



Via email to yamagamia@metro.net

August 16, 2021

Ms. Akiko Yamagami
Transportation Planning Manager
Goods Movement
Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority
One Gateway Center
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Dear Ms. Yamagami:

This letter is in response to your request for information on the consistency with LA Metro's Equity Platform of the community engagement conducted on behalf of the Alameda Corridor-East (ACE) Project, a comprehensive program of safety and mobility improvements along the freight mainline railroads in the San Gabriel Valley implemented by the San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments (SGVCOG) and funded in partnership by LA Metro.

The ACE Project was started in 1998, well before current equity considerations were in place. However, as illustrated below, the SGVCOG community outreach approaches since inception of the ACE Project have largely been consistent with the goals and objectives of LA Metro's equity framework. The SGVCOG established the ACE Project in response to sharpening community concerns over the safety, congestion, air pollution, noise and other local impacts of growing freight rail traffic at at-grade crossings in the San Gabriel Valley with the completion of the Alameda Corridor rail expressway between the San Pedro Bay ports and downtown Los Angeles. The ACE Project program goals are to increase safety, improve mobility, reduce emissions and foster economic vitality. These broad goals reflect desired community outcomes of reducing the impacts of increased freight rail traffic through San Gabriel Valley communities which otherwise are burdened with the growth of freight movement in Southern California, the nation's largest trade gateway and inland corridor. Further, quality of life benefits include restoration of community connectivity and cohesion, which was previously divided by the railroad tracks.

In addition to the overall ACE Project reflecting community outcomes, SGVCOG's community outreach efforts have sought to incorporate community concerns and input in the design of the specific improvement projects that make up the comprehensive ACE Project. During the design engineering phase for each ACE project, SGVCOG conducted extensive community engagement meetings once project design reached the 65% level. At that level of design, renderings, property take and easement maps and detour routes are sufficiently detailed to allow meaningful community input. SGVCOG ensured that translators were on hand at community engagement meetings to allow input to be provided in English, Spanish and Chinese languages.

This extensive community engagement seeks to establish informed opportunities for surrounding communities to shape each of the ACE projects so that the completed projects meet the needs and the desires of the communities. For instance, at the most recent community outreach meeting for the Turnbull Canyon Road grade separation project in July 2019, community input and concerns resulted in the addition to the project of street lights to deter crime and dumping, installation of no-truck-through traffic signs on residential streets and fencing to be added to a pedestrian overcrossing to deter graffiti and camping, among other design revisions. During individual project construction, communities are kept apprised in advance of impactful construction activities so mitigation efforts can be developed to ease or offset impacts on neighboring residents and businesses.

Attached to this letter in response to your request are the SB 535 Disadvantaged Communities and AB 1550 Low-income Communities assessments prepared as part of the applications seeking SB 1 Trade Corridor Enhancement Program funds for the ACE grade separation projects at Montebello Boulevard and Turnbull Canyon Road.

I hope this information is helpful. Please contact me at phubler@sgvcog.org should you have questions or need more information.

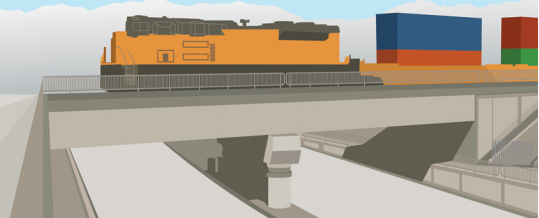
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul R. Hubler". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "P".

Paul Hubler
Director of Government and Community Relations

Attachment

Attachment
SB535 Disadvantaged Communities and
AB1550 Low-Income Communities Assessment



vi. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

ACE has conducted extensive community outreach for the Montebello Boulevard Grade Separation Project and planned safety improvements for the remaining at-grade crossings in the City of Montebello. In coordination with the City of Montebello, ACE held a community-wide project public information meeting on May 17, 2016. The meeting was well-publicized, with more than 22,000 invitation letters mailed to Montebello residents, businesses and key stakeholders and articles published in community newspapers. Nearly 90 people attended the meeting at a conference center in Montebello, including residents, business owners and representatives of the City of Montebello, Congresswoman Linda Sanchez’s office, Montebello Unified School District, Montebello Chamber of Commerce and Beverly Hospital.

The purpose of the meeting was to provide information and solicit comments and questions based on updated concept design plans for the proposed roadway underpasses at Montebello Boulevard and Maple Avenue and safety gate and crossing improvements at Greenwood and Vail Avenues. Display boards were made available showing concept design plans, traffic detours and right-of-way/easements required at each crossing. Materials were made available in English, Spanish and Chinese and translators were on hand to provide assistance to attendees. The plans developed were based on conceptual proposals approved by the Montebello City Council in February 2015.

The community input and concerns and ACE responses were summarized in a written report sent to the Montebello City Manager. ACE staff presented the concept plans for review and approval by the Montebello City Council, and the final concept was approved in July 2016, with an amendment to replace the underpass on Maple Avenue with a pedestrian overcrossing and quad gates. The underpass was replaced due to concerns over potential property access impacts to a nearby dairy and the lack of significant vehicular traffic on Maple Avenue.

The Montebello Boulevard Grade Separation Project received clearance under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) in November 2017.

vii. COMMUNITY BENEFITS AND IMPACTS — DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES AND LOW-INCOME AREAS

The Project will produce mobility, safety, environmental, and quality-of-life benefits for the communities in and around the Project area by restoring connectivity and cohesion to a community divided by the UPRR rail line. That community is primarily Hispanic, lower-income and more transit-dependent than the overall population of Los Angeles County, with nearly 15% of residents living below the poverty level⁴.

The Project is located in Census tract #6037532101, which is designated as both a disadvantaged community and a low-income community. It is among the most disadvantaged 25% in the state,

⁴ <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/montebellocitycalifornia/PST045216>



according to the California Environmental Protection Agency pursuant to Section 39711 of the Health and Safety Code, and contains households with a median income at or below 80% of the statewide median or with median household incomes at or below the threshold designated as low income by the Department of Housing and Community Development’s list of state income limits adopted pursuant to Section 50093 of the Health and Safety Code.

Figure 4 shows the SB 535 Disadvantaged Communities and AB 1550 Low-income Communities impacted by the Project⁵. The red and blue circles indicate the area within .5 and 1.0 miles of the Project site, respectively, where property values are expected to increase due to the grade separation construction. These increased property values will all occur in communities designated as disadvantaged or low income.

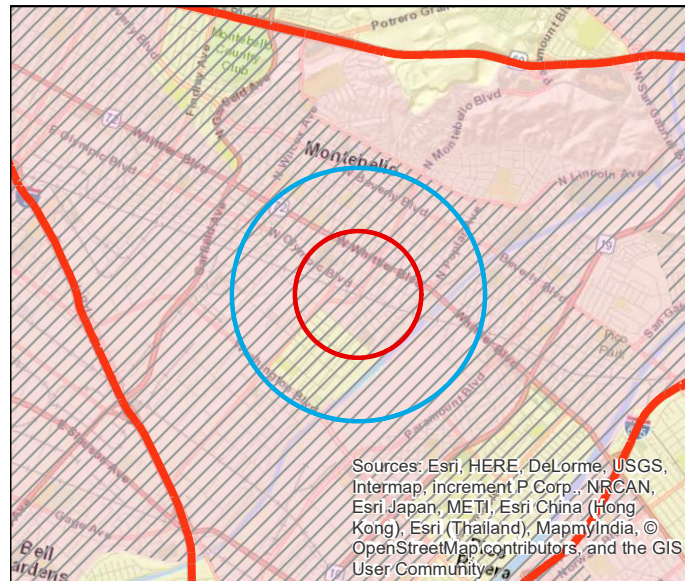


Figure 4: Montebello Boulevard Grade Separation Project Disadvantaged Communities and Low-Income Areas

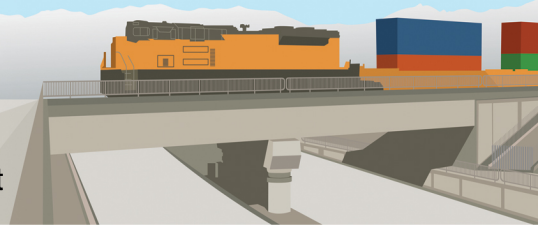
viii. COMMUNITY BENEFITS AND IMPACTS – GENERAL

As also described in the Benefit-Cost Analysis section of this narrative, the impact of the Project goes beyond the immediate project area, and extends to communities not designated as disadvantaged or low-income. The Project will improve the quality-of-life for residents in the City of Montebello and the San Gabriel Valley by reducing the hours that vehicles are delayed due to crossing trains, which will also lead to reductions in toxic emissions from idling vehicles, which will improve air quality throughout the region. The Project will improve safety for motorists, bicyclists and pedestrians by eliminating the possibility of a crash, and will also eliminate delays for emergency responders. These improvements will reduce traffic congestion and create travel time savings throughout the region’s highly congested

⁵ <https://www.arb.ca.gov/cc/capandtrade/auctionproceeds/communityinvestments.htm>



highways, and improve the reliability of freight movement between the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach, thus reducing the costs associated with freight delays.



vi. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

The ACE Construction Authority intends to conduct community and public involvement for the Project throughout 2018. ACE staff has briefed the offices of Los Angeles County Supervisors Hilda Solis and Janice Hahn in preparation for holding a Community Open House meeting for the Project in 2018. The purpose of the open house meeting will be to present to residents and businesses the preliminary design plans and renderings, traffic detour information, and right-of-way/easements required from private property for the Project, as well to solicit comments from the public and affected parties. Public comments received at the meeting or by letter will be documented and responded to in writing. Information will be available in English, Spanish and Chinese languages.

vii. COMMUNITY-IDENTIFIED NEEDS, AND BENEFITS TO DISADVANTAGED AND LOW-INCOME COMMUNITIES

The Project will produce mobility, safety, environmental, and quality-of-life benefits for the communities in and around the Project area by restoring connectivity and cohesion to a community divided by the UPRR rail line. Additionally, the Project will increase low-income and minority access to jobs located in the City of Industry by eliminating congestion and delay. The project census tract (#6037408202) and the surrounding area are home to both SB 535 disadvantaged communities and AB 1550 low-income communities.

Figure 3 shows the SB 535 Disadvantaged Communities and AB 1550 Low-income Communities impacted by the Project. The circles indicate the area within 0.5, 1.0 and 1.5 miles of the Project site, respectively, where property values are expected to increase due to the grade separation construction. These increased property values will primarily occur in communities designated as disadvantaged and low income.

i. COMMUNITY-IDENTIFIED NEEDS AND BENEFITS TO OTHER AREAS

As described above in Section VII and later in Section XI of this narrative, the Project will improve the quality-of-life for residents in the surrounding communities and the San Gabriel Valley. These benefits go beyond the immediate project area, and extend to communities not designated as disadvantaged or low-income.

The project will benefit these other communities by reducing the hours that vehicles are delayed due to crossing trains. Reducing vehicle hours and miles in the area will also lead to reductions in toxic emissions from idling vehicles, which will improve air quality throughout the region. The Project will improve safety for motorists, bicyclists and pedestrians by eliminating the possibility of a crash, and will also eliminate delays for emergency responders. These improvements will reduce traffic congestion and create travel time savings throughout the region's highly congested highways, and improve the reliability of freight movement between the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach, thus reducing the costs associated with freight delays. As mentioned above, the project is also the last at-grade crossing in the area, eliminating train horn noise at the crossing for all communities in the area.

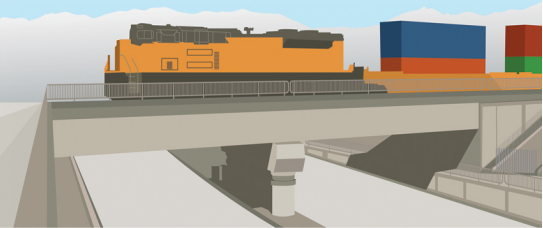
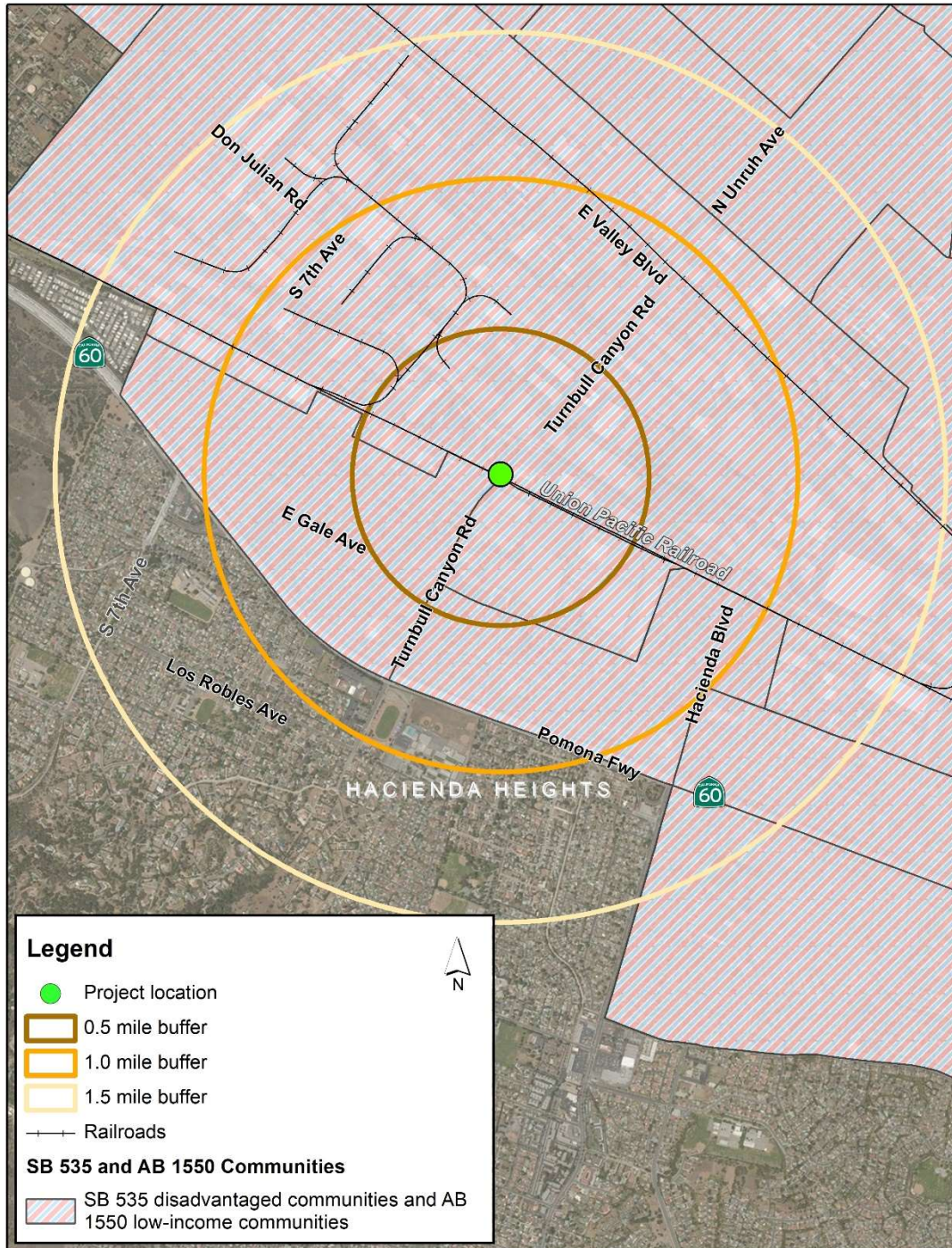


Figure 3: Disadvantaged and Low-Income Communities



Source: California Air Resources Board