



Metro

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December 30, 2009

TO: BOARD OF DIRECTORS

THROUGH: ARTHUR T. LEAHY *AL*
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

FROM: CAROL INGE *CI*
CHIEF PLANNING OFFICER

SUBJECT: WILSHIRE BOULEVARD BUS RAPID TRANSIT PROJECT

ISSUE

The Wilshire Boulevard Bus Rapid Transit Project (Wilshire BRT) has reached the midpoint in its environmental review by recently completing four community scoping meetings for the Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment (DEIR/EA). The DEIR/EA is expected to become final in early spring 2010, with staff seeking Board approval in May 2010.

BACKGROUND

In September 2007, staff submitted a Federal Very Small Starts grant application to fund the planning, design, engineering, and construction of the Wilshire BRT. Submittal of this project was subject to concurrence by the City and County of Los Angeles since it involved operational improvements within both the City and County. Total cost of the project was estimated at \$31.5 million, with a Federal share of \$23.3 million. In December 2007, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) approved the grant application and has since fully funded the project with appropriations of \$9.7 million in Federal FY 2009 and \$13.6 million in Federal FY 2010.

SAFETEA-LU created the Federal Very Small Starts (VSS) Program to fund small-scale transit corridor projects, such as the Wilshire BRT, and encourage implementation of low-risk bus and rail projects that meet certain criteria. The Wilshire BRT was deemed by the FTA as a potentially highly successful project and received the highest score of all VSS grant applications submitted in FY 2009.

DISCUSSION

The Wilshire BRT is a 12.5 mile project along Wilshire Boulevard, between downtown Los Angeles and the City of Santa Monica, to construct curbside peak-period bus lanes in the City of Los Angeles (9.0 miles) and Los Angeles County (0.6 miles). When implemented, bus passenger travel times are expected to improve by an average of 24%. Average Metro Rapid bus speeds are projected to increase by an average of nearly 32%. Up to a 10% mode shift from mixed flow automobile use to bus use is projected. Based on the speed improvements and associated ridership increases experienced with the Metro Rapid Program to-date, transit ridership along the Wilshire corridor is anticipated to increase between 15% and 20%. Attachment 1 presents the Project limits.

In December 2007, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) granted Metro pre-award authority to incur costs for project development activities prior to grant approval, including finalization of any necessary environmental analysis. Consultants were retained by Metro to assist in the preparation of a joint California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)/National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) document consisting of an Initial Study/Environmental Assessment (IS/EA) for the Wilshire BRT.

Metro is coordinating the environmental review with the City of Los Angeles who is sharing equally in its cost. In November 2008, four community meetings were conducted along the Wilshire corridor in West Los Angeles, Westwood, Hancock Park/Koreatown, and Westlake/MacArthur Park to present the proposed project to the community. Approximately 140 people attended the meetings with 61 providing verbal comments and 10 forwarding written comments. In response to the public comments received at those meetings, we determined that an Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment (EIR/EA) would be the more appropriate document for the project in order to consider project alternatives.

The proposed project and project alternatives were presented at a series of four community scoping meetings held in October 2009. Overall, 132 people attended the four scoping meetings with 57 speaking and another 20 submitting written comments at the meetings. In addition to receiving comments at the meetings, Metro received 585 comments outside of the scoping meetings. Based on community feedback received during the scoping process, over 90% of the comments supported the project. This is attributable to the overwhelming response generated by the Bus Riders Union and the California Public Interest Research Group's (CALPIRG) membership.

One project alternative, which was well received by the public, eliminates the need to remove nearly 100 parking spaces along a key segment of the corridor by retaining the "jut-outs", and reallocates some of the cost savings from retaining the jut-outs toward curb lane pavement reconstruction. A peak hour bus lane is still proposed in this segment through the conversion of a mixed flow lane to a bus lane. This alternative also reduces the corridor bus lane length by approximately 0.7 miles at the eastern end of the corridor where Wilshire Boulevard is only two lanes in each direction. The bus

lane is also eliminated for 0.3 miles just east of the I-405 freeway where the weaving of cars leading to the freeway on and off ramps makes a bus lane extremely difficult. Attachments A and B show the proposed project and project alternative, respectively.

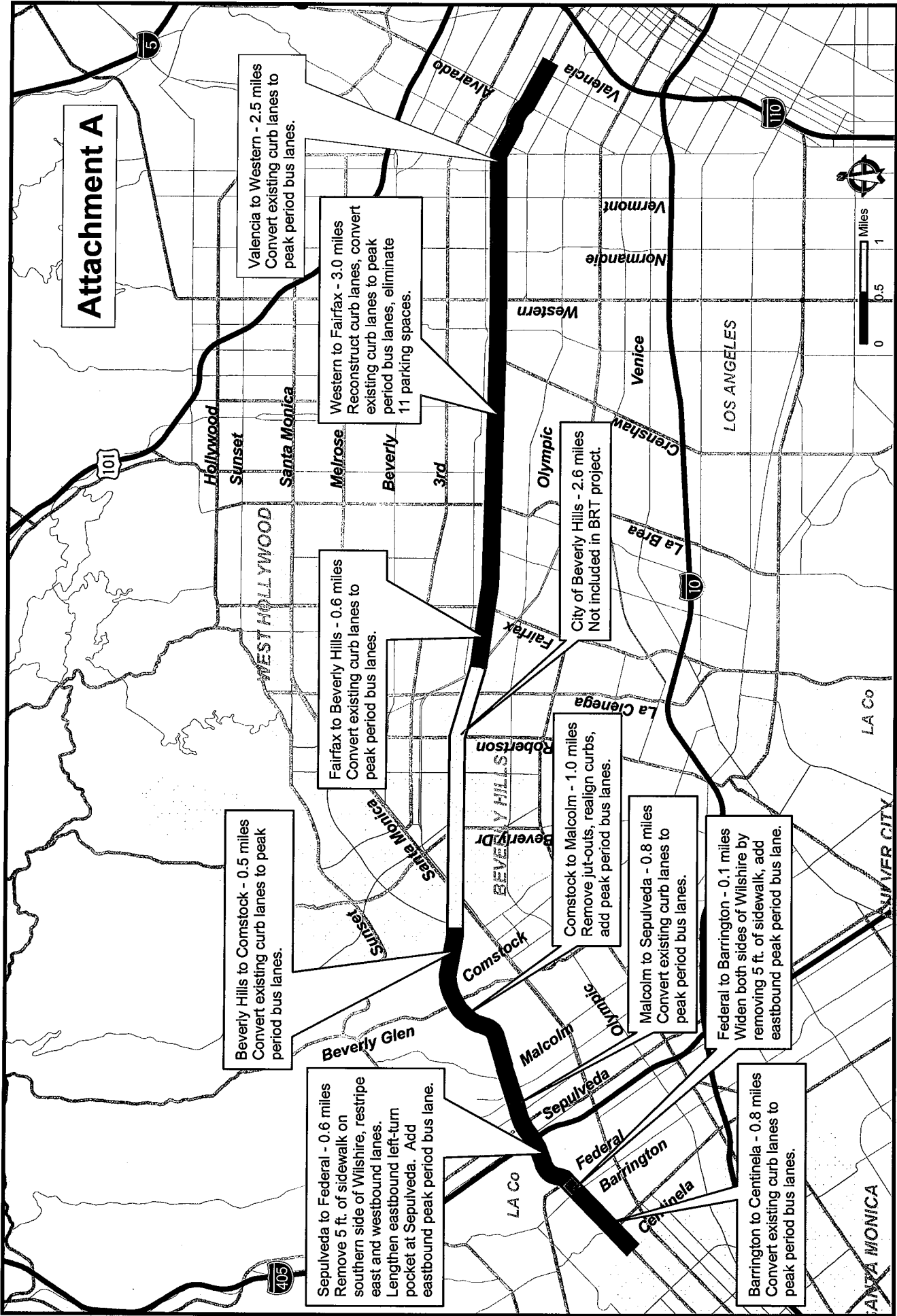
NEXT STEPS

The DEIR/EA is scheduled for release in February 2010, with a 45-day public review period. During the DEIR/EA review period, four public hearings will be scheduled for public comment on the draft document. Metro staff will return to the Board in May 2010 to seek approval of the Wilshire BRT Final EIR/EA.

Prepared by: Martha Butler, Transportation Planning Manager

Attachment A: Map of Wilshire BRT Proposed Project

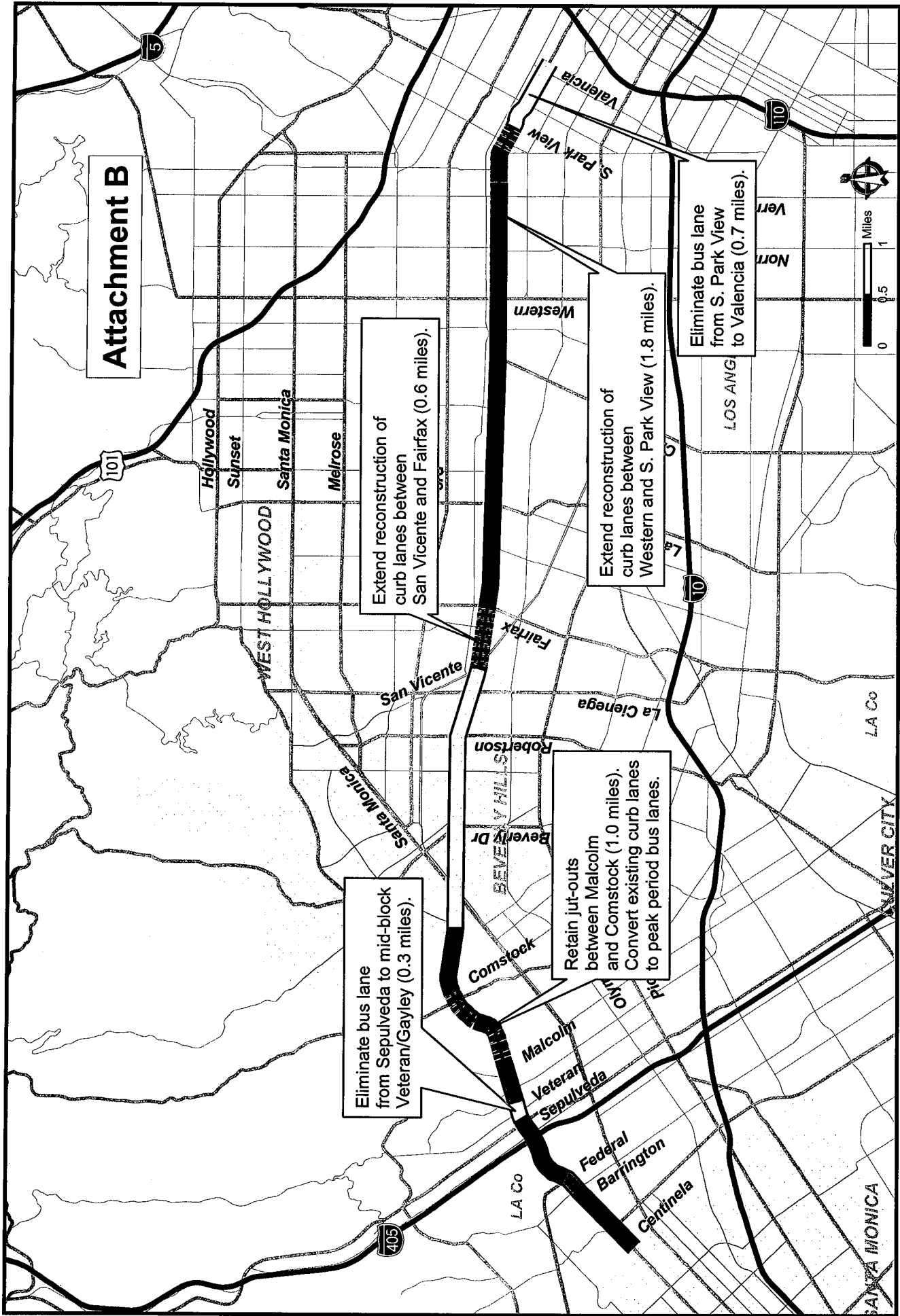
Attachment B: Map of Wilshire BRT Project Alternative



Wilshire Bus Rapid Transit Project

Proposed Project -- Centinela to Valencia





Attachment B

**Wilshire Bus Rapid Transit Project
Project Alternative -- Centinela to Park View**

