U.S. Department
of Transportation
Federal Transit
Administration

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OFFICE OF
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FEB 27 2006

Mr. Roger P. Snoble
Chief Executive Officer
Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority
One Gateway Plaza
Los Angeles, CA 90012-2952

Re: Record of Decision; Mid-City/Exposition Light Rail Transit Project

Dear Mr. Snoble:

This is to advise you that the Federal Transit Administration has issued a Record of Decision (ROD) for the Los Angeles Mid-City Westside Transit Corridor - Mid-City/Exposition Light Rail Transit Project. The comment period for the Final Environmental Impact Statement closed November 28, 2005. The Federal Transit Administration's Record of Decision is enclosed.

Please make the ROD and supporting documentation available to affected government agencies and the public. Availability of the ROD should be published in local newspapers and should be provided directly to affected government agencies, including the State Inter-governmental Review contact established under Executive Order 12372.

Please note that if a grant is made for this project, the terms and conditions of the grant contract will require the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority to undertake the mitigation measures identified in the ROD.

Thank for your cooperation in meeting the National Environmental Policy Act requirements. If you have questions about our review, please call Mr. Ray Tellis of our Los Angeles Metropolitan Office at (213) 202-3956.

Sincerely,

Leslie T. Rogers
Regional Administrator

Enclosure

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RECORD OF DECISION

Los Angeles Mid-City Westside Transit Corridor
Mid-City/Exposition Corridor Light Rail Transit Project
Los Angeles, California
by the
Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority

DECISION

The U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Transit Administration (FTA), has determined that the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) have been satisfied for the Mid-City/Exposition Transit Corridor Light Rail Transit Project (Project) in Los Angeles, California. The Project consists of the design, construction, and future operation of a light rail transit line from Downtown Los Angeles to Culver City. The Project was adopted as the Revised Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) by the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (LACMTA) Board and was evaluated as the Light Rail Transit (LRT) Build Alternative in the Final Environmental Impact Statement/Final Environmental Impact Report (Final EIS/EIR) issued on October 14, 2005 by FTA and LACMTA. The LPA was also recommended for approval by the Exposition Metro Line Construction Authority (Authority), the agency that has the authority and responsibility under State law for the design and construction of the Project.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Mid-City/Exposition Transit Corridor Locally Preferred Alternative is a light rail transit (LRT) project that will run from 7th Street/Metro Center Station in Downtown Los Angeles to the intersection of Washington and National Boulevards in Culver City, covering a distance of 8.6 miles.

The LRT fixed guideway would operate in a dual track configuration mainly at-grade in selected streets or in an exclusive LACMTA-owned Right-of-Way (ROW). The LPA includes ten stations. Eight of these stations will be new and two of the stations will utilize the existing Metro Blue Line Stations at 7th/Metro Center and Pico/Convention Center. The LPA includes three grade separations: one below grade segment at Flower and Figueroa Streets; one aerial segment at La Brea Avenue; and one aerial segment at La Cienega Boulevard, extending over Jefferson Boulevard and the Ballona Creek to Fay Avenue in Culver City. Stations are configured as either center or side platform, similar to stations in use on the Metro Gold and Blue Lines and on aerial grade separations similar to the Metro Green Line. Overhead power lines similar to Metro Blue, Gold and Green Lines electrically power LRT within the street rights-of-way and in the LACMTA-exclusive ROW, including all grade separations.

BACKGROUND & SYSTEM PLANNING CONTEXT

The Mid-City/Exposition LRT Project reflected in the LPA is the culmination of several decades of planning and analysis regarding transit improvements in the Mid-City/Westside area of Los Angeles. The Mid-City/Westside Study Area is located in western Los Angeles County and is roughly bounded by the Pacific Ocean on the west; Sunset Boulevard and the Hollywood Freeway (US 101) on the north; Downtown Los Angeles (Hill Street on the east; and Slauson and Manchester Boulevards on the south. The Study Area encompasses approximately 112 square miles and includes all or portions of the City of Los Angeles, Beverly Hills, Santa Monica, and Culver City, and unincorporated Los Angeles County (Veteran's Administration, West Los Angeles, and Baldwin Hills).

Since the 1970's, the LACMTA and its predecessors the Southern California Rapid Transit District (SCRTD) and the Los Angeles County Transportation Commission (LACTC) have conducted numerous transportation planning and environmental impact studies that have established the need for, and environmental impacts resulting from, improved east-west oriented transit service in various parts of the Study Area. Several planning and environmental studies prepared in the late 1980's and early 1990's identified the potential for the westward extension of the Metro Red Line system, which currently terminates at Wilshire Boulevard and Western Avenue.

These efforts led to the adoption of a Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) for the Metro Red Line Segment 3 (Mid-City Area) in 1994, which was developed as a Federal New Start project. A Full Funding Grant Agreement (FFGA) was entered into with the Federal Government to provide funding for the design and construction of Segment 3. (Segment 3 consisted of three subway extensions – Eastside, Mid-City, and North Hollywood.)

The Mid-City segment of the Red Line covered by this FFGA would have provided two stations further west along the Metro Red Line from its current terminus at Wilshire/Western to the Mid-City Shopping Center near the intersection of Pico & San Vicente Boulevards. The Metro Red Line Subway was envisioned to ultimately extend as far west as Century City, Westwood, and the I-405 Freeway. However, in January 1998, LACMTA suspended work on the Metro Red Line subway extension to the Mid-City area (as well as to the Eastside) due to funding shortfalls. The Federal Government had committed to fund $245 million, or approximately 50% of the cost of the Mid-City segment of Project. However, state and local funds that were needed to match this grant were not available.

Following suspension of the Red Line subway extensions, LACMTA conducted an extensive financial review of its overall capital and operating programs and resources and produced a Restructuring Plan entitled: *Analysis and Documentation of the MTA's Financial and Managerial Ability to Complete North Hollywood Rail Construction and Meet the Terms of the Bus Consent Decree* (adopted by the LACMTA Board of Directors on May 13, 1998, and subsequently approved by FTA on July 2, 1998). The Restructuring Plan documented that LACMTA did not have sufficient local matching funds to finance heavy rail subway projects in the Eastside and Mid-City corridors, as anticipated in the FFGA for those projects. At the same time, the Restructuring Plan called for LACMTA to study "viable and effective options" for

transit in all parts of Los Angeles County, with an emphasis on the corridors in which the rail lines had been suspended.

Within the Eastside and Westside corridors, this necessitated the examination of alternative fixed guideway options to heavy rail subway. It also committed the LACMTA to a re-evaluation of the financial capacities of the agency to undertake new start, fixed guideway projects. To that end, the Board authorized the Regional Transit Alternatives Analysis (RTAA) Study that commenced in July 1998 and was completed in November 1998.

The RTAA Study accomplished several important objectives for LACMTA. The study identified the amount of funding available for new projects between FY 1989 and FY 2004. It suggested possible funding allocations, identified immediate bus transit improvements in Los Angeles County, and established a framework for further fixed guideway project development in the Eastside, Westside, and San Fernando Valley corridors. The study also included a preliminary evaluation of fixed guideway alternatives in the three corridors. The study did not make recommendations with regard to preferred fixed guideway transit modes or configurations, but recommended that a Major Investment Study (MIS) level of analysis be conducted to provide more information regarding these choices. Results of the RTAA Study were presented to the LACMTA Board on November 9, 1998.

In February 2000, the LACMTA Board of Directors considered recommendations contained in the Mid-City/Westside Transit Corridor Study: Re-Evaluation/Major Investment Study (MIS), and selected alternatives for the Wilshire Corridor and the Exposition Corridor for further analysis and environmental review. The MIS Study considered a wide range of alternatives for the Mid-City/Westside Study Area, including heavy rail, light rail and bus rapid transit. Following the MIS, LACMTA commenced the formal environmental review process.

The project is included in the Southern California Association of Governments' adopted Regional Transportation Plan as a fully committed project to be implemented within the first ten years of the plan. Also, funding for the project has been programmed in the federally approved Regional Transportation Improvement Program.

FUNDING

The cost of the Exposition LPA (in year of expenditure dollars) is estimated to be $640,000,000. This cost estimate covers all Project capital costs, including construction (guideway, track, stations, systems, yards/ships, etc.); right-of-way; 16 light rail vehicles, indirect costs, contingency, escalation, and the bikeway.

The Project capital funding plan relies on a variety of local, State, and Federal sources to fully fund the Project. The primary funding sources are Prop. C 25% funds ($331 million); Federal Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) Program funds ($215 million), and local contributions ($50 million), Local and State sources constitute approximately 62% of the funding for the capital plan, and Federal sources (primarily CMAQ) constitute approximately 38%. The Capital Cost Cash Flow assumes a June 2010 Revenue Operations Date.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The EIS/EIR considered the following alternatives:

No-Build Alternative - The No-Build Alternative represents the transportation condition consisting of existing and committed elements of the region's transportation plan, excluding the proposed transit (bus and light rail transit) investments for the study Corridor. The No-Build Alternative includes all highway and transit projects and operations that the region and LACMTA expect to be in place by the year 2020. These include improvements to the local bus systems and operation of the existing Red, Blue, and Green lines. New project that were included in the No Build Alternative included the following:

- Metro Rapid countywide bus system
- Wilshire Bus Rapid Transit Project
- Metro Orange Line BRT Project
- Eastside LRT Project
- Metro Green Line Extension to LAX
- Crenshaw Corridor Transit Project
- San Fernando Valley North South Transit Project

Transportation Systems Management Alternative - The Transportation Systems Management (TSM) Alternative built upon the committed projects contained in the No Build Alternative by optimizing transit operations as much as possible short of constructing major capital investments. Additional TSM bus improvements within the Mid-City/Exposition Transit Corridor included bus services on streets parallel to the proposed Build Alternatives that would emulate the service provided by the proposed fixed-guildway investment. TSM improvements included the following:

- Jefferson Boulevard new Metro Rapid bus service
- Venice Boulevard new Metro Rapid bus service
- Improvements to Culver City and Santa Monica municipal bus lines in the project vicinity
- Bus service frequencies were modeled with 5 minute peak headways and 10 minutes off-peak

Build Alternatives - In February and March 2000, following its review of the findings of the Major Investment Study, the LACMTA Board of Directors considered and provided specific direction on alternatives to be evaluated in the Draft EIS/EIR. This process was derived from previous studies of the selected LPA associated with the Exposition Right of Way (ROW), currently owned by LACMTA, as a viable future transit improvement opportunity.

Based on previous analysis conducted for the Study Area, a set of alternatives was selected for screening in the MIS prior to the preparation of the Draft EIS/EIR. The build alternatives evaluated in the MIS for the Exposition Corridor included:

- *Exposition Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)*. -- This is referred to as Alternative 2 and 2a in the 2001 Draft EIS/EIR. This alternative offers significant, long-term transportation benefits through the use of an exclusive Busway. Articulated buses operating either in a dedicated curb-lane or the Exposition ROW would provide connection to Downtown Los Angeles, USC, Exposition Park and Harbor Freeway Transitway from key centers in Santa Monica, West Los Angeles, and Culver City. Alternative 2 was identified as a full alignment BRT along the Exposition Corridor from Downtown Los Angeles to Santa Monica. Alternative 2a was identified as a Minimal Operating Segment (MOS) from Downtown Los Angeles to Culver City along the Exposition Corridor.

- *Exposition Light Rail Transit (LRT)*. -- This is referred to as Alternative 3 and 3a in the 2001 DEIS/EIR. This alternative offers significant, long-term transportation benefits through the implementation of a light rail transit system. Light rail vehicles operating on existing tracks or in the Exposition ROW would connect Downtown Los Angeles, USC, Exposition Park, and Harbor Freeway Transitway from key centers in Santa Monica, West Los Angeles, and Culver City. This alternative has less frequent disruption of intersections and adjacent properties when compared with the BRT and has the capacity to serve post-2020 demand. Alternative 3 is identified as a full alignment LRT along the Exposition Corridor from Downtown Los Angeles to Santa Monica. Alternative 3a is identified as a Minimal Operating Segment (MOS) from Downtown Los Angeles to Culver City along the Exposition Corridor.

The LACMTA Board of Directors approved alternative #3a in June 2001 as the Locally Preferred Alternative for the Mid-City/Exposition Transit Corridor. The action deleted further consideration of Alternative #2 Bus Rapid Transit (Downtown Los Angeles to Santa Monica), #2a Bus Rapid Transit Alternative (Downtown Los Angeles to Culver City) and Alternative #3 Light Rail Transit (Downtown Los Angeles to Santa Monica). The deletion of Alternatives #2 and #2a from further consideration was based on the selection of light rail transit instead of bus rapid transit as the preferred transit mode for the Mid-City/Exposition Transit Corridor. The deletion of Alternative #3 from further consideration was based on the decision to limit the total length of the project to extend from Downtown Los Angeles to Culver City (approximately 9 miles) instead of Downtown Los Angeles to Santa Monica (approximately 15-16 miles).

The following are some of the reasons that were cited in the selection of light rail transit (Alternative #3a) over bus rapid transit (Alternative #2 and #2a) in the Mid-City/Exposition Transit Corridor:

- Intensity of Transit Use- The Mid-City/Exposition Transit Corridor is expected to carry a higher number of transit riders than most other corridors, however, the right of way passes adjacent to many schools, parks, residential neighborhoods and other sensitive land uses. Light rail vehicles can carry up to 600 persons on a typical 3-car train, whereas the largest BRT vehicles can carry approximately 90 passengers per vehicle. Therefore, the LRT vehicles can reduce the impacts on the adjacent land uses by carrying the high number of transit riders in approximately 1/6 the number of vehicles. This significantly reduces the impacts to adjacent communities.

- Traffic Impacts- Light Rail Vehicles will be able to operate with maximum frequencies of once every 5 minutes in the peak periods. Similar service levels with BRT vehicles would require that buses operate every 45-60 seconds in order to carry a similar number of passengers. This creates a greater number of traffic impacts at street crossings and reduces the amount of signal priority that can be provided to the transit vehicles. As a result, BRT provides slower travel times than LRT in this corridor because of the high traffic volumes on cross streets and the reduced levels of traffic signal priority that can be provided for the BRT service levels required.

- Noise Impacts- Noise from BRT vehicles is generated from the engine exhaust vents which are 10-12 feet above grade. Noise from LRT vehicles is generated from the wheels which are 1-3 feet above grade. As a result, soundwalls must be 10-12 feet tall in many areas to mitigate the sound from BRT vehicles. LRT soundwall heights can range from 3-4 feet if located immediately adjacent to the tracks to 6-8 feet if located at the right of way line. Furthermore, LRT vehicles would pass less frequently than BRT vehicles and generate fewer numbers of intrusions to communities as a result.

- Narrowness of Right of Way- Because the Exposition Right of Way is quite narrow in many areas, the BRT Alternative would require the removal of most trees and plant materials from the right of way in order to provide the paved asphalt running surface. When combined with the existing traffic lanes, this would have the effect of creating a very wide roadway that would have the appearance of a 6-10 lane arterial roadway. The LRT guideway does not require a paved surface and is generally narrower than the BRT guideway. This allows for separation between the automobile roadway and the trackway surface and the opportunity to provide landscaping in these areas that would not be possible in most segments of the BRT guideway. This landscaped buffer was an important consideration to several communities along the corridor as it allows for a "transit parkway" concept that could be developed as a part of the LRT project.

- System Connectivity in Downtown Los Angeles- The LRT Alternative would operate as a branch of the Metro Blue Line and share stations and a subway tunnel in Downtown Los Angeles. This provides faster operating times in the Downtown area and allows for easier transfers with the Metro Blue Line and Metro Red Line than would be possible with an above ground bus system in the Downtown area.

The following are some of the reasons that were cited for the selection of the length of the LRT project from Downtown Los Angeles to Culver City (Alternative #3a) instead of Downtown Los Angeles to Santa Monica (Alternative #3):

- Lack of Funding for Project to Santa Monica- The costs to construct a light rail transit project from Downtown Los Angeles to Santa Monica were estimated at more than $1.0 billion in future (year of expenditure) dollars. Because of limited funding availability at both the state and federal levels, a project of this size did not seem feasible in 2001. The Board instead adopted a motion expressing "an intent to complete the project to Santa Monica in the future."

- Lack of Consensus of a Route from Culver City to Santa Monica- The Draft EIS/EIR considered an alignment for LRT that followed Venice Boulevard and Sepulveda Boulevard and did not use the MTA owned former railroad right of way in the areas adjacent to South Robertson, Castle Heights, Cheviot Hills, Westwood Gardens and the West of Westwood communities. Many comments were received that said that additional consideration should be given to an alignment that remained on the MTA owned right of way and did not divert around this segment. Due to a lack of consensus on this issue, no decision was made concerning the route of the future project from Culver City to Santa Monica and this question was deferred to a future study.

DESCRIPTION OF THE LOCALLY PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

The Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) will operate through the following segments:

- Downtown Los Angeles LPA Segment – The LRT alignment begins at the existing 7th Street/Metro Center station and continues south on Flower Street to the existing Pico/Convention Center Station, using a shared existing trackway with Metro Blue Line. The alignment continues on the same shared trackway until Washington Boulevard, where it branches south from the existing Metro Blue Line route to follow a new trackway on Flower Street south of Washington Boulevard to a new 23rd Street station at Flower and 23rd Streets. The alignment will operate in street running mode in the downtown area and will continue south on Flower Street to a new Jefferson Station at Jefferson and Flower Streets. The 23rd Street Station features a center platform while the Jefferson Station will have side-opposing platforms. Just south of Jefferson Boulevard, the LRT alignment will enter a 2,290-foot undercrossing, of which 1,250 feet will be fully depressed. The alignment will continue in the undercrossing to a portal located west of Pardee Way in the median of the Exposition ROW. From the portal, the alignment will transition to grade.

- Mid-Corridor LPA Segment -- Continuing west at-grade in the median of the Exposition ROW, the LRT alignment will continue in street running mode. The Vermont and Western stations will have side and split platforms located adjacent to the street intersections. The alignment will then continue to operate in the ROW median until Gramercy Place, where the LRT trackway will transition into a side running configuration west of Gramercy Place in the Exposition ROW, along Exposition Boulevard. From a point west of Gramercy Place, the LRT will transition from street running mode to utilize train signals and crossing gates to operate through at-grade crossings. The Crenshaw Station will utilize side and split platforms. Transit parking will be developed in the existing parking facility owned by the West Angeles Cathedral to include 500 spaces. Train operations across Crenshaw Boulevard will be at-grade using City traffic signal controls. Continuing west, the alignment will run with crossing gates for the remainder of the route to Culver City. The LRT will be configured in the median of the Exposition ROW until Farmdale Avenue, and then return to a side running configuration until Rimpau Avenue, where an aerial grade separation begins. The La Brea Station will be located on an aerial bridge structure over La Brea Avenue. The

aerial bridge will span approximately 1,870 feet from Rimpau Avenue to Alsace Avenue west of La Brea Avenue. (Exposition Boulevard terminates in the Mid-Corridor segment at La Brea Avenue.) The alignment will run at-grade between Alsace Avenue and Clyde Avenue, where another aerial grade separation will begin at Clyde Avenue to the La Cienega Station.

Also, within this segment Class II bike lanes would be installed on the north and south sides of Exposition Boulevard beginning west of Vermont Avenue; these lanes will transition from Exposition Boulevard to Jefferson Boulevard via Harcourt Avenue. Bike lanes will be located on-street on the north and south sides of Jefferson Boulevard from Harcourt Avenue to La Cienega Boulevard.

- West End LPA Segment -- The La Cienega Station will span over La Cienega Boulevard on the aerial structure in the Exposition ROW. This structure will be approximately 2,970 feet long running from Clyde Avenue in the City of Los Angeles, continuing above La CienegaBoulevard, Jefferson Boulevard, then over Ballona Creek and returning back to grade just east of Fay Avenue in Culver City. The proposed LRT bridge structure would pass above the existing, single track historic railroad bridge over Ballona Creek, which would be retained. A short segment of Jefferson Boulevard, west of La Cienega Boulevard, would be widened along the north side to accommodate additional turning and through traffic lanes on Jefferson Boulevard. A new parking facility and transit center will be constructed on the southeast corner of La Cienega and Jefferson to provide 530 spaces at the La Cienega station. The parking facility site is currently owned by the City of Los Angeles.

  Continuing west after the alignment returns to grade west of Fay Avenue, the existing Hayden crossing will be removed. National Boulevard in Culver City will be widened to become a combined east-west boulevard. An at-grade Washington/National Station (aka Venice/Robertson Interim Station) will be located on the Exposition ROW, east of National Boulevard and adjacent to Wesley Street.

  The project bike path will connect to the LRT station at Wesley Street. Cyclists will continue on a Class III bike route from Wesley Street to Washington Boulevard and then cross National Boulevard to a new bicycle and pedestrian promenade on the Exposition ROW between Washington Boulevard and Venice Boulevard. Cyclists will then connect to the Class I Exposition West Bike Path across Venice Boulevard (to be constructed as a separate project by the City of Los Angeles). Parking facilities will be provided along the Exposition ROW between Washington and National Boulevards, between Venice and Washington Boulevards, and on the Exposition ROW west of Venice Boulevard totaling 600 spaces.

Specific project facilities will include the following:

- Operations and Maintenance Facility

  The rail storage and maintenance facility will be located on property located adjacent to the existing Division 11 facility in Carson, California. The facility is located approximately 16.5 miles from the project route. The Division 11 facility will be expanded by approximately 8.5 acres to accommodate facilities for a fleet of 16 vehicles. Space will be provided for the track needed for the build-out year fleet after year 2010, when 3-car train consists will be required for service. The facility will also provide administrative and functional uses including offices, materials, tools, parts storage, and communications equipment rooms.

- Mid-day Layover Facility

  For the temporary storage of LRT vehicles, a mid-day layover site would be established in an industrial area south of Downtown Los Angeles. A short section of abandoned rail ROW from Union Pacific Railroad would be provided for midday storage. The proposed track purchase is approximately 10 miles closer to the Mid-City/Exposition LRT alignment than Division 11 in Carson. The Mid-day Layover Facility will consist of a 26-foot wide right-of-way parallel to the two existing Metro Blue Line tracks extending from Washington Blvd. south to 24th or 25th St. This right-of-way will be wide enough for one or two mid-day storage tracks as required. It would allow for the mid-day storage of Exposition LRT vehicles up to the entire 16 car fleet.

- Traction Power Substations - The project includes eight (8) traction power substations (TPSS's), spaced at approximate one-mile intervals. TPSS sites will include: (1) northeast corner of Flower and 18th Streets; (2) northeast corner of Flower and West 37th Streets; (3) northwest corner of Exposition Boulevard and Normandie Avenue; (4) southeast corner of Exposition Boulevard and 2nd Avenue; (5) south of Exposition Boulevard and east of 9th Avenue; (6) northwest corner of Exposition Boulevard and Farmdale Avenue; (7) south side of Metro right of way adjacent to La Cienega Grade Separation structure; and (8) south side of Metro right of way on the southeast side of the National and Washington Boulevard intersection.

- Parking Lot at Washington/National Station- Parking facilities for the Washington/National Station (aka Interim Venice/Robertson Station) will be provided to include 600 spaces within the LACMTA ROW between Washington and National Boulevards, between Venice and Washington Boulevards and west of Venice Boulevard. The parking facility and pedestrian connections will be built on an interim basis, in coordination with the ROW Station Option. Parking will be developed to maximize parking closest to the interim station location.

- Sound walls- The locations and heights of the sound walls will be as presented in Table 4.6-10 (page 4.6-19) of the FEIS/EIR. The locations and heights are also described under mitigation measure NV1 in Section 4.6.3.1 (page 4.6-32) of the FEIS/EIR. All of the sound walls will incorporate landscape screening or other public art features to enhance their appearance and reduce visual intrusion.

- La Cienega Station Parking Structure- The La Cienega Station parking structure will be located on the southeast corner of Jefferson and La Cienega Boulevards. Driveway access from Jefferson and La Cienega Boulevards will be provided. The driveway access from Jefferson will pass under the LRT structure, which is elevated at this location, and access the northeast corner of the parking structure. The driveway access from La Cienega Boulevard will be via an existing private alleyway along the south side of the structure and will access the southeast corner of the structure. This alleyway will need to be converted into a public right-of-way. Vehicles will also be able to exit onto Jefferson and La Cienega Boulevards via these driveways (right-turn only).

  The parking structure will comprise five above ground levels and two below ground levels. The total height of the structure will be 50' that will require a variance from the 45' height limit in this area. The parking structure will accommodate over 450 vehicles. Additional surface parking will be provided within the ROW to satisfy the 530 spaces required for this station. Street level retail will be provided on the first floor of the parking structure fronting La Cienega Boulevard. An On-Street Transit Center will be provided along La Cienega Boulevard facing the street level retail amenities. A drop-off and waiting area will be provided on the north side of the parking structure along the south side of Jefferson Boulevard.

The Project will use light rail vehicles with standard dimensions measuring 90 feet in length, 8.6 feet in width, and 15 feet in height. The system will use a catenary system (overhead wires) as a source of power. The LRT maximum speed will be 55 miles per hours, with lower speeds in certain segments of the alignment. It will take just approximately 26 minutes with the stops to run the length of the line. Initially, a fleet of 16 light rail vehicles will be required to operate the line in one to two car trains. Ultimately, a fleet of 31 vehicles will provide three-car trains to operate during peak periods. All LRT Stations will be designed to accommodate three-car trains. Selected bus routes will be modified to connect at LRT stations.

Ultimately, during peak periods, trains will eventually reach headways (time between train arrivals) as close as five minutes. During off-peak hours, trains will run approximately every 10 minutes. During peak periods, to further reduce travel times, LACMTA may also introduce express service where there would not be a stop at every station. Ridership forecasts indicate there will be approximately 43,000 average daily boardings by 2025.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS

The Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an EIS was published in the Federal Register on May 19, 2000 (Vol 65, No 98). A Notice of Preparation (NOP) of an EIR, the CEQA equivalent of the NOI, was prepared and circulated by the State of California CEQA Clearinghouse on May 8, 2000.

- Scoping Public Outreach- Six public scoping workshops were held between May 23rd and June 8th, 2000 that were attended by more than 380 persons. Letters of invitation

were mailed to over 12,000 addresses. In addition, articles and advertisements were run in a number of Westside newspapers including the Los Angeles Times, Jewish Journal, Korea Times, The Sentinel, La Opinion as well as numerous community publications. The 30-day public scoping comment period extended through June 23, 2000, and all comments received about the Project were documented and reviewed as a part of the preparation of the DEIS/EIR. Additionally, LACMTA staff attended more that 42 community meetings with business, civic and homeowners associations during the scoping period and subsequent preparation of the Draft EIS/EIR. At the end of the public scoping period, all comments were reviewed and work commenced on preparation of the Draft EIS/EIR.

A Notice of Availability of the DEIS/DEIR was published in the Federal Register on April 13, 2001 and the public review period of the Draft EIS/EIR extended through June 15, 2001.

- DEIS/DEIR Public Outreach- During the public review period, the Draft EIS/EIR was placed in public libraries and other repository sites. The document was made available on the LACMTA website (www.metro.net) and information about public hearings and other ongoing project activities was available via the project telephone line (310-366-6443). Approximately 1,000 Executive Summaries of the DEIS/DEIR were mailed and/or delivered affected stakeholders, those on the project mailing list, and those who attended project meetings or requested copies. Full copies of the document were made available to all major institutions and agencies and all others who requested them. Three formal public hearings were held and were attended by over 300 persons. A transcript of all public testimony was entered into the record. A total of 785 individuals provided comments, including approximately 150 public testimonies recorded at the public hearings. Spanish language and Korean language translation services were available. On June 28, 2001 the LACMTA Board considered the DEIS/DEIR and adopted a Locally Preferred Alternative for the Mid-City/Exposition Transit Corridor. The Board directed that PE and the FEIS/FEIR should be prepared for a light rail transit project from Downtown Los Angeles to Venice/Robertson Station in Culver City.

The FTA approved entry into Preliminary Engineering in February 2002. A revised funding plan was developed for the project and LACMTA then procured consultant support to prepare the FEIS/FEIR and preliminary engineering design. Outreach efforts for the FEIS/FEIR were restarted in October 2002.

The focus of outreach efforts during the preparation of the FEIS/FEIR/PE was to resolve issues and concerns raised during the public comment period in 2001. In cases where opposition to the project existing, staff and consultants met with stakeholders and community groups to consider design options and mitigation measures that would better address concerns and build community support for the project. A series of Station Area Workshops were conducted as well as Working Group Meetings in the Downtown, Mid-Corridor and West End areas. Between November 2002 and September 2005, a total of 124 community meetings were conducted in all areas of the corridor with all stakeholders. Additionally, tours were conducted of the Metro Gold Line between Downtown Los Angeles and Pasadena and individual meetings were held with agencies and stakeholders that had specific issues.

LACMTA first submitted the Administrative FEIS/FEIR to FTA for approval to circulate in April 2004. Following a receipt of comments in September 2004, LACMTA revised the Administrative FEIS/FEIR and resubmitted the document to FTA in December 2004. FTA raised concerns at that time about the New Starts Project Justification criteria used in the FEIS/FEIR. During the period that this issue was being reviewed, in June 2005, LACMTA revised the funding plan for the project and withdrew the project from the federal New Starts Program. After further modifications, the FTA approved release of the FEIS/FEIR for public circulation in October 2005.

- FEIS/FEIR Public Outreach -The Notice of Availability of the FEIS/FEIR was posted in the Federal Register on October 14, 2005 and the document was circulated for a 45-day public review period that ended on November 28, 2005.

  Official responses to public comments on the project are contained in the FEIS/FEIR document. During the supplemental, 45-day public review period, a second opportunity to comment on the project was provided. 62,000 notices were sent to every home and business within ¼ mile of the project route and advertisements were placed in eight different newspapers with general circulation in the project corridor. Three public workshops were held between November 2 and 9th that were attended by approximately 500 persons. In addition to the 785 comments received on the Draft EIS/EIR, a total of 184 additional comments were received during the FEIS/FEIR Supplemental public review period. The DEIS/DEIR comments and responses were included in the FEIS/FEIR. The supplemental public review period comments and responses are included herein as Attachment B.

  The supplemental public review period was not intended to supersede the previous public review process. LACMTA staff provided a summary of the comments received during the supplemental public review period in the Board report prepared prior to certification of the FEIS/FEIR by the LACMTA Board of Directors on December 15, 2005. In cases where comments could have affected consideration of the certification of the FEIS/FEIR, staff provided a summary of these comments and responses to those comments, as appropriate. The Board report was posted on the LACMTA website and noticed in accordance with public meeting laws. The public was invited to come to the LACMTA Board Meeting on December 15, 2005 to provide public comment on the adequacy of the responses to comments contained in the FEIS/FEIR.

  At the December 15, 2005 LACMTA Board Meeting, a total of 20 commentors spoke during the public comment period preceding the Board action to certify the FEIS/FEIR. A total of 17 of the 20 speakers were supportive of the project.

BASIS FOR DECISION

FTA has determined, in accordance with 40 CFR 1505.2(a), that the LRT Build Alternative is the environmental preferred alternative for the following reasons:

- Responsive to Project Goals and Objectives- The goals and objectives of the Los Angeles Mid-City/Westside Transit Corridor, Mid-City/Exposition Light Rail Transit Project Final EIS/EIR have been developed from the extensive corridor and systems planning studies carried out over the past ten years, including the 1999-2000 Mid-City/Westside Re-Rvaluation/Major Investment Re-Evaluation Study. Based on these planning and community involvement activities, the following goals and objectives listed were used. They are based on established transportation and land use goals and objectives of the major government jurisdictions within the study area, including the Cities of Los Angeles and Culver City. These goals and objectives, as set forth below, were utilized in the development and evaluation alternatives considered in the Final EIS/EIR.

    - Improve access and mobility for residents, employees, and visitors to the Corridor.

    - Support land use and development goals as stated in the City of Los Angeles and County of Los Angeles community plans and regional plans.

    - Achieve local consensus by ensuring that the process is responsive to the community and policy-makers.

    - Provide a transportation project that is compatible with and enhances the physical environment wherever possible.

    - Provide a transportation project that minimizes adverse impacts to the community.

    - Provide a transportation project that is reasonably within budget constraints for both capital and operating expenses.

- Transportation Improvements and Related Benefits- In addition, the LRT Build Alternative offers the following transportation improvements and related benefits:

    Increased Transit Patronage - The LRT Build Alternative will result in 22,200 more daily person trips made by transit in the Corridor in the Year 2020 than would be made with the No-Build Alternative.

    Improved Transit Travel Time - The LRT Build Alternative will result in travel time savings when compared with the No-Build Alternative. The end-to-end run time of the LRT Build Alternative will be approximately 27 minutes. When combined with other services, this will result in the following travel time savings

for representative trips; Marina del Rey to Downtown Los Angeles (24 minutes), Culver City to Downtown Union Station (20 minutes).

Consistency with Local Plans and Economic Revitalization - The LRT Build Alternative will provide a higher level of support to local land use, revitalization, and redevelopment plans as compared to the No-Build Alternative.

Transit Opportunities to the Transit Dependent and Special Needs Groups - The LRT Build Alternative will provide better connections, more "regional" access, better travel times, and to a greater number of locations by the combined LRT/bus system, than would the No-Build Alternative. During the peak travel periods, 56% of the travel time savings will be provided to low-income (transit dependent populations) who generally live along the project route and to the south.

Improvement in Air Quality - As the Los Angeles area is currently an air quality "non-attainment area" for certain Federal and state air quality standards, the LRT Build Alternative will provide reductions in the critical pollutants as well as reductions in passenger vehicle miles traveled. The LRT Build Alternative is included as a project in the region's conforming air quality transportation plan.

Environmental Impacts - The LRT Build Alternative will result in greater impacts than would the No-Build Alternative, in the areas of traffic, parking, acquisitions, visual quality and aesthetics, noise and vibration, and construction impacts. However, sufficient mitigation has been identified and is being implemented as part of the Mitigation Monitoring Plan for the Project to reduce the impacts to an acceptable level. The LRT Build Alternative has environmental benefits in the areas of increased transit opportunities, land use and development, economic and fiscal impacts, equity and environmental justice, and air quality.

Cultural resources protection - The LRT Build Alternative and its mitigation have been found acceptable to the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), with regard to the protection of historic properties.

Community acceptance - Throughout the development of the Project, a pro-active community involvement program was conducted utilizing project scoping, community workshops, public hearings, community meetings, Corridor Working Group meetings, elected officials' meetings, Technical Advisory Committee meetings, distribution of community flyers, newspaper advertisements/notifications, and presentations to the LACMTA Board of Directors, LACMTA Board committees, and the Construction Authority Board of Directors. The Project overall has been favorably received. Comments received during the supplemental public review period in October/November 2005 were 84% favorable toward the project.

COMMENTS AND COORDINATION

The Final EIS/EIR responds to community comments received during circulation of the Draft EIS/EIR in 2001. In approving the Draft EIS/EIR on June 28, 2001, the LACMTA Board directed staff to conduct additional analysis at specific locations in order to address community concerns that were revealed during the circulation of the Draft EIS/EIR. The additional analysis resulted in refinements to the LACMTA Board approved LPA and were described as design options in the Final EIS/EIR.

A total of 14 design options were evaluated in the Final EIS/EIR and the LACMTA Board approved six design options for incorporation into the project. The six design options included the following: 1) Flower Street Downtown Alignment; 2) La Brea Aerial Station and Grade Separation; 3) La Cienega Station Parking Facility; 4) Jefferson Boulevard Northside Widening at La Cienega; 5) Jefferson Boulevard Aerial Grade Separation; and 6) Venice/Robertson Interim At-Grade Station East of National Boulevard. In addition, the LACMTA Board environmentally certified three additional design options in the event that additional funding should become available. These design options included; 1) USC/Exposition Park Optional Station near Kinsey Drive; 2) USC/Exposition Park Extended Undercrossing; and 3) Venice/Robertson Aerial Station and Grade Separations at Washington and National Boulevards.

During the preparation of the Final EIS/EIR and the response to public comments, LACMTA and FTA considered whether the changes would cause new or changed significant impacts beyond those envisioned in the Draft EIS/EIR. Such changes would necessitate a recirculation of the Draft EIS/EIR in accordance with CEQ and FHWA/FTA regulations to provide the public and other agencies with full information about the project and an opportunity to comment on the changes. FTA concurred with LACMTA's determination that a recirculated NEPA document was not necessary, that the changes were designed to reduce the impacts envisioned in the Draft EIS/EIR, the changes would not cause new significant impacts, and that LACMTA provided adequate opportunity for public and agency interagency involvement in the consideration of the changes. Nonetheless, a supplemental public review period was conducted between October 14, 2005 and November 28, 2005 in order to provide an opportunity for comment on the Final EIS/EIR and the design changes recommended for inclusion in the revised Locally Preferred Alternative. All comments received during the supplemental public review period were considered as a part of the action taken by the LACMTA Board of Directors on December 15, 2005.

Summary of Comments

The supplemental public review period for the Mid-City/Exposition Light Rail Transit Project Final EIS/EIR lasted from October 14, 2005 through November 28, 2005. During that time, government agencies, community, and private organizations, as well as the public at-large, were encouraged to submit comments on the Final EIS/EIR to Metro. A total of 184 commentors expressed their views regarding a variety of matters related to the impacts and Mitigation Measures analyzed and proposed in the Final EIS/EIR. Comment letters were received via mail, e-mail, and fax. In addition, written comments were received at the three Community Open Houses held in neighborhoods along the proposed LRT alignment.

Out of the 184 total commentors, 19 were major Federal, State, or local agencies or organizations. 120 comment sheets were received at the three Community Open Houses held along the alignment area at Veterans Memorial Auditorium (51 comment sheets), West Angeles Church (26 comment sheets), and at Exposition Park (43 comment sheets). The majority of the comment sheets received from the Exposition Park and Veterans Memorial Auditorium Workshops held favorable views of the Project. However, the majority of the comment sheets received from the Community Open House held at West Angeles Church were in opposition to the Project. An additional 44 letters and e-mails were received from individuals and residents, with approximately half expressing support of the Project. The chart "percentage of Comments" of page 2 represents the distribution of all comments into general categories from the Final EIS/EIR.

Attachment B-1 summarizes the comments received from the City of Culver City and the City of Los Angeles and 20 additional agencies, organizations, and individuals regarding specific concerns about the Mid-City/Exposition LRT Project, its associated impacts and Mitigation Measures. These comments include the major concerns and issues that were germane to the LACMTA Board's decision to certify the Final EIS/EIR.

Coordination

Between the time of the close of the supplemental public review period on November 28, 2005 and the certification of the FEIS/FEIR by the LACMTA Board of Directors, additional coordination efforts occurred with those stakeholders and commentors who had issues with the project that had not yet been fully resolved. The key stakeholders included the City of Los Angeles, City of Culver City, Caltrans, and the California Public Utilities Commission, the following is a discussion of the project's outreach, responsiveness and ongoing coordination with these entities:

- **City of Los Angeles/Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT)** - The original LPA adopted by the LACMTA Board in 2001 followed the Hill Street alignment in Downtown Los Angeles via Washington Boulevard and Hill Street to the Exposition railroad right-of-way. In comments on the Draft EIS/EIR as well as from on-going subsequent coordination, the Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT) – which has jurisdiction over Washington Boulevard and Hill Streets– strongly objected to an LRT routing along Hill Street. In a letter from Assistant General Manager James Okazaki, LADOT cited adverse traffic impacts at the Washington and Hill intersection as well as parking loss impacts along Hill Street as reasons LACMTA should select an alternate route. The City of Los Angeles recommended Flower Street as the preferred route due to reduced traffic and parking impacts.

  LACMTA immediately commenced meetings with Mr. Okazaki and LADOT staff. In 2003 and 2004, eight separate meetings were held with LADOT to review in-progress preliminary engineering work. Additionally, LADOT was invited to become a regular participating member in the Expo LRT Steering Committee, which has met weekly since January 2003 to discuss project progress and issues. Susan Bok has been the primary LADOT contact at these meetings.

In March 2005, LACMTA and LADOT agreed that more focused technical discussions were warranted. Toward this end, weekly coordination meetings have been held to allow the preliminary engineering team to discuss and resolve specific technical issues with LADOT staff. The LADOT technical meetings have been working sessions among LACMTA and LADOT engineers to define specific traffic configuration concerns, to identify constraints, and to develop mutually acceptable solutions. Through these sessions, LACMTA and LADOT have developed specific traffic lane requirements at each intersection within the City of Los Angeles along the Expo LRT alignment. LADOT has been a close working partner with LACMTA in defining the street improvements that have been incorporated into the project. Additionally, LADOT has been a partner with LACMTA in supporting the resolution of traffic concerns raised by Caltrans, CPUC, LATTC, and others.

Although the city had concerns regarding at-grade LRT crossings at the southern end of Flower Street near the I-110 freeway ramps and access to USC's new Galen Arena, LACMTA's decision to adopt an undercrossing in this location has eliminated the majority of these impacts. Additional design changes in the area near Los Angeles Trade Technical College to widen the street by five feet on each side to accommodate a dedicated turn lane further addressed their concerns. Consistent with the City's recommendation to use Flower Street, LACMTA has incorporated the City's recommended design changes along Flower Street.

Following the incorporation into the PE design of the LADOT recommendations, the FEIS/FEIR traffic impact analysis found no adverse impacts at the Flower Street intersections. As a result, LADOT recommended approval of the Flower Street alignment as presently described in the FEIS/FEIR and this recommendation was approved by the Los Angeles full City Council in their action to support the approval of the project in November 2005.

The LADOT technical coordination meetings are ongoing and will continue into the Final Design phase of the project. The frequency of the meetings has been reduced to biweekly, with additional meetings held on an ad hoc basis to address specific design issues as they arise.

- **City of Culver City** – The original LPA adopted by the LACMTA Board in 2001 called for at-grade rail crossings at all intersections in the City of Culver City and an at-grade station at Venice/Robertson, which serves as the western terminus of the line. This configuration conflicted with the adopted city General Plan that called for no at-grade crossings and full grade-separation of all crossings in that city. Primarily for this reason, the City of Culver City opposed the project at the time of the adoption of the LPA in 2001.

  In order to respond to the City's concerns for full grade separation of the line, the LACMTA Board adopted a Grade Crossing Policy for Light Rail Transit in December 2003, which provided a framework for decision making in early stages of preliminary engineering regarding where grade separations would be warranted. Furthermore, regular

meetings with the Culver City Department of Transportation were held starting in 2003 to provide more detailed analysis of the city's concerns through the PE design and traffic mitigation analyses. Additionally, the city retained traffic consultants of their own who prepared reports and contributed to the analysis of traffic impacts in this area.

As a result of these coordination efforts, LACMTA staff recommended to the Board that a grade separation of Venice Boulevard would be required at such a time in the future that the line might be extended further to the west. Currently, the adopted LPA stops before it reaches Venice Boulevard and does not cross that street. As a result, crossings of nearby Washington and National Boulevards will also need to be grade-separated in the future because of their close proximity to Venice Boulevard. The traffic analysis prepared by LACMTA did not concur that a fully grade-separated station and crossings of Washington and National Boulevard would be required at this time, if no Venice Boulevard crossing were included in the LPA.

A compromise agreement was reached in mid-2005 to resolve the above conflict by shifting the Venice/Robertson Station a few hundred feet to the east. This location required no rail crossing of any streets in the City of Culver City, but allowed for a future grade separation to be built if the line is extended past Venice Boulevard as a part of a future project.

This alternative station site (now referred to as the Washington/National Station) was supported by Culver City in action by their City Council on November 21, 2005 and was forwarded to the LACMTA Board of Directors as a condition of the City's support for the project. In their action on December 15, 2005 the LACMTA Board of Directors approved the revised LPA with the revised station location endorsed by Culver City.

The City of Culver City is represented on the Board of Directors of the Metro Exposition Line Construction Authority and will have an active role in the ongoing design and subsequent construction of the project.

- **Caltrans** – Although Caltrans identified several concerns in their FEIS/FEIR comment letter related to the approved Flower Street alignment and the potential for impacts to the I-110 Freeway ramps, it is important to place this comment in the context that Caltrans has also been actively working with LACMTA for the past year to resolve these issues and has developed a path forward with LACMTA to resolve them.

  In ongoing meetings between LACMTA, Caltrans and LADOT during the past year, the Flower Street alignment was determined to be preferable to the Hill Street alignment by both Caltrans and LADOT. Both alignments had impacts to freeway ramps and facilities, but the Flower Street route had fewer impacts overall. Impacts to the I-110 Freeway ramps near Exposition Boulevard were eliminated altogether when the undercrossing design was developed between Jefferson and Trousdale Parkway so that LRT vehicles will be grade separated from those ramps. Some concerns have remained related to the 28th Street ramp and the encroachment of the Jefferson Station into Caltrans right-of-

way, however, these issues are the focus of ongoing design review that will be resolved as the design is developed for these areas of the project.

In February 2005, LACMTA and Caltrans established an Expo Project Development Team (PDT) that has met regularly to discuss the project in relations to Caltrans' facilities. PDT meetings are held at Caltrans' offices every three weeks to define and address project issues. The PDT includes representatives from various Caltrans departments, including Design, Traffic Operations, Structures, Right of Way, and Environmental. As an adjunct to the PDT meetings, LACMTA has also held focused meetings with the Caltrans geometrician to discuss specific roadway configurations and clearances.

The purpose of the PDT is to identify project elements requiring Caltrans approvals, to define approaches to addressing technical issues relevant to Caltrans, and to establish the process for Caltrans approval of construction affecting its facilities. The PDT has defined a combined Project Report/Project Study Report (PR/PSR) as the approval document that will be required by Caltrans for construction of improvements within and adjacent to Caltrans rights of way.

The PR/PSR, which is currently under development by LACMTA, will discuss project requirements at all affected Caltrans facilities – including the I-110 ramps and the Caltrans pumping plant – and will define the elements that must be incorporated into final design. The PR/PSR will also establish specific Caltrans coordination, review, and inspection requirements during final design and construction. LACMTA continues to meet with Caltrans through the PDT on a regular basis, and has incorporated the Caltrans technical and coordination requirements into the Design-Build solicitation documents.

- **California Public Utilities Commission** – As the responsible regulatory agency for railroad crossing safety, CPUC will have ultimate review and approval authority of grade crossings along the project alignment. To facilitate this process, LACMTA has held several meetings with CPUC and maintains ongoing contact with this reviewing agency. During the preparation of the FEIS/EIR, LACMTA first met with CPUC representatives in December 2002. In October 2003, a second meeting was held, prior to LACMTA Board approval of the Grade Crossing Policy for Light Rail Transit.

  As the development of Preliminary Engineering has proceeded, CPUC has been provided with in-progress conceptual and preliminary engineering drawings and offered opportunity to review and comment. Additionally, as a result of recent changes in approach to the evaluation of grade crossing safety by CPUC, LACMTA has prepared and submitted a Preliminary Grade Crossing Hazard Analysis per the latest CPUC approach to evaluating grade crossing safety. This analysis presents the preliminary approach to crossing safety for the LPA.

  In November 2005, LACMTA conducted a two-day tour of the alignment with CPUC to familiarize local representatives with the project and to identify specific areas of CPUC concern that will be addressed during the CPUC approval process and incorporated into

the final design. As a result of these tours, LACMTA is preparing additional information to provide to CPUC for evaluation, including proposed traffic signaling, gates, and lane configurations as well as traffic count data on apparent low-volume intersections. In January 2006, LACMTA provided CPUC with a summary of the CPUC-requested information and its current status; LACMTA is working closely with LADOT to finalize and provide the traffic count and design approach information that CPUC has requested. This information is also being incorporated into an updated Preliminary Grade Crossing Hazard Analysis.

FEIS/FEIR Mitigation Measure SS8 commits LACMTA to complete the Hazard Analysis before the start of Final Design. The Hazard Analysis will determine a design basis for warning devices. It is LACMTA's intent to work closely with CPUC to develop final crossing designs that meet CPUC requirements for approval. Upon assembly of LADOT-provided information, the next step will be to hold more focused site diagnostic meetings with CPUC. LACMTA will be working closely with CPUC as part of the final design process.

- **Non English-Speaking Outreach** - Advertisements for the FEIS/FEIR public workshops were placed in seven different newspapers, including three non-English language newspapers: L'Opinion (Spanish), Korea Times (Korean) and Rafu Shimpo (Japanese). Project staff members were available to discuss project issues in the above languages. Several comment sheets were submitted in Spanish and these have been translated into English and responses provided in both English and Spanish.

MEASURES TO MINIMIZE HARM

All practicable means to avoid or minimize environmental harm from the Locally Preferred Alternative have been adopted. LACMTA and the Authority will ensure that the responsible parties implement all mitigation measures provided in the Final EIS/EIR for the Locally Preferred Alternative. The mitigation commitments are fully identified in the Mitigation Monitoring Plan (Attachment A). FTA will require as a condition of any grant or grant agreement with LACMTA or the Authority that all committed mitigation measures in the Final EIS/EIR be implemented, unless FTA approves of a change in writing, after an appropriate NEPA review. FTA will also require that LACMTA and the Authority submit written reports on the progress in implementing the mitigation commitments. FTA will monitor this progress through review of the design and construction of the Exposition Project.

In their action on December 15, 2005, the LACMTA Board of Directors adopted a Statement of Overriding Considerations, which made findings that required them to balance, as applicable, the economic, legal, social, technological, or other benefits of the Project against its unavoidable risks when determining whether to approve the Project. If the specific economic, legal, social, technological or other benefits of the Project outweigh the unavoidable adverse environmental effects, those effects may be considered acceptable. The Board is then required to list specific reasons for considering a project acceptable when significant impacts are not avoided or substantially lessened. Those reasons must be based on substantial evidence in the Final

EIS/EIR or elsewhere in the administrative records (CEQA Guidelines Section 15093(b)). In accordance with the requirements of CEQA and CEQA guidelines, the LACMTA Board made findings that the Mitigation Measures identified in the Final EIS/EIR and the Mitigation Monitoring & Reporting Plan, when implemented, will avoid or substantially lessen virtually all of the significant effects identified in the Final EIS/EIR. Nonetheless, certain significant impacts of the Project were found to be unavoidable even after incorporation of all feasible Mitigation Measures. These significant unavoidable impacts are summarized below.

- **Construction Related Traffic Impacts** – Traffic would remain significant after implementation of Mitigation Measures. With commencement of the construction phase of the Revised LPA and Recommended Options, interferences in the normal flow of traffic on streets adjacent to the alignment may occur along with possible street/lane closures. Substantial re-routing of traffic may occur as a result of the construction of the USC/Exposition Park Undercrossing adjacent to the University of Southern California and Exposition Park. Development and implementation of a Construction Traffic Management Plan will aid in minimizing adverse impacts to circulation and access in this area. Although this impact is adverse and significant, it is considered a temporary impact as it will only occur during the construction phase of the Revised LPA.

- **Construction Related Air Quality Impacts** – Air Quality impacts would also remain significant after implementation of Mitigation Measures. Implementation of mitigation measures would reduce PM_{10} emissions by approximately 69 percent during the site preparation/demolition phase, by approximately 55 percent during the grading phase, and by approximately 50 percent during the construction phase. However, PM_{10}emissions would still exceed the SCAQMD threshold for PM_{10}. This impact, although unavoidable and significant, is considered to be a temporary impact that will occur only during the pre-construction and construction phase activities.

The LACMTA Board further specifically found that notwithstanding the disclosure of these significant unavoidable impacts, there are specific overriding economic, legal, social, technological, and other reasons for approving the Project. Those reasons are as follows:

- **Daily Transit Trips.** The Revised LPA is expected to increase the number of daily transit trips by 22,000 compared with the current bus service offered by the No-Action Alternative and reduce travel times. Light rail service would also offer improved access for area residents to local destinations as well as to the regional rail and bus system and, therefore, to regional destinations. It would also serve many educational and community centers in the corridor, enhancing mobility for young adults and school age children. These educational and community destinations include: USC, Los Angeles Trade Technical College, Paramount and Sony Studios, California African-American Museum, California Science Center, Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History, Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum and Sports Arena, Los Angeles Convention Center and Staples Center.

- **Exclusive Right-of-Way.** The Revised LPA and Recommended Options would provide a convenient and reliable transportation mode to transit-dependent populations. The LRT

will travel along an exclusive right-of-way which will not be affected by daily local traffic conditions.

- **Vehicle Miles Traveled.** The Revised LPA and Recommended Options is anticipated to decrease the study area Daily Auto Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) by 66,000 when compared to the No-Action Alternative. This would result in long-term beneficial effects on congestion and air quality.

- **Construction Employment.** The Revised LPA is anticipated to generate thousands of new construction jobs. In addition, LACMTA is formulating a local hiring policy for the construction and operational related job opportunities for the corridor. Such a program will include resources for job development and training. LACMTA currently offers a series of programs designed to encourage minority and women-owned businesses to participate in the construction and operation of new transportation projects.

- **Balancing Transportation Expenditures.** The Revised LPA would provide light rail transit service to the Los Angeles Mid-City/Westside Corridor communities. Implementing LRT service in the corridor would help restore the balance of regional capital transportation expenditures.

- **Transit-Oriented Development Incentives.** The Revised LPA is likely to stimulate transit-oriented development (TOD) in or near LRT station areas, particularly where there are local land use incentives and favorable market conditions. Interest in the development of land adjacent to the proposed alignment has already become evident throughout the stretch of the corridor. In a corridor where growth is fueled by entertainment and media-related businesses, demand for production and "creative spaces" would encourage opportunities for mixed-use development that could provide needed housing and space for retail and social service uses. In addition, landscape treatments along the light rail line could enhance the urban design of the communities within the transit corridor, making opportunities for development more attractive.

- **Landscaping.** Landscaping and urban design components proposed as a part of the Revised LPA Exposition Transit Parkway will enhance each neighborhood or corridor that the alignment runs through from Downtown Los Angeles, the Mid-Corridor, and the West End (including Culver City).

On balance, the MTA Board found that there are specific, economic, legal, social, technological, and other considerations associated with the Project that serve to override and outweigh the Project's significant unavoidable effects and, thus, the adverse effects are considered acceptable.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

In 2003, the California State Legislature adopted Public Utilities Code (Sections 132600-132650, et. Seq.) to create the Metro Exposition Line Construction Authority (Authority). The Construction Authority has the responsibility for the design and construction of a light rail transit

line between downtown Los Angeles and downtown Santa Monica. The project covered by this Record of Decision is Phase I of that light rail line. The State statute establishing the Authority grants it the powers necessary to design and build the Project, including the power to acquire property, incur indebtedness, relocate utilities, and enter into contracts with public and private entities. In carrying out its authority and responsibility, the Authority will award the Design Build Contract, and will oversee the design and construction work of the Design Build Contractor. The Authority and the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority will enter into agreements relating to the funding and implementation of the Project. The Authority will also be responsible for certain aspects of the Mitigation Monitoring Plan, as described in detail in Attachment A. The Authority will be dissolved upon the construction of the entire light rail transit line described in the State statute.

The Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (LACMTA) is responsible for the initial stages of Project development, including planning, alternatives analysis, capital cost estimation, and preliminary engineering. LACMTA is responsible for environmental review and clearance of the Project, including compliance with the requirements of CEQA and NEPA. LACMTA will also be responsible for certain aspects of the Mitigation Monitoring Plan, as described in Attachment A. During the design and construction phases of the Project, LACMTA will provide support to the Authority in areas such as grants management, design reviews, real estate acquisition and accounting, and will provide vehicles and operators for system testing. At the completion of construction, LACMTA will be responsible for pre-revenue testing, operational certification, and related activities. LACMTA will then assume responsibility for operations and maintenance of the Project as part of the Metro transit system.

DETERMINATIONS AND FINDINGS

Environmental Protection (49 USC Sections 5301(e) and 5324(b))

The environmental record for the Project is included in the previously referenced Major Investment Study and the Draft EIS/EIR and FEIS/EIR. Cumulatively, these documents represent the detailed statement required by both NEPA and the Federal Transit Laws, 49 USC Sections 5301 (e) and 5324 (b), regarding the environmental impacts of the proposed Project, any adverse environmental effects which cannot be avoided should the proposed project be implemented, alternatives to the proposed project, and any irreversible and irretrievable impacts on the environment which may be involved in the proposed Project should it be implemented. (The State environmental record for the Project is also included in the Draft EIS/EIR and the FEIS/EIR, as well as in the Findings of Fact and Statement of Overriding Considerations adopted by the LACMTA Board on December 15, 2005.)

On the basis of the evaluation of social, economic, and environmental impacts as presented in the Final EIS/EIR, the Findings of Fact and Statement of Overriding Considerations, the Mitigation Monitoring Plan, and the written and oral comments offered by the public and other agencies, FTA has determined, in accordance with 49 USC 5324 (b), that:

1. An adequate opportunity was afforded for the presentation of views by all parties with a significant economic, social, or environmental interest in the Project and fair consideration has been given to the preservation and enhancement of the environment and to the interest of the community in which the proposed Project is to be located; and

2. All reasonable steps have been taken to minimize the adverse environmental effects of the proposed Project and where adverse environmental effects remain, no feasible and prudent alternative to avoid or further mitigate such effect exists.

Historical And Archaeological Resources

The California State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) has determined, following consultation and coordination with FTA and LACMTA, that there will be no adverse impact on the identified historical properties in the Exposition Corridor. This determination, made pursuant to the regulations implementing Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, is set forth in the attached December 8, 2004 letter from the SHPO (Attachment C). Notwithstanding this determination, LACMTA has committed to certain historic preservation mitigation measures in Section 4.13 of the Mitigation Monitoring Plan.

Conformity with Air Quality Plans

The Federal Clean Air Act (CAA), as amended, requires that transportation projects conform with the State Implementation Plan's (SIP) purpose of eliminating or reducing the severity and number of violations of the national ambient air quality standards and of achieving expeditious attainment of such standards. The EPA regulation implementing this provision of the CAA (40 CFR Part 93) establishes criteria for demonstrating that a transportation project conforms with applicable air quality plans.

In order to demonstrate conformity with the federally approved SIP, as required by EPA conformity regulations, a project must satisfy a number of regulatory conditions established in the regulations. The LPA satisfies the EPA conformity requirements, as documented in the Final EIS/EIR in Section 4.5. In addition, the LACMTA Board has determined that the potential air quality impacts are less than significant and do not require mitigation measures.

Section 4(f) Finding

Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966 (49 USC 303) affords special protection to parks, recreation areas, wildlife refuges, and historic sites. Impacts assessed under Section 4(f) include: (I) impacts due to permanent taking or acquisition of lands as identified above, and (2) impacts due to "constructive use" or impairment of 4(f) designated land uses due to proximity of a project. Section 4.13 of the Final EIS/EIR addresses this topic. The FTA has determined, in consultation with the US. Department of Interior and the SHPO, that there are no 4(f) properties in the Exposition Corridor.

Environmental Justice

Executive Order 12298, "Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations" (February 11, 1994), provides, in pertinent part, that FTA identify and address "disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects" of Federally-funded mass transit projects "on minority populations and low-income populations.. .," and that FTA "conduct its programs, policies, and activities in a manner that ensures that such programs, policies, and activities do not have the effect of subjecting persons.. . to discrimination ... because of their race, color, or national origin." In accordance with the terms of Executive Order 12898 and the guidance set forth in the Presidential Memorandum accompanying the Executive Order, FTA and LACMTA applied the analytical frameworks of NEPA and CEQA (California Environmental Quality Act) to assess the effects of the Project on minority and low-income populations in the Study Area. From these analyses, FTA has determined that minority populations (91 percent) and low-income populations (32 percent of households below the poverty level) in the Study Area will not be subjected to discrimination through the construction or operation of the Project, and furthermore, that all people within the Study Area will enjoy significantly improved mobility as a result of the Project. Section 4.3 of the Final EIS/EIR addresses this subject, providing an overview of the income and minority demographics of the study area, and an assessment of the potential impacts on minority or low-income populations in the corridor. In addition, Mitigation Measures 4.4-1, 4.4-2, 4.4.2-2, 4.2-3 and 4.2-4 will be implemented to mitigate to less than significant levels any potential equity and environmental justice impacts.

Flood Plain Impact

Executive Order 11988 links the need to protect lives and property with the need to restore and preserve natural and beneficial flood plain values. Specifically, Federal agencies are directed to avoid conducting, allowing, or supporting actions on the base flood plain unless the agency finds that the base flood plain is the only practicable alternative location. Similarly, Department of Transportation (DOT) Order 5650.2, which implements Executive Order 1198 and was issued pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, the National Flood Insurance Act of 1968, and the Flood Disaster Protection Act of 1973, prescribes policies and procedures for ensuring that proper consideration is given to the avoidance and mitigation of adverse flood plain impacts in agency actions, planning programs, and budget requests. As documented in Section 4.9 of the Final EIS/EIR, Ballona Creek would be subject to flooding during the 100-year storm events. During these storm events, the Creek would be subject to limited flooding of short duration. The Project does not significantly encroach on a flood plain since it crosses the flood plain on a bridge, and the Project would be built in accordance with all state and local flood plain protection standards. Mitigation measure WR1 would ensure no impacts result from the limited potential of flooding.

Wetland Impact

DOT Order 5660.1.A requires DOT to "assure the protection, preservation, and enhancement of the nation's wetlands to the fullest extent practicable during the planning, construction and operation of transportation facilities and projects." And, in accordance with Executive Order

11990, "new construction located in wetlands shall be avoided unless there is no practicable Alternative to the construction and that the proposed action includes all practicable measures to minimize harm to wetlands which may result from such construction." As discussed in Section 4.10 of the Final EIS/EIR, the nearest wetland is the Ballona Wetland located approximately 4.5 miles west of the Project area. The LACMTA Board has determined that proposed project would not affect any wetlands and no impact is anticipated.

Endangered Species Impact

The Executive Order pertaining to endangered species requires Federal agencies, in consultation with and with the assistance of the Secretary of the Interior or of Commerce, as appropriate, to insure that actions they authorize, fund or carry out are not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of threatened or endangered species or result in the destruction or adverse modification of critical habitat for these species. As discussed in Section 4.10 of the Final EIS/EIR, the proposed Project would follow the existing public ROWs and would largely be contained within existing limits of city streets or a former railroad ROW now owned by LACMTA. Despite this unlikely habitat, there would be one sensitive species that the Project could affect: raptors who nest in the tall trees in the existing median during breeding season. Mitigation measure BR2 would assure that this sensitive species is not disturbed. No other federally, state, or locally designated species would be affected.

Protection of Children

Executive Order 13045, "Protection of Children from Environmental Health Risks and Safety Risks" requires FTA to identify and address environmental health and safety risks that may disproportionately affect children. Approximately 20 percent of the population within a half-mile of the Project is between 6 and 18 years old). Sections 4.8 and 4.12 of the Final EIS/EIR identified mitigation measures to address concerns by the public and district schools. Because of these measures, the Project will not increase the risk to children's health or safety that is attributable to products or substances that a child is likely to come in contact with or ingest. Based on the information provided in Section 4.8 and the Final EIS/EIR Mitigation Monitoring Plan, FTA concludes that the requirements of the Executive Order have been satisfied.

Major Investment Study (MIS)

The MTA conducted a Re-Evaluation/Major Investment Study (MIS) process from June 1999 through February 2000, with extensive public and agency involvement, consideration of a range of alternatives, and an evaluation process that lead to the preparation of the Draft EIS/EIR and the selection of a Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) in June 2001. FTA finds that the Re-Evaluation/MIS conducted for the Project complies with the requirements of 23 CFR Part 450 regarding the Metropolitan transportation planning process.

In addition, the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG), the MPO, found the LACMTA's MIS study process and technical work effort conducted for the Corridor and Project in full compliance with SCAG's adopted procedures. A Letter of Completion was issued by SCAG on May 26, 2000.

NEPA Finding

In accordance with 23 CFR Part 771, FTA finds that all significant impacts on the environment associated with the proposed Project have either been the subject of mitigation measures or the Statement of Overriding Considerations adopted by the LACMTA Board. This finding is based on the environmental analyses set forth in the Final EIS/EIS and related studies of the Project, and those documents are hereby incorporated by reference into this finding. Furthermore, this finding is premised on LACMTA's obligations to carry out the mitigation measures attached hereto and identified in those documents.

Leslie T. Rogers
Regional Administrator
Federal Transit Administration
Region IX

FEB 2 4 2006
Date

ATTACHMENT A - MITIGATION MONITORING AND REPORTING PLAN

ATTACHMENT B - RESPONSE TO COMMENTS; Supplemental Public Review Period October 14 – November 28, 2005

ATTACHMENT B-1 - SUMMARY OF COMMENTS

ATTACHMENT C - SHPO LETTER DATED DECEMBER 8, 2004