

**Board Report**

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**PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE  
JULY 14, 2021****SUBJECT: COUNTYWIDE PLANNING MAJOR PROJECT STATUS REPORT****ACTION: RECEIVE AND FILE****RECOMMENDATION**

RECEIVE AND FILE monthly report on the Major Capital Projects in the environmental planning phase by the Chief Planning Officer.

**DISCUSSION**

This month's Major Project Status Report provides the regular update for Metro's four Pillar Projects and the North Hollywood to Pasadena Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Project. This month, the report also includes an update on the Rail to River Project, in response to a Public Comment request made at the June 2021 meeting of the Planning and Programming Subcommittee.

- **West Santa Ana Branch Corridor (WSAB)**

Metro staff submitted the third and final round of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (Draft EIS/EIR) to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) on June 9, 2021 and is working on incorporating final comments. FTA is currently expected to authorize public circulation of the Draft EIS/EIR by late July 2021.

Public outreach will be conducted during the release of the Draft EIS/EIR, including the official 45-day comment period. Both in-person open houses and virtual public-hearings are being contemplated at this time. Date and time of these meetings will be finalized in the coming weeks. To enhance project awareness and access to the latest updates, several multi-media tools will be launched to inform users about the project corridor and environmental process. Communications Toolkits also will be shared with community leaders to support their engagement with constituents, and presentations and project updates are available by request.

At the June 2021, meeting of the Planning and Programming Committee, Director Solis requested an update on Metro outreach thus far in the Little Tokyo community. Outreach in Little Tokyo has involved representatives from Arts District/Little Tokyo Neighborhood Council, Geffen/MOCA, Higashi Honganji Buddhist Temple, Japanese American National Museum, Japanese Chamber of Commerce of So. Calif., Little Tokyo Business Association, Little Tokyo Community Council, Little Tokyo Service

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Center, *Rafu Shimpo*, Savoy Community Association, St. Francis Xavier Church and Tokyo Villa Homeowners Associates.

Recently, Staff attended and presented at a WSAB-focused meeting organized by Little Tokyo Community Council (LTCC) on April 7, 2022 to discuss the Project, the environmental timeline and station design in Little Tokyo. In addition, Metro conducted a Stakeholder Working Group (SWG) meeting on April 26, 2022 for stakeholders and Community-Based Organizations (CBO) north of the I-10 freeway to present on the WSAB project. The meeting was attended by representatives from various groups including the Little Tokyo Business Association, Little Tokyo Community Council, Little Tokyo Neighborhood Council, Little Tokyo Towers, Mura HOA Board and St Francis Xavier Chapel.

The project continues to advance field survey work and verification of existing utilities identified as part of the 15% design. Staff continues to coordinate with various third parties as necessary including Union Pacific Railroad, cities, Caltrans, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and various utility providers.

- **Green Line to Torrance LRT Extension**

As reported in previous months, comments received during the scoping period were generally supportive of the project, however many included specific concerns regarding the two alternatives under consideration. These concerns included alignment configuration and potential impacts such as noise, vibration, property acquisition, safety, and changes to aesthetics/community character. The project team continues to evaluate these comments as we move forward with the Draft EIR and conceptual design of the alternatives under evaluation.

Meetings with the local jurisdictions (Redondo, Torrance, and Lawndale) are on-going to better understand communities' needs, concerns about the Project, and inputs to the environmental process. Neighborhood walks are being developed to continue engagement with community members and to understand concerns and opportunities in the project study area.

Coordination will continue as well with Caltrans and BNSF to identify and resolve current and future operational needs for both entities and alternatives under evaluation. Potholing activities are being scheduled with both Caltrans and BNSF to identify the location of existing utilities on both alternatives to better inform the conceptual design process.

- **Eastside Transit Corridor Phase 2**

The Eastside Transit Corridor Phase 2 (ESP2) Project team has completed a preliminary feasibility analysis of the at-grade configuration in the City of Montebello. This configuration includes the Greenwood Station, which would extend the at-grade configuration from approximately 4.4 miles to 5.2 miles. The team met with City of Montebello staff and councilmembers to present the preliminary findings on June 14<sup>th</sup>, 28<sup>th</sup>, 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>; the findings also were shared at the Washington Coalition meeting on July 1<sup>st</sup>.

The team will continue to coordinate with the City of Commerce on the maintenance storage facility

site, per Director Solis's request during the June 2021, Planning and Programming Subcommittee discussions. Congresswoman Lucille Roybal-Allard has submitted a project, "New Transit Maintenance Facility," to the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee for \$2 million in the 2021 Surface Transportation Reauthorization. Staff will work with the City to determine whether this requested funding would support the Eastside Transit Corridor Phase 2 or if it would support municipal bus operations instead. Staff will provide updates as new information emerges. Presently, the project consultant teams continue to evaluate and develop optional sites in the cities of Commerce and Montebello.

- **Sepulveda Transit Corridor**

Following authorization by the Board to award two Pre-Development Agreement (PDA) contracts in March 2021, Program Management is working to execute the Notice to Proceed with the two selected teams. Planning staff continues to prepare for the environmental scoping period, scheduled to commence in Fall 2021. As part of this preparation, on June 8, 2021, Metro staff conducted a virtual community meeting to provide an update on project activities since the publication of the Feasibility Study, provide an overview of the upcoming environmental process and the five alternatives, and provide an opportunity for stakeholders to ask clarifying questions on the project.

- **North Hollywood (NoHo) to Pasadena Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)**

Following Board approval of the Proposed Project on May 27, 2021, this Project is now in the Final EIR phase and staff continues to coordinate with cities in response to comments received in May and plans to conduct additional community outreach in the months ahead. The Proposed Project now includes two center-running BRT design options for Colorado Boulevard in Eagle Rock - one which converts a travel lane in each direction to a bus lane and the other which retains all travel lanes but reduces parking and median space to accommodate bus lanes.

Staff continues to work with the Cities of Burbank and Eagle Rock, and with our consultant teams to explore design options and better understand traffic conditions with the Proposed Project. Ideas for exploring the effects of different design options include visual simulation modeling tools to illustrate the proposed BRT operations and project local traffic volumes and circulation. Staff will return to the Board with an update, in response to Director Solis's request (made at the June Planning and Programming Committee meeting) for live traffic demonstrations.

- **Rail to Rail / Rail to River Active Transportation Corridor (ATC) Segments A, B**

Located in South Los Angeles, the Rail to Rail/River ATC Project spans approximately 10 miles from the future Metro LAX/Line to the Los Angeles River. The corridor is composed of two segments, each in a different phase of development. Segment A is the Rail to Rail component that converts an existing and underutilized portion of the Harbor Subdivision right of way into a multi-use path for walking, biking and rolling modes; this segment (approximately 5.6 miles in length) follows Slauson Avenue to the Metro A Line (Blue) Slauson Station.

Segment A is currently in the solicitation period for construction bids managed by Program Management. To date, pre-construction activities have included site clean-up and preparation, and an Invitation for Bids (IFB) was released in April. The procurement process is now in a black-out period, and staff will return to the Board in September for authorization of the Life of Project (LOP) budget.

Segment B is the Rail to River component, for which staff currently is conducting a supplemental alternative analysis. Rail to River Segment B aims to provide a safe, comfortable, and continuous active transportation route connecting Segment A at the Metro A Line (Blue) Slauson Station to the Los Angeles River path, enhancing mobility and regional connectivity for local communities.

Metro staff kicked off a Supplemental Alternatives Analysis (SAA) in October 2020, to identify a new and/or refined alternative corridor because of constrained rights of way along Randolph Street in Huntington Park due to the addition of the West Santa Ana Branch rail project. The study area covers approximately 4.3 square-miles bounded by the Metro A Line Slauson Station to the west, the LA River path to the east, just North of Slauson Avenue to the north, and just south of Randolph Street to the south, and includes a small area of unincorporated Los Angeles County, as well as the cities of Huntington Park, Vernon, Maywood, and Bell.

As part of this study, a community outreach effort was initiated to solicit public input and a technical working group was formed consisting of representatives from jurisdictions and internal Metro departments and/or projects within the study area. To date, staff has conducted three Technical Working Group (TWG) meetings and two rounds of virtual community meetings. The first round included a Community Advisory Committee (CAC) meeting held on January 27, 2021 and two community meetings held on February 11 and February 13, 2021. The second round included another CAC meeting held on April 29, 2021 and two community meetings held on May 11 and May 15, 2021. A total of 27 individuals and 18 organizations participated in the CAC meetings with a total of 149 people attending the virtual community meetings. Additionally, online surveys were conducted after each set of meetings with a total of 528 completed surveys received.

Based on all the feedback and surveys received to date, staff has identified and narrowed the initial list of potential alternatives to three. An additional level of technical analysis and ranking methodology will be conducted on these three alternatives to identify a refined and final alternative. Staff hopes to share these findings with the technical working group and community in late July/early August 2021.

- **Countywide Planning Dashboard**

While this report focuses on the four Major Capital (“Pillar”) Projects, there are six other Measure M projects, five non-Measure M projects, and four Strategy & Policy initiatives. For an update on these other 15 projects, please refer to the Countywide Planning Dashboard, included as Attachment A of this report.

## **EQUITY PLATFORM**

Equity assessment summaries for the projects in this month’s update report are included below. As

these projects are in environmental planning phases, and as community outreach continues, Metro staff will continue to engage with Equity Focused Communities (EFC) along these corridors and other minority, low income and limited English proficiency populations unique to local areas. In future Board reports, staff will update the equity summaries for these projects only when there are notable changes to equity impacts or engagement milestones.

West Santa Ana Branch Corridor: A Rapid Equity Assessment (REA) has been completed for the DEIR/S report. Metro has involved project stakeholders including CBOs during each phase of the Project through a variety of forums and platforms. Further, special outreach efforts have been and will continue to be undertaken to reach out to minority, low income and limited English proficiency populations, and persons with disabilities during the 45-day comment period for the Draft EIS/EIR. Based on the Federal Transit Administration's definitions for Environmental Justice Communities and on Metro's thresholds for Equity Focused Communities (EFC), the entire corridor falls within these communities.

Green Line to Torrance LRT Extension: The scoping period for this project was conducted with accommodations for members of the public with disabilities, with limited English proficiency, and/or facing barriers to reliable internet. Accommodations included (1) door-to-door canvassing to notify residents about the various ways to provide input and to encourage participation, (2) virtual meetings with simultaneous Spanish translation, and (3) options for submitting comments via project website, postal mail, and/or telephone hotline. Continued outreach efforts will be on-going with stakeholders including those we have not effectively engaged with to maintain community dialogue and encourage participation in the environmental process. This corridor does not include EFCs as defined by Metro.

Eastside Transit Corridor Phase 2: Of particular note this month, the Metro team has finalized the Community-Based Organization (CBO) Roundtable Strategy. The fundamental component of this strategy is a CBO Roundtable comprised of local community organizations that can provide expertise on how to best engage the community and especially, how to reach historically underrepresented, minority, limited English proficiency (LEP), and low income members. EFCs are located within a half mile of every station proposed along this corridor.

Next steps involve developing participatory criteria and scope of work with assistance from the project team's outreach consultant. The scope of work will outline the roles, responsibilities, and tasks for the Roundtable, and activities that the CBOs could perform. The CBO Roundtable would convene based on project needs to advise the team with specific public engagement and outreach activities to broaden the reach in meaningful ways. Depending on the suggested strategies or activities by the Roundtable, the CBOs could carry out these activities in coordination with Metro staff and the outreach consultant. All tasks and activities stipulated in the scope of work will include compensation for the CBOs. The CBO Roundtable Outreach Strategy is anticipated to be implemented this Summer, prior to commencing community engagement for the Eastside Transit Corridor Phase 2.

Sepulveda Transit Corridor: Consistent with Metro best practices, ADA accommodations and translations were made available to the public and instructions on how to request the accommodations were included on the meeting notices. The webinar included Spanish interpretation as well. The community was notified of the webinar in English and Spanish. Multiple email blasts

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were sent out, reaching over 15,000 contacts, and there were also various social media, website, and newsletter mentions from local elected offices, community organizations, and neighborhood councils. Approximately 380 stakeholders participated in the webinar, with 360 participating via the Zoom web platform and 20 calling in by phone. The webinar had high engagement; nearly 160 questions and comments were received. Following the webinar, emails were sent out to thank the participants and to share the webinar recordings in English and Spanish, which were posted to YouTube and linked on the project website to allow for easy accessibility. Staff is in the process of preparing Frequently Asked Questions from the questions raised at the webinar and submitted through the project email. These FAQs will be posted to the project website, and the link will be shared with stakeholders via email.

EFCs have been identified within this project study area, specifically in the San Fernando Valley (near the northern terminus of the project) and near UCLA. The project would also serve the high student population around UCLA and the veteran population from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs West Los Angeles Medical Center (VA). As outreach efforts progress, equity considerations will be addressed to ensure meaningful and effective engagement of these communities

NoHo to Pasadena BRT: It is important to note that while the Proposed Project does provide a new premium transit service through several Equity Focus Communities (EFCs), the Eagle Rock segment of the project is not one of them. Regardless of which option is chosen in Eagle Rock, the North Hollywood to Pasadena BRT will provide a new rapid transit connection between the EFCs in Burbank, Glendale and the regional rail network in North Hollywood and Pasadena. Additionally, the project will enhance connections to dense employment centers like Central Pasadena and the Burbank Media District, as well as to educational institutions, including a terminus at Pasadena City College and within walking distance of CalTech.

From the very onset of the project, the outreach efforts have been both robust and inclusive. Translators have been available at all meetings and meeting materials have been prepared in multiple languages, including Spanish and Armenian. Transit-intercept surveys were also conducted at various phases of the project to reach out to our current transit riders and inform them of the project, as well as to solicit their feedback. Moving forward during the FEIR process, staff will continue to engage with marginalized and vulnerable communities along the route.

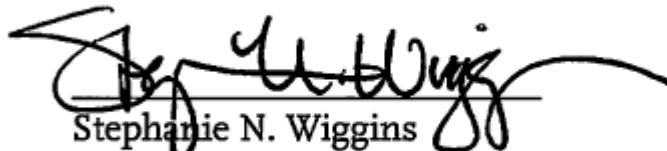
Rail to Rail, Rail to River ATC Segments A and B: Segment A of this corridor is almost entirely located within or adjacent to Equity Focused Communities. For Segment B, approximately 22 percent of the study area qualifies as an EFC. EFCs exist along some of the more populated areas of the study area, including to the west near downtown Huntington Park and to the east within the City of Maywood. Staff currently is working with the Office of Equity and Race on the preparation and completion of the Equity Assessment Tool for Segment B. The final report is anticipated to be completed in Fall 2021. Staff anticipates going to the Board in late 2021 with both the study findings and recommendations.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment A - Countywide Planning Monthly Major Projects - July 2021

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