

DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT/
DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

for the

EASTSIDE TRANSIT CORRIDOR PHASE 2 PROJECT

prepared by the

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION

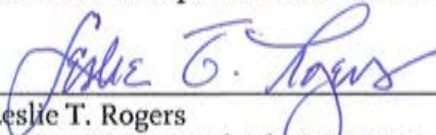
and the

LOS ANGELES COUNTY
METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY

Pursuant to:

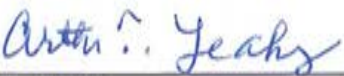
National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, § 102 (42 United States Code [USC] § 4332); Federal Transit Law (49 USC Chapter 53); 49 USC § 303 (formerly Department of Transportation Act of 1966 § 4(f)); National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, § 106 (16 USC § 470f); Clean Air Act (42 USC § 7401 et seq.); Clean Water Act, Section 404 (33 USC § 1344); Endangered Species Act (7 USC § 136; 16 USC § 1531 et seq.); 49 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) § 622.101; 23 CFR Parts 771 and 774; 40 CFR Parts 1500-1508; Executive Order 11990 (Protection of Wetlands); Executive Order 11988 (Floodplain Management); Executive Order 12898 (Environmental Justice); California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), Public Resources Code § 21000 et seq.; and the State of California's CEQA Guidelines, California Administrative Code, § 15000 et seq.

FTA may issue a single Final Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision document pursuant to Pub. L. 112-141, 126 Stat. 405, Section 1319(b) unless FTA determines statutory criteria or practicability considerations preclude issuance of the combined document pursuant to Section 1319.



Leslie T. Rogers
Region IX Regional Administrator
Federal Transit Administration

Date: 8-12-14



Arthur T. Leahy
Chief Executive Officer
Los Angeles County
Metropolitan Transportation Authority

Date: 7-2-14

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DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT/ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

LEAD AGENCIES: Federal Transit Administration, U.S. Department of Transportation and Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority

STATE CLEARINGHOUSE NO. 2010011062

TITLE OF PROPOSED ACTION: Eastside Transit Corridor Phase 2 Project

ABSTRACT: The Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) proposes to implement a light rail transit (LRT) project that would extend the Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension from the existing Atlantic Station to the east by 6.9 to 9.5 miles. The proposed build alternatives would terminate near State Route 60 (SR 60)/Peck Road or Washington Boulevard and Lambert Road. The Eastside Transit Corridor Phase 2 project area encompasses over 50 square miles of communities to the east and southeast of downtown Los Angeles. It includes portions of the cities of Commerce, Los Angeles, Montebello, Monterey Park, Pico Rivera, Rosemead, Santa Fe Springs, South El Monte, Whittier, and portions of unincorporated Los Angeles County, which include East Los Angeles and west Whittier-Los Nietos. Alternatives studied include a No Build Alternative, a Transportation System Management (TSM) Alternative, and two LRT build alternatives as follows:

- No Build Alternative
- TSM Alternative
- State Route 60 (SR 60) LRT Alternative
- Washington Boulevard LRT Alternative

This report is a combined Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (Draft EIS/EIR), satisfying the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). This Draft EIS/EIR defines the alternatives studied and describes each alternative's associated potential transportation and environmental impacts, capital costs, and potential funding sources. Potential areas of impact include transit, traffic, parking, land use/neighborhoods, land acquisition, displacement and relocation, equity and environmental justice considerations, visual quality, air quality, climate change, noise and vibration, geology, soils and seismicity, exposure to hazardous substances, water resources, biological resources, energy resources, safety and security, historic, archaeological and paleontological resources, community facilities and parklands, construction impacts, and other CEQA determinations. Mitigation measures for the impacts of the alternatives are also identified. The information contained in this document will be used by the Metro Board of Directors to make a decision on whether to implement the project and to select, from among the alternatives and alignment options under consideration, a locally preferred alternative in conjunction with the Federal Transit Administration for implementation.

Additional written comments and/or questions concerning this document should be directed to:

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PREFACE

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) have prepared this Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (Draft EIS/EIR) to solicit agency and public comment on a proposed major transit investment in Los Angeles County, California. FTA is the lead agency under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Metro is the lead agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Caltrans is a cooperating agency as delegated by FHWA under Section 1305 of the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21). The proposed action is a light rail transit (LRT) project that would extend the existing Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension 6.9 to 9.5 miles east to South El Monte or Whittier. The project would provide residents and businesses in the Eastside communities with an enhanced transit link to the Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension and the regional rail system. The proposed granting of federal funds for the project is the federal action that necessitates analysis under NEPA.

Studies of major rail transit infrastructure investments on the Eastside date back to the 1980s. In 2009, Metro completed an Alternatives Analysis Report and an addendum to that report that evaluated transit mode and alignment alternatives in the Eastside Transit Corridor. This resulted in the screening of over 47 alternatives down to two alternatives. The Eastside Transit Corridor Phase 2 project is included in Metro's *Long Range Transportation Plan* and is part of the *Regional Transportation Plan* adopted by the Southern California Association of Governments, the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization, in 2012.

This Draft EIS/EIR is designed to take the decision process one step further, by evaluating the LRT alternatives in greater detail. These include:

- **Project concept alternatives** – Two light rail alternatives are analyzed, representing different routes with at-grade/aerial configurations;
- **Alignment options** – The Draft EIS/EIR considers an optional route for a segment of one of the alternatives;
- **Configuration options** – Configuration options (aerial versus at-grade) are considered for segments of one of the alternatives; and
- **Other components** – Other decisions to be made based on the Draft EIS/EIR such as the location of a maintenance yard and other alignment features.

This Draft EIS/EIR also analyzes a No Build Alternative and Transportation System Management (TSM) Alternative.

This Draft EIS/EIR presents the results of a comprehensive analysis of the alternatives. In Chapter 1, the Draft EIS/EIR presents the purpose and need for a transit investment within the Eastside Transit Corridor Phase 2 project area. Chapter 2 summarizes the alternatives considered, including physical features and operating characteristics. Chapter 3 summarizes the transportation benefits and impacts of each alternative. Environmental factors, impacts, and mitigation are discussed in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 contains the Section 4(f) evaluation. Chapter 6 addresses each alternative's capital cost and funding sources, while Chapter 7 addresses public and agency outreach. More detailed technical documentation, identified in the Table of Contents, is available for those interested in the analysis methodology and results appendices.

During the Draft EIS/EIR circulation period, Metro will hold four public hearings to receive oral and written testimony on the document from the general public. Public hearing locations are in the project area. Metro will provide a notice of these public involvement meetings in compliance with NEPA and CEQA. A comprehensive effort to inform the public through email, mail, print, broadcast and digital media, flyers, social networking, and other means will be undertaken on a similar scale with previous rounds of meetings. Public hearing times and locations will be:

Saturday, September 27, 2014
9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.
Pico Rivera Senior Center
9200 Mines Avenue
Pico Rivera, CA 90660

Monday, September 29, 2014
6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.
Quiet Cannon Banquet Center
901 Via San Clemente
Montebello, CA 90640

Tuesday, September 30, 2014
6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.
Uptown Whittier Senior Center
13225 Walnut Street
Whittier, CA 90602

Wednesday, October 1, 2014
6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.
South El Monte Senior Center
1556 Central Avenue
South El Monte, CA 91733

The 60-day comment period will begin on August 22, 2014 and end on October 21, 2014. After the 60-day circulation period closes, the Metro Board will consider the adoption of a Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) after considering the alternatives and evaluation results in this Draft EIS/EIR, written comments on the document, and testimony received at the public hearings. During preliminary engineering (PE), the project will be further refined as more detailed decisions are made within the adopted project scope. The PE phase will also include completing NEPA and CEQA processes with a Final EIS/EIR and a Record of Decision (ROD). A federal commitment to fund the project would not be made until after issuance of the ROD. FTA may issue a single Final Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision document pursuant to Pub. L. 112-141, 126 Stat. 405, Section 1319(b) unless FTA determines statutory criteria or practicability considerations preclude issuance of the combined document pursuant to Section 1319.

Issuance of the Final EIS/EIR to the public will be dependent upon Metro's ability to develop a constrained financial plan which demonstrates construction initiating within three years after issuance of the ROD, the time frame by which information within an EIS/EIR is still valid. If the publication of the Final EIS/EIR occurs sometime prior to 2026 (likely within the next five to 10 years), a Supplemental Draft EIS will be required prior to its publication.

The project is currently included within the constrained component of Metro's LRTP and the 2012-2035 RTP, which commit funding to the project starting in 2026. This commitment is based on the availability of funds from Measure R, which funds \$1.25 billion of the project starting in FY 2026. Metro's LRTP envisions the project to begin construction between 2027 and 2035 and to be in operations in 2035.

In an effort to implement the project sooner and to advance the issuance of the Final EIS/EIR, thereby reducing costs and providing new services earlier than originally planned, the Metro Board is pursuing additional funding mechanisms for projects planned for the later years of Measure R. Metro's effort includes the second part of its America Fast Forward legislation, a new class of Qualified Tax Credit Bonds for Transportation.

Measure R was amended by the Metro Board of Directors in June 2013 to reflect changes to the availability date of Measure R funds for Eastside Transit Corridor Phase 2 and other projects. This amendment reflected the availability of funds for the Eastside Transit Corridor Phase 2 project prior to 2024, but only if certain conditions are met. The change in Measure R funding availability is conditioned on meeting several threshold tests, including passage of the America Fast Forward Tax Credit Bond program. If these conditions are met and the funds are available, then the Metro Board of Directors can amend or reflect this change in availability in the LRTP. As such, the financial plan contained in the Final EIS/EIR will reflect the Measure R amendment and will clearly identify the timeframe in which Measure R funds are available for this project.

In order to accelerate a project in the LRTP, the funds must be available and the Metro Board must approve an amendment to the 2009 LRTP or an update to the overall LRTP, approving the project, its new schedule, and its new funding. Should this occur, and the new dates of construction are known, a supplemental environmental analysis will be conducted, if warranted.

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