

1 INTRODUCTION

The Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) has prepared this Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) for the Sepulveda Transit Corridor Project (Project). As described in Chapter 2 of this DEIR, Metro initiated work to consider modal alternatives for high-capacity transit connecting the San Fernando Valley to West Los Angeles. The Project would construct a fixed guideway public transportation line across the Santa Monica Mountains along the Sepulveda Pass. Metro staff is initiating environmental review of five build alternatives informed by both the Sepulveda Transit Corridor Feasibility Study and concepts developed by pre-development agreement (PDA) contractors. All of the alternatives described in this DEIR would have a northern terminus station near the Van Nuys Metrolink/Amtrak Station and a southern terminus station near the Metro E Line (Expo) and include stations that provide connections to the Metrolink Ventura County Line, Amtrak Pacific Surfliner and Coast Starlight, the East San Fernando Valley Light Rail Transit Line, the Metro G Line, the Metro D Line, and the Metro E Line. This DEIR was prepared in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act of 1970 (CEQA) (California Public Resources Code Section 21000 et seq., as amended) and its implementing guidelines (California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Section 15000 et seq.). Metro is the lead agency for the Project under CEQA.

1.1 Purpose of the Project

The Sepulveda Corridor is a vital link for the communities of greater Los Angeles, connecting residents in the San Fernando Valley to the Westside’s bustling employment hubs and cultural landmarks, such as Westwood, UCLA, and Century City. For many families, workers, and students, this route is key to accessing jobs, education, and opportunities that shape daily life. More than just a major travel route, the corridor serves as an essential connection for people across western Los Angeles County, helping them bridge neighborhoods and access vital resources in a region that is ever-growing and increasingly interconnected.

The natural barrier created by the Santa Monica Mountains makes traveling between the San Fernando Valley and the Westside difficult and slow. Interstate 405 (I-405) through the Sepulveda Pass is one of the most congested corridors in the country, and transit service between the San Fernando Valley and the Westside is limited. Each weekday, more than 400,000 trips cross the Sepulveda Pass (Metro, 2019), and a typical San Fernando Valley commuter loses 59 hours per year to traffic delays just from the evening drive home on I-405 between Wilshire Boulevard and Ventura Boulevard (INRIX, 2024).

The Project would add a critical regional connection to the transportation network, linking the San Fernando Valley with the Westside and providing a reliable, fast alternative to the congested 405 freeway. The Project would:

- Connect the San Fernando Valley—where more than 1.8 million people live—and the rest of the region to major destinations and job centers, including UCLA, Westwood, and Century City. Each day 86,000 students, faculty, staff, and visitors travel to the UCLA campus (UCLA, 2023), and more than 50,000 people work in Century City (SCAG, 2024)
- Leverage other existing and planned transit investments to improve accessibility and mobility by providing Angelenos a north-south link between major transit lines, including the Metrolink Ventura County Line, the Metro East San Fernando Valley Light Rail Line, and the Metro D, E, and G Lines, as shown on Figure 1-1

- Increase economic output in the Los Angeles region by \$25.5 billion to \$42.9 billion, generating \$7.3 billion to \$12.1 billion in additional wages (Metro, 2025)

Figure 1-1. Sepulveda Transit Corridor Project Study Area



Source: HTA, 2024

Traffic congestion in the Project Study Area (shown on Figure 1-1) is likely to continue to deteriorate, with the number of trips forecast to grow approximately 17 percent by 2042 and 24 percent by 2057 (Metro, 2019). Improvements in mobility are needed in the corridor.

The Project would:

- Expand mobility with a fast and dependable rail option that could attract approximately 63,000 to 124,000 daily riders
- Result in time savings for riders traveling between the San Fernando Valley and the Westside—a trip that is currently about 40 to 80 minutes by car and unreliable due to unpredictable traffic conditions would take 18 to 33 minutes on transit
- Attract 20,000 to 42,000 new daily transit riders by serving an area underserved by existing transit infrastructure
- Provide mobility options that may result in reduction in vehicles miles traveled by an estimated 342,000 to 775,000 each day, reducing air pollution and providing health and economic productivity benefits

1.2 Purpose of this Draft Environmental Impact Report

The Project requires the discretionary approval of the Metro Board of Directors (Metro Board). Therefore, the Project is subject to the environmental review requirements of CEQA. In accordance with Section 15121 of the CEQA Guidelines, the purpose of this DEIR is as follows:

- To satisfy the requirements of CEQA and the CEQA Guidelines
- To inform public agency decision-makers and the public of the significant environmental effects of the project and possible ways to minimize those significant effects
- To enable Metro to consider environmental consequences when deciding whether to approve the Proposed Project, this EIR evaluates a range of alternatives, one of which may be identified as the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) for further refinement and potential advancement into final design and construction.

Section 15367 of the CEQA Guidelines defines the lead agency as the public agency that has the principal responsibility for executing or approving a project. The lead agency is charged with the duty to avoid or substantially lessen significant environmental impacts of a project, where feasible. The lead agency also has an obligation to balance the economic, social, technological, legal, and other benefits of a project against its significant and unavoidable impacts on the environment. In accordance with Section 15051 of the CEQA Guidelines, Metro serves as the lead agency for the Project.

This DEIR is a Project Environment Impact Report (EIR), as defined by Section 15121 of the state CEQA Guidelines, and serves as an informational document for the general public and project decision-makers. This DEIR is designed to:

- Identify significant direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts of the Project on the environment
- Indicate the manner in which those significant impacts can be minimized with mitigation measures
- Identify reasonable and potentially feasible alternatives for the Project that would avoid or reduce the significant impacts
- Identify any significant and unavoidable impacts

When environmental impacts cannot be mitigated to a less than significant level, the impacts are considered significant and unavoidable. If a public agency approves a proposed project that has

significant and unavoidable impacts, the agency must state in writing the specific reasons for approving the project based on the Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) and any other information in the public record for the project. This documentation is termed a “Statement of Overriding Considerations” and is used to explain the specific reasons why the benefits of a proposed project make its significant and unavoidable environmental effects acceptable. The statement is prepared based upon substantial evidence in the record and in conjunction with the action to approve the project, in accordance with Section 15093 of the CEQA Guidelines.

This DEIR was prepared in accordance with Section 15151 of the CEQA Guidelines, which defines the standards for Environmental Impact Report (EIR) adequacy as follows:

“An EIR should be prepared with a sufficient degree of analysis to provide decisionmakers with information which enables them to make a decision which intelligently takes account of environmental consequences. An evaluation of the environmental effects of a proposed project need not be exhaustive, but the sufficiency of an EIR is to be reviewed in the light of what is reasonably feasible. Disagreement among experts does not make an EIR inadequate, but the EIR should summarize the main points of disagreement among the experts. The courts have looked not for perfection but for adequacy, completeness, and a good faith effort at full disclosure.”

1.3 Environmental Impact Report Background

As described in Chapter 2 of this DEIR, Metro published the *Sepulveda Transit Corridor Project Final Feasibility Report* (Metro, 2019), which presented the relative performance and cost of various alignment and station alternatives. In 2020, the Metro Board provided direction to prepare the DEIR, building on previous work for six recommended alignment alternatives.

On November 30, 2021, Metro released for public review the *Sepulveda Transit Corridor Project Notice of Preparation* (NOP) of the DEIR, which initiated the CEQA EIR process. The NOP, as well as the scoping comment letters and verbal comments, are included in Appendix A, *NOP and Scoping Summary Report*, of this DEIR.

1.4 Scope and Content

In accordance with the CEQA Guidelines, this DEIR includes detailed analyses of the following environmental topics:

- Aesthetics
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Energy
- Geology, Soils, Seismicity, and Paleontological Resources
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use and Planning
- Noise
- Population, Housing, and Growth
- Public Services
- Recreation
- Transportation
- Tribal Cultural Resources
- Utilities and Service Systems
- Wildfire
- Other CEQA Considerations
- Cumulative

This DEIR was prepared under the direction and supervision of Metro and reflects the independent judgment of Metro. During preparation of this DEIR, numerous community and stakeholder engagement events were held to inform agencies, organizations, and persons who might have an interest in the Project. Information, data, and observations from these outreach efforts are included in Chapter 5, Public Participation and Outreach, of this DEIR.

This DEIR will be available for general public review during the 90-day public review period and will be posted to Metro's website at: metro.net/projects/sepulvedacorridor/. A printed copy of the DEIR will be available at Metro Headquarters in the Dorothy Peyton Gray Transportation Library, One Gateway Plaza, Los Angeles, CA 90012. Electronic copies of the DEIR will also be available for public review at the following locations:

- Metro Headquarters, Dorothy Peyton Gray Transportation Library, One Gateway Plaza, Los Angeles, CA 90012
- Mid-Valley Regional Library, 16244 Nordhoff St, North Hills, CA 91343
- Panorama City Branch Library, 14345 Roscoe Bl, Panorama City, CA 91402
- Van Nuys Branch Library, 6250 Sylmar Avenue, Van Nuys, CA 91401
- Sherman Oaks Martin Pollard Branch Library, 14245 Moorpark St, Sherman Oaks, CA 91423
- Westwood Branch Library, 1246 Glendon Av, Los Angeles, CA 90024
- West Los Angeles Regional Branch Library; 11360 Santa Monica Bl, Los Angeles, CA 90025
- Palms-Rancho Park Library, 2920 Overland Av, Los Angeles, CA 90064
- Pico Branch Library (Santa Monica), 2201 Pico Bl, Santa Monica, CA 90405
- Fairview Branch Library (Santa Monica), 2101 Ocean Park Bl, Santa Monica, CA 90405
- Powell Library (UCLA), 10740 Dickson Plaza, Los Angeles, CA 90095-1450

During the 90-day public review and comment period, public agencies, organizations, and individuals may submit written comments concerning the adequacy of the document by e-mail or mail to:

Peter Carter, Project Manager
Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority
One Gateway Plaza, Mail Stop 99-22-6
Los Angeles, California 90012
E-mail: sepulvedacorridor@metro.net

1.5 Intended Use of this DEIR

In accordance with Section 15088 of the CEQA Guidelines, after the public review and comment period, written responses to all written comments and oral testimony pertaining to significant environmental issues received during the comment period will be prepared as part of the FEIR.

The DEIR and the comments received during the public review period (along with other factors including engineering and cost) will inform the Metro Board in the identification of an LPA from the alternatives evaluated. Once the LPA is identified, the FEIR will focus additional environmental analysis on that alternative. However, all comments received on all alternatives evaluated in the DEIR will be responded to and published as part of the FEIR. Selection of an LPA for further analysis does not limit the Metro

Board's ability to approve a different alternative, including the No Project Alternative, after reviewing the FEIR and considering public input.

As required by CEQA, responses to comments submitted by commenting agencies will be distributed to those agencies for review prior to consideration of the FEIR by the Metro Board. Pursuant to Sections 15090 to 15093 of the CEQA Guidelines, upon completion of the FEIR and other required documentation, the Metro Board may certify the FEIR, adopt findings relative to the Project's environmental effects after implementation of mitigation measures, provide a statement of overriding considerations, and approve the Project. Following approval of the Project, a Notice of Determination would be filed with the State Clearinghouse.

1.6 Draft Environmental Impact Report Organization

This DEIR includes the following chapters:

- **Executive Summary.** This chapter provides a summary of the Project, public outreach information, project background, environmental impacts, and mitigation measures. This summary also presents areas of controversy, including issues raised by members of the public and various agencies.
- **Chapter 1, Introduction.** This chapter briefly discusses the purpose of the DEIR, identifies the environmental topics evaluated in the document, describes the environmental review process and organization, and discusses the intended use of this DEIR.
- **Chapter 2, Project Description.** This chapter provides a detailed description of the proposed project, as well as alternatives, including location and surrounding uses, history, objectives, operating characteristics, and construction schedule and phasing.
- **Chapter 3, Environmental Analysis.** This chapter is divided into subsections corresponding with the environmental topics listed in Section 1.4 and provides the environmental setting (regulatory framework and existing conditions), methodology, impact analyses, project measures and/or mitigation measures if applicable, and conclusions regarding the level of significance after mitigation for each environmental topic.
- **Chapter 4, Comparison of Alternatives.** This chapter provides a comparison of the Project's alternatives as evaluated in Chapter 3, including the No Project Alternative. This chapter also provides the identification of the environmentally superior alternative, as required by CEQA. Lastly, this chapter identifies alternatives that were considered, but not carried forward for detailed review.
- **Chapter 5, Public Participation and Outreach.** This chapter provides an overview of the outreach efforts conducted from scoping up to the circulation of this DEIR.
- **Chapter 6, References.** This chapter lists the references and sources used in the preparation of this DEIR. Documents listed in this chapter are available for review upon request.
- **Chapter 7, Abbreviations and Acronyms.** This chapter identifies and defines the acronyms and abbreviations used in this DEIR.
- **Chapter 8, Contributors and Preparers.** This chapter lists the persons who contributed to the preparation of this DEIR.