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NOTICE OF PREPARATION (NOP) OF AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT (EIR) FOR THE METRO GOLD LINE EASTSIDE EXTENSION QUADRANT GATES PROJECT

DATE: April 6, 2011
TO: Agencies, Organizations, and Interested Parties
SUBJECT: Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report
PROJECT TITLE: Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension Quadrant Gates Project

The Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) is the lead agency in the preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The City of Los Angeles and County of Los Angeles are responsible agencies as they have discretionary approval power over the project. The EIR's purpose is to evaluate the environmental issues associated with the proposed installation of quadrant gates at at-grade intersections along the Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension (MGLEE) alignment.

The purpose of this Notice of Preparation (NOP) is to notify agencies, organizations, and individuals that Metro plans to prepare a Draft EIR and to request input on the environmental analysis to be performed. From public agencies, we are requesting comments on the scope and content of the environmental information which is germane to each agency's statutory responsibilities with regard to the proposed project. We are also requesting interested individuals' or organizations' views on the scope of the environmental document.

PROJECT HISTORY: Metro proposes to install quadrant gates along all at-grade intersection crossings along the Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension. In 2009, the Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension Four Quadrant Gate Feasibility Study was developed to analyze all 24 at-grade intersection crossings along the alignment and determine the impacts of installing gates at each of the intersections. The study determined that the installation of the gates could present impacts from right-of-way acquisitions, relocation of utilities, impacts on the flow of vehicular and pedestrian traffic, as well as potential impacts to cultural and historical resources. In order to adequately measure and mitigate the potential impacts from installation of the four quadrant gates an EIR is being initiated to assess the potential impacts to traffic, noise and property and identify possible mitigations.

PROJECT LOCATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING: The Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension (MGLEE) is a six-mile light rail transit project, which extends the Pasadena Gold Line from Downtown Los Angeles at Union Station to the Little Tokyo/Arts District and continuing east through Boyle Heights to the terminus near the intersection of Atlantic Avenue and Pomona Boulevard. Four miles of the MGLEE alignment run on the surface and two miles run underground. There are six at-grade and two underground stations. The surface portion of the alignment is street running and operates in the center median of 1st Street and 3rd Street. The light rail trains that operate in the center median are separated from adjacent vehicular traffic by a six-inch high curb. Where at-grade intersection crossings occur, the movement of trains, vehicles, and pedestrians are controlled by traffic signals, train signals, striping, and signage. This type of surface light rail system is classified as "semi-exclusive - within street right-of-way" by the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC). CPUC regulations limit speed on surface light rail systems to the legal speed of parallel traffic but not to exceed 35 miles per hour.

There are 24 signalized at-grade vehicle crossings in the surface portion of the MGLEE alignment, which are being evaluated for rail crossing gates; 11 intersections are in the City of Los Angeles and 13 are in unincorporated Los Angeles County. The 11 intersections in the City of Los Angeles are located within the Central City, Central City North, and Boyle Heights Community Plan areas. The Central City Community Planning area is considered the financial, industrial, and governmental hub of Los Angeles. The 13 intersections in the County of Los Angeles are located within the East Los Angeles Community Plan area. This community plan area is located approximately four miles east of Downtown Los Angeles. It is surrounded by the City of Los Angeles to the north and west, the Cities of Montebello and Monterey Park to the east, and the City of Commerce to the south. The area is heavily urbanized and contains mostly residential uses. All 24 intersections are located in developed areas and are surrounded by land uses that are typical to urban areas. Surrounding land uses include residential, commercial, retail, medical, institutional, and vacant uses (see attached map).

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PROJECT: The purpose of the project is to increase public awareness of the operations of the Metro Gold Line trains at at-grade intersection crossings. While the MGLEE has informed the public of activities during its first year of operation, the Metro Board has directed staff to evaluate various alternatives that will improve awareness of the light rail system. Active traffic control systems will be considered in this EIR as instruments to inform motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians of the approach or presence of light rail trains. Quad gates and other traffic control systems already exist along segments of the Metro Blue and Gold Lines.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The proposed project involves installation of rail crossing gates at 24 at-grade intersection crossings along the MGLEE alignment. The project would utilize standard rail crossing gate equipment that has been approved by the CPUC and utilized at other Metro Light Rail crossings. The crossing gate equipment would be mounted in the sidewalk in the public right-of-way (ROW) and would be located near the limit lines of intersections being evaluated. In addition to the crossing gates, a single train controller cabinet (approximately 6' x 10' x 3') would need to be installed at each intersection where gates are installed. The installation of gates may also require civil work, such as the relocation of existing underground or aboveground utilities, the installation of vehicle loops or track circuitry in the roadway, and may require street widening or the re-striping of traffic lanes at certain intersections. Existing traffic signals and other light posts may need to be relocated for the installation of the gates at certain locations where conflicts arise.

PROJECT ALTERNATIVES: The project alternatives will include a "No-Build" alternative, where no crossing gates are installed, and various "Build" alternatives, where crossing gates would be installed at up to 24 at-grade intersection crossings. After all alternatives are evaluated, a preferred alternative will be selected during the EIR process.

PROBABLE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS: Based on a preliminary initial study conducted for the project, the following environmental areas may have potentially significant impacts as a result of installing the quadrant gates:

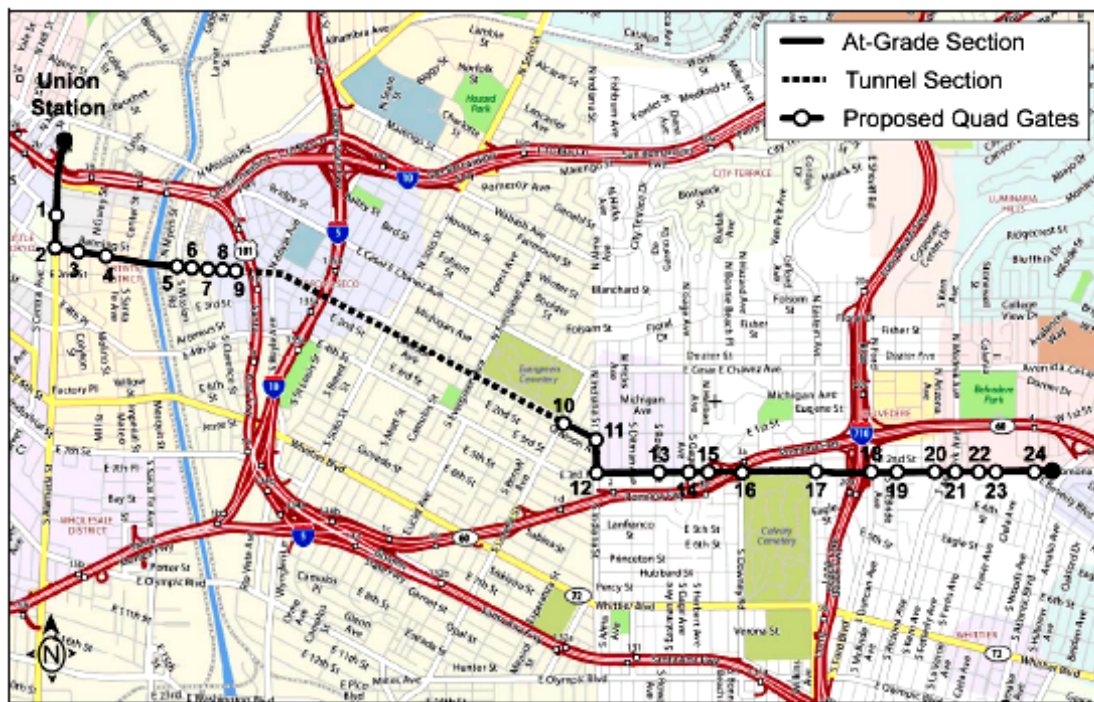
- Aesthetics (impacts to historic resources)
- Air Quality (impacts related to queuing)
- Cultural Resources (historic resources)
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials (related to emergency access)
- Land Use (related to property acquisition)
- Noise (impacts of bells to sensitive receptors)
- Public Services (impacts related to emergency response times)
- Traffic (reduced LOS)

SCOPING MEETINGS: Two public scoping meetings will be held for the project. All members of the public are invited to attend at the following times and locations:

Tuesday, April 26
 6:30pm – 8pm
 Boyle Heights Senior Center
 2839 E 3rd St
 Los Angeles, CA 90033

Thursday, April 28
 6:30pm – 8pm
 Centro Maravilla Service Center
 4716 E Cesar E. Chavez Av
 Los Angeles, CA 90022

AGENCY RESPONSE TO THIS NOP: Written comments on the scope of the EIR, including the purpose and need, the alternatives to be considered, the impacts to be evaluated, and the methodologies to be used in the evaluation should be sent to Metro on or before May 6, 2011. Written comments should be sent to Mr. Eric Carlson, Project Manager, Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority, One Gateway Plaza, MS: 99-22-2, Los Angeles, CA 90012 or via email at carlson@metro.net.



Project Map

Legend

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|---|---|---|
| 1. Alameda St/ Temple Street | 9. Gless Street/1 st Street | 17. Eastern Avenue/3 rd Street |
| 2. Alameda St./1 st Street | 10. Lorena Street/1 st Street | 18. Ford Boulevard/3 rd Street |
| 3. Hewitt Street/1 st Street | 11. Indiana Street/1 st Street | 19. McDonnell Avenue/3 rd Street |
| 4. Vignes Street/1 st Street | 12. Indiana Street/3 rd Street | 20. Arizona Avenue/3 rd Street |
| 5. Mission Road/1 st Street | 13. Rowan Avenue/3 rd Street | 21. Mednik Avenue/3 rd Street |
| 6. Anderson Street/1 st Street | 14. Gage Avenue/3 rd Street | 22. Civic Center Way/3 rd Street |
| 7. Utah Street/1 st Street | 15. SR-60 WB Ramps/3 rd Street | 23. LaVerne Way/3 rd Street |
| 8. Clarence Street/1 st Street | 16. Downey Road/3 rd Street | 24. Woods Avenue/3 rd Street |