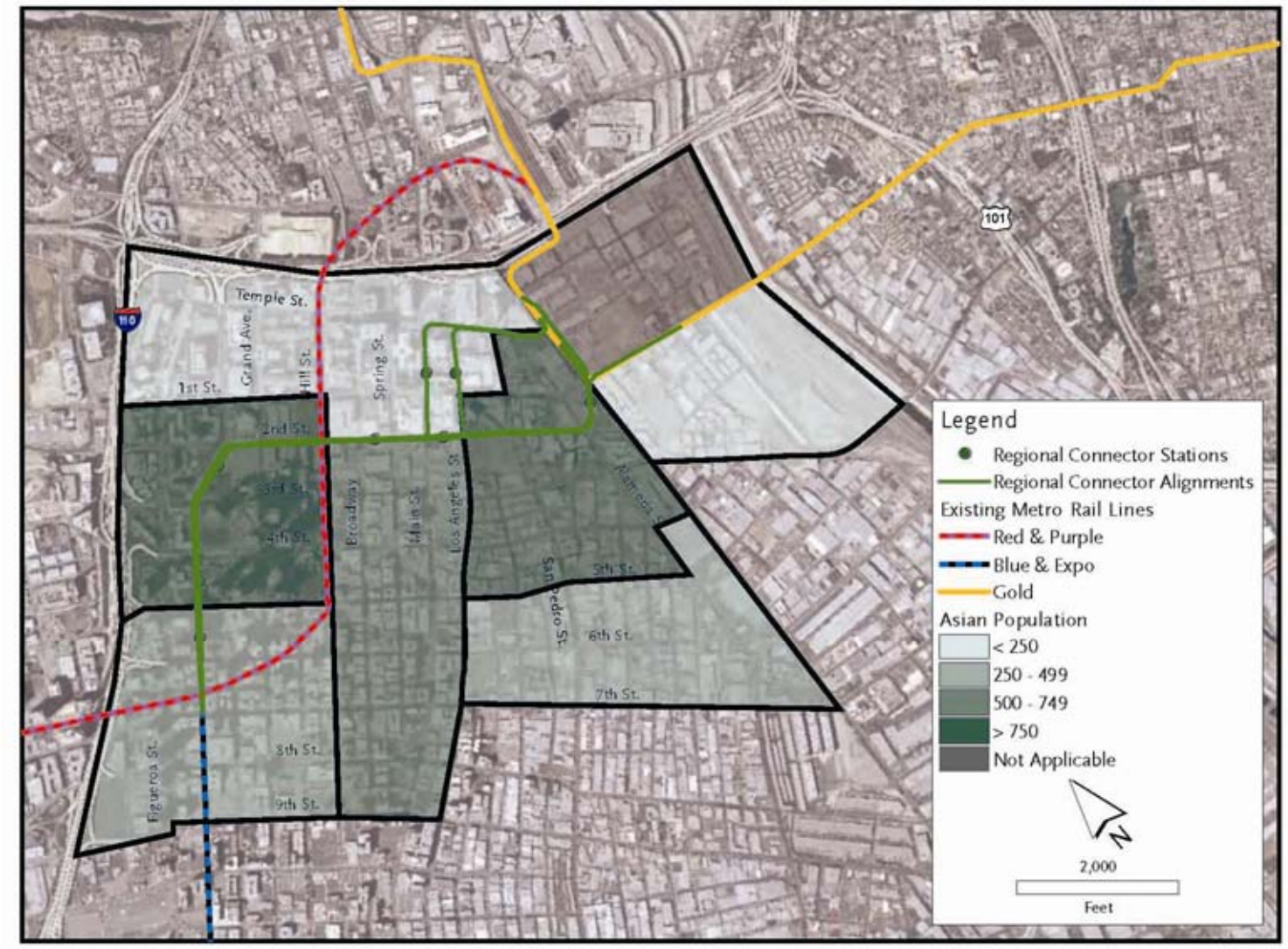

Figure 3-3. Ethnicity, Asian Population in Project Area

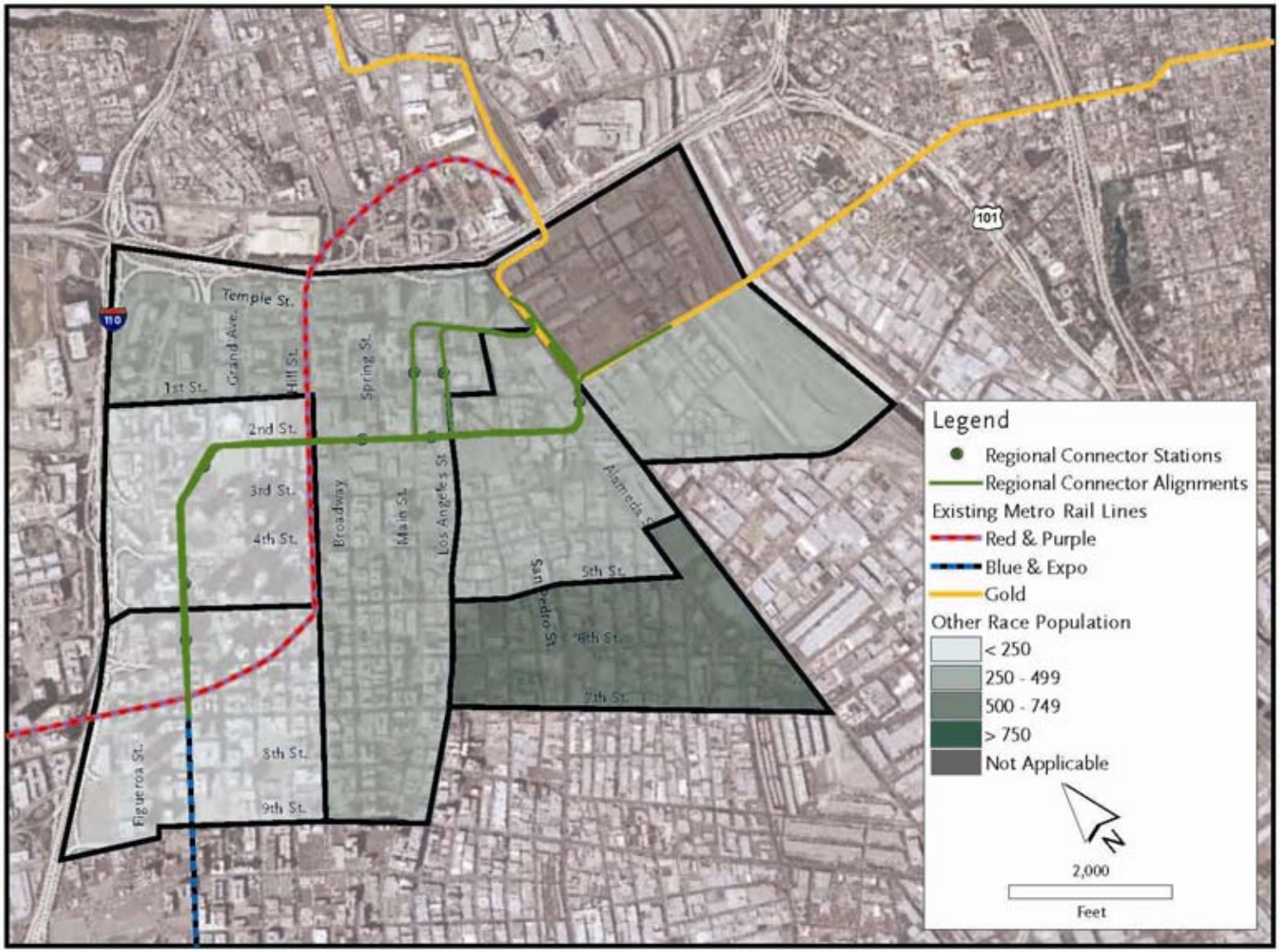

Figure 3-4. Ethnicity, Other Races Population in Project Area

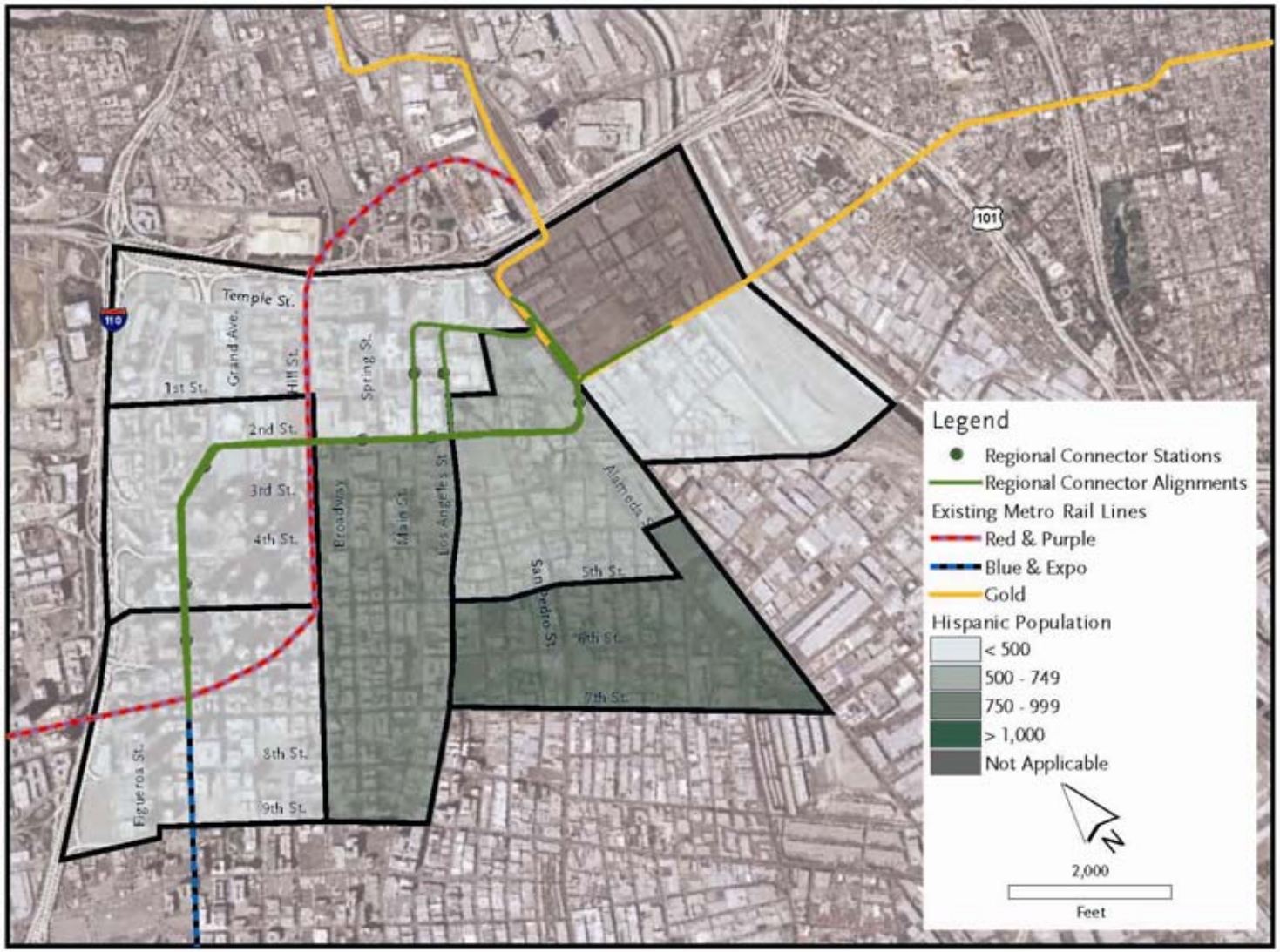

Figure 3-5. Ethnicity, Hispanic Population in Project Area

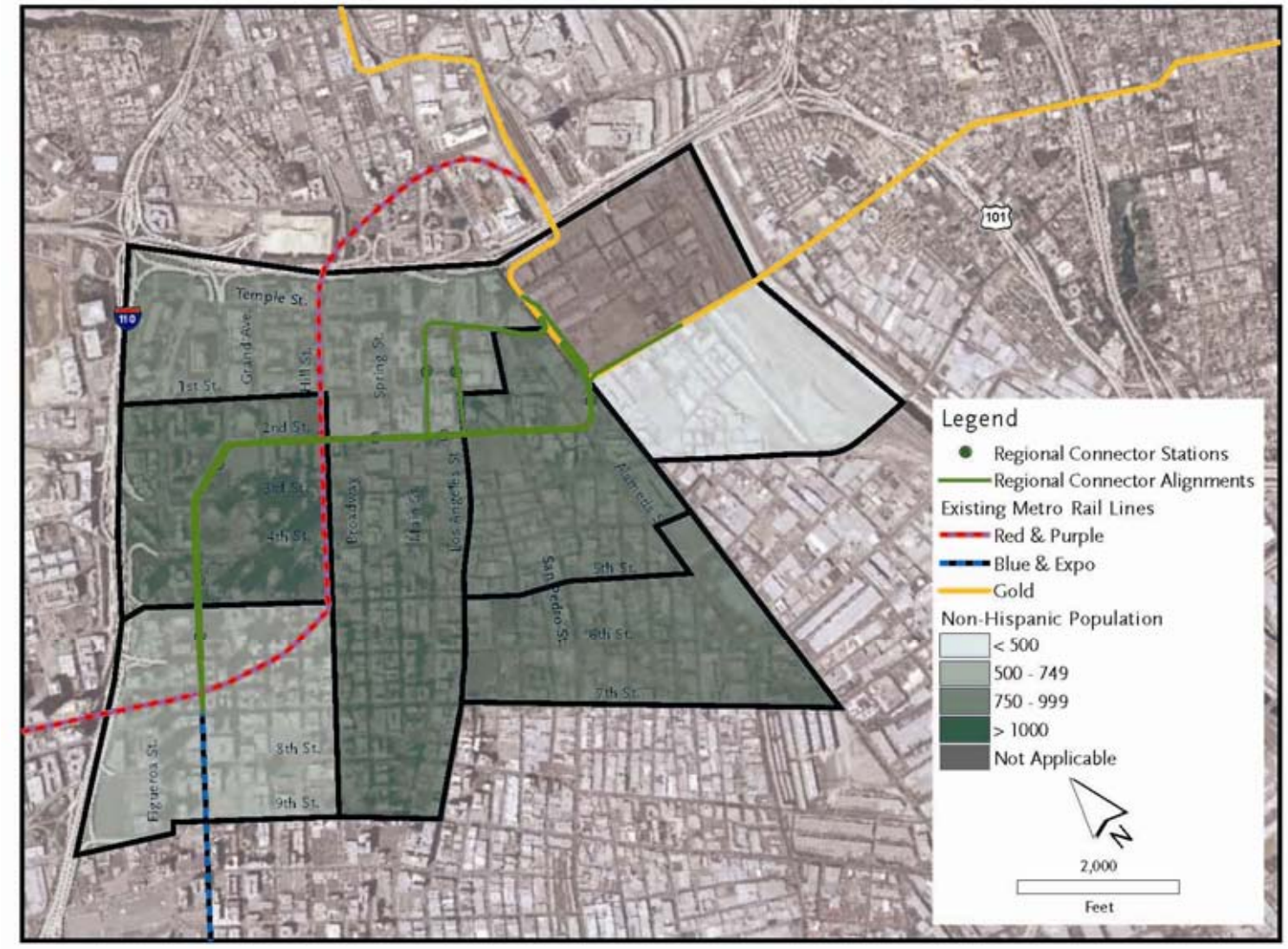

Figure 3-6. Ethnicity, Non-Hispanic Population in Project Area

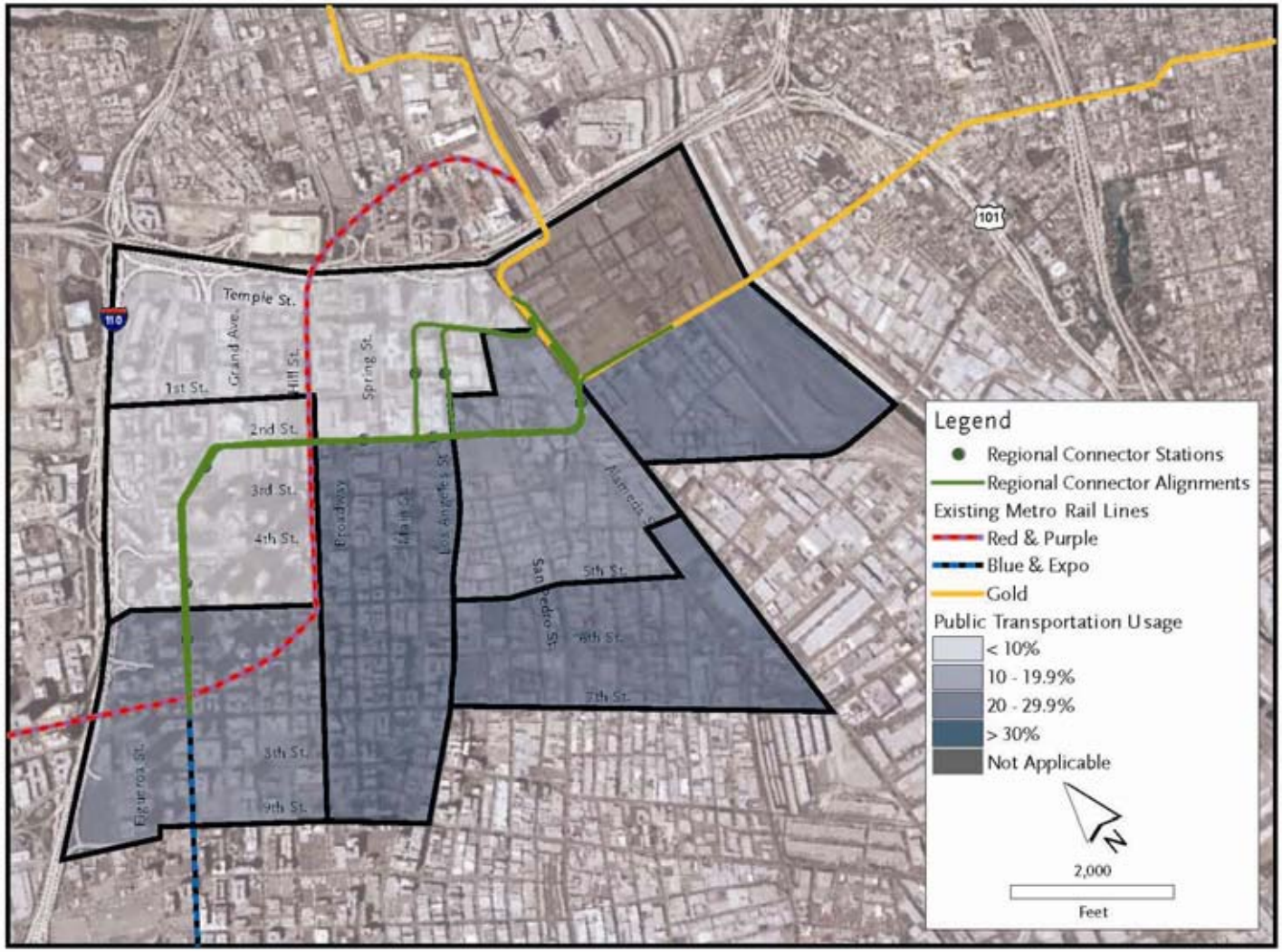

Figure 3-7. Public Transportation Users in Project Area

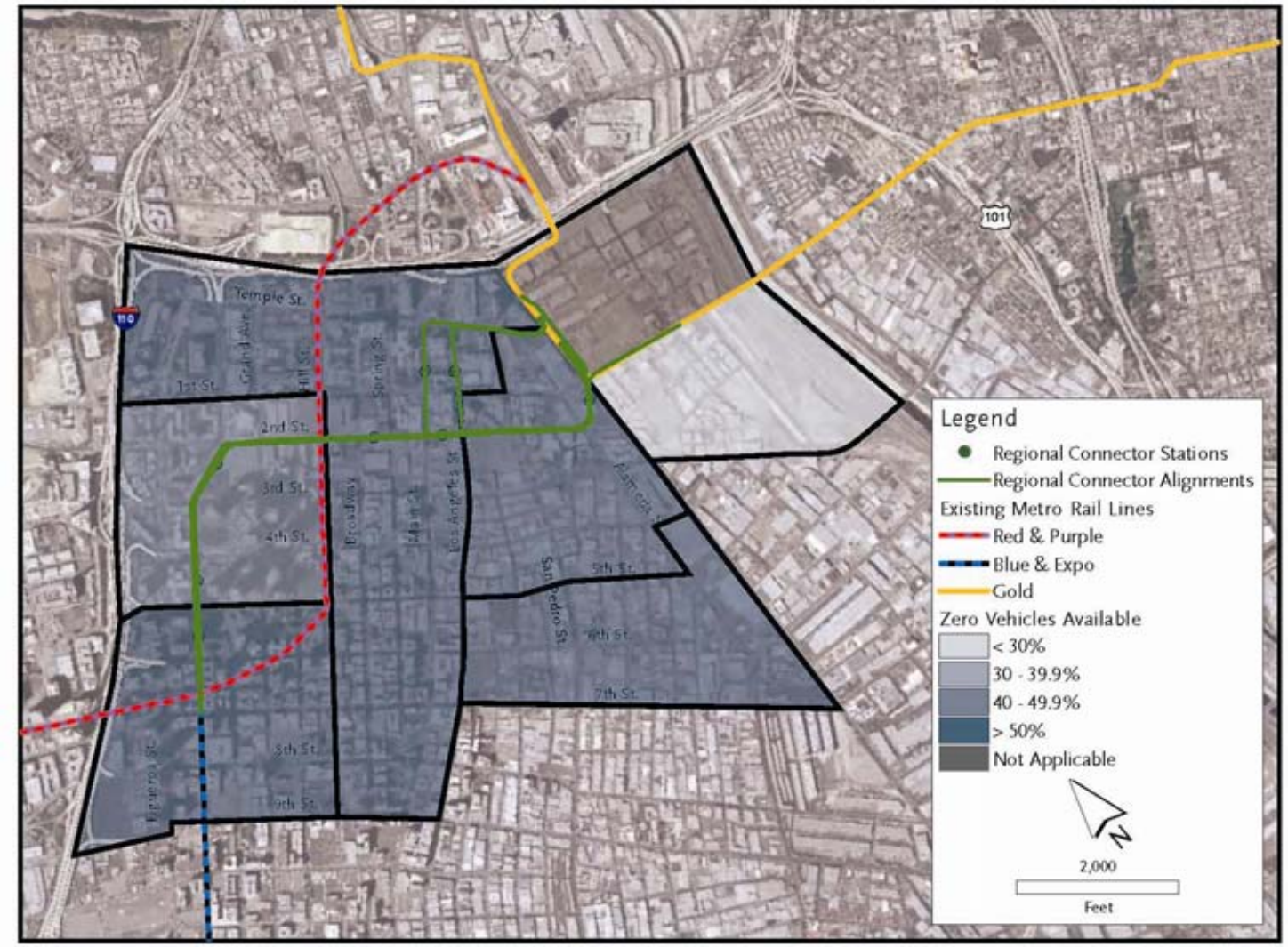

Figure 3-8. Households with No Available Car in Project Area

4.0 PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION FACILITIES AND SERVICES

4.1 Project Area Public Transit Context

Downtown has the highest concentration of transit service of any area in the County. At present, ten transit operators provide service along 110 bus routes and four Metro Rail lines within the project area, as illustrated in Figure 4-1. There is also heavy pedestrian activity throughout the project area. The bus and rail lines branch out in all directions from the project area to many destinations in Los Angeles County. Freeway express service also allows riders to reach destinations in Orange, San Bernardino, and Ventura Counties during peak commute hours.

4.2 Transportation Facilities and Services in the Project Area

4.2.1 Metro Rail

Metro provides rail service to the project area with the Metro Red Line from Union Station to North Hollywood, the Metro Purple Line from Union Station to Wilshire Center, the Metro Blue Line from the 7th Street/Metro Center Station to Long Beach, and the Metro Gold Line from East Los Angeles to Pasadena. The rail service consists of 70 rail stations and over 79 track miles.

Service has recently been extended to East Los Angeles through the opening of the Metro Gold Line to East Los Angeles and will be extended to Culver City in 2011 via the Metro Expo Line that is currently under construction. All Metro Rail stations provide connections to additional public transportation options, including Metrolink and Amtrak commuter rail services and bus service provided by Metro and other transit operators. Table 4-1 summarizes existing and future Metro Rail Lines currently under construction in the project area.