

MTA Issues Final Environmental Report on East LA Rail Project

By ED SCANNELL

The MTA has made available to the public the final environmental report on a planned 6-mile light-rail extension of the Metro Gold Line through East Los Angeles.

The extension would serve one of the most densely populated areas of Los Angeles County. Construction of the 1.7-mile tunnel portion of the project could begin in mid-2003. The extension could begin operations in mid-2008.

The report, called the Final EIS/EIR for the Los Angeles Eastside Corridor, includes responses to public comments received following last year's release of the Draft EIS/EIR, and a refined analysis.

It also includes a detailed mitigation plan that addresses community concerns regarding impacts during construction and operation of the light-rail project.

If the MTA Board votes at its Feb. 28 meeting to certify the Final EIS/EIR, the proposed project then would be presented to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) for its approval before beginning final project design.

Eastsiders have been patient

"The people of the Eastside have waited patiently for several years for this project, which will connect them to the growing Metro Rail system and greatly improve their access to jobs, medical facilities and places of recreation," said Board Chairman John Fasana. "We could not have reached this milestone without their substantial support."

The Eastside light-rail project would serve as an extension of the Metro Gold Line, which is now under construction between Union Station and Pasadena and is expected to begin operations in mid-2003.

The extension would operate from Union Station to Atlantic Boulevard along 1st Street, then transition to 3rd Street via Indiana Street and proceed east along 3rd Street to Atlantic Boulevard.

The extension would include nine stations and operate at street level with the exception of a tunnel segment through Boyle Heights that was necessitated by the narrowness of streets along this portion of the alignment.

"Buses will remain an important part of the transit system, but given the eastside's population and transit use, the area is a prime candidate for this extension of the Metro Rail system," said Supervisor Gloria Molina. "The extension will provide the people of East Los Angeles with a seamless connection to a large portion of the county, which will prove even more valuable as traffic congestion on our streets and highways grows."

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