



LOS ANGELES METRO  
STATION LOCATION FEASIBILITY STUDY

NORTHRIDGE METROLINK STATION – FEASIBILITY STUDY  
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PREPARED FOR

**LA Metro Regional Rail**

One Gateway Plaza

Los Angeles, CA

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**IN ASSOCIATION WITH:**

IBI Group

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### INTRODUCTION AND PROJECT PURPOSE

The Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) is conducting the Station Location Feasibility Study (Study) for the Northridge Metrolink Station to examine the feasibility of relocating the station closer to Reseda Boulevard and to identify opportunities to make improvements to the existing station. The Southern California Regional Rail Authority (SCRRA) operates Metrolink passenger rail service in six southern California counties, including Los Angeles County. Metrolink serves an average of nearly 40,000 riders each weekday<sup>1</sup>; however, opportunities exist to consolidate, develop, and enhance multi-modal transportation hubs in certain areas across the Metrolink system which could potentially improve regional mobility, attract ridership, and mitigate traffic-induced pollution. First/Last Mile analysis, multi-modal connectivity, and active transportation planning were all incorporated into the Study to support safe, secure, and easy rider experiences, which may encourage increased patronage. Enhanced access between the Northridge Metrolink Station, Reseda Boulevard, and California State University, Northridge (CSUN) were explored to create a more direct connection between transit, employment, and education destinations.

**In March 2016, the Metro Board of Directors unanimously approved a motion to examine the feasibility of relocating the existing Northridge Metrolink Station to Reseda Boulevard to improve transit connectivity.**

This Study aims to identify:

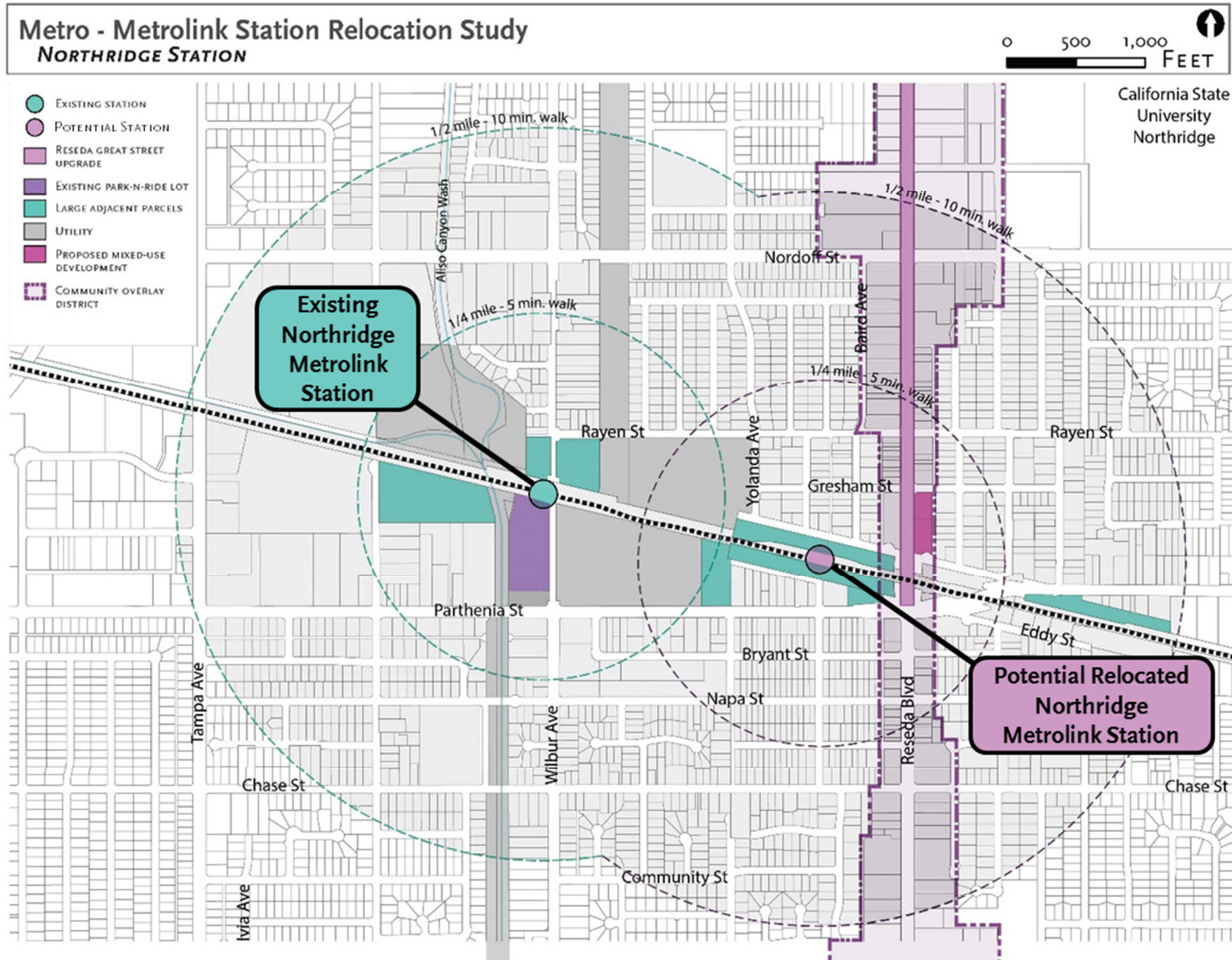
- Potential relocation options for the Northridge Metrolink Station; and related benefits and challenges
- Opportunities to maximize rail-to-bus connectivity
- Opportunities to improve First/Last Mile and active transportation connections
- Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) and other land use opportunities to maximize the use of the station

The Study area is shown in Figure 0-1.

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<sup>1</sup> SCRRA, 2017

Figure 0-1: Study Area



**EXISTING CONDITIONS**

The existing Northridge Metrolink Station is located near the intersection of Parthenia Street and Wilbur Avenue, covers approximately 4 acres, and provides 290 free parking spots to commuters, which are 59 percent utilized on an average weekday. The station area itself is bound by the Aliso Canyon Wash to the west, various industrial and commercial businesses to the north across the railroad tracks, a large transmission substation to the east, and a transmission line easement to the south between the station and Parthenia Street, as shown in Figure 0-2. The station opened in 1994, and was constructed in five days as an emergency station stop in response to the Northridge earthquake. The station was later reconstructed by the City of Los Angeles in 2000 which provided a bus turnaround, public art, and upgraded passenger amenities, such as bicycle locker shells, canopies, and seating (see Figure 0-3). The station also has two electric vehicle charging stations within the parking lot.

**Figure 0-2: Existing Station Area**



**Figure 0-3: Existing Passenger Amenities**



The community of Northridge is located in northwest Los Angeles County in the San Fernando Valley which is largely residential with sizeable employment in the education, health, and social service industries. The majority of commuters drive alone (75 percent) and four percent of Northridge residents commute by transit<sup>2</sup>. CSUN is a major destination in the community and

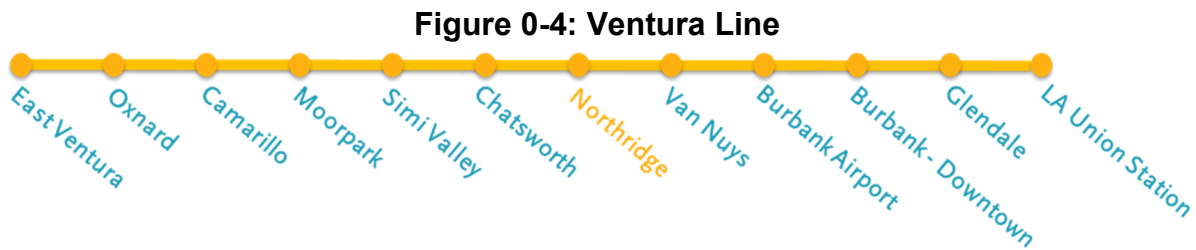
<sup>2</sup> US Census, ACS 2015, 5-year estimates



over 41,000 students attend the university each year. The campus is located nearly 2 miles away and access to the Northridge Metrolink Station is only feasible via a circuitous route along Reseda Boulevard and Parthenia Street, as there is no northern access to the station. Reseda Boulevard has Los Angeles County’s first parking-protected bicycle lane, however there is currently no bicycle infrastructure connecting the existing station with the Reseda corridor.

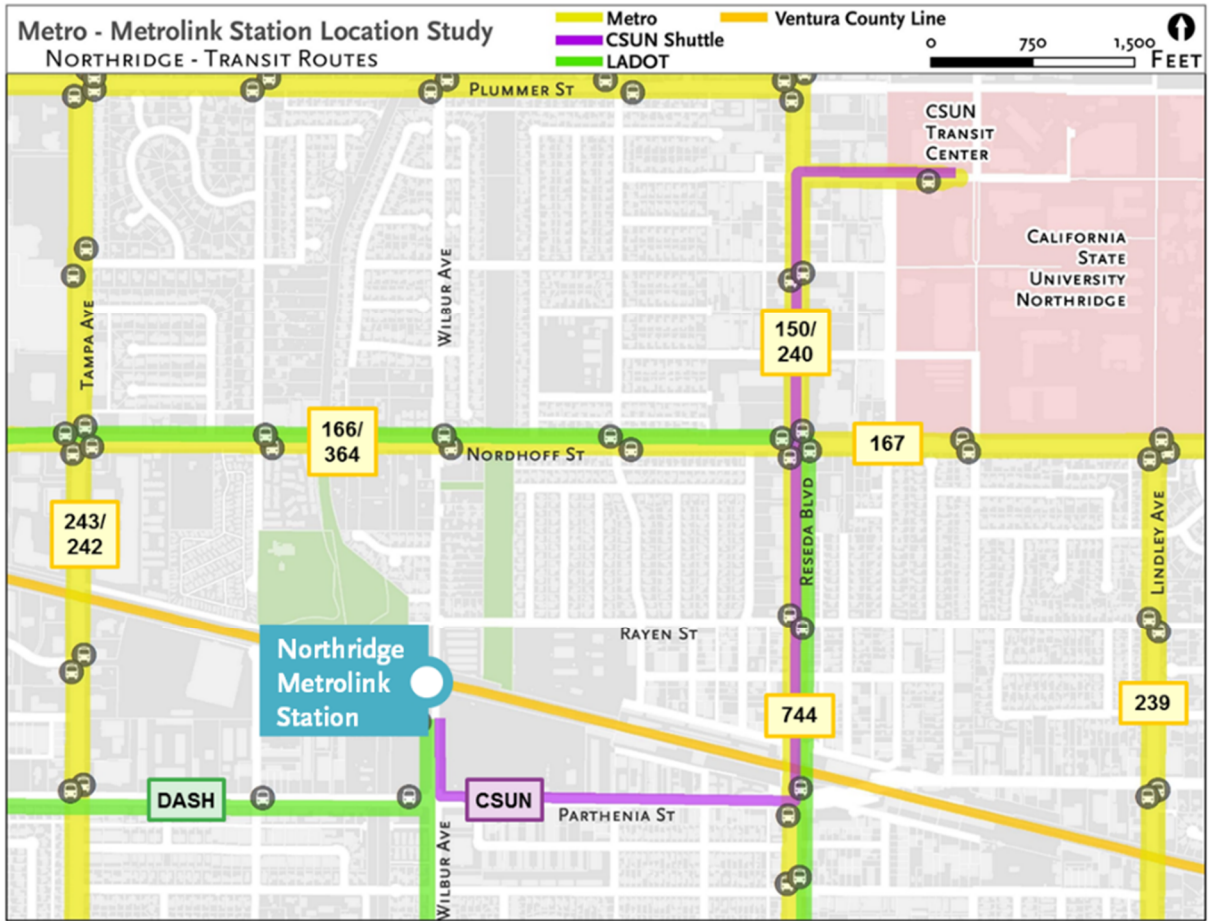
Transit service through the Northridge Metrolink station consists of 22 Metrolink trains per weekday on the Ventura Line. The Ventura Line provides weekday Metrolink service between Downtown Los Angeles and East Ventura (Figure 0-4), and there is no weekend service. The station currently has an average weekday boarding of about 370 passengers per day.

**Approximately 370 passengers board Metrolink at the Northridge Metrolink Station on an average weekday.**



Bus service is available via the Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT) DASH and CSUN Shuttles. The CSUN Shuttles meet every Metrolink train during peak hours and the service provides the only direct link between the CSUN Transit Center and the Northridge Metrolink Station. As many as 200 CSUN students, faculty, and staff utilize the shuttle to access the Northridge Metrolink Station on an average weekday. There are no Metro bus routes adjacent to the station, and the existing bus turnaround is too small to accommodate larger buses. The closest Metro Local and Rapid buses operate on Reseda Boulevard and Tampa Avenue (Figure 0-5), approximately two-thirds of a mile away from the current station.

**Figure 0-5: Northridge Transit Routes**



**STUDY ALTERNATIVES**

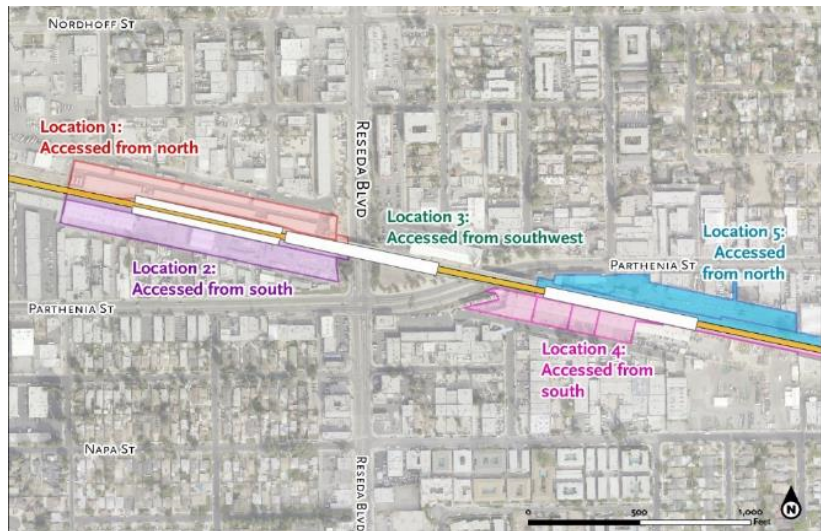
Both alternatives aim to identify potential opportunities to enhance transit connectivity throughout the community and region.

- **Alternative 1:** Station Relocation – Relocate the existing Northridge Metrolink Station to the intersection of Reseda Boulevard, Parthenia Street, and the Ventura Line.
- **Alternative 2:** Existing Station Enhancements – Upgrade the existing Northridge Metrolink Station into a multi-modal transit station to encourage increased patronage, connectivity, and safety.

**ALTERNATIVE 1: STATION RELOCATION**

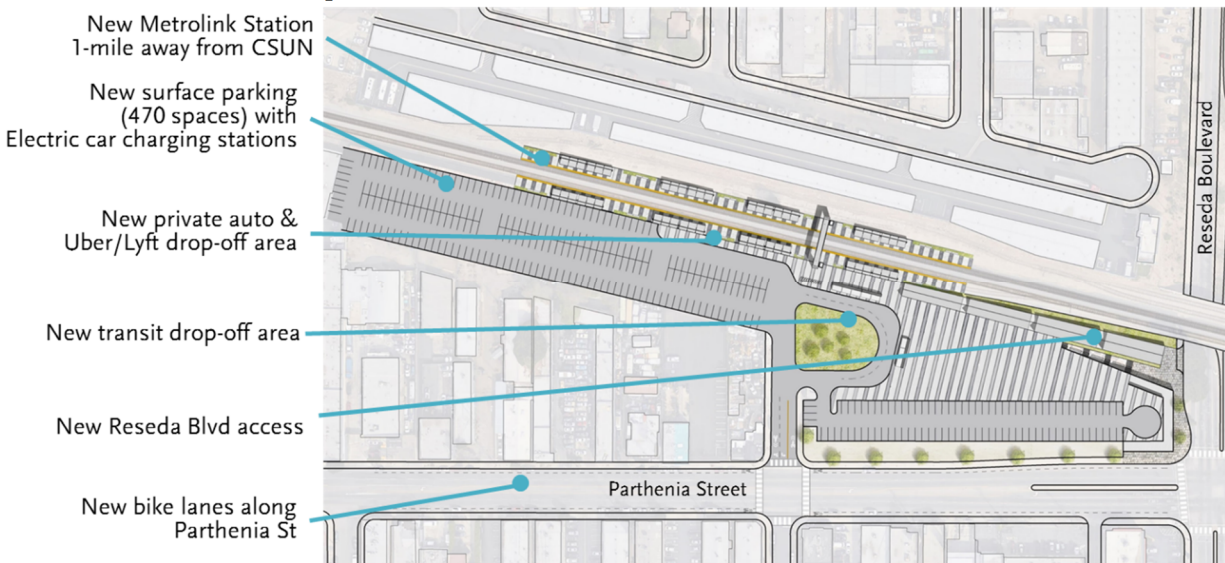
For Alternative 1, five potential station sites adjacent to Reseda Boulevard (Figure 0-6) were initially considered for a potential relocated Northridge Metrolink Station. The five sites were initially analyzed based on the location’s transit accessibility, stakeholder preference, physical impacts, operational considerations, and potential costs. Based on the preliminary analysis, a site at the southwest intersection of Reseda Boulevard and the

**Figure 0-6: Five Initial Location Options**



Ventura Line was identified for further study (see Figure 0-7). The other sites were not selected for further study due to a combination of reasons related to pedestrian and vehicular access, railroad right-of-way, and transit connectivity. The identified site has large continuous parcels adjacent to the station platform area to support parking demand and is large enough to allow for future TOD growth. While the identified station location was designated for further analysis in this Study, a comprehensive environmental process would vet all possible locations in more detail if the project were to move forward.

**Figure 0-7: Alternative 1 Station Relocation**



**ALTERNATIVE 1: ANALYSIS**

Each alternative was analyzed for its feasibility in five (5) categories: transit accessibility, community and stakeholder preference, physical impacts, operations, and costs, summarized in Table 0-1.

**Table 0-1: Alternative Characteristics**

|                                      |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Transit Accessibility                | Regional Connectivity                   |
|                                      | Accessibility and First/Last Mile       |
|                                      | Parking Considerations                  |
|                                      | Land Use Considerations                 |
| Community and Stakeholder Preference | Community Preference                    |
|                                      | Stakeholder Preference                  |
| Physical Impacts                     | Right-of-Way Impacts                    |
|                                      | Environmental Impacts                   |
|                                      | Utility Impacts                         |
| Operations                           | Rail Operational Considerations         |
|                                      | Bus Operational Considerations          |
| Costs                                | Rough-Order-of-Magnitude Cost Estimates |

Transit Accessibility

The station location at Reseda Boulevard and Parthenia Street may have more potential for increased multi-modal connectivity due to the presence of protected bike lanes and bus routes along Reseda Boulevard. Alternative 1 locates Metrolink service in close proximity with employment and retail centers along Reseda Boulevard, a major corridor in the Northridge community. To address future parking demand at the station, the relocated station has the potential to provide enough parking to meet and exceed current demands. A potential station area plan for a relocated station can potentially accommodate approximately 470 surface parking spaces, including handicapped parking spaces and electric vehicle charging stations, due to the size of the properties at this location. The existing station parking capacity is 290 spaces and is 59 percent utilized on an average weekday. The intersection of Parthenia Street and Reseda Boulevard is also an activated commercial area with a high degree of visibility that creates “eyes-on-the-street”, making the location a potentially safe and attractive option for transit users and pedestrians. Figure 0-8 illustrates the potential station access from Reseda Boulevard to the relocated station area. It also shows potential TOD opportunities, which will be discussed below.



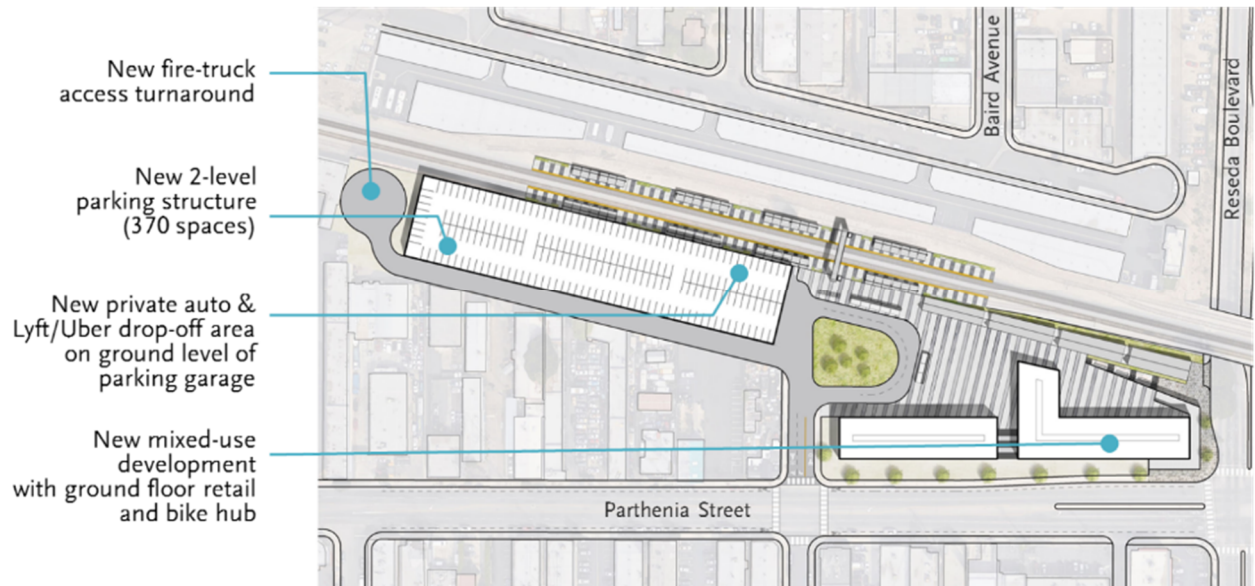
**Figure 0-8: Rendering of Potential Station Access from Reseda Boulevard with TOD**



The planned growth of the University may provide synergistic opportunities for transit improvements. The CSUN campus is located approximately one-mile away from the potential station site, which may be too far for students and staff to walk. The existing protected bike lane on Reseda Boulevard provides a viable active transportation link as an alternative. Additionally, because Reseda Boulevard is a major Metro bus corridor, the station could have regular bus service to the University to supplement existing transit service.

In terms of potential for TOD, Alternative 1 had high potential for increased path connectivity, aesthetics, safety, and accessibility due to high visibility and increased foot and auto traffic, but showed a lack of social spaces for community, civic, and educational uses. A potential TOD opportunity site plan is illustrated in Figure 0-9 and could provide some of that missing social and community space. The properties included in Alternative 1 are not currently zoned for residential, so any potential TOD would require a land use change by the City of Los Angeles to accommodate residential uses. The station parking could be developed as a surface lot or parking structure, and sharing opportunities and parking management strategies may be explored to meet the demands of both TOD residents, patrons, and commuters.

**Figure 0-9: Example of TOD Site Plan**



**Community and Stakeholder Preference**

Stakeholders were able to provide their comments throughout the life of the study, including Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR), as they currently own part of the railroad right-of-way and operate freight service in this corridor. The existing business and property owner of the identified relocation site, Northridge Lumber Company, is a UPRR freight customer, and UPRR generally does not support capital projects which affect their customers or freight operations.

Community feedback was provided in two phases. Comment cards collected at the community meeting preferred Alternative 1, at a rate of 42 percent. Comments collected via email and the online comment form on Metro’s website after the May 4<sup>th</sup> community meeting preferred Alternative 1, at a rate of 65 percent.

**Overall, 62% of the comments provided by the community showed a preference for Alternative 1.**

The concerns related to Alternative 1 included the potential for added congestion at the intersection of Parthenia Street and Reseda Boulevard as a result of the close proximity of the relocation alternative. Comments in support of the relocation of the Northridge Metrolink station favored its closer proximity to CSUN, its adjacent location to more local businesses, bike lanes, and Metro buses, and enhanced access to the station due to higher visibility. The Northridge Lumber Company is the current property owner and the family-owned business currently operates at this site. The Northridge Lumber Company indicated that they would be open to discussing the station relocation alternative given the right circumstances, timing, and price.

### Physical Impacts

The potential physical impacts analyzed as part of Alternative 1 in this Study include right-of-way, utility, and environmental impacts.

The Ventura Line runs along a shared railroad corridor, owned by both Metro and UPRR. If the station were to be relocated in this area, the platforms could be constructed in existing Metro right-of-way and potentially also in UPRR right-of-way, which may incur easement costs. The properties identified as the station area for Alternative 1 are currently owned and operated by Northridge Lumber Company. Any station relocation here could have impacts to this existing UPRR customer and longtime local business, which conflicts with current railroad operational agreements that passenger railroad operations and infrastructure must avoid impacting UPRR customers.

If a station were to be constructed, the underground utilities in the existing buildings and the open stock area would need to be abandoned or relocated in coordination with the proper agencies. These underground utilities include electrical conduits, water, and sewer lines.

A preliminary analysis was conducted to identify potential environmental challenges which may require further technical analysis should the alternative undergo future detailed studies and/or environmental processes. The initial environmental considerations identified potential challenges related to air quality, land acquisition, hazards and hazardous materials in the railroad right-of-way, noise and vibration, parking and site access, and traffic and circulation.

### Operations

Relocating the existing Northridge Metrolink Station could potentially benefit rail and bus operations. The majority of the Ventura Line is single tracked, and the existing station is located on a part of the corridor with no railroad sidings present. As a result, freight and passenger trains must hold for passing trains. Alternative 1 is in an area with multiple railroad sidings, which could allow trains to pass while passengers board and alight at the relocated station. This may result in greater operational flexibility compared to the existing station. Metrolink Design Criteria designates two-side platform and center platform configurations as the preferred station configurations for new Metrolink stations, and both UPRR and Metrolink prohibit at-grade pedestrian crossings.

The bus routes that could serve a relocated Northridge Metrolink Station include the CSUN Metrolink shuttle and the LADOT DASH Northridge route. While any potential station relocation alternative for Northridge would provide bus or shuttle terminals for transferring passengers within the immediate station area, limited stop bus services, such as the Metro Rapid 744, may not be able to deviate from Reseda Boulevard to accommodate transfers. A bus terminal is desirable for similar terminating and long-distance services, and through-running street buses typically minimize detours and prefer to stop curbside on the street. A potential solution could be to offer passengers with direct platform access from Reseda Boulevard with improved bus amenities such as signage and shade, as was illustrated in Figure 0-8.

**Cost Estimates**

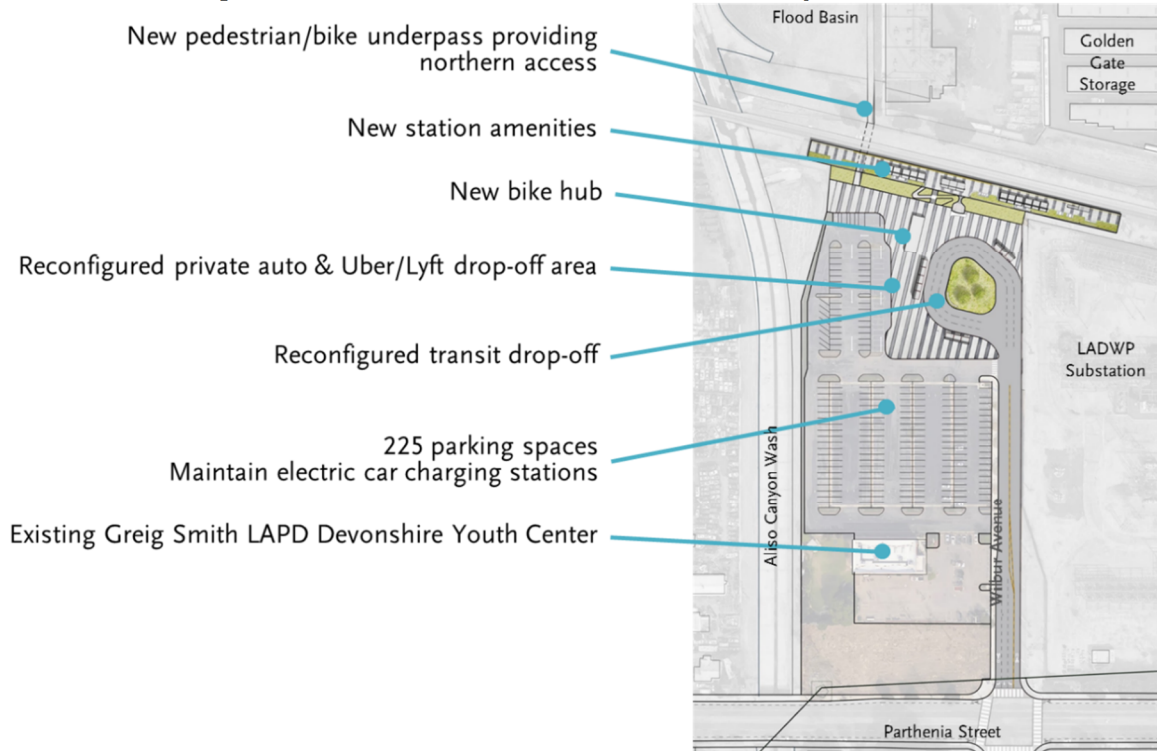
Rough order-of-magnitude (ROM) capital cost estimates were developed for Alternative 1 for feasibility purposes. With the goal of portraying the highest level of development for a station of this scale, the total estimated ROM capital cost is approximately \$145 million. This includes a grade-separated pedestrian crossing, a transit drop-off area, demolition clearing and earthwork, right-of way costs, and contingencies.

**The total estimated ROM capital cost is approximately \$145 million for Alternative 1.**

**ALTERNATIVE 2: EXISTING STATION ENHANCEMENTS**

Alternative 2 could transform the existing station to a multi-modal hub to improve transit accessibility. With an existing large lot and a future development around the existing station, opportunities exist to enhance the station and surrounding area with transit and accessibility improvements. The program may include a pedestrian tunnel and pathway to streamline access from the north, an upgraded transit drop-off area to accommodate larger transit vehicles, a new bike hub, an enhanced station area and platform with more shade and wayfinding information, and bike lanes along Parthenia Street to connect bicyclists with the Class II bike lane along Reseda Boulevard (see Figure 0-10).

**Figure 0-10: Alternative 2 Multi-Modal Improvements**





## ALTERNATIVE 2: ANALYSIS

Alternative 2 was analyzed for its feasibility in the five categories utilized by Alternative 1.

### Transit Accessibility

Current pedestrian accessibility is restricted from the northern end of the station and not all transit vehicles can be accommodated under current station conditions, thereby limiting the transit transfer opportunities available to passengers. A northern access tunnel for pedestrians and bicyclists is recommended, as well as improvements to pedestrian crossings around the station area and surrounding streets to extend the existing walkshed and increase pedestrian safety. An expanded and improved transit loop and transfer area may increase rail-to-bus connectivity (Figure 0-11).

**Figure 0-11: Rendering of Potential Transit Drop-off Area Improvements**

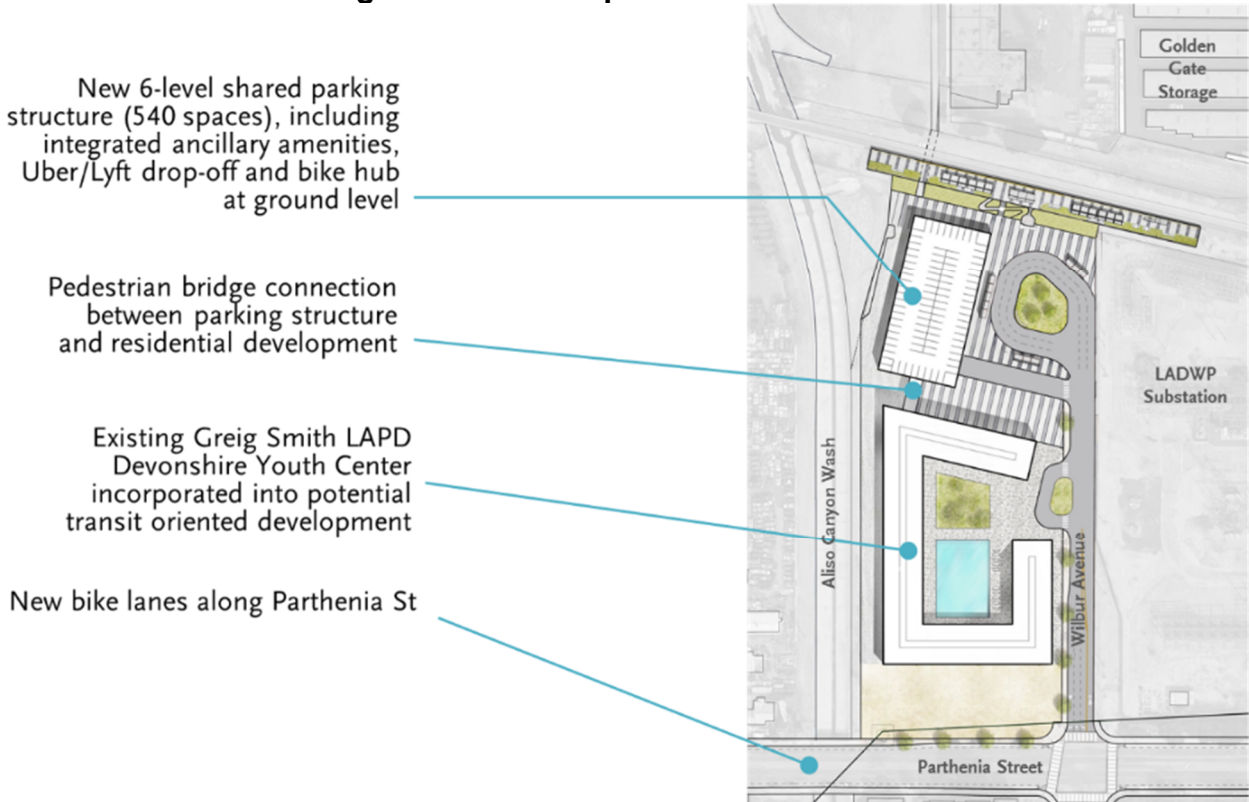


An upgraded station could provide approximately 225 parking spaces with a surface lot; this represents a loss of 35 parking spaces over existing conditions to accommodate an enhanced transit drop-off area and bicycle amenities. A parking structure is a possibility given the current size and site location to meet future park-and-ride demand and potential shared parking opportunities with neighboring businesses.

The site also has potential for TOD given its adjacent location to two commercial corridors, and the station is currently owned and maintained by the City of Los Angeles and LADOT. An initial TOD assessment deemed the site could be most successful in the areas of social factors, with a diverse mix of uses within walking distance, and a positive housing and transportation affordability index. The existing site also shows high potential for development due to upward trends in nearby community property values and investments. The existing site is currently zoned exclusively for public uses, so any potential TOD would need to pursue a land use change by

the City of Los Angeles. A possible site plan showing an example of what TOD could look like at the existing Northridge Metrolink Station is shown in Figure 0-12.

**Figure 0-12: Example of TOD Site Plan**



**Community and Stakeholder Preference**

As a result of the community outreach efforts, the project team received feedback regarding Alternative 2. Much of the support for Alternative 2 was shared at the May 2017 community meeting where local residents and stakeholders were able to voice their concerns and submit comment cards. From the comment cards collected at the May 4<sup>th</sup> meeting, 58 percent of these were in support of Alternative 2. Out of the comments received after the meeting via email and the online comment form, 35 percent of the feedback was in support of Alternative 2. Overall, the comments ranged from being supportive of the station enhancements to concerns regarding safety and traffic congestion near Reseda Boulevard. As a stakeholder, the City of Los Angeles expressed concern that any potential TOD for the existing station site would be subject to entitlement processes and future adjacent land uses.

**Physical Impacts**

As a result of potential upgrades at the existing Northridge Metrolink Station, physical impacts may be limited to a new northern access pedestrian tunnel. Given the site’s proximity to a flood basin, there may be potential challenges related to hydrology and water quality due to the potential encroachment into the flood plain and any construction effects associated with the

tunnel. The addition of new bicycle lanes may also result in potential challenges related to traffic and circulation. Potential construction of the northern pedestrian tunnel may also require land use easements with nearby property owners, and may affect water, electrical, and fiber optic utilities as well as railroad right-of-way in and around the station area.

### Operations

No additional passenger rail service or rail infrastructure was included in the Study for the Northridge Metrolink Station as part of Alternative 2. With the exception of any construction related to a potential pedestrian tunnel underneath the railroad, Alternative 2 may have very few impacts to existing rail operations.

A reconfigured transit turnaround and layover facility as part of Alternative 2 could expand the turning radius from 25-feet to 50-feet and accommodate more transit vehicle types, thereby potentially providing riders with more transit connection opportunities.

### Cost Estimates

The capital costs associated with upgrading the existing Northridge Metrolink Station under Alternative 2 is approximately \$26 million. This includes an upgraded station platform and passenger amenities, a pedestrian tunnel to create northern access to the station, an expanded transit turnaround and layover facility, a new bike hub, and contingencies.

**The total estimated ROM capital cost is approximately \$26 million for Alternative 2.**

## COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDER OUTREACH

The Northridge Metrolink Station Location Feasibility Study was developed in response to a March 2016 Metro Board motion approved to examine the feasibility of relocating the Northridge Metrolink Station at Wilbur Avenue to Reseda Boulevard to improve transit connectivity. Stakeholder and community engagement was a component in the Study to enhance transparency and receive comments from the community.

Metro and Metrolink hosted the Northridge Metrolink Station Location Feasibility Study Community Meeting on May 4, 2017 to introduce the study and present the two study alternatives:

- Alternative 1: Analyze the feasibility of relocating the existing Northridge Metrolink Station to Reseda Boulevard
- Alternative 2: Create a multi-modal transit hub using the existing Northridge Metrolink Station

In summary, the May 4<sup>th</sup> Community Meeting was attended by nearly 100 Northridge community members, who had the opportunity to meet and hear directly from Metro and Metrolink staff about

the Study and other transportation efforts in their community. Following the meeting, the presentation was posted to the Metro Regional Rail website, where the community could continue to review the materials, and anyone who missed the meeting could view the presentation. Stakeholders were able to submit comments on the Study from May 5th through May 26th via an online form on the Regional Rail page or directly via email to Metro staff. A total of 135 comments were received through comment cards at the Community Meeting, the online comment form, and emails.

The comments received for the Northridge Metrolink Station Location Feasibility Study were twofold. The May 4<sup>th</sup> Community Meeting attendees submitted comment cards that indicated a preference for Alternative 2 (58 percent) due to potential high costs and increased traffic near the Parthenia Street and Reseda Boulevard intersection. Following the meeting, the comments received via email and the online comment indicated a preference for Alternative 1 (65 percent) due to the closer proximity to CSUN and potential for increased transit connectivity. Collectively, the comments gathered throughout the outreach process showed a preference for Alternative 1 at a rate of 62 percent and a preference for Alternative 2 at a rate of 38 percent.



**CONCLUSIONS**

A snapshot comparison of the two alternatives is summarized in Table 0-2.

**Table 0-2: Summary of Alternatives**

|                              | <b>Alternative 1</b>  | <b>Alternative 2</b>  |
|------------------------------|---|---|
|                              | <b>Relocated Metrolink Station</b>  | <b>Existing Station Enhancements</b>  |
| Feasibility                  | New station would require land acquisition, approval from Union Pacific Railroad, and railroad operational enhancements.                  | Opportunities for improving transit and active transportation connectivity exist in and around the Northridge Metrolink Station |
| Estimated Costs              | \$145M  | \$26M   |
| Community Input              | 62% of comments preferred Alternative 1   | 38% of comments preferred Alternative 2   |
| Transit-Oriented Development | Not currently zoned for residential uses  | Not currently zoned for residential or commercial uses  |
| Physical Impacts             | Impacts to existing lumberyard business, Union Pacific Railroad right-of-way  | Potential impacts to flood basin north of the station as a result of new northern pedestrian/bicyclist access                   |
| Environmental Considerations | Air quality, land acquisition, hazards and hazardous materials, noise and vibration, parking and site access, and traffic and circulation | Hydrology and water quality, traffic and circulation  |