

1. Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the purpose of this Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the North Hollywood to Pasadena Bus Rapid Transit Project (BRT) (Proposed Project or Project), a discussion of the environmental review process, and a description of the organization of this Draft EIR.

The Proposed Project would provide a BRT service connecting several cities and communities between the San Fernando and San Gabriel Valleys. Specifically, the Proposed Project would consist of a BRT service that runs from the North Hollywood B/G Line (Red/Orange) Station in the City of Los Angeles through the Cities of Burbank and Glendale and into the City of Pasadena ending at Pasadena City College (PCC). The Proposed Project would operate along a combination of local roadways and freeway sections with various configurations of mixed-flow and dedicated bus lanes depending on location. In addition to the Proposed Project, several route options and configuration options are addressed in this Draft EIR.

The Proposed Project includes options for the BRT route and configurations. This was necessary due to public feedback during the completion of the Alternatives Analysis and EIR scoping feedback. It was not possible to reach a consensus on one route preferred by Metro, the cities, stakeholders, and general public. Metro determined that all stakeholders would best be informed about the Proposed Project by equally evaluating the potential environmental impacts of multiple routes in the four cities.

1.1 PURPOSE OF THIS DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

The Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) has prepared this Draft EIR for the following purposes:

- To satisfy the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (Public Resources Code [PRC] Section 21000, et seq.) and the CEQA Guidelines (California Code of Regulations [CCR], Title 14, Chapter 3, Section 15000, et seq.).
- To inform public agency decision-makers and the public of the significant environmental effects of the Proposed Project, as well as possible ways to minimize those significant effects, and reasonable alternatives to the Proposed Project that would avoid or minimize those significant effects.
- To enable Metro to consider environmental consequences when deciding whether to approve the Proposed Project, including which, if any, route to approve.

Metro serves as the Lead Agency for the Proposed Project in accordance with Sections 15051 and 15367 of the CEQA Guidelines, which define the Lead Agency as the public agency that has the principal responsibility for executing or approving a project.

As described in CEQA and the CEQA Guidelines, lead agencies are charged with the duty to avoid or substantially lessen significant environmental impacts of a project, where feasible. In discharging its duties under CEQA, a lead agency has an obligation to balance the economic, social, technological, legal, and other benefits of a project against its significant unavoidable impacts on the environment. This Draft EIR is an informational document designed to identify the potentially significant impacts of the Proposed Project on the environment; to indicate the manner in which those significant impacts can be minimized; to identify reasonable and potentially feasible alternatives to the Proposed Project that would avoid or reduce the significant impacts; and to identify any significant unavoidable adverse impacts that cannot be mitigated. Known areas of controversy associated with the Draft EIR include loss of travel lanes, parking, and bicycle lanes, and removal of portions of roadway medians. Controversial construction effects include business access, air pollution, and noise.

This Draft EIR was prepared in accordance with Section 15151 of the CEQA Guidelines, which defines the standards for EIR adequacy as follows:

“An EIR should be prepared with a sufficient degree of analysis to provide decision-makers with information which enables them to make a decision which intelligently takes account of environmental consequences. An evaluation of the environmental effects of a proposed project need not be exhaustive, but the sufficiency of an EIR is to be reviewed in the light of what is reasonably feasible. Disagreement among experts does not make an EIR inadequate, but the EIR should summarize the main points of disagreement among the experts. The courts have looked not for perfection but for adequacy, completeness, and a good faith effort at full disclosure.”

1.2 ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS

In May 2019, an Alternatives Analysis Report, including its findings and recommendations, was presented to the Metro Board of Directors. The Metro Board directed staff to initiate a Draft EIR. In compliance with the CEQA Guidelines Section 15082, a Notice of Preparation (NOP) was prepared and distributed on June 14, 2019, to the State Clearinghouse and June 17, 2019, to various other public agencies and the general public for a 45-day review and comment period. During the initial 45-day review period, Metro extended the public scoping period for an additional 15 days – officially ending the scoping period on August 15, 2019. Five scoping meetings were held in July 2019 to facilitate public review and comment on the Proposed Project and the Draft EIR.

Metro received a total of 2,584 comments during the public scoping period. Generally, comments received were a mix of both supportive and opposed sentiments toward the Proposed Project. The scoping process and comments received to date are detailed in Chapter 7, Public Outreach. The NOP and Scoping Report, including the NOP comment letters received by Metro, are contained in Appendix A of this Draft EIR. The baseline condition and existing setting for the Draft EIR are those at the NOP date.

In accordance with the CEQA Guidelines, this Draft EIR includes detailed analyses of the following environmental topics:

- Aesthetics
- Agriculture and Forestry Resources
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Energy Resources
- Geology and Soils
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Mineral Resources
- Noise
- Land Use and Planning
- Population and Housing
- Public Services
- Recreation
- Transportation
- Tribal Cultural Resources
- Utilities and Service Systems
- Wildfire

This Draft EIR was prepared under the direction and supervision of Metro and reflects the independent judgment of Metro. During the public review and comment period, public agencies, organizations and individuals may submit written comments concerning the adequacy of the document by email or mail to:

Scott Hartwell, Project Manager
Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority
One Gateway Plaza, Mail Stop: 99-22-6
Los Angeles, CA 90012
Email: nohopasbrt@metro.net

Metro will conduct a public hearing to take testimony on the Draft EIR during the public review and comment period. After the public review and comment period, written responses to all written comments and oral testimony pertaining to environmental issues received during the comment period will be prepared as part of the Final EIR. As required by CEQA, responses to comments submitted by commenting agencies will be distributed to those agencies for review prior to consideration of the Final EIR by Metro's Board of Directors. Upon the completion of the Final EIR and other required documentation, the Board of Directors may adopt the findings relative to the Proposed Project's environmental effects after implementation of mitigation measures and provide a statement of overriding considerations, certify the Final EIR, and approve the Proposed Project.

1.3 EIR ORGANIZATION

This Draft EIR is comprised of the following chapters:

Executive Summary. This chapter provides a summary of the Project, the public outreach information, project background, environmental impacts, and mitigation measures.

- 1. Introduction.** This chapter briefly discusses the purpose of the Draft EIR, identifies the environmental topics, describes the environmental review process and organization, and discusses the intended use of this Draft EIR.
- 2. Project Description.** This chapter provides a detailed description of the Proposed Project, including location and surrounding uses, history, objectives, operating characteristics, and construction schedule and phasing.
- 3. Environmental Impacts Analysis.** This chapter presents the environmental setting, project analyses, and if applicable, mitigation measures, and conclusions regarding the level of significance after mitigation for each environmental resource.
- 4. Other Environmental Considerations.** This chapter summarizes possible effects of the Proposed Project that were determined not to be significant; discusses significant unavoidable impacts that would result from the Proposed Project; analyzes significant irreversible changes in the environment; and assesses potential growth-inducing impacts, related to economic or population growth or the construction of additional housing, either directly or indirectly, in the surrounding area; and anticipated permits and approvals.
- 5. Cumulative Impacts.** This chapter presents CEQA requirements for cumulative impact analysis and analyzes the potential for the Proposed Project to have significant cumulative effects when combined with other past, present, and “reasonably foreseeable” probable future projects.
- 6. Alternatives.** This chapter provides an analysis of a range of reasonable alternatives to the Proposed Project, including the No Project Alternative required by CEQA.
- 7. Public Participation and Outreach.** This chapter presents public engagement and community outreach that occurred throughout the environmental process.
- 8. Organizations and Persons Consulted.** This chapter lists the organizations and persons with whom Metro consulted during the Draft EIR process.
- 9. List of Preparers.** This chapter lists the persons who contributed to the preparation of this Draft EIR.
- 10. References.** This chapter lists all the references and sources used in the preparation of this Draft EIR.