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NOTICE OF PREPARATION OF A DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

DATE: October 1, 2020

TO: Agencies, Organizations, and Interested Parties

SUBJECT: Notice of Preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Report

PROJECT TITLE: Antelope Valley Line Capacity and Service Improvements Program

FROM: Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority

PROJECT LOCATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING: The Antelope Valley Line (AVL) is a 76.6-mile-long commuter rail line that serves Northern Los Angeles County as part of the Metrolink system. The AVL extends from Los Angeles Union Station in the City of Los Angeles and terminates in the City of Lancaster with stations in the cities and communities of Los Angeles, Glendale, Burbank, Sun Valley, Sylmar, San Fernando, Newhall, Santa Clarita, Acton, Palmdale, and Lancaster. The Antelope Valley Line Capacity and Service Improvements Program (Proposed Project) proposes expansion of commuter rail service along the entire AVL corridor as well as three capital improvements required to facilitate the proposed service increase. The three capital improvements would be located along the AVL corridor, one of which is within the City of Santa Clarita, one in City of Los Angeles, and the third would be located in the City of Lancaster at the Lancaster Terminal (see **Figure 1**). These capital improvement projects together with the Brighton Street to McGinley Avenue double-track project, which has been environmentally cleared separately as part of the Brighton to Roxford Double Track Project, will enable increased commuter rail services on the railroad corridor.

PROJECT INITIATION: The Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro), the Lead Agency, has initiated a Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Proposed Project pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The Draft EIR will be prepared in accordance with Sections 15120 through 15132 of the CEQA Guidelines. The purpose of this Notice of Preparation (NOP) is to notify all interested agencies, organizations, and individuals that Metro plans to prepare a Draft EIR, invite public participation in the EIR scoping process, and announce the public scoping meetings.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES: The Proposed Project would enable improved service frequency and reliability to the commuter rail service to meet the mobility needs of residents, employees, and visitors throughout the region. The AVL corridor is anticipated to experience strong population and employment growth over the next 20 years and solutions to realize the full potential of the AVL will be crucial to support this growth. Around 66% of the AVL corridor is single track, meaning that only one track is provided to operate trains in both directions. This limits the ability to run more frequent services and a regularized schedule, especially during the off peak and weekends. There are limited maintenance and storage facilities at Lancaster Terminal and therefore the operational

capacity and flexibility for commuter rail services on the AVL corridor are constrained. Objectives of the Proposed Project include:

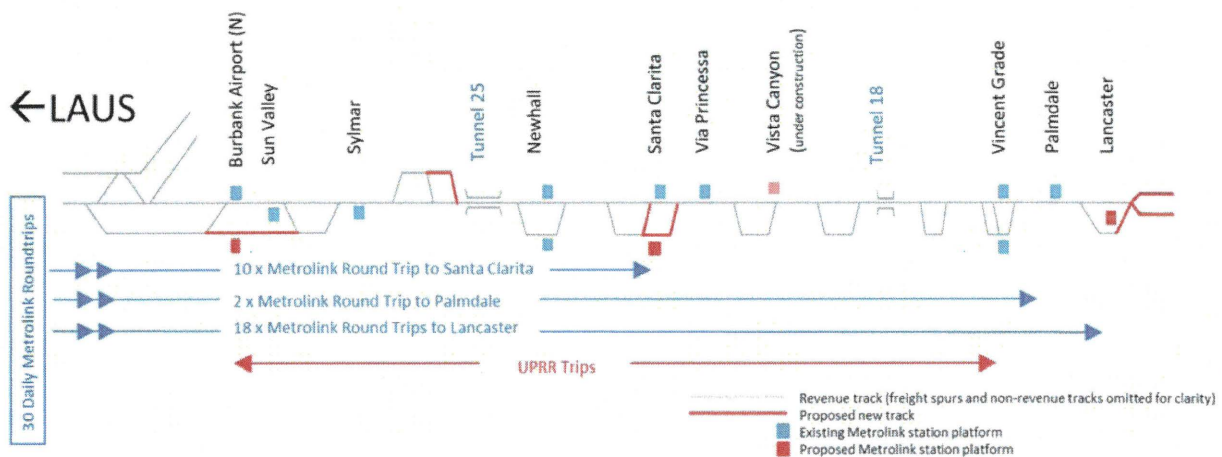
- Provide regular and more frequent commuter rail services to improve regional connectivity, and accessibility by enabling a 30-minute bi-directional passenger rail service to Santa Clarita Valley, and 60-minute bi-directional service to Lancaster Station along the AVL corridor.
- Improve passenger service reliability and efficiency on the AVL rail corridor.
- Provide necessary supporting infrastructure improvements to increase capacity and enhance operational flexibility and reliability along the AVL corridor.
- Support the vision and goals for rail service in the region consistent with the California State Rail Plan.

Figure 1: Proposed Project Overview



PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The AVL corridor to Santa Clarita is currently served by 15 weekday round trips. To meet forecasted ridership demands of up to 17,500 daily riders by 2028, more capacity on the AVL corridor will be required to meet the forecasted ridership and to provide riders with more regular and frequent peak and off-peak services. In addition to Brighton to Roxford Double Track Project that is already completed environmental review, the Proposed Project involves the construction of three other capital improvements which would provide the capacity required to allow commuter rail service to increase along the AVL to 30-minute bi-directional headways between Los Angeles Union Station and Santa Clarita Valley and up to 60 minute bi-directional headways to Lancaster Terminal by the year 2030 (See **Figure 2**).

Figure 2: Proposed Metrolink service on AVL corridor



The three capital improvements, shown in **Figure 1**, are described below, with two capital improvements having an option, which would provide flexibility for future implementation. Each capital improvement and their associated options will be assessed in the EIR:

- **Balboa Double Track Extension.** The Balboa double track extension would extend the existing double track approximately 6,300 feet north from Balboa Boulevard to Sierra Highway. This would provide operational capacity for Metrolink to schedule more regular services especially in the off-peak period. Subject to design, retaining structures will be considered to avoid encroachments outside of right-of-way (ROW).
- **Canyon Siding Extension.** The Canyon siding extension would add approximately 8,400 feet of new double track between Soledad Canyon Road to Golden Oak Road. This improvement would also provide a second station platform at the existing Santa Clarita Metrolink station which will enable Metrolink to run 30-minute bi-directional service between Los Angeles Union Station and Santa Clarita Valley. Subject to design, retaining structures will be considered to avoid encroachments outside of ROW.
 - **Option** – In addition to the new double track, a crossover would be constructed to the south of Santa Clarita station to facilitate turnback of Metrolink trains and improve operational reliability.
- **Lancaster Terminal Improvements.** The Lancaster terminal improvements would include expansion of the existing yard with two new 1,000-foot long train storage tracks, and a second station platform at the Lancaster station to provide Metrolink with more operational flexibility. The improvements also include double tracking the track section between W Avenue to

Jackman Street. The storage track design may require an operating easement within the Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) ROW subject to further design refinements.

- **Option** – Rather than constructing a second station platform, the existing side platform at Lancaster station would be retained to allow flexibility for future integration with regional rail plans.

The railroad capacity increases afforded by the Proposed Project and the separate Brighton to Roxford Double Track Project would enable additional passenger rail services (for example Metrolink services) to be run at a more regular timetable compared to the current timetable. As a result, an increase from 15 weekday round trips to 30 weekday round trips at regular 30-minute headways between Los Angeles Union Station and Santa Clarita Valley will be possible by the year 2030. For the Antelope Valley, an increase from 9 weekday round trips to 20 weekday round trips at regular 60-minute headways between Los Angeles Union Station and Lancaster will be possible.

POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS: The purpose of the Draft EIR is to disclose the impacts of the Project on the environment. The Draft EIR will address all environmental factors listed in Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines, including:

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

Project design features and mitigation measures to reduce potentially significant impacts during construction of the capital improvements and operations along the AVL corridor with the proposed service increase will be identified in the Draft EIR.

SCOPING MEETINGS: Virtual public scoping meetings to accept both digital and oral comments on the scope of the Draft EIR will be held on the following dates and times:

Thursday, October 15, 2020 6:00 PM to 7:30 PM Meeting Link: bit.ly/avloct15 Call-In Number: 883.548.0282 (Toll Free) Meeting ID: 945 8533 5887	Saturday, October 17, 2020 11:00 AM to 12:30 PM Meeting Link: bit.ly/avloct17 Call-In Number: 883.548.0282 (Toll Free) Meeting ID: 917 9041 8493
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The scope of the Draft EIR, including the goals and objectives, project area, project description, and the environmental impacts to be evaluated will be presented at the scoping meetings. Spanish and Armenian interpreters and/or Spanish/Armenian-speaking staff will be available at the scoping meetings. Spanish and Armenian translations of all meeting materials will also be provided. Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accommodations and other translation requests can be made by calling (213) 922-4844 at least 72 hours in advance of the meeting.

COMMENT DUE DATE: In addition to oral and written comments accepted at the scoping meetings, written comments on the scope of the Draft EIR will be accepted Thursday, October 1, 2020 through Saturday, October 31, 2020. Metro does not anticipate extending the scoping comment period. Therefore, written comments should be sent to Metro on or before Saturday, October 31, 2020 at the postal address or e-mail address below.

ADDRESS: Please send all written comments to Brian Balderrama, Senior Director, Metro, One Gateway Plaza, Mail Stop 99-17-2, Los Angeles, CA 90012, or via email to AVL@metro.net.

Date 10/1/2020

Signature Brian Balderrama

Title Senior Director, Program Management