



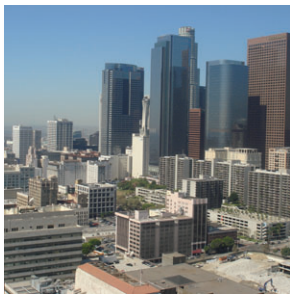
Introduction

The Regional Connector Transit Corridor project (Regional Connector) is a vital public transit infrastructure investment that would enhance investments already made in the existing Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) Rail system. It would link four distinct travel corridors covering over 80 miles across Los Angeles County through the center of downtown Los Angeles. Metro has envisioned this connection for nearly two decades beginning in the late 1980s/early 1990s. Figure ES-1 shows the regional Metro Rail lines expected to be in operation by the year 2035, and how the Regional Connector would serve as a central link between them.



Figure ES-1: Existing and Proposed Regional Metro Rail Lines (2035)

*The project area is
the largest regional
employment center
in Los Angeles
County*



The Regional Connector would serve communities across the region, allowing greater accessibility while also supporting population and employment growth in downtown Los Angeles. The proposed Regional Connector would directly link 7th Street/Metro Center Station (the Metro Blue Line terminus and Metro Expo Line terminus) located at 7th and Figueroa Streets, to the Metro Gold Line near Little Tokyo/Arts District Station at 1st and Alameda Streets. The project would include new stations downtown and would allow continuous train operations between Long Beach and Montclair and from East Los Angeles and the San Gabriel Valley to Santa Monica without the need to transfer. It would also provide passengers with direct trains into the heart of the business and civic districts, whereas the Metro Gold Line currently passes along the edge of downtown. The following map (Figure ES-2) illustrates the present gap in the light rail network between the Metro Blue and Gold Lines. They are currently connected by only the heavy rail Metro Red and Purple Lines requiring two transfers.

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 within downtown 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 in the historic structures of the Historic Core; and the culturally unique, mixed-uses of Little Tokyo and the Arts District. Figure ES-2 shows the general locations of these neighborhoods.

In addition to mobility benefits, the location of the Regional Connector project has the potential to improve the livability of the entire Los Angeles County region. The Regional Connector project fills the missing link in the Los Angeles rail network and, by virtue of its location, would afford the region with significant transportation, economic, land use, and environmental benefits. The analysis presented in this document shows that improved mobility to and through downtown Los Angeles has the potential to boost economic development and improve social justice by providing better access to employment, educational opportunities, and cultural activities. Improved transit connectivity would increase transit ridership which would also generate environmental benefits through reduced vehicle trips, less roadway congestion, and improved air quality.

In June 2008, Metro included the Regional Connector Transit Corridor project in its Draft Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) as a rail project in the Tier 1 Unfunded Strategic Plan. Measure R identified \$160 million for the Regional Connector. Additional funding will need to be secured to build and operate the line. This is consistent with the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) which was approved by the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) in May 2008.

The Regional Connector Transit Corridor Project Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (EIS/EIR) was made available to identified stakeholders, agencies, and the general public for review and comment for a 45-day review period from September 3, 2010 through October 18, 2010. On October 28, 2010, the Metro Board of Directors voted

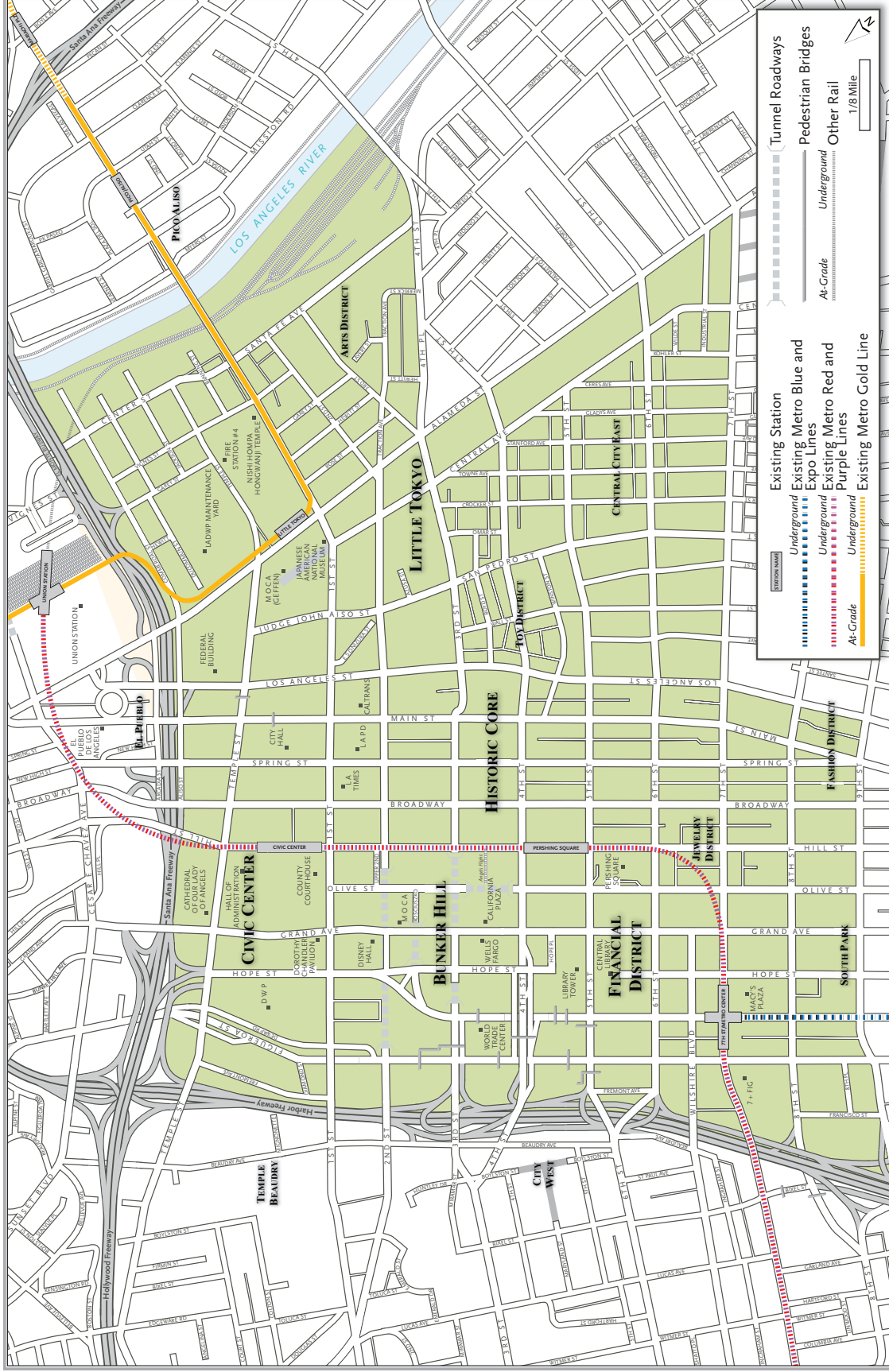


Figure ES-2: Project Area

The purpose of the proposed build alternatives, including the LPA, is to improve transit travel time and provide more reliable transit service

to designate the Fully Underground LRT Alternative without the Flower/5th/4th Street station as the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA). However, the project design would not preclude construction of a station at this location as a future, separate project.

Based on comments received on the Draft EIS/EIR and input received from community meetings held during preparation of this Final EIS/EIR, refinements were made to the LPA to reduce or avoid previously identified impacts. The refinements to the LPA were analyzed where potential differences in impacts from the Draft EIS/EIR were identified. Some portions of the Draft EIS/EIR pertaining to these refinements were recirculated for a 45-day public review between July 22, 2011 and September 6, 2011. No changes to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) impact findings or California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) impact determinations were identified as a result of refinements to the LPA or other developments since publication of the Supplemental EA/Recirculated Draft EIR Sections.

The remainder of this Executive Summary describes the purpose and need of the project, a description of the alternatives studied in this EIS/EIR, a summary comparison of the alternatives, a summary of the adverse and/or significant environmental impacts of the LPA, and information regarding avoidance, minimization and mitigation measures.

Purpose and Need

Purpose



The purpose of the proposed build alternatives, including the LPA, is to improve transit travel time and provide more reliable transit service. The project would 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 (currently under construction). This link would serve communities across the region, allowing greater accessibility while serving population and employment growth in downtown Los Angeles. Thus, the Regional Connector would benefit both riders moving through the downtown area and those whose destination is in the downtown area.

The Regional Connector is planned 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" (a trip with no transfers) from Long Beach to Montclair and from East Los Angeles and the San Gabriel Valley to Santa Monica.

Need

In evaluating the mobility and travel conditions within the project area, several issues emerged that revealed a need to provide improved transit connections and service within and across downtown Los Angeles. These needs include:

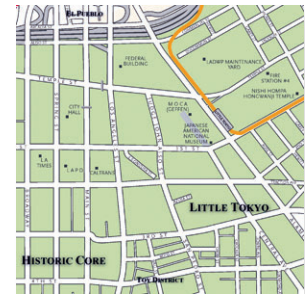
- Growth in population and employment will continue to draw both local and regional residents to the project area creating demand for transit services.

- Transit system expansions to the radial network centered on downtown Los Angeles will continue to funnel riders into the unconnected core creating concerns related to Metro Red and Purple Line capacity for connecting riders, crowded station platforms, and regional system schedule reliability.
- Transit dependent populations within the project area and along the existing light rail lines include low-income households, significant elderly populations, and a high percentage of zero car households.
- Travel demand data highlights the congested nature of the downtown core, the high percentage of commuters that come from outside of the project area, and the built up nature of the project area that prevents expansion of the road network.
- Transit usage requires multiple transfers for cross-town trips for both local and regional riders thereby increasing travel times.
- Local land use plans and policies, including the adopted City of Los Angeles General Plan Framework Element, Central City Community Plan, and Downtown Design Guidelines and Modified Street Standards, support increased transit alternatives, linking the regional system through downtown, and transit and pedestrian-friendly design in downtown communities.

Growth in population and employment will continue to draw both local and regional residents to the project area creating demand for transit services

Project Corridor

The project would link the regional destinations of Long Beach to Montclair and East Los Angeles and the San Gabriel Valley to Santa Monica without the need to transfer. 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 (Figure ES-2).



See Figure ES-2 on page ES-3

Description of Alternatives Studied in the Draft EIS/EIR

The Alternatives Analysis (AA) process identified and screened 36 potential transportation alternatives in light of the project's purpose and need, goals, and objectives. The AA process included initial technical analyses and community and public agency feedback gathered at meetings and public workshops. Alternatives considered in the AA represent the full spectrum of reasonable means of achieving the goals and objectives of the project. The AA evaluated the potential alternatives based on their environmental impacts, efficiency, financial feasibility, effectiveness, and equity. From the AA effort, alternatives emerged which were analyzed further in the Draft EIS/EIR and were confirmed and refined based on the public scoping process and community input received.

All proposed light rail transit (LRT) build alternatives studied in the Draft EIS/EIR would begin underground at the existing Metro Blue Line (and future Metro Expo Line) platform at the 7th Street/Metro Center Station. The tracks

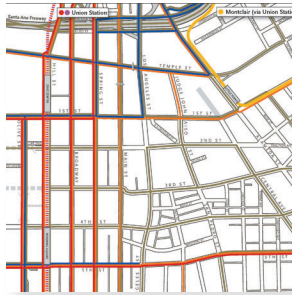
The AA process included initial technical analyses and community and public agency feedback

would extend in a northeastern direction to a new junction with the Metro Gold Line near Alameda Street. Three build alternatives were analyzed in the Draft EIS/EIR and are further described below.

In addition to the LRT alternatives, a No Build Alternative and a Transportation System Management (TSM) Alternative were also studied in the Draft EIS/EIR. The No Build and TSM Alternatives demonstrate how the regional transportation system would function if the proposed project was not implemented, and serve as benchmarks for measuring the potential impacts of the build alternatives.

No Build Alternative

The No Build Alternative is the future scenario without the TSM or any of the proposed build alternatives. The No Build Alternative does not include any major service improvements or new transportation infrastructure beyond what is listed in Metro's 2009 L RTP. Figure ES-3 illustrates the transit lines that currently serve the project area.

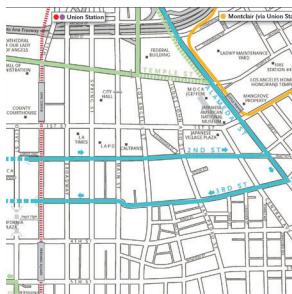


See Figure ES-3 on page ES-7

By the projection year of 2035, the Metro Expo Line to Santa Monica, Metro Purple Line to Westwood, Metro Crenshaw Line, Metro Green Line to the South Bay and LAX, and the Metro Gold Line to Azusa (which will ultimately run to Montclair) and the San Gabriel Valley will have opened, and a number of bus routes will have been reorganized and expanded to provide connections with these new rail lines. The transit network within the project area would otherwise be largely the same as it is now.

Transportation System Management Alternative

The TSM Alternative includes all of the provisions of the No Build Alternative, plus two new express shuttle bus lines linking the 7th Street/Metro Center and Union Stations. These buses would run frequently, just a few minutes apart, especially during peak hours. Enhanced bus stops would be located every two to three blocks to maximize coverage of the area surrounding the routes. Rail service would remain the same as for the No Build Alternative.



See Figure ES-4 on page ES-8

Build Alternatives

An LRT system consists of electric trains powered by overhead wires, typically operating in an urban transit setting. LRT uses conventional steel tracks, which have the flexibility to be placed in exclusive surface right-of-way, in tunnels, on elevated viaducts, in street medians, or in mixed flow traffic lanes. This allows light rail trains to operate in a variety of environments. From the AA effort, two build alternatives emerged which were analyzed further in the Draft EIS/EIR. These alternatives are:

- At-Grade Emphasis LRT Alternative
- Underground Emphasis LRT Alternative

Metro undertook a unique and intense community engagement process to shape and compose the Draft EIS/EIR. Based on this extensive public outreach effort, the Fully Underground LRT Alternative evolved to more adequately address the community of Little Tokyo's concerns regarding potential impacts of the other build alternatives. The Metro Board of Directors voted in February 2010 to add the Fully Underground LRT Alternative to the Draft EIS/EIR analysis.

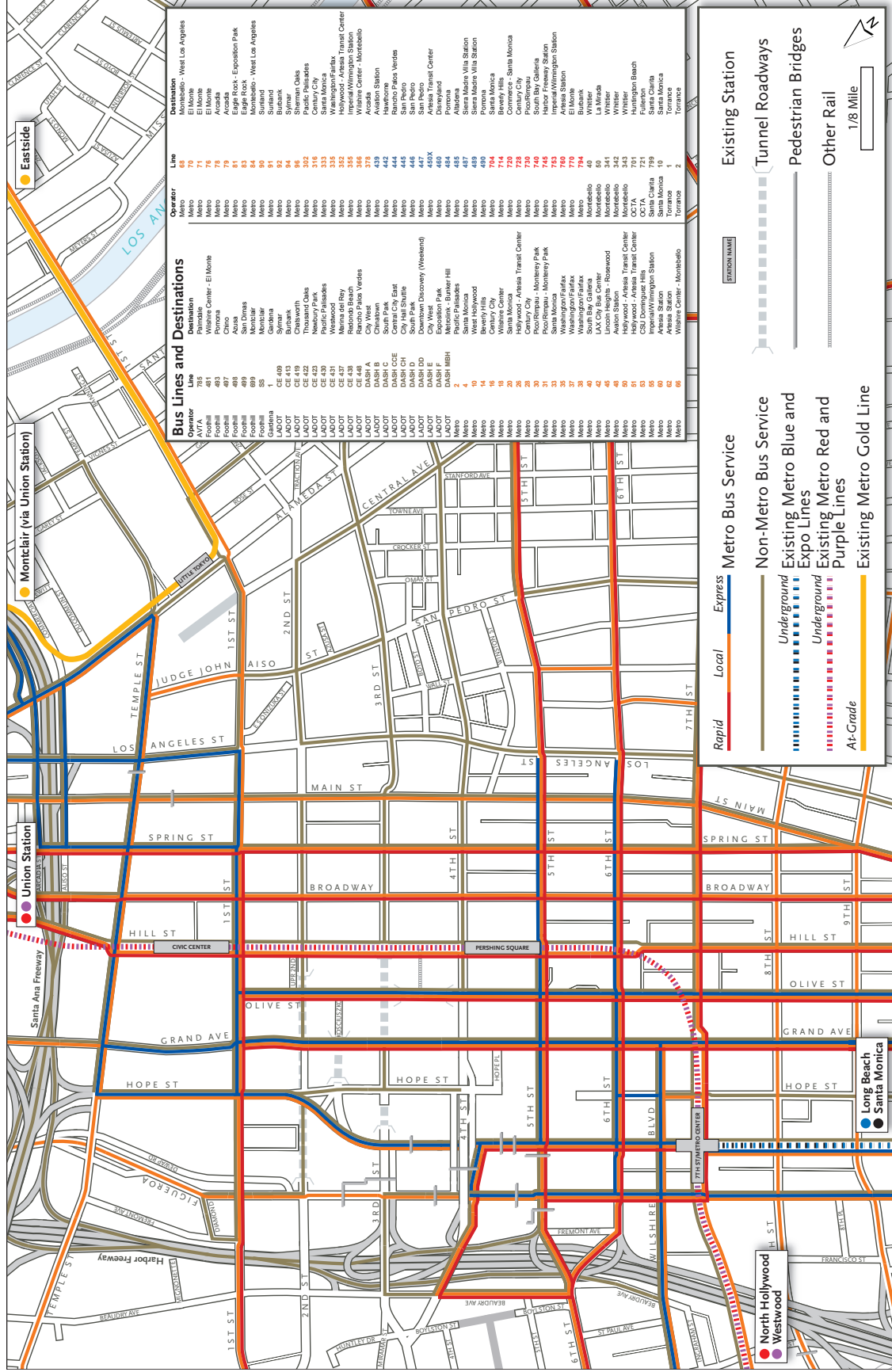


Figure ES-3: No Build Alternative

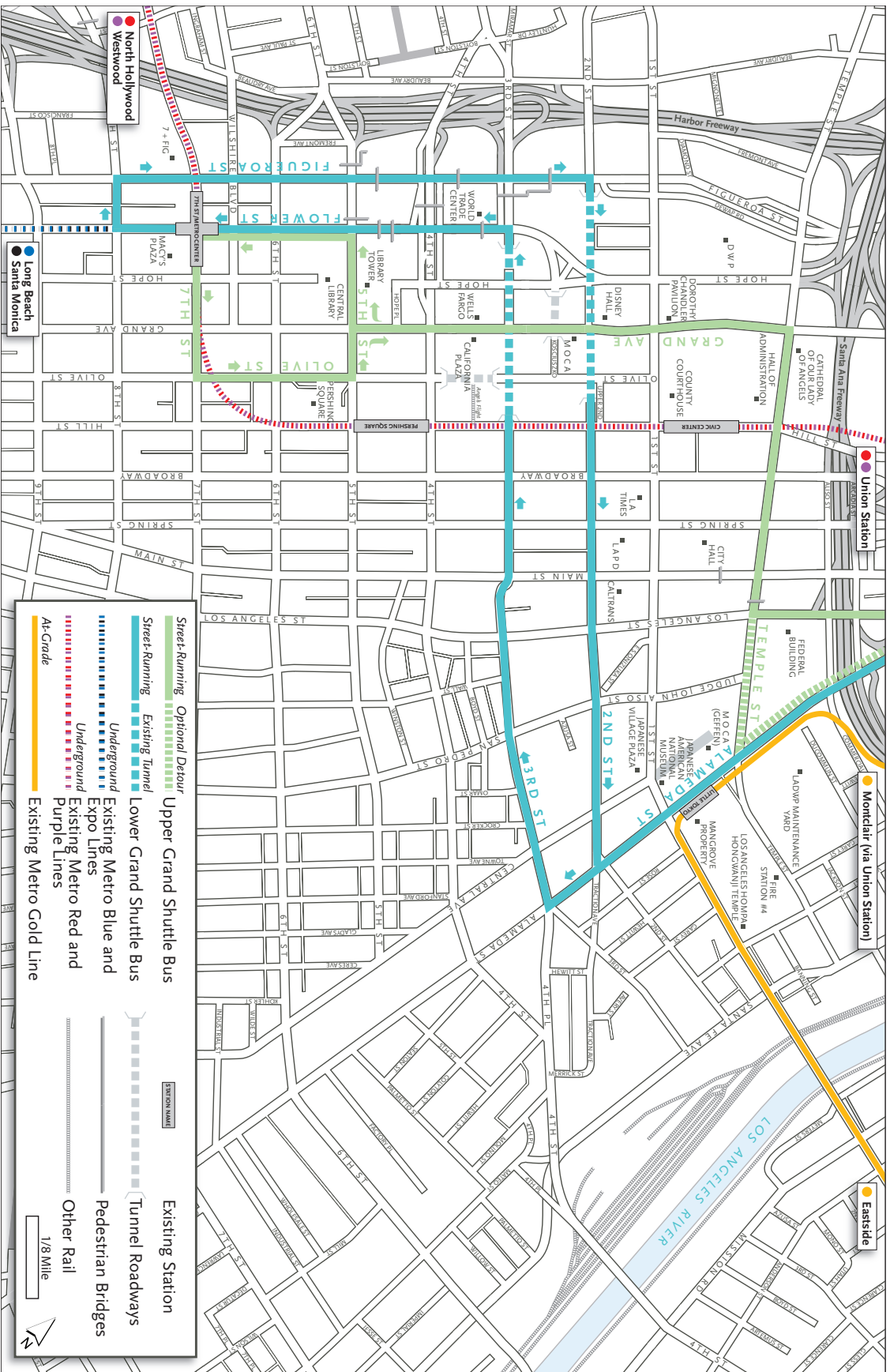


Figure ES-4: Transportation System Management Alternative

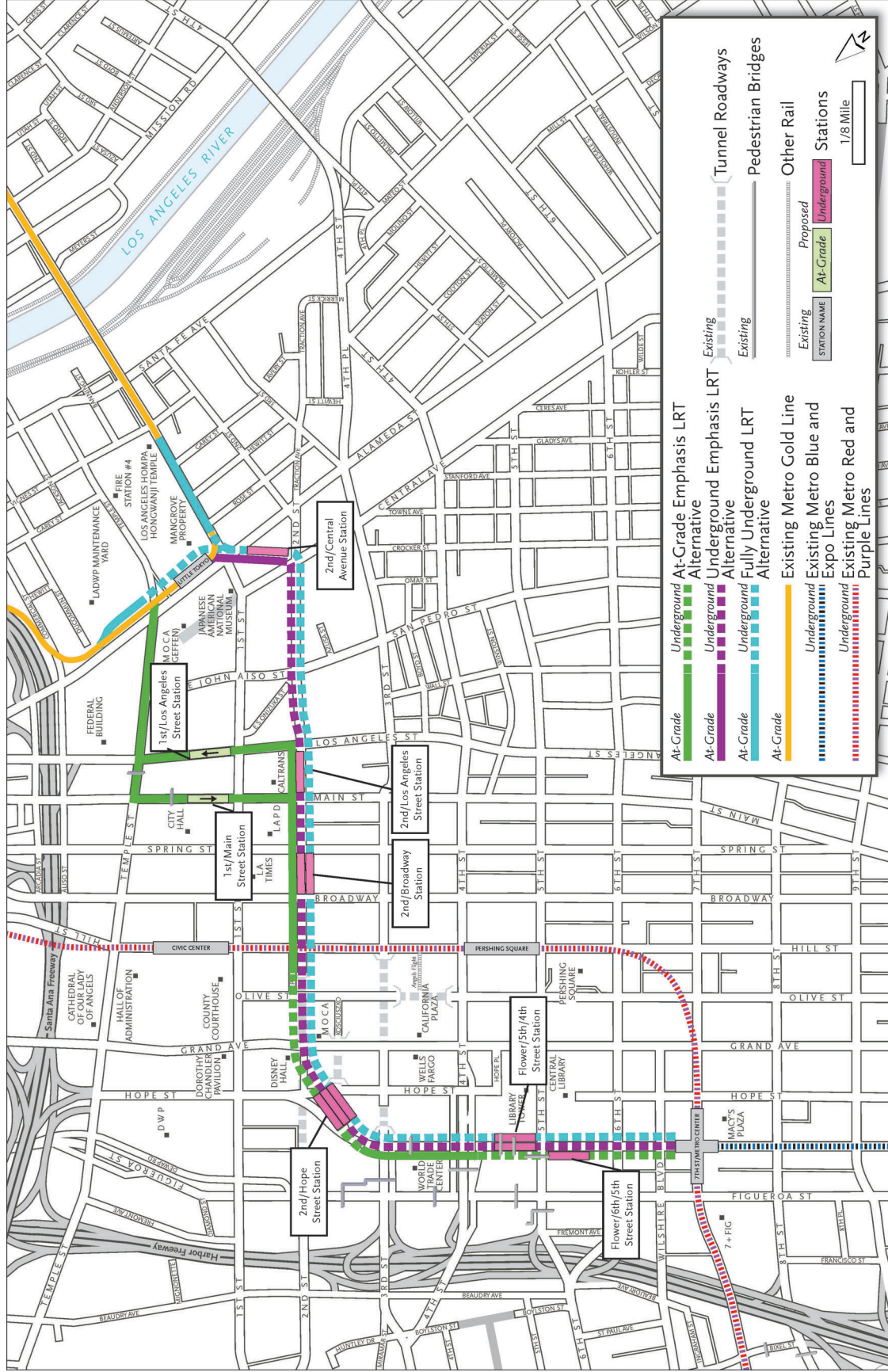


Figure ES-5: LRT Alignments and Stations Studied in the Draft EIS/EIR