

Section 2.0 | Introduction

LA Aerial Rapid Transit Technologies LLC, as the Project Sponsor, is proposing the Los Angeles Aerial Rapid Transit Project (proposed Project), which would connect Los Angeles Union Station (LAUS) to the Dodger Stadium property via an aerial gondola system in downtown Los Angeles.

This Section 2.0, Introduction, provides an overview of the purpose of this Final Environmental Impact Report (Final EIR), a discussion of the environmental review process and community outreach, and a description of the organization of this Final EIR.

2.1 SUMMARY OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT

The proposed Project would connect LAUS to the Dodger Stadium property via an aerial gondola system. The proposed Project would also include an intermediate station at the southernmost entrance of the Los Angeles State Historic Park. The proposed Project would provide an aerial rapid transit (ART) option for visitors to Dodger Stadium, while also providing access between the Dodger Stadium property, the surrounding communities, including Chinatown, Mission Junction, Elysian Park, and Solano Canyon, and the Los Angeles State Historic Park, to the regional transit system accessible at LAUS.

The aerial gondola system would consist of cables, three passenger stations, a non-passenger junction, towers, and gondola cabins. When complete, the proposed Project would have a maximum capacity of approximately 5,000 people per hour per direction, and the travel time from LAUS to Dodger Stadium would be approximately seven minutes. The proposed Project would provide pedestrian improvements, including hardscape and landscape improvements, as well as amenities at the Los Angeles State Historic Park. The ART system has the ability to overcome grade and elevation issues between LAUS and Dodger Stadium, and would provide safe, zero-emission, environmentally friendly, and high-capacity transit connectivity in the Project area that would reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions as a result of reduced vehicular congestion in and around Dodger Stadium and on neighborhood streets, arterial roadways, and freeways. The proposed Project would operate daily to serve existing residents, workers, park users, and visitors to Los Angeles.

A detailed description of the proposed Project is provided in Section 3.0, Project Description, of this Final EIR.

2.2 PURPOSE OF THIS FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

In accordance with California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Sections 15088, 15089, and 15132, the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro), as Lead Agency, has prepared this Final Environmental Impact Report (Final EIR) for the Los Angeles Aerial Rapid Transit Project (proposed Project) proposed by LA Aerial Rapid Transit Technologies LLC, as the Project Sponsor. This section provides an overview of the purpose of this Final EIR for the proposed Project. This Final EIR has been prepared to comply with the requirements of 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.).

This Final EIR is intended to assist Metro in making decisions regarding the adoption of the proposed Project. It is required by CEQA Guidelines section 15132 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 comments received regarding the Draft EIR, and any other relevant information added by the lead agency.

Refinements to the proposed Project since circulation of the Draft EIR, as well as corrections and additions to the Draft EIR, are provided in Section 5.0, Corrections and Additions, of the Final EIR. The Final EIR 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 Section 3.0, Project Description, Section 5.0, Corrections and Additions, and Section 6.0, Responses to Comments, of the Final EIR, the proposed Project's refinements and corrections and additions are the result of public comments and community outreach conducted as part of the Draft EIR circulation 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 proposed Project alignment 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 proposed Project or a feasible way to mitigate or avoid such an effect. As shown in Section 5.0, Corrections and Additions, of this Final EIR, the refinements to the proposed Project 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.

2.3 ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH

2.3.1 Notice of Preparation and Scoping Meetings

In accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15082, a Notice of Preparation (NOP) was prepared and distributed to notify agencies, organizations, and individuals that Metro planned to prepare a Draft EIR, and to request input on the environmental analysis to be performed. The 45-day comment period began on October 1, 2020, and concluded on November 16, 2020, for a 46-day comment period. As part of the EIR scoping process, Project information was made available to the public online through two primary means: 1) a virtual "open house," and 2) an online virtual scoping meeting. The virtual open house was accessible to reviewing parties and the public throughout the 46-day public review period. The virtual open house and online virtual scoping meeting were made accessible through Metro's project website at metro.net/aerialrapidtransit. The NOP and Project fact sheet were posted in the virtual open house, and the virtual scoping meeting was provided in English, Spanish, and Cantonese.

The online virtual scoping meeting was held on October 22, 2020, and included an overview of the proposed Project, an overview of the CEQA process, and the Project timeline for environmental review. The public was also able to submit questions and comments during the online meeting. A recording of the scoping meeting was posted on the Metro website following the meeting.

A total of 305 comments, composed of 8 agency comments, 20 organization comments, 226 individual comments, and 51 comments during the online virtual scoping meeting, were received in response to the

NOP. In addition, an estimated 741 individuals visited the virtual open house and 75 individuals attended the online virtual scoping meeting. The NOP, and the public comments received during the 46-day review period for the NOP, are included in Appendix A of the Draft EIR.

The NOP included two potential alignment alternatives being considered for the proposed Project: the Spring Street Alternative and the Broadway Alternative. Due to feedback received during the scoping process, the Broadway Alternative is now being considered as the proposed Project. The Spring Street Alternative is discussed in Section 4.0, Alternatives, of the Draft EIR.

2.3.2 Draft EIR Public Review Period

Following the public scoping period and NOP release, Metro began developing the Draft EIR. Metro released the Draft Environmental Impact Report (“EIR”) for the proposed Project on October 17, 2022, for a 60-day public review period ending on December 16, 2022. On November 15, 2022, Metro extended the public review period an additional 30 days for a 90-day public review period ending on January 17, 2023. Notice of the release of the Draft EIR, the extension of the public review period, and the public meetings was provided to agencies and interested parties in several ways in compliance with CEQA, as discussed in detail in Appendix A, Public Outreach Report, of the Final EIR.

Metro held a total of eight public meetings immediately before, during, and after the 90-day Draft EIR public review period, including two community information sessions prior to the release of the Draft EIR. Following the release of the Draft EIR for public review, Metro held two informational workshops (one virtual and one in person), and four public hearings (two virtual and two in-person). All informational workshops and public hearings offered Spanish, Cantonese, and Mandarin interpretation, and, following a request for a Taishanese interpreter, the final two public hearings also offered Taishanese interpretation. Metro also provided materials in English, Spanish, Chinese (Traditional), and Chinese (Simplified), both as printed materials at the in-person public meetings, and electronically on Metro’s project webpage and the SB 44 website.

An estimated 715¹ attendees participated in the eight public meetings. Metro received 1,132 comments during the Draft EIR public review period via U.S. mail, the project email address, voicemail, and by submitting written and/or oral comments at the four public hearings.

Refer to Appendix A, Public Outreach Report, of this Final EIR, for detailed discussion of the Draft EIR public review period. Refer to Appendix B, Public Hearing Transcripts, and Appendix C, Public Comments on the Draft EIR, of this Final EIR, for copies of all public comments received on the Draft EIR during the public review period, and Section 6.0, Responses to Comments, for responses to comments received on the Draft EIR.

Prior to the release of the Final EIR, Metro hosted two pre-Final EIR release public meetings to provide an update on the proposed Project, with one held virtually via Zoom webinar, and one held in-person in the Project area. Project materials and information were provided at both the in-person meeting and on Metro’s website in English, Spanish, Chinese (Traditional), and Chinese (Simplified). Interpretation was provided in English, Spanish, Mandarin, Cantonese, and Taishanese. Upon the completion of the Final EIR

¹ The total number of attendees is based on the Zoom webinar attendees for virtual meetings and sign-in sheets for in-person meetings. Because attendees at in-person meetings were not required to sign in, the in-person estimates are an approximation and may not reflect the actual total number of attendees at the in-person meetings.

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.

2.4 SENATE BILL 44

Senate Bill (SB) 44, effective January 1, 2022, added section 21168.6.9 to the Public Resources Code and provides for streamlined judicial review for "environmental leadership transit projects," so long as certain requirements are met. To qualify for the streamlined judicial review process established under SB 44, the proposed Project must be an "environmental leadership transit project," defined as a "fixed guideway" that (i) operates at zero emissions; (ii) reduces GHG emissions in the project's corridor "as defined in the applicable environmental document over the useful life of the project, without using offsets"; (iii) reduces 30 million vehicle miles traveled in the project's corridor "as defined in the applicable environmental document over the useful life of the project"; (iv) is consistent with the applicable sustainable communities strategy and regional transportation plan; and (v) incorporates sustainable infrastructure practices. (Cal. Pub. Res. Code § 21168.6.9(a)(1)(A)-(F).

As discussed in detail in Section 1.0, Introduction, of the Draft EIR, and Topical Response A, SB 44, and included in Section 6.0, Responses to Comments, of this Final EIR, the proposed Project meets the definition of an environmental leadership transit project, and has complied with and will comply with all other requirements of Public Resources Code section 21168.6.9, the full and complete text of which is included as Appendix R to this Draft EIR. In particular, and as discussed above, although Public Resources Code section 21168.6.9 only requires one informational workshop and one public hearing, Metro hosted two informational workshops and four public hearings during the Draft EIR public review period.

In addition, in accordance with Public Resources Code section 21168.6.9(e)(1)(A), the required notice is copied below and in Appendix D, Public Resources Code section 21168.6.9 Notice, of this Final EIR:

THIS ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT IS SUBJECT TO SECTION 21168.6.9 OF THE PUBLIC RESOURCES CODE, WHICH PROVIDES, AMONG OTHER THINGS, THAT THE LEAD AGENCY NEED NOT CONSIDER CERTAIN COMMENTS FILED AFTER THE CLOSE OF THE PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD, IF ANY, FOR THE DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT. ANY JUDICIAL ACTION CHALLENGING THE CERTIFICATION OR ADOPTION OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT OR THE APPROVAL OF THE PROJECT DESCRIBED IN SECTION 21168.6.9 OF THE PUBLIC RESOURCES CODE IS SUBJECT TO THE PROCEDURES SET FORTH IN THAT SECTION. A COPY OF SECTION 21168.6.9 OF THE PUBLIC RESOURCES CODE IS INCLUDED IN THE APPENDIX TO THIS ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT.

2.5 FINAL EIR ORGANIZATION

This Final EIR is comprised of the sections listed below.

1.0 Executive Summary. This section provides an overview of the proposed Project and its potential impacts. Also included in this section are areas of controversy and issues to be resolved, an overview of the public review process that was completed for the proposed Project, and a summary of the alternatives to the proposed Project.

2.0 Introduction. This section briefly discusses the purpose of this Final EIR, the intended uses of this Final EIR, the environmental review process and community outreach efforts, and the contents of this Final EIR.

3.0 Project Description. This section provides a detailed description of the proposed Project, including a description of aerial transit technology generally, the proposed Project's location and local community context, ridership, system operations, construction and project buildout, and required permits and approvals.

4.0 Cost and Financing. This section summarizes the capital, operating, and maintenance costs and planned sources of funding for the proposed Project.

5.0 Corrections and Additions. This section 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. New content is shown in underline and removed content is shown in strikethrough. None of these corrections or additions constitute significant new information which would necessitate a recirculation of the Draft EIR.

6.0 Responses to Comments. This section contains a list of commenting agencies and individuals received by Metro during the public review period for the Draft EIR. Consistent with Section 15088 of the CEQA Guidelines, each of the comments is followed by the corresponding responses to each comment within each comment letter or public hearing verbal comment, that pertain to the analysis and findings contained in the Draft EIR. Copies of the original written comment letters are provided in Appendix C, Public Comments on the Draft EIR, and Appendix B, Public Hearing Transcripts, of this Final EIR.

7.0 Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program. This section includes the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program ("MMRP") for the proposed Project. The MMRP lists the mitigation measures and project design features by environmental topic and identifies the responsible party, monitoring agency, enforcement agency, monitoring phase, monitoring frequency, and action(s) indicating compliance.

8.0 Acronyms. This section provides an alphabetical list of acronyms and abbreviations used in the Final EIR.

9.0 List of Preparers. This section lists the individuals involved in the preparation of this Final EIR and the organizations and persons consulted.

10.0 References. This section includes a list of reference and source materials used in the preparation of this Final EIR.

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