

1. Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the purpose of this Final Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the North Hollywood to Pasadena Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Project (Proposed Project or Project). This Final EIR has been prepared to comply with the requirements of 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.).

The Proposed Project would provide a BRT service connecting several cities and communities between the San Fernando and San Gabriel Valleys. From west to east, the route traverses the communities of North Hollywood (in the City of Los Angeles), Burbank, Glendale, Eagle Rock (in the City of Los Angeles) and Pasadena. 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.

1.1 INTENDED USES OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

This Final EIR is intended to assist Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) in making decisions regarding the adoption of the Proposed Project. It is required by Section 15132 of the CEQA Guidelines to include the Draft EIR or a revision of the draft; comments and recommendations received on the Draft EIR (either verbatim or in summary); a list of persons, organizations, and public agencies who commented on the Draft EIR; responses to significant environmental comments raised in the review and consultation process; and any other relevant information added by the lead agency. Key revisions to the Proposed Project since circulation of the Draft EIR are summarized below. Additional details are provided in Chapter 2, Project Description.

- The Metro Board of Directors selected Route Options A1 to B to C to D to E1 to F1 to G1 to H1 as the Proposed Project.
- The Proposed Project no longer includes shared bus and bicycle lanes on any segment.
- The Final EIR assesses configuration options in Eagle Rock that implement dedicated bus lanes while also preserving bicycle lanes, medians, and parking, including a travel lane reduction option.
- A station is proposed at Alameda Avenue and Naomi Street in Burbank in place of the two stations that were formerly proposed at Olive Avenue and Alameda Street along with Olive Avenue and Buena Vista Street.
- Curb-running bus lanes are no longer proposed along Olive Avenue between Buena Vista Street and Lake Street in Burbank. The Final EIR instead assesses a side-running

bus lanes configuration for this stretch, including a travel lane reduction while preserving parking and retaining existing sidewalk widths.

- The proposed station on Olive Avenue and Lake Street in Burbank is no longer located on the Olive Avenue bridge.

These Proposed Project refinements and others are addressed within the Final EIR. This document also contains comments received on the Draft EIR and their responses, as well as updates and clarifications to the text and graphics.

As described in Chapter 2, Project Description, and Chapter 4, Response to Comments, of the Final EIR, project modifications, such as lane reductions in Burbank on Olive Avenue from Buena Vista Street to Lake Street and inclusion of two design options in Eagle Rock, are the result of public comments and community outreach conducted as part of the Draft EIR circulation conducted pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15105. Such modifications would not be considered “significant new information” pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15088.5 as the modifications have been made to portions of the Project route already described in the Draft EIR and have been made as a result of lengthy public outreach and discourse such that the public has not been deprived of a meaningful opportunity to comment upon a substantial adverse environmental effect of the Project or a feasible way to mitigate or avoid such an effect. As shown in Chapter 3, Corrections and Additions, of the Final EIR, the refinements to the Proposed Project and the design options would not alter the conclusions of the Draft EIR regarding the potentially significant impacts of the Proposed Project or result in any new or substantially more severe significant environmental impacts. On the contrary, the design options in Eagle Rock would avoid potentially significant impacts to bicycle facilities identified in the Draft EIR.

1.2 ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH

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 are detailed in Chapter 7, Public Outreach of the Draft EIR. The Scoping Report is contained in Appendix V of the Draft EIR.

Following the public scoping review period and NOP release, Metro began developing the Draft EIR. Upon release of the Notice of Availability (NOA) on October 26, 2020, a 46-day review period was initiated for public review and comment on the Draft EIR findings. The NOA provided notice for responsible agencies to transmit their comments on the findings and content of the Draft EIR, focusing on specific information related to their own statutory responsibility. During the initial 46-day review period, Metro extended the public review period for an additional 18 days – officially ending the scoping period on December 28, 2020. The decision to extend the public review period was based on community interest in the Project and the current Los Angeles County COVID-19 Safer at Home orders to allow sufficient opportunities for the public to review and comment on the Draft EIR. Additionally, due to the holiday schedule, the public review period was extended beyond 60 days to allow for comments to be received after the holidays and without interruption.

Per CEQA, a public review period is required when issuing the availability and completion of a Draft EIR. Appendix A of the Final EIR includes the Public Outreach Report for activities occurring after publication of the Draft EIR.

Metro hosted virtual public hearings where the public was able to provide comments regarding the content and findings of the overall project plans. Metro conducted two virtual public hearings and one virtual platform during the public review period. A virtual platform allows the public access to materials and project information similarly to an in-person setting. Additionally, a copy of the NOA was filed with the Los Angeles County Clerk and State Clearinghouse. Legal advertisement notices were published in eleven newspapers of general circulation in the Project area, and 15,000 flyers were delivered door-to-door to residents and businesses within the Eagle Rock community.

Metro conducted public hearings to take testimony on the Draft EIR on November 12 and 14, 2020. A total of 242 stakeholders attended the public hearings and over 800 stakeholders visited the online virtual platform. Metro received 445 unique comments during the Draft EIR public review period. Comments were received through four methods, including via the project email address, voicemail, and by submitting a written and/or oral comment at one of the two public hearings. The majority of local community members generally supported and/or were not opposed to the project. However, many had specific comments regarding the different route alignment options, particularly in the Eagle Rock community. The Eagle Rock comments referenced a proposed new design concept named the “Beautiful Boulevard” and also expressed concern related to the Proposed Project’s consistency with the City of Los Angeles’s Mobility Plan 2035 from the General Plan.

Upon evaluating the nearly 500 comments received during the Draft EIR public review period, Metro made refinements to the Proposed Project, particularly in the Eagle Rock community along Colorado Boulevard and in the Burbank community. The public engagement program to update the community on the refinements included briefings and presentations with elected officials, City staff, key stakeholder roundtable meetings, business roundtable meetings and a community meeting.

Throughout this public engagement effort, the Metro team gathered feedback about the technical aspects of the Proposed Project and refinements to the alignment along Colorado Boulevard in Eagle Rock and Olive Avenue in Burbank. This process included an opportunity for key groups and businesses in the Eagle Rock community to provide direct feedback to the project team and a later opportunity for the communities in the corridor to provide feedback on the identical information and refinements presented to the key groups and businesses. These opportunities for feedback were designed to be transparent and inclusive, and allowed community members extended meeting times for the Project Team to respond to the many questions and comments received. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and Los Angeles County Safer at Home Orders, all meetings were held virtually to allow the public to attend from the safety of their homes. In addition to the virtual meetings, the meetings were recorded and made available on the project website along with the meeting presentation materials.

Metro attended one-on-one meetings with individual agencies to provide an overview of the project, schedule, next steps and to solicit feedback on the project. Metro staff conducted outreach to key stakeholder groups within the Eagle Rock community to provide an update on the refinements to the Proposed Project prior to presenting to the public. The stakeholder meetings included elected officials, neighborhood councils, community-based organizations, businesses and business groups, and school organizations.

The key stakeholder roundtable meetings were conducted virtually with key stakeholders in Eagle Rock on Tuesday, March 16, 2021, with two sessions provided at different times to allow for opportunities that fit their schedules. At the roundtable meetings, Metro provided an overview of the project, an update on the refinements of the project in Eagle Rock, the timeline, next steps and an opportunity for dialogue in breakout rooms with project staff. Each of the breakout rooms allowed meeting attendees to ask questions and provide feedback about the project and refinements. Key stakeholders were notified by email leading up to the roundtable meetings with a total of three email notices (e-blasts) in English and Spanish.

A business roundtable meeting was conducted virtually with businesses along Colorado Boulevard in Eagle Rock on Friday, March 26, 2021. At the roundtable meeting, Metro provided an overview of the project, an update on the refinements of the project in Eagle Rock, the timeline, next steps and an opportunity for dialogue with project staff. The meeting format allowed meeting attendees to ask questions and provide feedback about the project and refinements. Businesses were notified prior to the roundtable meeting with a total of five email notices (e-blasts). Additionally, flyers were distributed door-to-door to businesses along Colorado Boulevard leading up to the roundtable meeting notifying businesses of the meeting.

A virtual community meeting was held on April 1, 2021, to update the corridor communities on the refined alignments in Eagle Rock and Burbank and to solicit feedback from the public. Following the approval of the Proposed Project by the Board of Directors on May 27, 2021, an additional series of virtual community meetings were held on September 23, 2021, for the Eagle Rock community and October 7, 2021, for the Burbank community to gather feedback and answer questions about the proposed refinements in their respective jurisdictions. Each meeting consisted of a presentation of the refinements by Metro followed by a question and answer

period. In addition to simultaneous Spanish interpretation, a copy of the PowerPoint presentation was made available in Spanish on the project website.

Transit rider intercept surveys were conducted in Burbank and Eagle Rock between October 1 and October 13, 2021, to inform transit users and capture feedback about the project. Surveys were conducted at key bus stops with high ridership along Colorado Boulevard in Eagle Rock, Olive Avenue in Burbank, and the B/G Line (Red/Orange) station in North Hollywood. Interviewees had the opportunity to provide either written responses or video comments.

Mobile phone surveys were also sent to transit riders within the project study area via Metro's Transit App between September 27 and October 10, 2021. The goal of the surveys was to better understand the characteristics of transit riders and which elements of the Proposed Project they found most important. Two separate surveys were made available for targeted geographic audiences – one for Eagle Rock and one for Burbank – and were available in both English and Spanish.

Additionally, Metro staff conducted door-to-door outreach to businesses on Colorado Boulevard in Eagle Rock and Olive Avenue in Burbank between November 5 and December 4, 2021. The purpose was to further inform business owners and employees about the project and capture feedback on the design options being studied in both communities. Staff also distributed flyers providing background information, the design options being studied, and contact information.

Upon the completion of the Final EIR and other required documentation, the Metro Board of Directors may adopt the findings relative to the Proposed Project's environmental effects after implementation of mitigation measures, certify the Final EIR, and approve the Proposed Project.

1.3 FINAL EIR ORGANIZATION

This Final EIR is comprised of the chapters listed below. Chapter 3, Corrections and Additions, includes corrections and additions to the Draft EIR; new content is shown in underline and removed content is shown in ~~strikethrough~~. These revisions were either initiated by the lead agency or made to address comments received during the public review period. None of these corrections or additions constitute significant new information which would necessitate a recirculation of the EIR.

1. **Introduction.** This chapter briefly discusses the purpose of the Final EIR, the intended uses of this Final EIR, the environmental review process and community outreach efforts, and the contents of this Final 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. **Corrections and Additions.** This chapter identifies any revisions made to provide more detail, clarify, and/or correct the text and graphics contained within the Draft EIR. These

revisions were either initiated by the lead agency or made to address comments received during the public review period. None of these corrections or additions constitute significant new information which would necessitate a recirculation of the Draft EIR.

4. **Responses to Comments.** This chapter contains a list of commenting agencies and individuals and a copy of each comment letter received by Metro during the public review period for the Draft EIR. Consistent with Section 15088 of the CEQA Guidelines, each of the comment letters is followed by the corresponding responses to each of the comments within each letter that pertain to the analysis and findings contained in the Draft EIR.
5. **Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP).** This chapter includes the MMRP for the Proposed Project. The MMRP lists the required mitigation measures and identifies the enforcement agency, monitoring agency, monitoring phase, monitoring frequency, and the action indicating compliance with each measure.