

# 1.0 PURPOSE AND NEED

## 1.1 Background

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA), in coordination with the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (LACMTA or Metro) proposes the Eastside Transit Corridor Phase 2 Project (Project), to extend the E Line Eastside Extension in eastern Los Angeles County further east and is the subject of this Environmental Assessment (EA). The Project is a federal undertaking as it is expected to receive funding assistance from FTA. The FTA serves as the federal lead agency for compliance in accordance with National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) environmental requirements per Title 23 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 771.119. Additional details on the Project alternatives and the screening process are provided in **Chapter 2.0** (Description of Alternatives).

## 1.2 Project Purpose and Need

### 1.2.1 Project Purpose

The purpose of the Project is to reduce travel times for communities in eastern Los Angeles County and provide new multimodal connections to destinations within the greater Southern California region. By serving highly concentrated areas of employment, activity centers, and residential communities, the Project would expand economic opportunities and promote the growth of local economies, while supporting transit oriented community goals and addressing the travel needs of transit dependent populations. It would enhance regional connectivity by providing new and faster multimodal options and lead to economic development and infill growth opportunities throughout eastern Los Angeles County.

In support of the goals in Metro's 2020 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) (Metro 2020a) and Metro's Vision 2028 Strategic Plan (Metro 2018a), the purposes of the Project are to:

- Enhance regional connectivity between eastern Los Angeles County communities and the greater Southern California region.
- Accommodate growing travel demand resulting from increased future population and employment growth.
- Provide mobility options to increase travel efficiencies to and from eastern Los Angeles County.
- Improve access to existing concentrations of activity centers and employment within eastern Los Angeles County.
- Enable jurisdictions in eastern Los Angeles County to promote growth in their local economies.
- Improve accessibility and connectivity for transit dependent populations.

### 1.2.2 Project Need

The Project addresses the transportation needs of eastern Los Angeles County communities which face high population and employment growth and constrained transportation facilities. Future population and employment growth will contribute to increases in travel demand which, if unaddressed, will overwhelm existing and future transportation networks, impact goods movement, and exceed transit capacities in eastern Los Angeles County. The Project is needed to address growing population and employment densities, congestion impacts on bus transit and vehicle travel, quality of life, and high transit demand within the Study Area, as discussed below:

- **Growing population and employment densities** – By year 2050, already high-density communities within the Study Area are expected to grow an additional 3 percent to 10 percent.<sup>1</sup> As population and employment grow, existing traffic would also continue to grow, increasing travel times and lowering travel speeds. Providing improved transit opportunities in Eastern Los Angeles County would help alleviate this increase in congestion and will also improve access to high-density activity centers in the Study Area and throughout Metro’s regional transit system.
- **Local roadway congestion impacts on bus transit** – With limited regional rail system connections in the Study Area, residents, employees, and visitors rely on bus services that operate on a congested arterial network. This congestion negatively affects the reliability and consistency of local and regional transit services. In addition, there are no existing or planned direct routes that would parallel the Project corridor without several bus transfers.
- **Arterial and freeway congestion impacts on vehicle travel** – Existing Study Area freeways and roadways are highly congested during peak periods, with the heaviest congestion occurring on Interstate 5, State Route 60, and Interstate 10 freeways to and from Downtown Los Angeles. Other nearby freeways, such as Interstate 710 and Interstate 605, are also congested during peak hours and east-west movements along parallel arterials such as Washington Boulevard experience heavy truck traffic from goods movement throughout the day.
- **Quality of life** – The communities of eastern Los Angeles County are faced with increasing air quality concerns, particularly given areas of industrial activity in the Cities of Commerce and Montebello and unincorporated East Los Angeles. Improving quality of life can be achieved by enhancing access to transit services and other mobility options. Encouraging transit ridership would generate economic benefits by reducing vehicle trips, lessening roadway congestion, and reducing emissions from several air pollutants.
- **High transit demand** – The Study Area has high transit demand as the travel market includes a large number of households that use and depend on transit such as low-income populations, youth and seniors, and households that do not own vehicles. Within the Study Area, approximately 15 percent of households are low-income,<sup>2</sup> 37 percent of residents are youth and seniors, and 10 percent of households do not own a vehicle<sup>3</sup> (United States Census Bureau 2022). To address this strong transit demand, more access and connectivity to public transportation is needed within the Study Area.

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<sup>1</sup> The City of Montebello’s population density (8,330 residents per square mile) is more than three times the density of Los Angeles County as a whole (2,500 residents per square mile), and would continue to grow to almost 8,600 residents per square mile by 2050. Even more striking is the existing employment density within the City of Commerce (9,480 jobs per square mile), which is more than seven times the employment density of Los Angeles County as a whole (1,265 jobs per square mile) and is projected to reach 9,700 jobs per square mile by 2050 (Southern California Association of Governments 2024a).

<sup>2</sup> Approximately 15 percent of the population of the Study Area is considered low-income and living below the poverty threshold in 2022 (United States Census Bureau 2022).

<sup>3</sup> Approximately 10 percent of households in the Study Area are zero-car households without access to private vehicles in 2022 (United States Census Bureau 2022).