

**Metro**

Los Angeles County  
Metropolitan Transportation Authority

One Gateway Plaza  
Los Angeles, CA 90012-2952

213.922.2000 Tel  
metro.net

**PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE  
FEBRUARY 20, 2008**

**SUBJECT: WESTSIDE EXTENSION ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS STUDY-  
STATUS REPORT**

**ACTION: RECEIVE AND FILE**

**RECOMMENDATION**

Receive and file this status report on the Westside Extension Alternatives Analysis (AA) Study scoping process (Attachment A) and the preliminary definition of alternatives for screening (Attachment B).

**ISSUE**

In June 2007, the Board approved the start of an AA Study for the Westside Extension Transit Corridor by awarding two contracts; one for the AA technical work including a tunnel feasibility assessment and the other for community outreach. During the month of October, staff conducted a series of six scoping/community meetings to solicit input on the range of alternatives to be considered. These meetings were well attended by more than 460 participants. During the comment period that extended from October 1<sup>st</sup> to November 7<sup>th</sup>, a total of 484 comments were received from cities, stakeholders, organizations, civic associations and residents.

Staff has reviewed the comments received through the outreach effort along with technical analysis prepared by the consultant team and identified a total of 17 representative alternatives that include transit alignments historically studied within the corridor as well as new ideas regarding modes, alignments and profiles suggested by the scoping comments listed in Attachment A. Staff is beginning to screen these alternatives in accordance with Federal Transit Administration (FTA) New Starts Program Guidelines and conduct further community outreach in preparation for returning to the Board in summer 2008 with recommendations on the best performing alternative(s).

## DISCUSSION

The Westside Extension AA Study is evaluating a range of transit improvements in order to recommend a Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) that can best accommodate population growth and transit demand and be compatible with land use and future development opportunities. To ensure the greatest flexibility in future funding options, the study is following federal Section 5309 New Starts Program guidelines. As a part of any new consideration for a high capacity transit corridor, federal guidelines require that as a first step, an AA Study be conducted which considers all reasonable alternatives, including above-ground alternatives, different transit modes such as light rail transit (LRT) or bus rapid transit (BRT) and alternative route alignments.

### AA Scoping

The scoping process for the Westside AA Study included both the identification of prospective participants and notification for all meetings. The intention was to both inform and solicit feedback on what transit improvements should be studied and how transit improvements should be evaluated.

A scoping notice was published in Federal Register Volume 72 No. 189 on October 1, 2007. The scoping comment period extended until November 7, 2007. The general public and agency representatives were given opportunities to attend public meetings and provide verbal plus written comments. In addition, project information could be viewed and comments could be submitted on the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority's website.

A summary of the substantive comments are provided in Attachment A. As indicated, comments were provided through a variety of means including verbal, by letter, from email and from our Information line. At the scoping meetings, participants were briefed regarding the Westside study area transit needs, a range of transit modes for consideration and the two principal routes identified historically which followed Wilshire Boulevard and Santa Monica Boulevard. Commenters addressed transit mode, transit alignment, potential stations, evaluation criteria to be used and general issues about the study.

### Comments Received

The overwhelming majority of comments supported the need for a transit improvement in the Westside Extension Corridor. The Wilshire subway alignment was the most favored route and mode. Many people also advocated for a subway on both the Wilshire and Santa Monica alignments. In many cases, where the public supported both the Wilshire and the Santa Monica alignments, most thought that the Wilshire alignment should take precedence. Limited support was voiced for aerial/monorail, LRT or BRT modes, with opposition to each of these modes expressed as well.

These comments provide useful input to the definition of alternatives and their subsequent evaluation and will be incorporated as the Westside AA Study progresses.

## **Preliminary Definition of Alternatives**

Based on the analysis of previous corridor study alternatives and the scoping comments received, a preliminary definition of alternatives has been developed. These alternatives are listed and illustrated in Attachment B.

The alignments, stations and transit technologies, include heavy rail transit (HRT), LRT, Monorail and BRT. In all, 17 build alternatives have been developed in addition to the required No Build and Transportation Systems Management (TSM) Alternatives. These alternatives include the following:

- HRT Subway via Wilshire Boulevard (Alternatives 1, 12 and 14)
- HRT Subway via Santa Monica Boulevard (Alternatives 4, 6, 7, 8 and 13)
- Combined Wilshire/Santa Monica HRT Subway Alignments (Alternatives 9, 10, 11, 15 & 16)
- Light Rail, Monorail & Heavy Rail Elevated Alternatives (Alternatives 2, 3 & 5)
- BRT Alternative (Alternative 17)

## **Tunnel Feasibility Review**

In October 2005, the American Public Transit Association (APTA) convened an expert peer review panel which concluded that underground tunneling could be conducted safely under Wilshire Boulevard, if normal engineering practices and precautions were observed. As a result, the AA Study will prepare a tunnel feasibility review which will further the work of the APTA Panel to develop an initial engineering concept and scope for any further engineering design and costing of the tunnel alternatives. The LACMTA Tunnel Advisory Panel is providing oversight for this work.

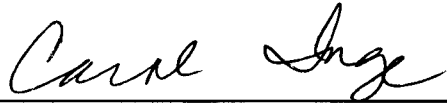
## **NEXT STEPS**

At the February Planning and Programming Committee staff will report on comments received at the second round of community meetings held on January 31<sup>st</sup>, February 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>. In April, staff will prepare a detailed analysis of the 17 alternatives in comparison to the No Build and TSM Alternatives and conduct additional community outreach to gauge community concerns and support for the various options. The results of this analysis will be brought back to the Board during the summer with recommendations for the selection of a locally preferred alternative.

## ATTACHMENTS

- A. Summary of AA Scoping Comments
- B. Definition of Alternatives for Screening

Prepared by: David Mieger, Deputy Executive Officer – Westside Planning, TDI  
Jody Feerst Litvak, Operations Communications Manager  
Renee Berlin, Executive Officer, Transportation Development and  
Implementation



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Carol Inge  
Chief Planning Officer  
Countywide Planning and Development



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Roger Snoble  
Chief Executive Officer

## Westside Extension Alternatives Analysis Study Summary of Early Scoping Process

Public comment for the Westside Extension AA Study commenced on October 1, 2007 with the publication of an Early Scoping Notice in the Federal Register. As part of this scoping process, we conducted six scoping/community meetings geographically dispersed throughout the study area:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>City</u>	<u>Attendance</u>
October 9, 2007	Emerson Middle School	Los Angeles	77
October 11, 2007	Pan Pacific Park	Los Angeles	58
October 16, 2007	Wilshire United Methodist Church	Los Angeles	73
October 17, 2007	Beverly Hills Public Library	Beverly Hills	69
October 18, 2007	Santa Monica Public Library	Santa Monica	81
October 29, 2007	Plummer Park	West Hollywood	111

In total, 484 comments were received through a combination of the public meetings, email, US mail, and the information phone line or via the project website. The formal public comment period for early scoping closed on November 7, 2007.

### Summary of Public Comments

The overwhelming majority of comments received supported the urgent need for a transit improvement on the Westside. A potential Wilshire subway alignment was the most favored route and mode, with nearly as many people advocating for subways on both the Wilshire and Santa Monica Boulevard alignments rather than just one. In many cases, where the public supported both the Wilshire and the Santa Monica alignments, most thought that the Wilshire alignment should take precedence. Some support was expressed for aerial/monorail, LRT, or BRT modes.

### Mode

The community greatly supported a potential subway mode i.e. heavy rail below grade. Most of those in favor of a subway did not give a reason for their preference. Those that did express a reason for this mode indicated speed of travel, ability to move large numbers of people, limited impact to road traffic, etc. Those favoring options other than subway cited cost and length of time to construct. Those preferring monorail or LRT expressed the view that these modes were less expensive and quicker to build.

Subway		Aerial/Monorail		LRT		BRT	
Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
262	8	22	1	18	8	14	22

**Potential Station Locations**

Several potential station locations along Wilshire (11) and Santa Monica (12) Boulevards were presented during early scoping. Many comments received provided suggestions for stations at other locations, or noted support or concerns about possible station locations. The public’s most favored station locations include:

- Century City (31)
- UCLA (22)
- Connecting to the Exposition LRT (14)
- City of Beverly Hills (13)
- Connecting to a North/South transit line (12)
- Tied (11)
  - Beverly Center
  - City of Santa Monica
  - Santa Monica Boulevard
- City of West Hollywood (10)
- Beverly Center/Cedars Sinai (9)
- Wilshire/Westwood (8)
- Tied (7)
  - Avenue of the Stars
  - Constellation
  - Crenshaw Boulevard
  - La Brea Ave
  - Los Angeles World Airport (LAX)
  - Westwood

Public comments showed that the community recognizes the economic benefits of key station locations. They especially expressed the importance of connecting job centers to housing, and to ensure that station locations and design blend with the neighborhood.

**Alignments**

The public was presented with two potential alignment options, generally following Wilshire and Santa Monica Boulevards. Overall, a Wilshire Boulevard alignment, extending westward from the Metro Purple Line at Wilshire/Western, received the greatest amount of support (107). People voiced support for a Santa Monica Boulevard alignment extending westward from Hollywood (49). Over 50 people asked that both alignments be considered. From the public comments received,

there is a strong sense that connections with other transit lines and modes are important.

Wilshire		Santa Monica		Both	
Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
107	3	49	1	52	9

**Evaluation Criteria**

The community was asked to identify specific criteria that could be used to evaluate potential modes and alignments. Of the few comments received, noise and vibration during construction and operation were of greatest concern. Other suggestions included the need to assess community benefits, accommodate pedestrians with special needs, address the effect of green house gas emissions, as well as the ability of the alternatives to absorb additional demand over time and generate ridership on other parts of the transit system. Other evaluation criteria suggested including the overall capacity and speed of the alternatives, bicycle safety and construction safety in earthquake zones.

The community also asked that tunneling be carefully considered both near historic homes in parts of the study area and in zones with methane gas. New construction technologies were especially important to those with tunneling concerns. The public was also interested in learning about funding options and whether building the system in segments would be feasible. There were also questions about station parking as well as economic and joint development opportunities at future stations.



## Westside Extension Alternatives Analysis Study Definition of Alternatives for Screening

Based on the analysis of previous corridor study alternatives and the scoping comments received, a preliminary definition of alternatives has been developed. The alignments, stations and transit technologies, include heavy rail transit (HRT), light rail transit (LRT), Monorail and Bus Rapid Transit (BRT). In all, 17 build alternatives have been developed in addition to the required No Build and Transportation Systems Management (TSM) Alternatives. The following is a description of the major groupings of alternatives.

### **Figure B-1: HRT Subway via Wilshire Boulevard (Alternatives 1, 12 and 14)**

Alternative 1 extends the existing Metro Purple Line subway from its present terminus at the Wilshire/Western Station under Wilshire Boulevard to the intersection of Wilshire/Santa Monica Boulevards. It then proceeds west along Santa Monica Boulevard to Century City before turning north to rejoin Wilshire Boulevard in Westwood Village. From that point, the alignment continues under Wilshire Boulevard to its western terminus at 4th Street in downtown Santa Monica.

Alternatives 12 and 14 are variations of Alternative 1 that deviate from Wilshire to serve activity centers to the north. Alternative 12 turns north on La Brea Avenue and proceeds north to Beverly Boulevard where it turns west to provide a connection to Cedars-Sinai Medical Center and Beverly Center. Alternative 14 turns north on Fairfax Avenue to provide a connection to the Farmer's Market and The Grove Shopping Center before turning west on 3<sup>rd</sup> Street to then provide a connection to Cedars-Sinai Medical Center and Beverly Center. Both alignments rejoin the main Wilshire Boulevard alignment at Century City.

### **Figure B-2: HRT Subway via Santa Monica Boulevard (Alternatives 4, 6, 7, 8 and 13)**

Alternatives 4, 6, 7, 8 and 13 extend the existing Metro Red Line subway to the west primarily along Santa Monica Boulevard. All of the Santa Monica Boulevard alignments join the Wilshire alignments in Century City where they turn north to join Wilshire Boulevard in Westwood Village. From that point, the alignments continue under Wilshire Boulevard to their western terminus at 4<sup>th</sup> Street in downtown Santa Monica.

Alternatives 4, 6, 7 and 8 all share a common alignment from the proposed station at Fairfax and Santa Monica Blvd to a western terminus at Wilshire Boulevard and 4th Street in downtown Santa Monica. The principal differences are the various connections to the Metro Red Line in the vicinity of the Hollywood/Highland Station. Alternative 13 differs from the other alignments that predominantly follow Santa Monica Boulevard by deviating south of Santa Monica Boulevard near San Vicente Boulevard to provide service to Cedars-Sinai Medical Center and Beverly Center. This

proceeds south to join the Wilshire Boulevard alignments in Beverly Hills at the Wilshire/Beverly Station.

**Figure B-3: Combined Wilshire/Santa Monica HRT Subway Alignments (Alternatives 9, 10, 11, 15 & 16)**

These alternatives combine portions of the Wilshire and Santa Monica alignments to provide combined service to both areas.

**Figure B-4: Light Rail, Monorail & Heavy Rail Elevated Alternatives (Alternatives 2, 3 & 5)**

These alternatives share a common alignment between the intersection of Wilshire and Santa Monica Boulevards and the western terminus at 4th Street in downtown Santa Monica. Separate alternatives are proposed which use Wilshire Boulevard east of Santa Monica Boulevard (Alternatives 2 and 3) and which use Highland Avenue and Santa Monica Boulevard (Alternative 5) northeast of the Wilshire/Santa Monica intersection.

Alternative 2 assumes HRT and in this case the alignment transitions out of the subway to an elevated configuration and continues west toward Santa Monica on a similar route to the baseline Alternative 1 Wilshire subway route. Alternative 3 follows an identical route to Alternative 2, but utilizes aerial LRT or monorail technology. The use of either LRT or monorail will require a transfer at Wilshire/Western Station between the Metro Purple Line and the LRT/monorail aerial guideway.

Alternative 5 begins in the vicinity of the Hollywood/Highland Red Line station. Due to engineering constraints it is not possible to seamlessly transition from a subway to an elevated configuration in this area; therefore all modes (HRT, LRT and Monorail) require a physical transfer. This transfer would take place along Highland Avenue north of Sunset as close to the Hollywood/Highland station entrances as possible. The alignment would then continue south on Highland Avenue to Santa Monica Boulevard, continue west and then southwest along Santa Monica Boulevard to Wilshire and then continue on the elevated alignments common segment to downtown Santa Monica.

**Figure B-5: BRT Alternative (Alternative 17)**

The BRT Alternative provides for new transit services in the Westside Transit Corridor traveling in an exclusive curb lanes during peak periods. The BRT alternative would operate predominantly along Santa Monica Boulevard with two branches, one to 4th Street in downtown Santa Monica and the second along Santa Monica Boulevard to Westwood Boulevard. The BRT alternative also includes a similarly operated Wilshire line from the end of the Metro Purple line along Wilshire to Ocean Avenue in downtown Santa Monica.



Figure B-2: Santa Monica Boulevard Heavy Rail Transit (HRT) Subway Alternatives (Alternatives 4, 6, 7, 8 and 13)

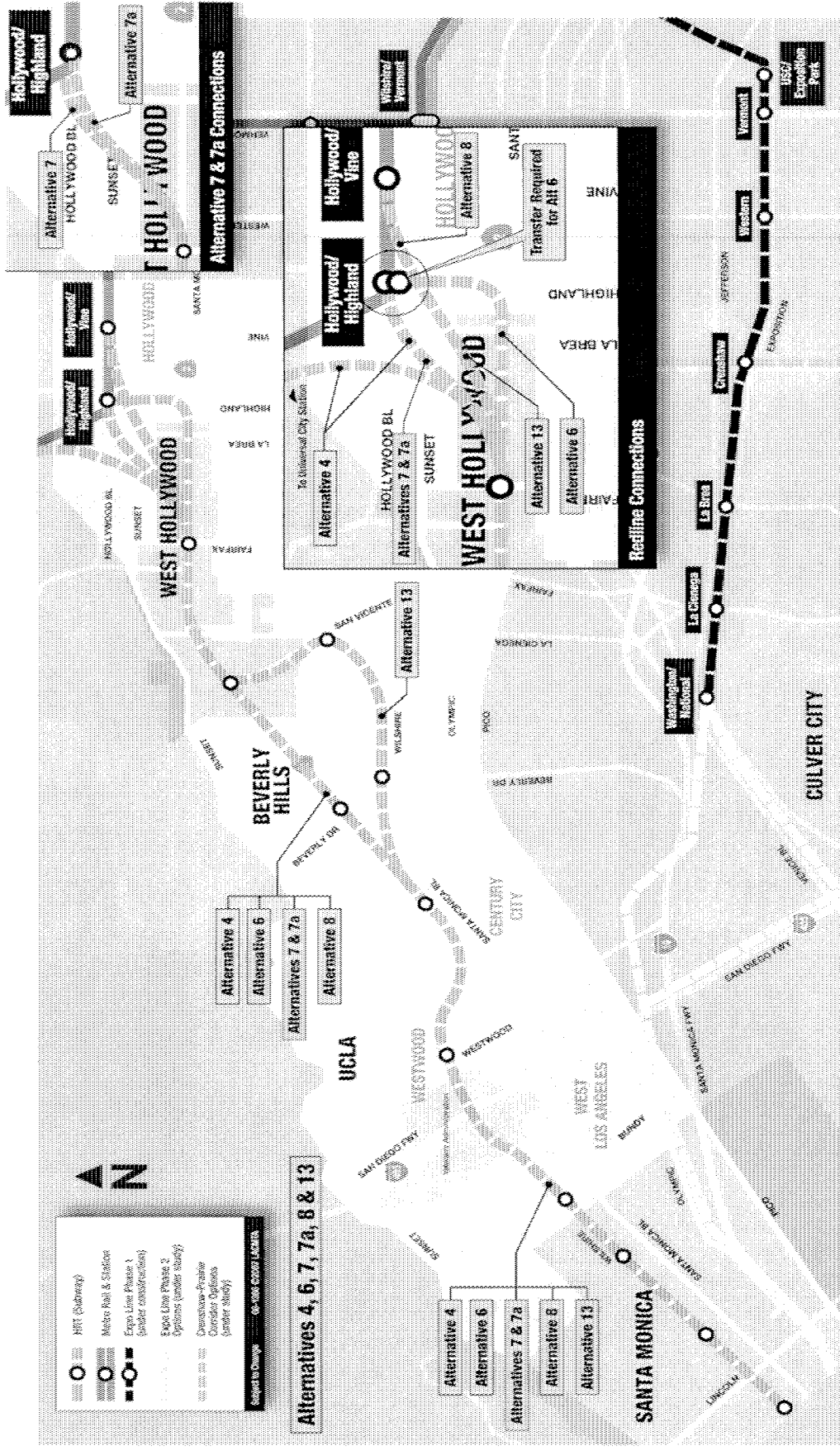




Figure B-4: Elevated Wilshire/Santa Monica Boulevard Alternatives – HRT, LRT & Monorail (Alternatives 2, 3 and 5)

