

METRO WESTSIDE EXTENSION TRANSIT CORRIDOR ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS STUDY

Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority
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Metro



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PREFACE

Context of the Alternatives Analysis

The Metro Westside Extension has been an integral element of local, regional and federal transportation planning since the early 1980s. Extending westward from the Los Angeles Central Business District (CBD), the Westside Extension has been the subject of in-depth technical studies and extensive community involvement during this period. Ultimately, the transit investment has been envisioned to extend toward Beverly Hills, Century City, Westwood (UCLA), West Los Angeles, and Santa Monica.

In the early 1990s, plans were underway to extend the Metro Red Line to the west. Construction was already underway on the Metro Red Line from Union Station to Westlake/MacArthur Park, to Wilshire/Western Station, and to Hollywood/Vine Station. The new planning effort examined options detouring to the south of Wilshire Boulevard to avoid the federally prohibited methane gas hazard zone; a zone that was designated in 1985 after naturally occurring methane gas caused a fire in the Fairfax District. The planning for subway in this corridor was later suspended in 1998 due to a ballot initiative that prohibited subway funding and planning began on the development of a Westside Bus Rapid Transit system. This led to the Wilshire Bus Lane Demonstration Project, which operated successfully for three years but was never fully implemented due to community opposition.

At the request of Metro and the City of Los Angeles, the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) organized a Peer Review Panel of experts to reconsider the feasibility of Westside Corridor tunneling along the federally precluded Wilshire Boulevard segment in October 2005. The panel evaluated advances in worldwide tunneling technology and the safety of building and operating transit tunnels in the identified hazard zone along Wilshire Boulevard. The panel concluded that advances in tunneling technology and practice in the past 20 years would now permit that such tunneling would be feasible and could be undertaken at no greater risk than other subway systems in the United States. As a result, legislation was introduced in Congress to repeal the federal prohibition on subway construction along Wilshire Boulevard. The repeal of the prohibition was passed by Congress in 2007 and enacted into law in 2008.

In July 2006, the Metro Board of Directors authorized the resumption of an Alternatives Analysis study for all reasonable fixed guideway transit alternatives for the portion of the Westside Corridor north of the Exposition Corridor. Based on the findings of the APTA Peer Review Panel, the Board authorized the consideration of all reasonable alternatives for the Westside Extension Transit Corridor, including the previously excluded subway alternatives. An Early Scoping Notice to resume the Alternatives Analysis Study was issued by Metro and the Federal Transit Administration on October 1, 2007.

Purpose of the Alternatives Analysis Report

The purpose of the Alternatives Analysis Report is to focus on a specific transportation need (or set of needs) in a given corridor, identify alternative actions to address these needs, and generate the information needed to select a preferred project for implementation, or a smaller set of viable alternatives for further study. An Alternatives Analysis typically addresses such issues as costs, benefits, environmental and community impacts, financial feasibility, and community acceptance.

The Alternatives Analysis is the first step in the Federal Transit Administration's New Starts Project Planning and Development process. During the Alternatives Analysis process, a wide range of alternatives are identified and evaluated, the alternatives are screened against established criteria, and the most promising alternative(s) is (are) recommended for further evaluation in the next phase of the New Starts process.

Organization of the Alternatives Analysis Report

The Alternatives Analysis Report begins with a summary of the information contained in the entire report. The remainder of the report is organized into eight chapters:

- Executive Summary
- Chapter 1.0: Purpose and Need
- Chapter 2.0: Alternatives Considered for Early Scoping
- Chapter 3.0: Environmental Issues
- Chapter 4.0: Tunnel Feasibility Review
- Chapter 5.0: Urban Design
- Chapter 6.0: Financial Analysis
- Chapter 7.0: Comparative Analysis of Alternatives
- Chapter 8.0: Public Involvement Process and Agency Coordination and Consultation