




# EXPOSITION METRO LINE CONSTRUCTION AUTHORITY

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**DATE:** NOVEMBER 3, 2005

**TO:** BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**FROM:** RICHARD D. THORPE   
INTERIM CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

**ACTION:** EXPOSITION METRO LINE CONSTRUCTION AUTHORITY  
FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT/REPORT

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## RECOMMENDATION

Receive and file this report on the Final Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (Final EIS/EIR) for the Los Angeles Mid-City Westside Transit Corridor, Mid-City/Exposition Light Rail Transit Project, the modified Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) and summary of 14 design options considered therein.

## SUMMARY

The Final EIS/EIR has been recently revised to address requirements identified by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) as a result of their review of the previous submittals of the Administrative Draft in December 2004 and July 2005. The Final EIS/EIR also incorporates 14 additional minor design options developed to address comments by various stakeholders. The revised Administrative Draft submitted to the FTA for review on July 27, 2005, was approved by the FTA on October 4, 2005, for circulation for public review. The 45-day public review period began on October 14<sup>th</sup> and will end on November 28<sup>th</sup>.

The Final EIS/EIR recommends adopting certain modifications to the LPA approved by the Metro Board of Directors in June 2001. The recommended modifications include four (4) of the 14 new design options: (1) the Flower Street Eastside Design Option, (2) the north-side widening of Jefferson Boulevard, (3) a grade separation of Jefferson Boulevard and (4) an interim Venice/Robertson Station Alternative within the Metro-owned Exposition Right-of-Way east of National Boulevard. The estimated cost for the modified LPA is within the \$640 Million budget adopted for the project by the Metro Board of Directors.

## DISCUSSION

Earlier drafts of the Administrative Final EIS/EIR were submitted to the FTA in April and December 2004 for review and approval. Following its review, the FTA indicated that the Final EIS/EIR could not be approved for public release until certain concerns

regarding the modeling and patronage projections were satisfactorily addressed. In February, agreement was reached with the FTA that those concerns could be addressed in a White Paper if the Exposition LRT Project was withdrawn from the Section 5309 New Starts Program. Once the decision to withdraw the project from the New Starts process was approved by the Metro Board in April, the requisite White Paper was completed and submitted. The White Paper was accepted by the FTA in early July, clearing the way for completion of the revision of the Final EIS/EIR. The revised Final EIS/EIR was completed and submitted to the FTA for review and approval on July 27, 2005 and was approved for public release by the FTA on October 4, 2005.

The Final EIS/EIR includes evaluation of 14 minor design options affecting the project configuration. Four of these design options are recommended for adoption as part of the proposed LPA. Summary descriptions of each of the 14 design options are provided in the following paragraphs under their respective headings.

Downtown Alignment Design Options – In response to concerns expressed by the City of Los Angeles and others, two design options to the original LPA alignment have been evaluated in the Downtown Connection segment of the project. These include the Hill Street Couplet Design Option and the Flower Street Design Option. As a result of evaluation of the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) that was previously approved by the Metro Board of Directors in June 2001, and these two design options, staff has concluded that both the Flower Street and Hill Street Couplet are superior to the original LPA alignment. Staff has further concluded that the Flower Street Design Option is superior to the Hill Street Couplet Design Option because it is shorter, more direct, faster and serves a denser area. The Flower Street Option is recommended for adoption provided the funding contributions from the City of Los Angeles and USC, as identified in the adopted Funding Plan, are obtained.

In accordance with the Grade Crossing Policy adopted by the Metro Board of Directors, the Flower Street Design Option requires a grade separation for the transition from Flower Street to the median of Exposition Boulevard from just south of Jefferson Boulevard on Flower Street to Exposition Boulevard just east of Trousdale Parkway. The Flower Street alignment also includes identification of an optional USC/Exposition Park Station in the vicinity of Kinsey Drive.

USC requested and jointly funded studies to develop and evaluate additional design options for an extended Flower Street undercrossing. Two of the design options resulting from these studies are included in the Final EIS/EIR. These design options involve fully covering the undercrossing trench and additional landscaping. One option includes extending the undercrossing to west of Trousdale Parkway. Staff has indicated to USC that any extended undercrossing would have to be fully funded by USC, could not delay the project, and would require USC to receive support from the Exposition Park Stakeholders.

La Cienega Station Parking Facility – The La Cienega Station has been designed as an aerial structure spanning over La Cienega Boulevard with a contiguous parking structure for approximately 500 spaces on the southeast corner of Jefferson and La Cienega Boulevards. The parking structure is proposed to be located on a site owned by the City of Los Angeles, which was used as a construction-staging site for the East Central Interceptor Sewer Project (ECIS Project). In November 2004, the Los Angeles City Council passed a motion requiring further consideration by the Council to determine if the remaining portion (part of the site is required for an ECIS Air Treatment Facility) of the ECIS property will be made available for use by the Exposition LRT Project. In the event the ECIS site is not made available, an alternative parking facility design has been developed on the southwest corner of the intersection. However, adoption of this alternative would require acquisition of the parcel currently occupied by a Public Storage warehouse and would result in a serious impact on the project budget since the adopted budget was predicated on the City of LA making the ECIS site available at no cost to the project.

Jefferson Boulevard Design Options: Grade Separation and Widening Options – The Cities of Los Angeles and Culver City raised concerns about the grade crossing of Jefferson Boulevard identified in the Draft EIS/EIR due to potential traffic impacts. In response to these comments, several Design Options were developed to evaluate a potential grade separation of the Jefferson Boulevard crossing. Because of the close proximity of the aerial crossing of La Cienega, all the alternatives involved extension of the planned grade separation. Analysis of these alternatives found the extension of the La Cienega grade separation across Jefferson Boulevard and Ballona Creek returning to grade just east of Fay Avenue would be the superior alternative to the LPA. Therefore, it is recommended for inclusion in the proposed project.

The traffic impact analysis for the relocation of Metro Bus Division 6 concluded that Jefferson Boulevard would need to be widened from La Cienega to La Cienega Place to accommodate buses turning west onto Jefferson from southbound La Cienega in route to Division 6. This plus the need for bike lanes and two eastbound left turn lanes on Jefferson results in the need to widen Jefferson by a total of 14 feet. Two options for widening Jefferson have been identified: one involves widening the existing roadway to the north and the other involves widening the roadway to the south. Although the widening to the north requires acquisition of the parcel on that side of Jefferson, it is recommended for inclusion in the project as the superior alternative because of its lower overall cost.

Venice/Robertson Station Design Options – The LPA includes an interim at-grade station at Venice/Robertson, with at-grade crossings of National and Washington Boulevards. The City of Culver City requested that this decision be reconsidered in favor of an aerial station with grade-separated crossings of National and Washington Boulevards. Following adoption of the Grade Crossing Policy for Light Rail Transit, the Metro Board of Directors agreed that an aerial station would be required in the future when the line is extended further west. In the meantime, interim station designs have been developed that do not preclude future conversion to an aerial station as funding is not available for full

grade separation and an aerial station at this time. The design of the aerial station can be better developed in the future, when funding is identified and the routing of the future extension is known.

To respond to the City of Culver City's concerns about the at-grade crossings of National and Washington Boulevards, four additional interim station Design Options have been developed that do not require LRT crossings of these streets. These options consist of three "North of ROW" Design Options, which would locate an interim station on various parcels of land north of the Expo ROW and east of the intersection of Washington and National, including parcels on either side of Wesley, and the "ROW" Design Option, which would locate the interim station on the Metro owned railroad ROW east of National Boulevard. Staff is recommending the "ROW" Design Option since all other options require the acquisition of additional property which is not included in the current project budget.

**ATTACHMENT(S)**

None