

4.17 Environmental Justice

This section summarizes the potential impacts described in Chapter 3, Transportation Impacts and Mitigation, and other sections of Chapter 4, Environmental Analysis, Consequences, and Mitigation, and identifies potentially disproportionate environmental justice impacts (i.e., impacts which would affect environmental justice populations more than others). Additional detail is provided in the Environmental Justice Technical Memorandum, which is incorporated into this EIS/EIR as Appendix EE.

This section has been updated since publication of the Draft EIS/EIR to address comments received on the Draft EIS/EIR, as indicated in the Responses to Comments, Volumes F-2 and F-3, of this Final EIS/EIR, and based on refinements to the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA). Minor changes have also been made to this section in order to maintain consistency with other Metro projects. A vertical line in the margin is used to show where revisions have occurred to this section since publication of the Draft EIS/EIR, excluding minor edits for consistency and correction of formatting and minor typographical errors.

Field work performed for the Draft EIS/EIR confirmed that outside of Little Tokyo there are no environmental justice populations (limited English proficiency (LEP), low-income, minority, elderly, etc.) that would be disproportionately impacted by any of the build alternatives' construction and operation. Due to its minority concentration as well as the cultural and historic significance of the community, this analysis treats potential environmental justice impacts to Little Tokyo with special attention. Refinements to the LPA since publication of the Draft EIS/EIR have reduced the significance of potentially disproportionate adverse impacts in Little Tokyo. Less cut and cover construction and fewer business acquisitions would be needed, and tunnel boring machine (TBM) staging would be in a less impactful location on the edge of Little Tokyo. By reducing the need for road and sidewalk closures, property acquisitions, job displacement, and overall neighborhood disruption during construction, the refinements have helped reduce potential impacts in Little Tokyo. Most of the mitigation measures listed for the LPA in this section (which were candidate mitigation measures in the Draft EIS/EIR) have been carried forward and included in the Mitigation Monitoring Reporting Program (MMRP) for the LPA, Chapter 8, of this Final EIS/EIR. Some other measures have been refined and adapted for the MMRP, and some new measures have been substituted in the MMRP to address the same issues and concerns that were addressed by candidate mitigation measures in the Draft EIS/EIR.

Environmental justice consequences of the LPA are discussed in Section 4.17.3.5 and mitigation measures to address impacts associated with the LPA are provided in Section 4.17.4.3 and Chapter 8, MMRP for the LPA.

4.17.1 Regulatory Framework

Executive Order (E.O.) 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations, requires federal agencies to seek environmental justice by “identifying and addressing social and economic effects of... programs, policies, and activities on minority and low-income populations in the United States” (Federal Register, Volume 59, Number 32). It requires fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people,

and that no group of people, including a racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic group, should bear a disproportionate share of negative environmental consequences resulting from federal projects. In response, the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) issued the *Order to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations* (Federal Register Volume 62, Number 72), which sets guidelines to ensure that all federally-funded transportation-related programs, policies, or activities that have the potential to adversely affect human health or the environment involve a planning and programming process that explicitly considers effects on minority and low-income populations. E.O. 13166 requires federally-funded programs to develop and implement a system to provide meaningful access for limited-English proficiency populations. As a result, NEPA requires projects that receive federal funding to analyze environmental justice concerns.

CEQA does not refer specifically to the topic of environmental justice nor does it have specific thresholds of significance for environmental justice. CEQA focuses primarily on identifying and disclosing potential significant impacts to the physical environment. CEQA does, however, place a particular emphasis on identifying potential effects on affordable housing stating that an adverse impact may occur if a project displaces affordable housing. Since affordable housing is by definition inhabited by low-income people, the displacement of affordable housing can be seen as an indicator of environmental justice impacts. However, the Regional Connector project would have no impact on affordable housing. Therefore, this environmental justice analysis focuses on E.O. 12898 and NEPA requirements.

In summary, the environmental justice impact analysis is guided by the following regulations:

- E.O. 12898
- E.O. 13166
- Civil Rights Act of 1964
- USDOT Order to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations
- Age Discrimination Act of 1975

4.17.2 Affected Environment

4.17.2.1 Methodology

The environmental justice analysis evaluates potentially disproportionate adverse impacts to environmental justice populations. This section describes how the environmental justice study area was developed and analyzed to determine the presence or absence of environmental justice communities.

In order to determine if an environmental justice population would be disproportionately adversely impacted by the project, the existence and location of environmental justice populations within the study area must first be determined. A minority population is considered

present if the minority population percentage of the affected area is meaningfully greater than the minority population percentage in the general population or other appropriate unit of geographic analysis. A minority population is always considered “meaningfully greater” when the percentage of minorities exceeds 50 percent, regardless of what the percentage of minority populations is in the comparison geographic unit.

Following the Office of Management and Budget’s (OMB) Statistical Directive 14, the Census Bureau uses a set of money income thresholds that vary by family size and composition to determine who is poor. If a family’s total income is less than that family’s threshold, then that family, and every individual in it, is considered poor. The official poverty thresholds do not vary geographically, but they are updated annually for inflation using the Consumer Price Index (CPI-U). The official poverty definition counts money income before taxes and does not include capital gains and noncash benefits (such as public housing, Medicaid, and food stamps).

U.S. Census data for 2000, as well as more current demographic data including the 2008 American Community Survey, and the 2008 Downtown Demographic Study, was analyzed to determine if the environmental justice study area contained environmental justice communities exceeding 50 percent or that were meaningfully greater than the surrounding area.

The study area is located entirely within the City of Los Angeles. For the purposes of the environmental justice analysis, the study area contains the following U.S. Census Bureau 2000 Census Tracts: 2060.30, 2060.40, 2062, 2073, 2074, 2075, and 2077.10. The analyses included key socioeconomic indicators in the study area that influence the assessment of environmental justice concerns. Figure 4.17-1 illustrates the Census Tracts and environmental justice study area.

Portions of Census Tracts 2060.30, 2060.40, and 2077.10 were not included in the study area because they were well outside of the study area or otherwise geographically separated from the study area. As shown in Figures 4.17-2 through 4.17-7, the western portion of Census Tract 2060.30 is less than ten percent. The land uses within these areas are vacant or industrial/commercial with little, if any, residential land use. Thus, the population of Census Tract 2060.30 is predominately outside the study area and east of the Los Angeles River.

In addition, certain geographic features such as the Los Angeles River and I-110 act as physical barriers in downtown Los Angeles and are impediments to pedestrian access to the study area. The Los Angeles River is a geographic boundary within Census Tracts 2060.30 and 2060.40 that pedestrians would be unable to cross to reach the study area. The southern portion of Census Tract 2077.10 also exceeds the ½-mile distance that pedestrians are typically willing to walk to reach a transit station. For these reasons, portions of Census Tracts 2060.30, 2060.40, and 2077.10 are not included in the study area.

Since census tracts are geographically much larger than the alignments being evaluated and the extent of the project’s potential impacts, field visits and interviews were conducted to augment the demographic analysis. The results of both investigations are presented below.

4.17.2.2 Demographics

Though the proposed Regional Connector project would be located in downtown Los Angeles, benefits of the project would be felt across the Los Angeles region. Therefore, the affected environment includes the entire region. The study area contains the communities of Little Tokyo, the Arts District, Bunker Hill, Historic Core, Financial District, Toy District, and South Park. The study area is surrounded by predominantly minority and low-income neighborhoods such as South Los Angeles, Pico-Union, Westlake-MacArthur Park, Chavez Ravine, Lincoln Heights, and Chinatown.

U.S. Census Bureau 2000 Data

According to the 2000 Census, the study area housed approximately 18,070 persons, living in 10,340 housing units. Minorities made up 83 percent of study area. Hispanic or Latinos made up 35 percent of the population in the study area. Asians were the second largest minority group and made up 26 percent of the population. Whites and Blacks or African American populations made up 19 percent and 17 percent of the population, respectively. A summary of the study area's characteristics compared to the City and County of Los Angeles is included in Table 4.17-1. The 2000 Census data indicated that the study area's low-income and minority populations were meaningfully greater than the general population of the City and County of Los Angeles.

**Table 4.17-1. Summary of Demographic Characteristics –
Study Area Comparison to City and County of Los Angeles (Year 2000 Data)**

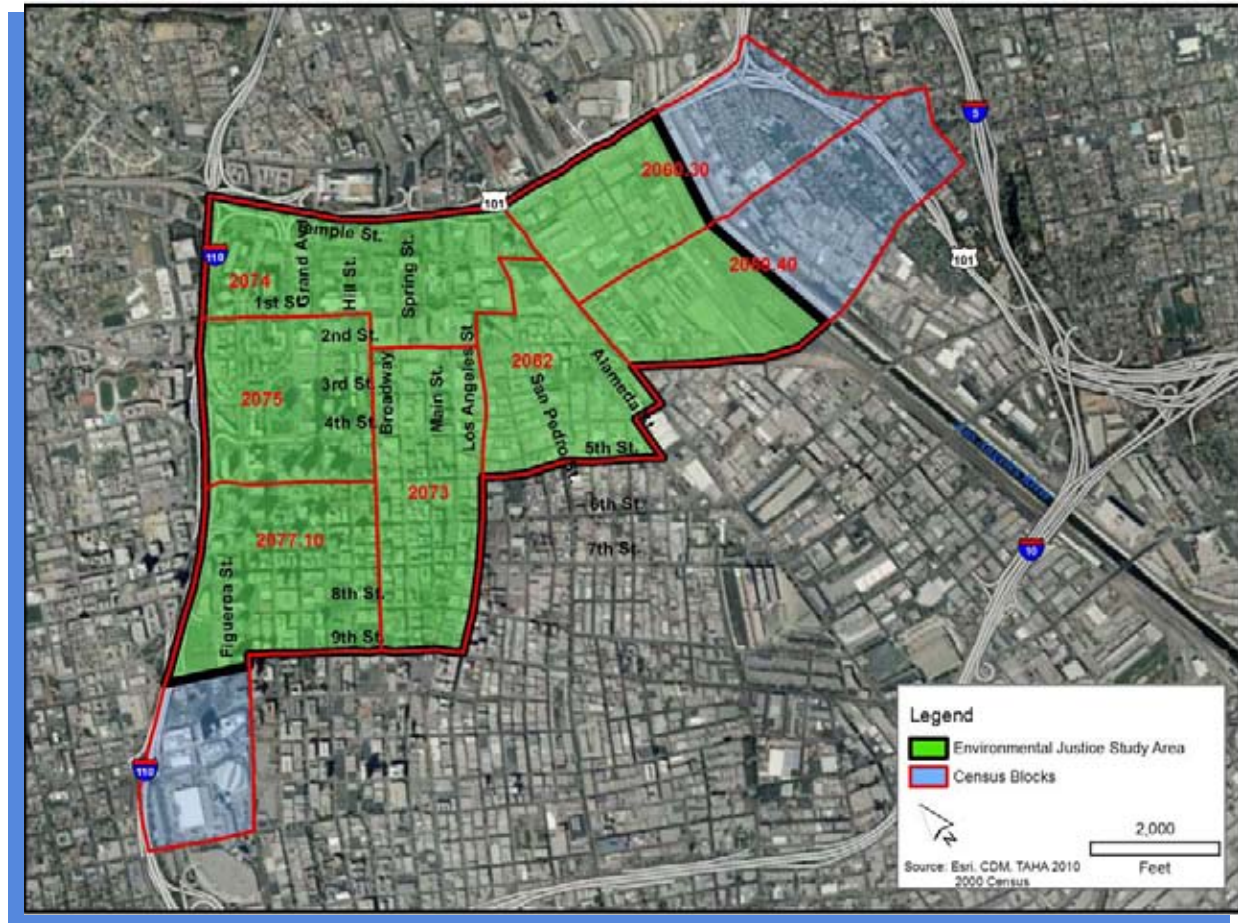
Characteristic	Study Area	County of Los Angeles	City of Los Angeles
Total Population (persons)	18,067 ^a	9,519,338	3,694,834
Total Housing Units	10,339	3,270,909	1,337,668
Percent Population Below Poverty Level	39%	18%	22%
Minority Percentage	83%	69%	53%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000; Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2009

^a Excludes homeless population.

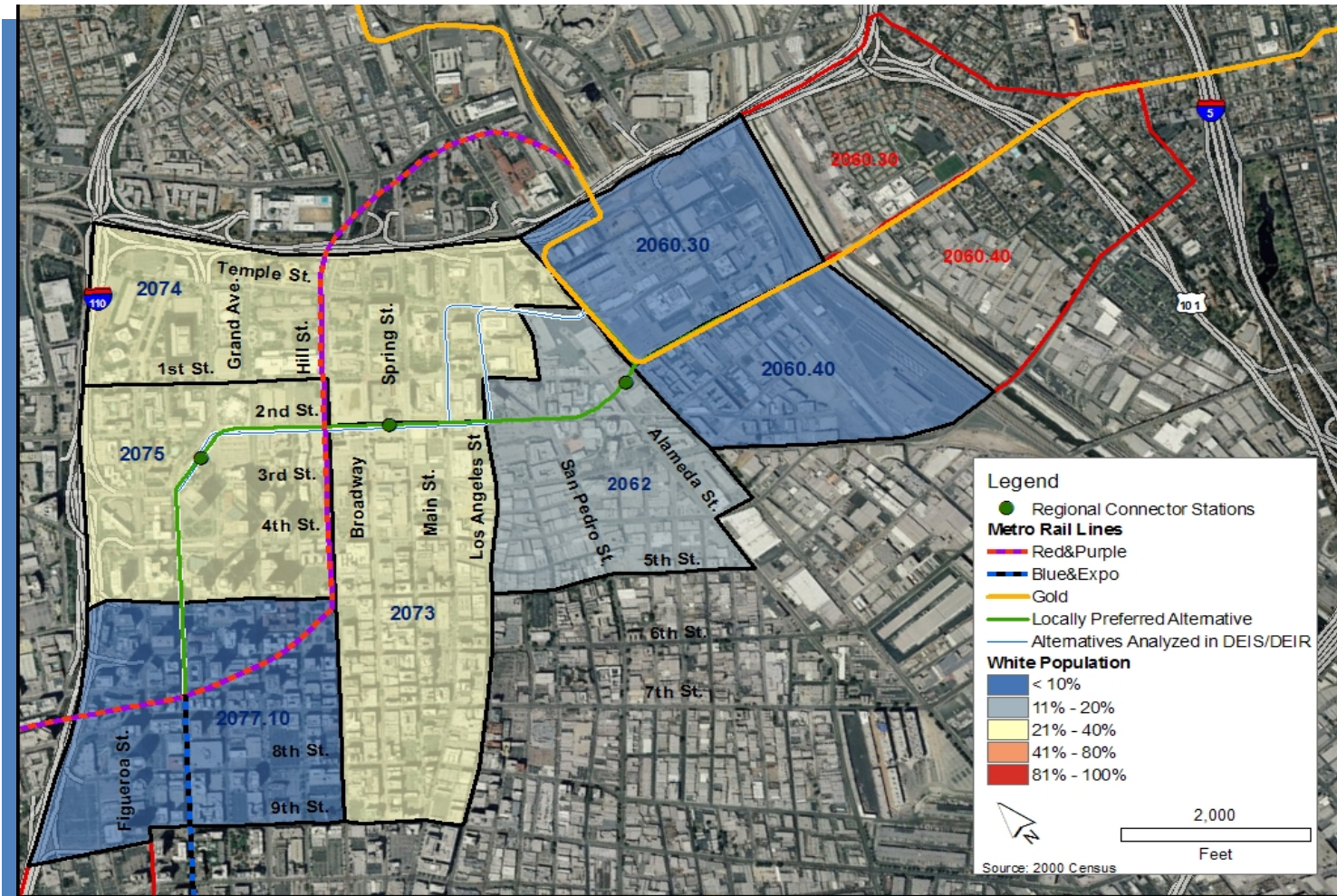
At the time of the 2000 Census, the study area was characterized by a diverse demographic. Economically, the study area housed a mostly low-wage workforce. In 2000, the median household income in the study area was approximately \$15,630. The median household income in the study area was substantially lower than both the City's (\$36,687) and the County's (\$42,189) median household income. In the study area, 39 percent of the population lived below poverty thresholds. Additionally, approximately 60 percent of the population had no access to a vehicle. Thus, the resident population in 2000 was highly transit-dependent.

Residents in the age range of 35-49 made up 26 percent of the population. Approximately 25 percent of the study area population was 65 years or older (3,390 persons) compared to approximately 10 percent in the City and County of Los Angeles.



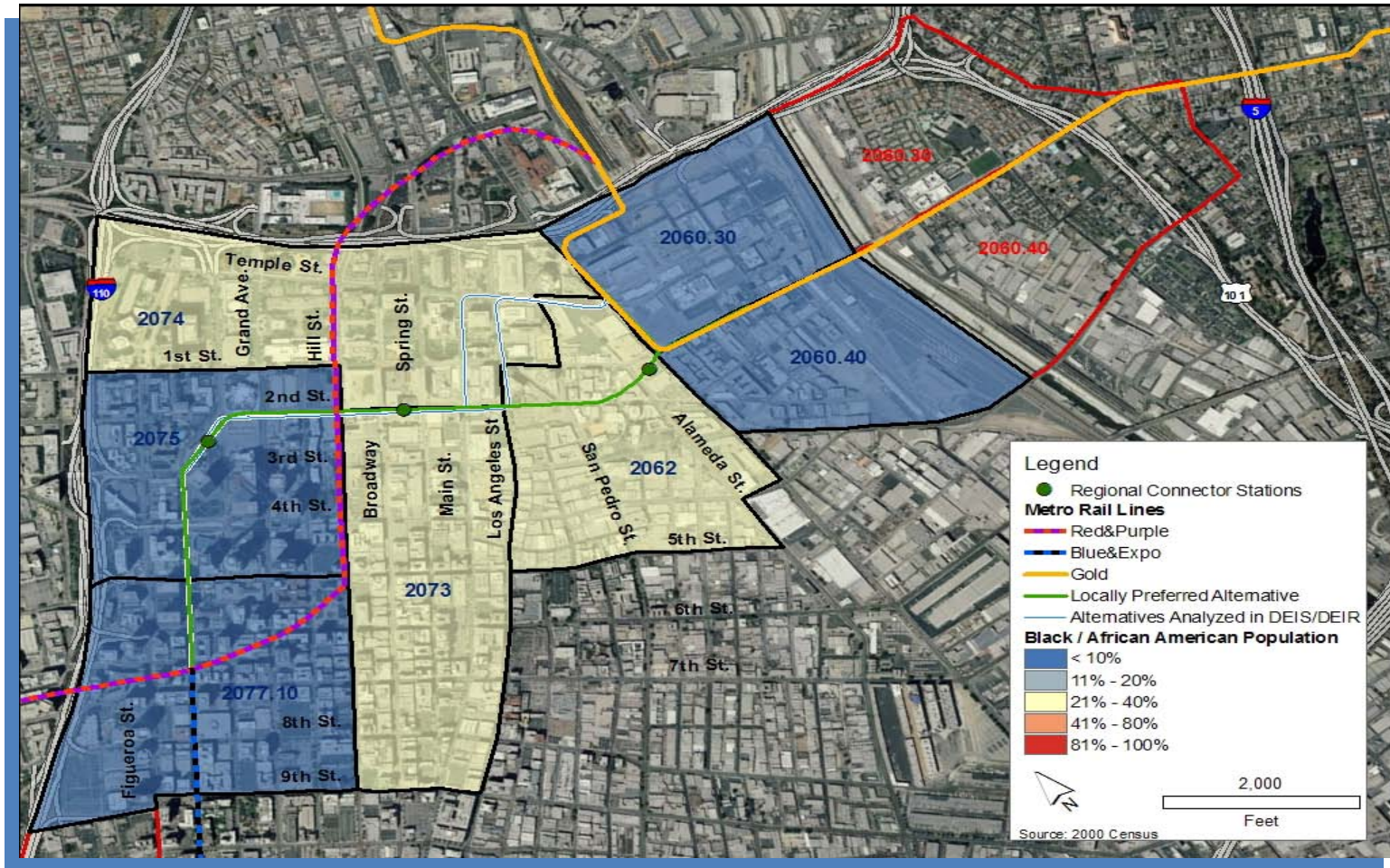
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Summary File 3, 2000

Figure 4.17-1. Study Area



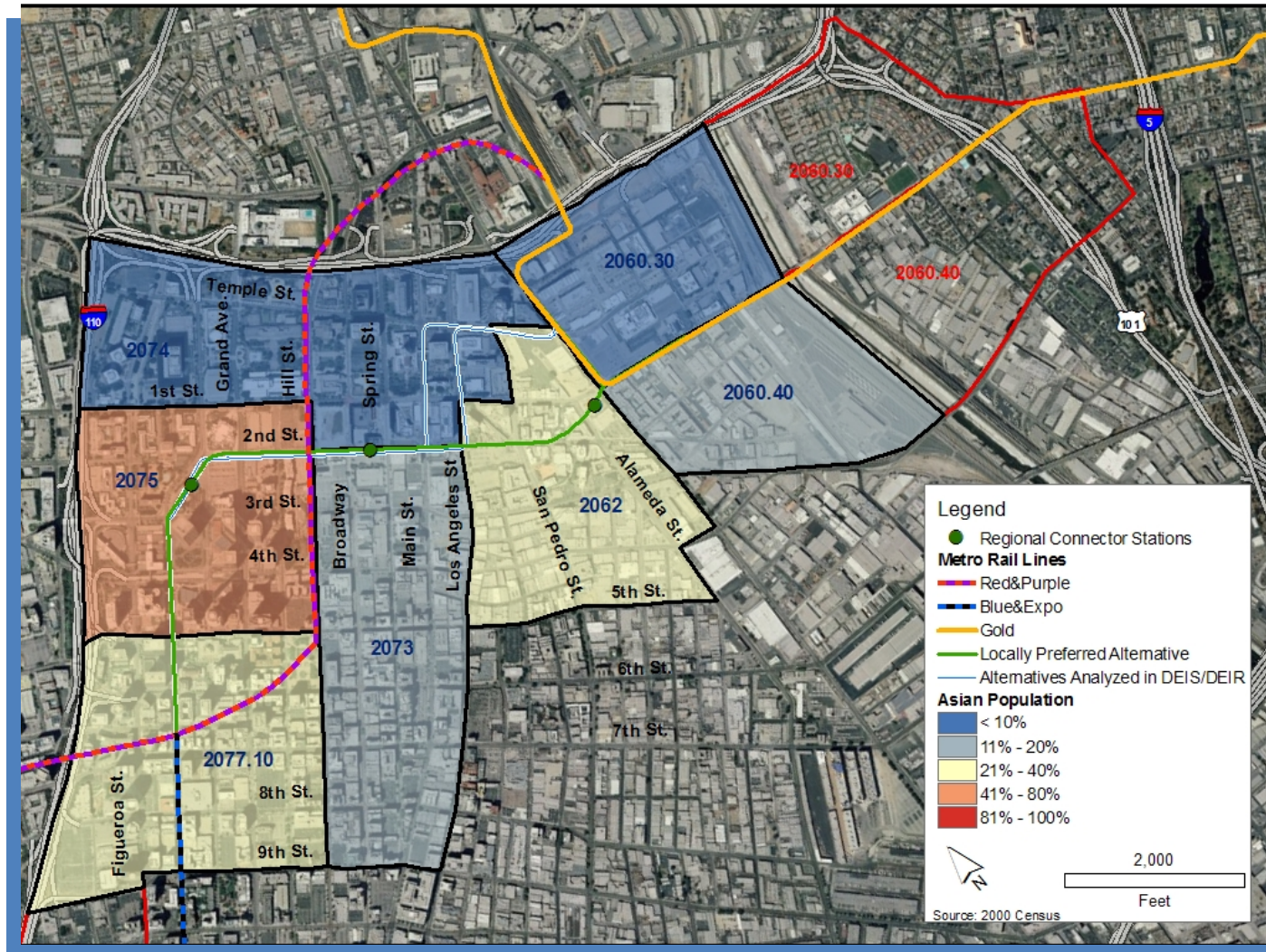
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Summary File 3, 2000

Figure 4.17-2. Ethnicity, White Population in Study Area



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

Figure 4-17.3. Ethnicity, Black/African-American Population in Study Area



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

Figure 4.17-4. Ethnicity, Asian Population in Study Area