

## **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 7<sup>th</sup> 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 7<sup>th</sup>/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.

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-