1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Study Background

As the principal transportation connection between East Los Angeles and the Ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles, the I-710 Corridor plays an important role in the regional, statewide and national transportation system, serving both person trips and goods movement needs. Figure 1.1-1 provides a project location map for the I-710 Corridor within the greater Los Angeles region of Southern California. The I-710 freeway is a major north-south link in the freeway/highway network that serves the heart of the region.

The I-710 freeway currently experiences high levels of congestion and emissions during the peak hours, a condition that is exacerbated by heavy truck volumes, design problems, and operational choke points along this 20-mile segment of the freeway. In addition, trucks and passenger vehicles that use surface streets and arterials as a means to avoid freeway congestion on I-710 contribute to existing traffic and quality of life concerns for the communities that line the I-710 Corridor. Moreover, travel conditions are expected to worsen in future years as projected increases in freight and vehicular traffic continues to outstrip available capacity on I-710.

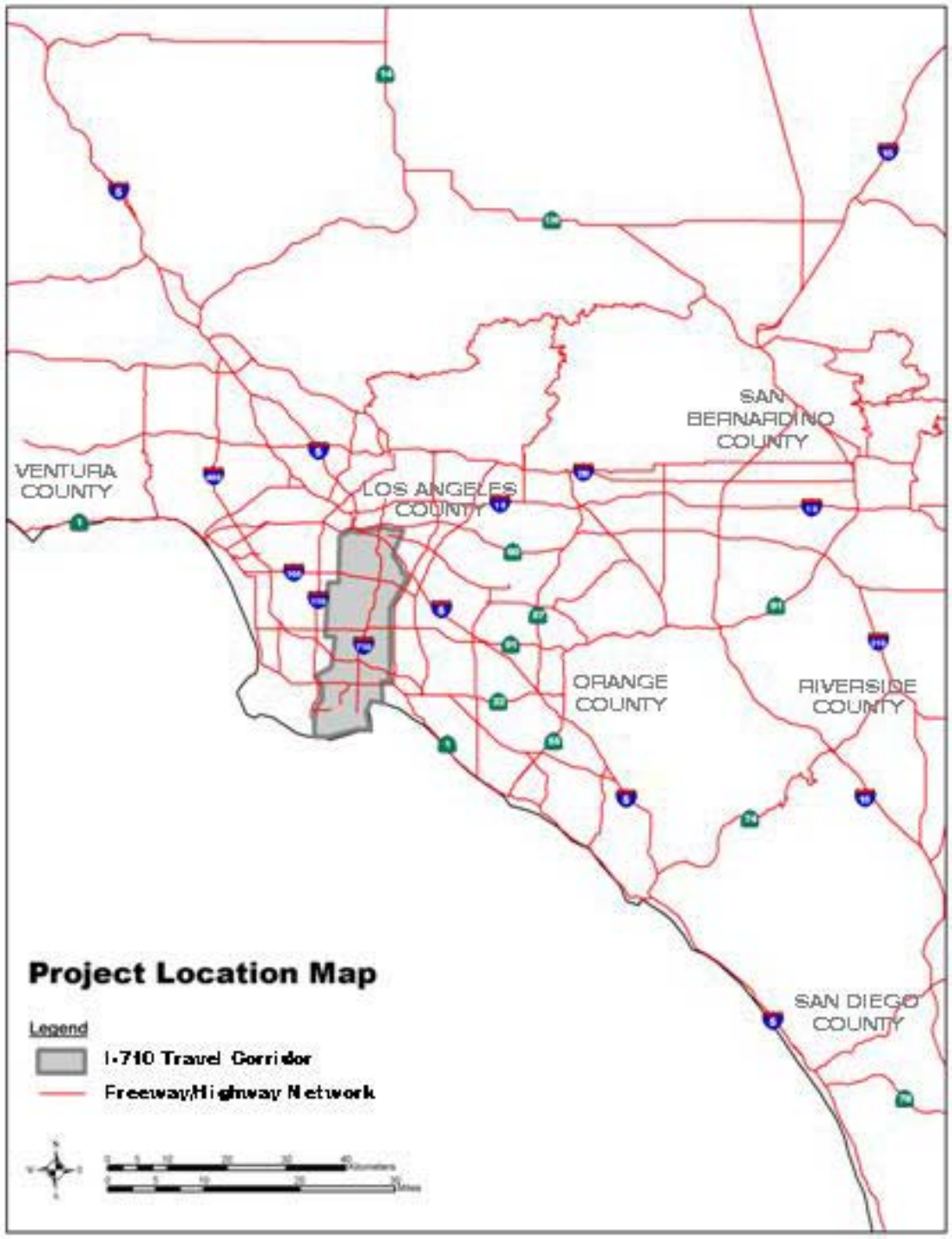
In May 2000, a memorandum of understanding (MOU) was executed among four partner agencies to guide the preparation of a major corridor study for the I-710 Corridor: (1) Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA); (2) Gateway Cities Council of Governments (COG); (3) California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) District 7; and (4) Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG).

The I-710 Major Corridor Study was undertaken to analyze the traffic congestion and mobility problems along the I-710 travel corridor and to develop transportation solutions to address these problems as well as some of the quality of life concerns experienced in the I-710 Corridor. The I-710 Study follows the requirements of a Regionally Significant Transportation Investment Study (RSTIS) – a formal planning process used by transportation agencies in the six-county Southern California region to make better decisions about transportation. It is a collaborative process that involves the public, local cities and communities, concerned citizens, environmental groups, business interests, transportation and environmental resource agencies, and elected officials.

A key outcome of the I-710 Major Corridor Study is the selection of a locally preferred strategy to carry into the environmental phase of project development. As illustrated in Section 9 of this report, the Locally Preferred Strategy is a package of both near-term and long-term transportation improvements. This I-710 Major Corridor Study also provides preliminary cost estimates and related technical information describing the Locally Preferred Strategy that will enable project sponsors to seek funding for future phases such as the environmental studies, project design, and eventually, implementation.

The *I-710 Major Corridor Study Final Report* summarizes and documents the major steps that led to the selection of the Locally Preferred Strategy for the I-710 Corridor. This report also identifies and describes issues raised by project decision-makers and participating agencies during the I-710 Study that will require further consideration as the project enters into subsequent phases of analysis and project development.

Figure 1.1-1
Project Location Map



Source: Parsons Brinckerhoff, 2001.

1.2 I-710 Corridor Study Area

The I-710 Study Area encompasses the sphere of influence of the I-710 travel corridor. The project study area is about twenty miles long and a little over six miles wide. The Study Area boundaries are generally defined as follows:

- State Route 60 (northern boundary)
- Lakewood Boulevard / Rosemead Boulevard (eastern boundary)
- Ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles (southern boundary)
- Wilmington Avenue / Alameda Street (western boundary)

A map of the I-710 Study Area is shown in Figure 1.2-1. The I-710 Corridor contains, either wholly or in part, the following communities and local jurisdictions:

- City of Bell
- City of Bell Gardens
- City of Bellflower
- City of Carson
- City of Commerce
- City of Compton
- City of Cudahy
- City of Downey
- City of Huntington Park
- City of Lakewood
- City of Long Beach
- City of Los Angeles
- City of Lynwood
- City of Maywood
- City of Paramount
- City of Signal Hill
- City of South Gate
- City of Vernon
- Rancho Dominguez (unincorporated Los Angeles County)
- East Los Angeles (unincorporated Los Angeles County)

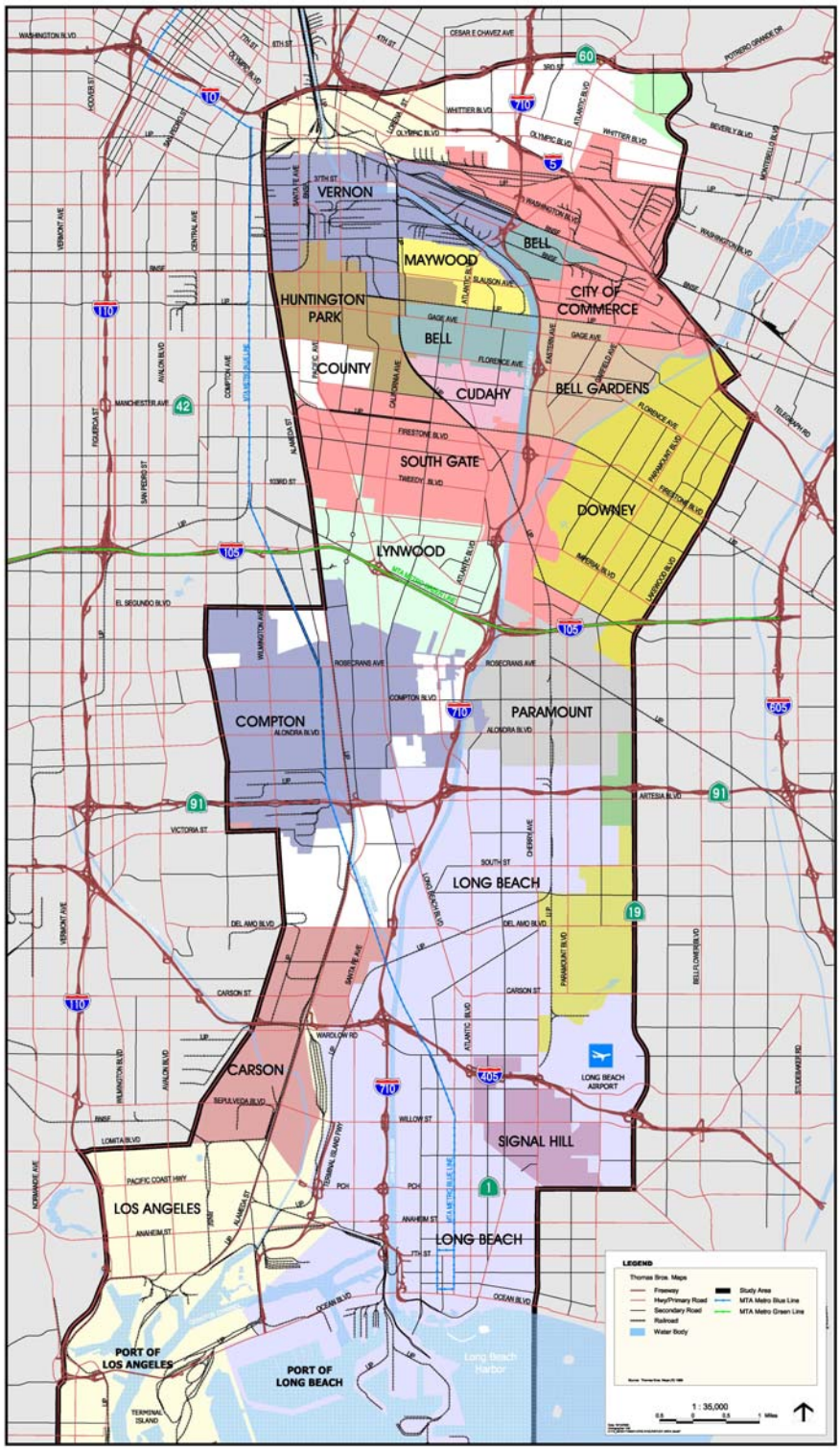
1.3 Project Organization

The I-710 Major Corridor Study was conducted through the cooperative effort of several agencies, organizations, and localities with jurisdiction in the I-710 Corridor Study Area as well as through the active participation of numerous community groups, interested citizens, and project stakeholders.

Daily project management and oversight of the consultant team(s) was provided by the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority in partnership with three other principal agencies: Caltrans, Gateway Cities COG, and SCAG. The principal partners met monthly to guide the activities of the I-710 Major Corridor Study. A list of the consultant firms that played a role in the I-710 Study or that prepared technical source material is included in Appendix A of this report.

The I-710 Oversight Policy Committee (OPC) was established prior to the initiation of the I-710 Study. The OPC provided guidance for policy direction and key project decisions such as purpose and need, guiding principals, alternatives considered, evaluation criteria, the final set of alternatives, and selection of a locally preferred strategy. The OPC is comprised of elected officials from participating cities and the County of Los Angeles; executive managers and/or senior staff from three of the principal partners (MTA, Caltrans, and SCAG); and a Commissioner from each of the Ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles. The OPC met on an as needed basis throughout the duration of the study, generally prior to major decision points. A description of the membership of the OPC is provided in Appendix B. Historical copies of meeting agendas and meeting minutes can also be found in Appendix B.

Figure 1.2-1
I-710 Corridor Study Area



Source: Parsons Brinckerhoff, June 2001.

In addition to the OPC, two advisory groups were established for the I-710 Study: (1) the I-710 Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and (2) the I-710 Community Advisory Committees (CAC).

The I-710 TAC was created at the onset of the study and is made up of technical and engineering staff from the municipalities located within the I-710 Study Area; the principal partners; the Ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles; and staff from the Federal Highway Administration/Federal Transit Administration (FHWA/FTA), Southern California Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD), the California Highway Patrol (CHP), and other stakeholders such as the Automobile Club of Southern California. A list of the I-710 TAC membership is provided in Appendix C of this report. The TAC's role was to monitor project status, provide coordination of work activities, support the exchange of technical information, review interim work products, and work to resolve technical issues that surfaced during the conduct of the study. The I-710 TAC also made formal recommendations to the I-710 Oversight Policy Committee at key study milestones. Agendas and meeting minutes that trace the activities and recommendations made by the TAC are provided in Appendix C.

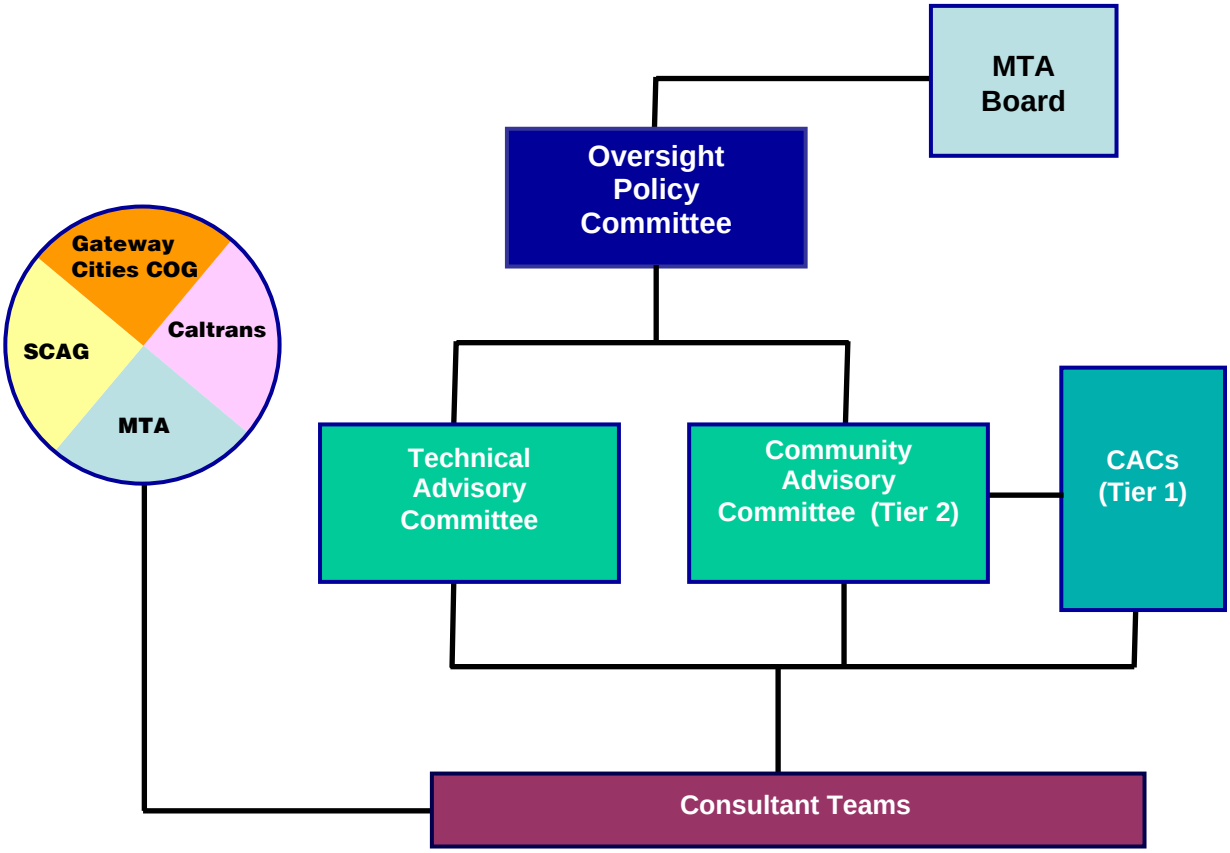
The MTA Board directed staff to establish a Community Advisory Committee (CAC) for the I-710 Major Corridor Study in May 2003 in response to concerns expressed by the communities regarding the potential impacts of the final set of five alternatives when these were made public in the spring of 2003. This concept was fully endorsed by the OPC, which then took steps in early summer of 2003 to develop and implement a tiered Community Advisory Committee structure for the I-710 Study to strengthen the level of public input for project decision-making. Each city is different and the tiering structure of the CACs needed to be able to respond to the organizational framework and processes within each city. The membership, tiering structure, roles and responsibilities, and key activities of the Community Advisory Committee(s) are explained in Section 2.5 of this report.

In general terms, each city located along the alignment of I-710 formed a local Community Advisory Committee to capture the unique concerns and issues associated with each city. These are called the Tier 1 CACs. In addition, a larger, Tier 2 Community Advisory Committee was formed that included representatives from the Tier 1 CACs as well as other project stakeholders appointed by the OPC members and/or drawn from community groups, environmental groups, and businesses with a specific interest in the I-710 Study.

The Tier 2 Community Advisory Committee, along with the TAC, provided formal recommendations to the OPC that greatly influenced the development of comprehensive strategy for the I-710 Study Area. These recommendations are summarized in Section 7 of this report. The Tier 2 Committee's full report, *Major Opportunity/Strategy Recommendations and Conditions* (August 2004), as well as findings and conclusions developed by the Tier 1 CACs that were documented by MIG, Inc., during the course of the I-710 Study, is included in Appendix S of this report.

An organization chart that outlines the channels of communication and hierarchical relationships among these groups and committees is shown in Figure 1.3-1 on the following page. It is important to note that three of the four principal agencies (MTA, Caltrans, and SCAG) have members that sit on both the Technical Advisory Committee and the Oversight Policy Committee.

Figure 1.3-1
I-710 Study Organization Chart



Whereas the specific membership might evolve, it is envisioned that these committees will continue in some fashion after the conclusion of the I-710 Major Corridor Study in order to ensure continuity and follow-through as the different elements of the project proceed into environmental study and development.

1.4 Study Process

The I-710 Major Corridor Study is both a planning tool and an evaluative process, consisting of a series of analytical steps. The analytical steps are interrelated and generally represent a series of major milestones as the study progresses. Figure 1.4-1 illustrates these activities and how one step led to another in the I-710 Study process. It is important to note that an active public outreach program was part of all of these steps so that public comments and input could be sought prior to each study decision point. Section 2 of this report elaborates upon the community outreach activities that took place in parallel with the overall I-710 Study process. The final decision point in the study is the selection and adoption of a Locally Preferred Strategy (i.e., a comprehensive transportation solution) for the Study Area.

Figure 1.4-1
I-710 Study Flow Chart

The following paragraphs provide a brief description of the analytical phases that comprise the decision-making framework for the I-710 Major Corridor Study.

Existing and Future Conditions: The first step was to compile information about the Study Area and the metropolitan region to assess the existing and future (Year 2025) socio-demographic, safety, and transportation system conditions. This assessment is intended to determine the underlying root causes of travel patterns, problems, and issues related to the transportation system in the I-710 Corridor.

Purpose and Need: In this phase, the purpose and need for transportation improvements was carefully defined for the I-710 Study Area. Travel patterns, transportation system performance, and past studies were reviewed and analyzed. The Purpose and Need Statement summarizes this technical information along with public input and identifies key trends and issues. These issues led to the determination of specific goals and objectives to be achieved by transportation improvements in the I-710 Corridor Study Area. The purpose and need for transportation improvements is documented in the *I-710 Major Corridor Study Purpose and Need Statement* (December 2001).

Goals and Objectives: The goals and objectives are derived from the purpose and need for transportation improvements in the I-710 Study Area as well as regional transportation goals for the Southern California metropolitan region described in SCAG's *CommunityLink 21: 2001 Regional Transportation Plan* (April 2001). Along with purpose and need, these goals and objectives shaped the development of transportation alternatives and established the evaluative framework for how transportation alternatives should be assessed and compared throughout the course of the study.

Alternatives Development: As part of this step, a candidate pool of initial alternatives was developed to address mobility problems and other concerns in the I-710 Study Area. The Initial Set of Alternatives was structured to provide a range of multi-modal transportation infrastructure and service improvements. The initial alternatives emphasized different transportation modes, potential alignments, and levels of investment, and thus addressed different aspects of the study goals and objectives. Included in the initial set of twelve alternatives were the No Build and Transportation Systems Management / Travel Demand Management (TSM/TDM) Alternatives as well as a number of build alternatives.

Alternatives Screening: The initial set of twelve alternatives was subjected to a "screening process," which narrowed down these alternatives to a reduced set. The reduced set of alternatives should be manageable in number and should include only those alternatives that have a "reasonable" chance of becoming the Locally Preferred Strategy. During screening, the initial alternatives were assessed based on screening criteria derived from the goals and objectives identified for the Study Area, combined with community input. The screening criteria applied both numerical and qualitative measures to assess the relative performance of each alternative. This process resulted in the identification of those alternatives or combination thereof that best met the various study goals and objectives for the I-710 Corridor. These were named the Final Set of Alternatives.

Alternatives Evaluation: During this analytical phase, preliminary technical studies were performed on the Final Set of Alternatives. The purpose of these studies was to elicit evaluative information on the alternatives as well as provide a higher level of definition of their

respective operational and physical characteristics. These technical studies included: conceptual engineering; travel demand forecasting; environmental analysis; estimation of capital costs; and right-of-way impact analysis. Once the technical studies were performed, this information was used to assess the travel benefits, costs, and impacts of the Final Set of Alternatives. Key trade-offs among the alternatives were identified and evaluated. In the I-710 Study, a set of guiding principles was established near the conclusion of the alternatives evaluation step to further refine the purpose and need for improvements and to set priorities for judging the performance of proposed transportation strategies.

Operational and Policy Improvements / Hybrid Design Concept: Based on the array of technical information, evaluation findings, and public feedback on the Final Set of Alternatives, an important step in the I-710 Study was to identify and select those transportation improvements needed to address existing and future transportation problems in the Study Area as well as human health, safety, and other public concerns. The study effort then focused on developing a new hybrid design concept that built upon those few elements of the Final Set of Alternatives that were most acceptable to the public and local communities in the Study Area. A key aspect of this step was the explicit consideration of operational and policy improvements that would result in actions needed to improve public health and that are needed to manage trucks and goods movement on a systemwide basis so as not to unduly impact local communities and residents in the Study Area.

Selection of a Locally Preferred Strategy: The Locally Preferred Strategy is drawn from the "Operational and Policy Improvements" and the "Hybrid Design Concept" based on a series of recommendations made by the advisory committees and other project stakeholders. The Locally Preferred Strategy (LPS) is a design concept that consists of added infrastructure, design improvements, policy initiatives, and operational strategies that combine to form the selected transportation solution for the I-710 Corridor. The LPS and accompanying documentation serve as the basis for follow-on environmental studies and development activities by the sponsoring agencies. Once approved by the Oversight Policy Committee and the MTA Board of Directors, the LPS is submitted for adoption into the long-range transportation plan for the SCAG region so that funding needed for development and implementation can be sought.