

# CHAPTER 6

## Public and Agency Outreach

## 6.0 PUBLIC AND AGENCY OUTREACH

### 6.1 Introduction

The Regional Connector Transit Corridor Project approval and certification of the Final EIS/EIR was the culmination of prior planning and environmental studies and projects completed in the past two decades. Per court order (Submitted pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, 42 U.S.C. §§ 42 U.S.C. 4321 et. seq, 23 CFR 771, and the Order re Plaintiffs' Combined Motion for Summary Judgment and Defendants' Motion and Cross-Motion for Summary Judgment, dated May 29, 2014 and Order re Plaintiff Today's IV, Inc. and 515/555 Flower Associates, LLC's Motion for Injunctive Relief, dated September 12, 2014 issued by the U.S. District Court in *Today's IV, Inc. v. FTA et al. (Today's IV)*, Case No. LA CV13-00378 JAK (PLAx), *Japanese Village, LLC v. FTA et al. (Japanese Village)*, Case No. LA CV13-00396 JAK (PLAx), *515/555 Flower Assoc., LLC v. FTA (Flower Assoc.)*, Case No. LA CV00453 JAK (PLAx) and the Judgments issued on October 24, 2014 by the U.S. District Court in *Today's IV* and *Flower Assoc.*), this SEIS is intended to provide more information on tunnel construction alternatives not pursued and to provide additional detail on tunneling methods not selected for use along Flower Street, specifically Open Face Shield and SEM tunneling for the Flower Street portion of the Regional Connector project alignment between 4th Street and the 7th Street/Metro Center Station. This Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement and Supplemental Record of Decision document has been prepared pursuant to Pub. L. 114-94, 23 USC 139 (n)(2)(A) as amended by the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act.

Public Outreach for this SEIS was focused on the two areas affected by the construction tunneling alternatives, Flower Street and Little Tokyo. Public notice of the availability of the Draft SEIS, a 45-day public review period and notification of the completion of the Final SEIS was provided in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)( 23 CFR 771.130).

### 6.2 Highlights of Previous Outreach Efforts

The Regional Connector Transit Corridor Project has garnered considerable stakeholder interest throughout the environmental process during including the AA, Draft EIS, and Final EIS phases. Recognizing the unique challenges and opportunities of the proposed project, as well as its potential benefits beyond the immediate downtown Los Angeles area, Metro developed a creative approach to ensure an inclusive, engaging and transparent outreach process. The community outreach effort was designed to build awareness and understanding of the project, provide opportunities for ongoing stakeholder involvement, and assist in the identification of potential mitigation measures.

Outreach included the engagement of a wide diversity of stakeholders and opinion leaders including business organizations, chambers of commerce, business improvement districts (BIDs), neighborhood councils, community councils, arts organizations, and residents groups in downtown Los Angeles. Particular outreach was done in the Little Tokyo community, located within the Project Area, one of the only three remaining "Japantowns" in the United States, and an environmental justice community. The Little Tokyo Working Group (LTWG) was created and included Metro staff and

leaders of the Little Tokyo Community Council (LTCC), which represented over 100 business and community organizations.

A collaborative effort, the group developed alternatives acceptable to the Little Tokyo community and appropriate mitigation measures to address construction and operational impacts. This collaboration led to the development of the Fully Underground LRT as the only acceptable alternative for the community. In 2010 the Metro Board approved the addition of the Fully Underground LRT Alternative to the Draft EIS for full environmental evaluation. Following the completion of the Draft EIS public review period, the Metro Board of Directors designated the Fully Underground LRT Alternative as the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) at the October 28, 2010 meeting.

Metro published a Supplemental Environmental Assessment (EA) document to introduce refinements made to the LPA in July 2011. The preparation of the Final EIS/EIR was completed in January 2012, and the Metro Board of Directors approved the Project on April 26, 2012. A Record of Determination (ROD) was issued by the FTA on June 29, 2012.

The formation and success of the LTWG, accompanied by Metro's desire to implement a transparent and proactive process in engaging this community, collectively provided an extraordinary opportunity for stakeholder engagement to defuse potentially volatile environmental justice issues, and in the process build trust, widespread enthusiasm, and support for a critical transit project.

Additionally, in April 2014 Metro was nominated for the Public Involvement/Partnership Award by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), an award given by the National Association of Environmental Professionals (NAEP), recognizing the community outreach efforts and proactive engagement of the Little Tokyo community in a focused and collaborative dialogue during the NEPA process in order to address their concerns.

### **6.3 Public Participation Plan (PPP)**

A detailed Public Participation Plan (PPP) was developed at the commencement of the environmental effort, and included a stakeholder database, communications protocols, public input tracking, and a schedule for interfacing with the public, and recommendations for how meetings should be conducted. All elements of the PPP were applicable to this SEIS effort. The full PPP is provided in the Final Scoping Report as Appendix G in the Final EIS/EIR.

Project notifications, mailers, and updates for this SEIS followed the specification outlined in the PPP, including newspaper ads, media outreach, and in appropriate languages. Public meeting notifications were published in local newspapers and held in the Study Area.

### **6.4 Agency Coordination**

The extensive consultation process with various cultural groups and agencies to identify traditional cultural properties and cultural practices was conducted during all phases of the environmental planning process has been documented for the Section 106 consultation process and detailed information can be found in Chapter 7, Public and Agency Outreach, of the Final EIS/EIR. This coordination has continued through this SEIS phase. Communication with the State Historic

Preservation Office (SHPO) was undertaken by FTA staff. Metro provided a letter to SHPO on June 4, 2015 explaining the purpose of the SEIS, court order, and the alternatives under evaluation. The letter included information on the alternatives considered but withdrawn from consideration and discussion of anticipated impacts. SHPO submitted no comments pertaining to the alternatives considered in this SEIS.

Various informational documents including meeting notices, electronic e-blast, mail post cards, and other collateral materials provided the public with project information during the Draft SEIS process. Letters were also sent to participating, non-participating, and reviewing agencies. Participating letters were sent on June 2, 2015 and included a copy of the Notice of Availability (NOA).

Table 6-1: Agency Distribution for the Draft SEIS

Resources Agency	
Department of Fish and Wildlife, Region 5	Resources, Recycling and Recovery
Office of Historic Preservation	California Highway Patrol
Department of Parks and Recreation	Caltrans, District 7
Department of Water Resources	Air Resources Board, Transportation Projects
Regional Water Quality Control Board, Region 4	Department of Toxic Substances Control
Native American Heritage Commission	Public Utilities Commission
Office of Emergency Services, California	

#### 6.4.1 Mailings, Flyers, and Electronic Mailings

Notification of public hearings was sent via postal mail to the addresses on the stakeholder database. Postcards were sent by a mail house to households and businesses located within a 1 mile radius of the project. Additionally, notices were posted on Metro’s website. Refer to Appendix I for copies of the published notification and post cards.

#### 6.4.2 Website and Media Outreach

The project website (<http://www.metro.net/regionalconnector/>) serves as a central point where stakeholders can readily access current project-related information. The project website was initially used for the AA phase and was updated regularly during the Draft EIS, the Final EIS phases, and the current SEIS phase. Website content for the Regional Connector includes a project overview, schedule of upcoming meetings, summaries of past meetings and collateral materials including fact sheets, presentations materials, and other information from both the current and previous project phases. The website is updated at key study milestones.

### 6.5 Public Review Period

The Draft SEIS was distributed for public review and comment prior to the issuance of this Final SEIS. Comments were submitted during the 45-day Draft SEIS review period to FTA or Metro. FTA and

Metro held two public hearings on the content and findings of the Draft SEIS during the 45-day public review period. The NOA alerted the public and interested Federal, State, tribal, regional and local government agencies of the availability of the DSEIS, and invite comment on the DSEIS. The NOA also provided notice that the FTA may issue a single Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision document pursuant to Pub. L. 112-141, 126 Stat. 405, Section 1319(b) unless the FTA determines statutory criteria or practicability considerations preclude issuance of the combined document pursuant to Section 1319. In that case, FTA would issue a Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement followed by a supplement to the Record of Decision, as needed. All substantive comments on the content of the Draft SEIS are addressed in this Final SEIS.

### **6.5.1 Public Hearings**

The Draft SEIS public participation process was initiated on June 12, 2015 and lasted for 45 days, ending July 27, 2015. The NOA was filed with the County Clerk on June 11, 2015. Ads, in English, Spanish, and Japanese, were published in local newspapers providing project information and the public comment period, and public hearings. Local newspaper publications included Rafu Shimpō (local Japanese publication), La Opinion (local Spanish publication), The Downtown News, and The Daily News. Copies of ads and postings can be found in Appendix I. During this time, there were two public hearings held within the study area, one in the Financial District and one in Little Tokyo. The public hearings were held:

- June 30, 2015 from 12:00 pm to 1:30 pm at the Los Angeles Central Library, Mark Taper Auditorium, 630 W. 5<sup>th</sup> Street, Los Angeles, CA 90071
- July 7, 2015 from 6:30 pm to 8:00 pm at the Japanese American National Museum, 100 N. Central Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90012

### **6.5.2 Public and Agency Comment**

A total of 13 public and agency comment letters were received during the public review period, including written materials submitted at the two public hearings. Comments were also submitted in the form of oral testimony at those hearings. A total of 2 public testimonies were recorded at the public hearings. Overall, a total of 6 comments by individuals (not agencies) were received on the Regional Connector Transit Corridor Project Draft SEIS.

Appendix J of this Final SEIS contains copies of all written comments, both mailed and comment cards from the public hearings, court transcripts, and responses to all comments received on the Draft SEIS.