

1.0 Introduction

This EIR has been prepared in compliance with CEQA PRC Section 21000 et seq. and the CEQA Guidelines (Section 15000 et seq.), as promulgated by the California Resources Agency and the Governor’s Office of Planning and Research. The purpose of this environmental document is to disclose the potential environmental impacts associated with the proposed project.

1.1 Existing Conditions at Los Angeles Union Station

LAUS was opened for service in 1939 and is the central hub for regional transportation in Southern California, providing direct linkages for the Metro rail system (e.g., Red, Purple, and Gold Lines), Metrolink commuter trains, Amtrak intercity and long-distance trains, and Metro and municipal bus systems.

The existing LAUS does not have adequate operational and passenger capacity to serve future rail transportation needs. Rail yard operations and passenger circulation at LAUS are currently constrained, congested, and nearing capacity. The combination of limited throat track and stub-end track capacity, along with the limited concourse capacity resulting from the current configuration of the pedestrian passageway and platforms, restrict Metro’s ability to accommodate the forecasted increase in rail and transit service (including accommodation of the planned HSR system) and corresponding increase in passenger capacity within the existing facility.

1.1.1 Limited Throat Tracks and Stub-Tracks Capacity

Under existing conditions, inbound and outbound trains are required to operate over the same track network into and out of LAUS via the throat. As a result, the capacity of the rail yard is operationally constrained because opposing train movements take approximately twice as long to clear track segments than under a scenario with the proposed run-through tracks in place.

The throat design at the entrance to the LAUS rail yard limits the number of trains that can enter and exit LAUS during the 3-hour AM and PM peak operating periods. The current pull in/back out movement requires trains to pull into the terminal and then reverse their direction of travel after unloading or loading passengers. The *Run-Through Tracks Project EIS/EIR* explains that scheduling reliability begins to deteriorate as an increased number of trains attempt to use LAUS, primarily during peak hours. This deterioration is expected to continue to increase as additional trains attempt to move into and out of LAUS within constrained time periods. If trains are delayed, their planned “slots” for arrival/unloading or loading/departure could be lost, which could interfere with other train slots. With LAUS approaching its overall capacity, there are likely to be even fewer opportunities for schedule recovery with the current stub-end configuration.

The proposed project is the central element of the SCORE Program that calls for significant investments in rail infrastructure in the Southern California region. Metrolink administers the SCORE Program and estimates the project-related capacity enhancements at LAUS would facilitate forecasted increases in

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ridership, reduce train idling time at LAUS, and facilitate other cumulative benefits for the region, including a regional reduction of GHG) and VMT.

1.1.2 Limited Passenger Concourse Capacity

LAUS functions as a regional transfer point for multiple transit modes in Los Angeles and throughout Southern California. These transit operations occur at the following key locations within LAUS: the rail yard, Patsaouras Transit Plaza (off Vignes Street), Amtrak Thruway bus plaza (on the north side of LAUS), Gold Line Station, and Red and Purple Line subway station. These transit modes are connected via the existing 28-foot-wide reinforced concrete pedestrian passageway located under the rail yard platforms (pedestrian passageway).

The pedestrian passageway connects the historic ticketing and waiting halls at LAUS to the East Portal Building and Patsaouras Transit Plaza. The current configuration of the pedestrian passageway causes ponding during rain events (water drains down stairways and also down the ramps that provide passenger access up to the rail platforms) and based on the current level of ridership, restricts cross-campus circulation and the associated access to and from transit modes served at LAUS.

The current layout and arrangement of the existing rail yard and its relationship to the existing pedestrian passageway is constricted, highly congested during peak travel hours, and unable to provide capacity to accommodate the forecasted increase of transit riders. Platform 1 (serving the Gold Line) is a high-level platform that is 30 feet wide. Platforms 2 through 7 (serving Metrolink and Amtrak) are low-level platforms that are 21 feet wide, which is 9 feet less than the SCRRRA Engineering Standard 3003 of 30 feet. The existing 21-foot-wide platforms provide 30 inches of clear wheelchair aisles on each side of the platform stair/ramp portals, which are over 100 feet long. Wheelchairs coming from opposite directions cannot pass each other and turning a wheelchair around can only be accomplished by encroaching into the safety zone of the platform. The current combination of narrow platforms with insufficient space for passenger and baggage services in the rail yard area, in addition to non-ADA-compliant connections to and from the rail yard and pedestrian passageway limit the functionality and overall circulation through LAUS.

1.2 Project Overview

Metro is proposing the Link US project to improve operational efficiency, capacity, flexibility, and connectivity for existing and future regional and intercity rail services at LAUS while minimizing the impacts on the environment; accommodate the planned HSR system and forecasted increases in passengers; and improve and increase pedestrian access to the train platforms, passenger flow and capacity, and accessibility for passengers with disabilities.

The proposed project would transform LAUS from a “stub-end tracks station” into a “run-through tracks station” with a new passenger concourse that would improve the efficiency of the station and accommodate forecasted increases in passengers and transportation demands in the region.

1.3 EIR Intended Uses

All discretionary projects in the State of California are required to comply with CEQA if implementation of the project has the potential to result in either a direct physical change to the environment or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change to the environment. More specifically, a project requires environmental review if it incorporates a discretionary action undertaken by a public agency. Discretionary actions are activities that are supported in whole, or in part, through public agency contracts, grants, subsidies, etc.; or activities requiring a public agency to issue a lease, permit, license, certificate, or other entitlement. If the project may have a “significant” impact on any environmental resource, an EIR must be prepared. In accordance with Section 15121(a) of the CEQA Guidelines (California Administrative Code, Title 14, Division 6, Chapter 3), the purpose of an EIR is as follows:

An EIR is an informational document, which will inform public agency decision makers and the public generally of the significant environmental effect of a project, identify possible ways to minimize the significant effects, and describe reasonable alternatives to the project.

Pursuant to Section 15378(d) of the CEQA Guidelines, Metro, acting as the CEQA lead agency, has identified a CEQA proposed project (proposed project) in this EIR to provide an accurate, stable, and finite description of the “development proposal for the purpose of environmental analysis.” Identification of the proposed project is intended to facilitate public comment at the local and state level. Metro is preparing this project-level EIR to provide information to public agencies, the general public, and decision makers, regarding the project-specific and cumulative environmental impacts of the proposed project. This EIR also identifies required mitigation measures that would avoid or reduce significant impacts resulting from implementation of the proposed project.

This EIR will be used by Metro to make decisions regarding project approval and implementation. It also may be used by CEQA responsible and trustee agencies (i.e., local jurisdictions and state agencies) in the event that permits or discretionary approvals from these agencies are required for the project.

1.3.1 CEQA Responsible and Trustee Agencies

The information in this EIR may also be used by other agencies involved with the project that have a responsibility under CEQA, including but not limited to, the following:

- Caltrans
- CHSRA
- SCRRRA
- City of Los Angeles

CDFW is a CEQA trustee agency (Section 15386[a] of the CEQA Guidelines) and must be notified if the project involves fish and wildlife of the state’s rare and endangered native plants, wildlife areas, and ecological reserves.

1.4 Document Organization

The content and format of this EIR meet the current requirements of CEQA and the CEQA Guidelines. This EIR is organized into the following sections with supporting technical appendices, so the reader can easily obtain information about the proposed project and its specific issues.

This Final EIR includes an environmental evaluation of the Draft EIR project and the Final EIR project. For ease of review, the Final EIR project description and environmental evaluation is consolidated within Section 2.0, Section 10.0, and Appendix P of this Final EIR. Revisions to the remaining sections of the Final EIR, including Sections 3.2 through 3.13 were made in response to comments. Where applicable, revisions are also made to distinguish the Draft EIR project and Final EIR project with modifications.

Executive Summary: This section provides a summary of the potential impacts, mitigation measures of the proposed project and impact conclusions, and a summary of alternatives to the proposed project. Areas of controversy and issues to be resolved are discussed.

Section 1 – Introduction: This section describes the purpose and use of the EIR and the organization of the EIR. This section provides a description of the NOP and scoping process. A list of environmental topics addressed in the EIR is provided.

Section 2 – Project Description: This section provides a detailed description of the proposed project, project components, and discretionary actions, as well as identifies the overall objectives for the proposed project.

Section 3 – Environmental Impact Analysis: For each environmental issue, this section presents the existing environmental setting and conditions before project implementation, regulatory environment, methods and assumptions used in the impact analysis, thresholds for determining significance, impacts that would result from the project, mitigation measures that would eliminate or reduce significant impacts, and the level of significance of each impact area after implementation of mitigation.

Section 4 – Cumulative Impacts: This section identifies cumulative impacts.

Section 5 – Alternatives: This section evaluates the environmental impacts of the No Project/No Build Alternative, Build Alternative (dedicated track alignment with an at-grade passenger concourse), and the Reduced Historic Impact Alternative. Additionally, this section identifies an environmentally superior alternative.

Section 6 – Other Statutory Considerations: This section identifies growth-inducing impacts, significant irreversible environmental changes, impacts found not to be significant, and significant and unavoidable environmental impacts.

Section 7 – Response to Comments (Final EIR): ~~Following completion of the review process for the Draft EIR, this section will~~ contains the written comments received by Metro on the Draft EIR during the public comment period and Metro’s responses to those comments.

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Section 8 – References: This section identifies the documents (printed references) and individuals (personal communications) consulted in preparing this EIR and also lists the individuals involved in preparing this EIR.

Section 9 – EIR Preparers and Organizations and Persons Consulted: This section identifies the individuals involved in preparing this EIR and the organizations and persons consulted.

Section 10 – Final EIR Project Supporting Documentation: This section includes documentation to support the Final EIR project environmental evaluation.

Technical Appendices: This section presents data supporting the analysis or contents in this EIR. All technical appendices are provided electronically on a CD in a pocket on the back cover of this document. In addition, copies of these reports are posted on Metro's website (metro.net/projects/link-us/) and available on file at Metro Headquarters (One Gateway Plaza, Los Angeles, California 90012) during normal business hours and are available at local public libraries.

1.5 Notice of Preparation and Scoping Meeting

Metro began the environmental review process pursuant to CEQA by sending out an NOP (Appendix A of this EIR). The NOP was first distributed locally to interested local public agencies and the general public, and then to the State Clearinghouse for distribution to state responsible and trustee agencies. The CEQA-required 30-day NOP review period began May 27, 2016, and identified that Metro intended to prepare an EIR for the proposed project. The NOP served as a chance for interested local public agencies and the general public to comment on the project and the scope and content of environmental issues to be examined in the EIR. Pursuant to CEQA, the NOP review period is 30 days; therefore, the comment period closed June 27, 2016.

The NOP was distributed to the public through mail and advertisements. The NOP was also available on the project website. The NOP was also published in several local, multicultural publications in different languages, including the following: *Los Angeles Downtown News* (English), *La Opinion* (Spanish), *Rafu Shimpo* (Japanese), and the *Chinese LA Daily News* (Chinese). These are the predominant newspapers circulated in the neighborhoods around LAUS and cover the main languages spoken in these areas.

In addition, Metro held a public scoping meeting for the project to further obtain input as to the scope of environmental issues to be evaluated in the EIR. The scoping meeting was held June 2, 2016, from 6:00-8:00 PM on the first floor plaza of Metro Headquarters (One Gateway Plaza, Los Angeles, California 90012).

At the scoping meeting, members of the public were invited to ask questions regarding the proposed project and the environmental review process and comment both verbally and in writing on the scope and content of the EIR. Written comments received during the 30-day review period for the NOP, as well as during the public scoping meeting, are included in Appendix A of this EIR.

1.6 Environmental Topics Addressed

This EIR addresses the potential environmental impacts of the proposed project and was prepared following input from the public and the responsible and affected agencies, through the EIR scoping process, as discussed previously. The contents of this EIR were established based on public and agency input. This following environmental topics are analyzed in this EIR:

- Land Use and Planning
- Transportation and Traffic
- Aesthetics
- Air Quality and Global Climate Change
- Noise and Vibration
- Biological Resources
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Geology and Soils
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Utilities/Service Systems and Energy Conservation
- Cultural Resources
- Public Services

1.7 Draft EIR Processing

This Draft EIR ~~is being~~was distributed to interested agencies, stakeholder organizations, and individuals. This distribution ensureds that interested parties ~~have had~~have had an opportunity to express their views regarding the environmental impacts of the project and to ensure that information pertinent to permits, authorizations, and discretionary approvals ~~is~~was provided to decision makers, lead agencies, and CEQA-responsible and trustee agencies. ~~This document is~~The Draft EIR was available for review by the public at Metro's office during normal business hours. The document ~~will~~was also ~~be~~be available on Metro's website.

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1.8 Comments Requested

This Draft EIR is being distributed for a 45-day period that will begin from January 17, 2019, and end through March 4, 2019. Written comments should be sent to the following address:

Vincent Chio
Link US Deputy Project Manager
Metro Headquarters
One Gateway Plaza (Mail Stop MS 99-17-2)
Los Angeles, California 90012

Comments may be also provided via online comment form at metro.net/linkus or via email. Please interested parties were requested to include the project title in the subject line, attach comments in Microsoft Word format, and include the commenter's U.S. Postal Service mailing address. Email comments should be directed to LinkUnionStation@metro.net. Metro will has responded to these comments in the this Final EIR. Metro requested All public comments must be received by 5:00 PM, March 4, 2019, to ensure incorporation into the Final EIR.

Public Hearing: Metro will hold a public hearing to explain the project and the Draft EIR analysis. Comments from the public may be submitted at the public hearing via comment card or court reporter. Information regarding the public hearing is provided below.

Date: Tuesday, January 29, 2019

Time: 6:00 – 8:00 PM

Location: Metro Headquarters,
One Gateway Plaza
Board Room, 3rd Floor
Los Angeles, California 90012

Once all comments have been assembled and reviewed, responses will be prepared to address significant environmental issues that have been raised in the comments. The responses will be included in the this Final EIR.

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