

MEMORANDUM

NOTICE OF PREPARATION OF A DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

DATE: Thursday, April 15, 2021

TO: AGENCIES, ORGANIZATIONS, AND INTERESTED PARTIES

FROM: LOS ANGELES COUNTY METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY (METRO)
ONE GATEWAY PLAZA, LOS ANGELES, CA 90012
ATTN: ROGER MARTIN, MAILSTOP 99-22-6

SUBJECT: NOTICE OF PREPARATION (NOP) OF A DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

PROJECT TITLE: METRO CRENSHAW NORTHERN EXTENSION

PROJECT INITIATION

The Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) has initiated a Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for Crenshaw Northern Extension (the Project) pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Metro is the lead agency for the Project. The Draft EIR will be prepared in accordance with CEQA Public Resources Code (PRC) Section 21000 et seq. and the CEQA Guidelines (Section 15000 et seq.), as promulgated by the California Resources Agency and the Governor's Office of Planning and Research.

The Crenshaw Northern Extension is a proposed northern extension of the Metro Crenshaw/Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) light rail transit (LRT) line, currently under construction, from the Metro E Line (Expo) to the Metro D Line (Purple) and B Line (Red) heavy rail lines with an optional terminus station at the Hollywood Bowl. The alternatives under consideration are described in more detail in the following sections of this NOP and illustrated in Figure 1 through Figure 3.

The purpose of this Notice of Preparation (NOP) is to notify interested agencies and parties, local jurisdictions, community organizations, and interested residents (collectively, interested parties) of the preparation of the Draft EIR for the Project. With this NOP, Metro seeks to solicit comments as to the scope and content of the Draft EIR and potential environmental effects from the Project; invite public participation in the Draft EIR scoping process; and announce the public scoping meetings.

PROJECT LOCATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The Project Study Area is a 16-square-mile area encompassing the entire City of West Hollywood and the following neighborhoods in the City of Los Angeles (Figure 2):

- West Adams
- Jefferson Park
- Arlington Heights
- Koreatown
- Mid-City
- Miracle Mile/Mid-Wilshire
- Hancock Park
- Windsor Square
- Larchmont
- Carthay
- Beverly Grove
- Mid-City West/Fairfax District
- Hollywood
- Hollywood Hills

The Study Area includes a variety of land uses, including single-family and multi-family residential neighborhoods and dense commercial and retail corridors. From the Metro E Line (Expo) in the south to Hollywood in the north, the character of the communities changes dramatically. The southern portion of the project area (south of Wilshire Boulevard) consists of low-rise but fairly dense housing with small-scale commercial uses, while the northern portion of the project area (north of Wilshire Boulevard) is characterized by regional activity centers, dense retail development, hotels, and significant employment centers and tourist attractions, as well as high-density, multi-family residential development. Some of the major regional activity and employment centers within the Study Area include the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), the Original Farmers Market, the Grove, Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, the Beverly Center, West Hollywood Rainbow District, Hollywood Walk of Fame, and the Hollywood Bowl.

In addition, a maintenance and storage facility (MSF) is proposed in the immediate vicinity of the Southwestern Yard Maintenance Facility near LAX as shown in Figure 3. The MSF would be located either in the City of Los Angeles or in the City of Inglewood.

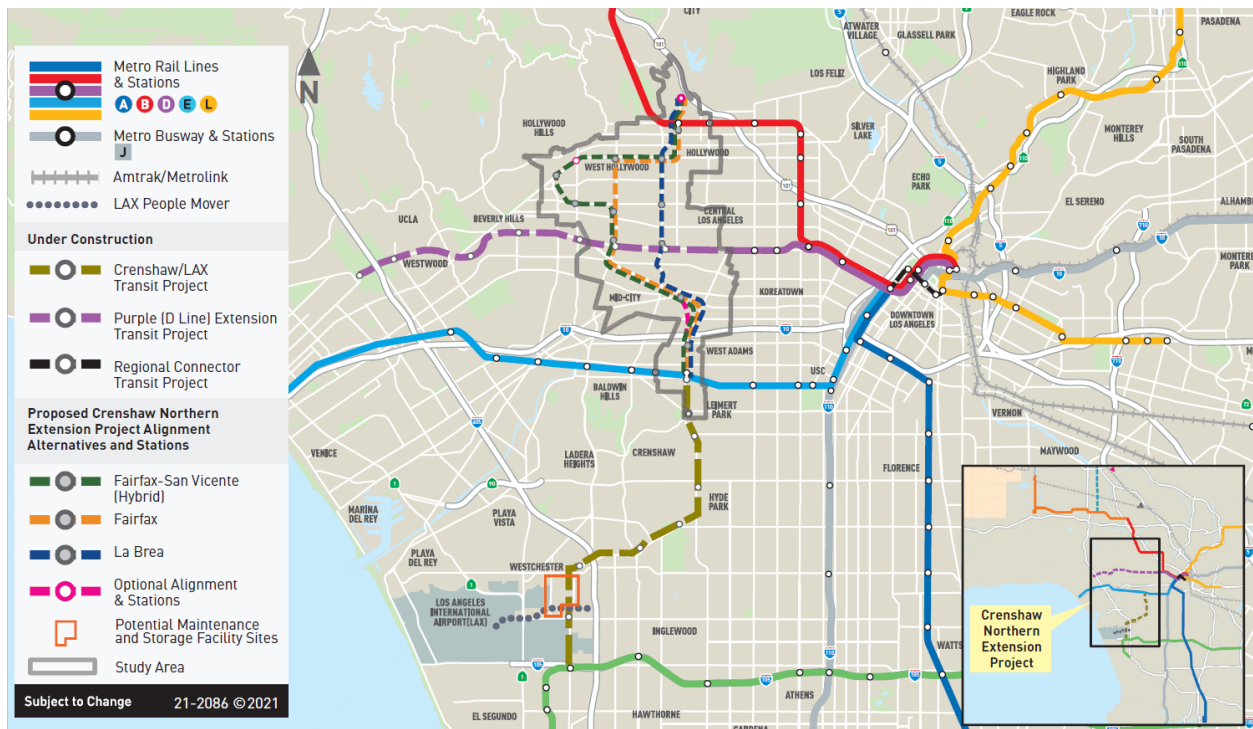


Figure 1 Project Location



Figure 2 Project Alignment Alternatives and Stations

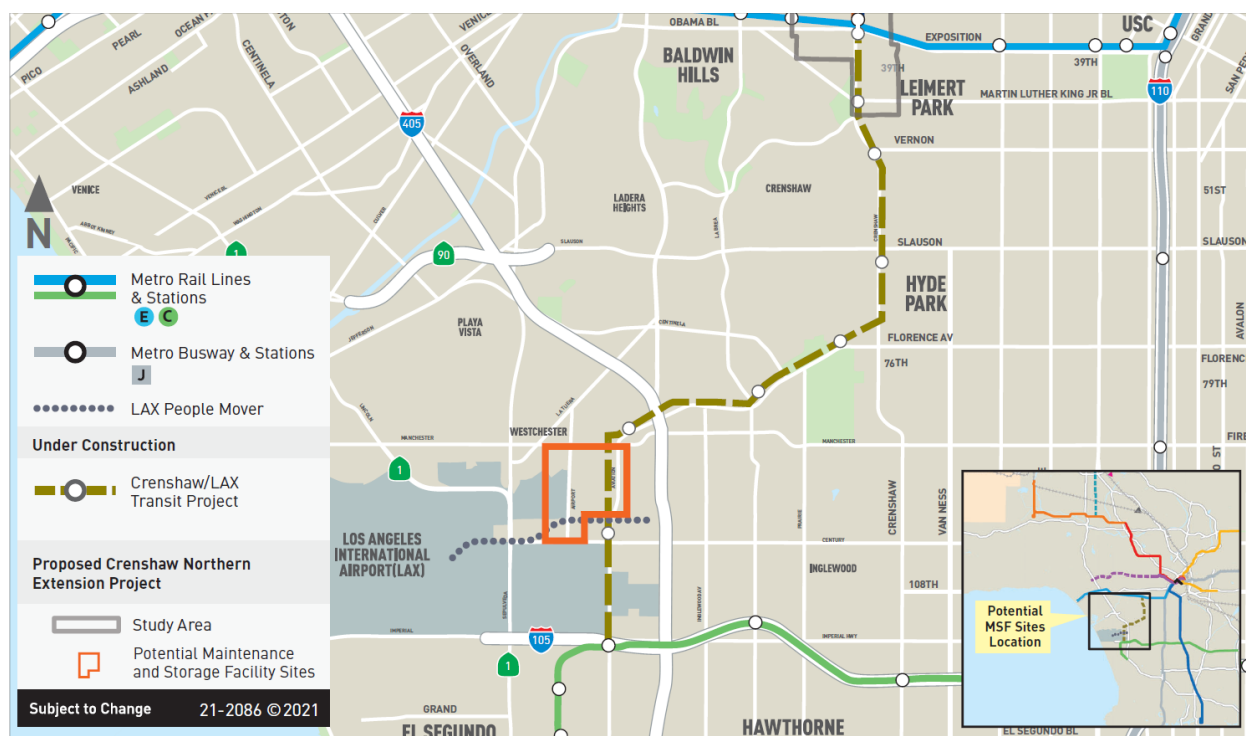


Figure 3 Area of MSF Location

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Over the past decade, Metro has documented the clear need for a north-south rail line in the Central Los Angeles vicinity to connect east-west rail lines and studied the feasibility of various alignments and modes. In 2009, Metro prepared the *Wilshire/La Brea LRT Extension Feasibility Study*, which considered alignments along La Brea Avenue, Fairfax Avenue, La Cienega Boulevard, and San Vicente Boulevard. The San Vicente and La Cienega alignments were further studied in the *Westside Subway Extension Alternatives Analysis and Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Report (2010)* as a potential branch of the Purple Line Extension but were ultimately dropped from further consideration due to funding constraints at the time.

In 2016, Metro initiated an Alternatives Analysis Study to further consider the feasibility of extending the Crenshaw/LAX LRT Line (currently under construction) to the north. In 2018, Metro published the Crenshaw Northern Extension Feasibility/Alternatives Analysis Study, which presented the relative performance and cost of five alternatives—Vermont, La Brea, Fairfax, La Cienega, and San Vicente. To further refine the alternatives, Metro prepared the Crenshaw Northern Extension Advanced Alternatives Analysis Study (2020) with the intent to share information with and garner information from the public. Two rounds of outreach meetings were conducted in spring and fall 2019. Input received throughout this process informed refinements to project alternatives and recommended three alternatives which were suggested for further study: Fairfax–San Vicente (Hybrid), Fairfax, and La Brea Alternative (Figure 1 Project Location). In 2020, the Metro Board of Directors (Metro Board) provided direction to prepare the Draft EIR for the Project for the three recommended alternatives.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The Project objectives are:

- Close a regional transit network gap.
- Increase the efficiency, reliability, and convenience of transit trips by providing faster, more direct service, in turn creating more connections and mobility options.
- Provide an alternative to congested roadways.
- Cultivate transit-friendly environment; maximize the potential for “smart” population and job growth.
- Improve mobility and access for transit-dependent residents.

ALTERNATIVES

As approved by the Metro Board, the Crenshaw Northern Extension Draft EIR will consider three alignment alternatives (Figure 1 Project Location):

- Fairfax–San Vicente (Hybrid)
- Fairfax
- La Brea

All three alternatives would extend the Crenshaw/LAX line north from the existing Metro E Line (Expo) Crenshaw/Expo Station to the Metro D Line (Purple) and the Metro B Line (Red) at the Hollywood/Highland Station. The alternatives would primarily operate underground and potentially include an alternate northern terminus station at the Hollywood Bowl. The Project may be constructed in one or more phases. The design of each alignment and station locations will be further refined following the Draft EIR scoping process.

Fairfax-San Vicente (Hybrid)

The Fairfax-San Vicente (Hybrid) alternative would travel north from the existing Metro E Line (Expo) Crenshaw/Expo Station before heading northwest on San Vicente Boulevard below), with a connection to the future Metro D Line (Purple) Wilshire/Fairfax Station. It would continue north on Fairfax Avenue before turning west along Beverly Boulevard to rejoin San Vicente Boulevard. The alignment would then continue east on Santa Monica Boulevard, connecting to the Metro B Line (Red) at the Hollywood/Highland Station with an optional terminus station at the Hollywood Bowl. The Fairfax-San Vicente (Hybrid) alternative would be entirely underground (with the option of being aerial/at-grade along San Vicente Boulevard) and would include the following stations:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| ▪ Expo/Crenshaw | ▪ San Vicente/Santa Monica |
| ▪ Crenshaw/Adams | ▪ La Cienega/Santa Monica (optional) |
| ▪ Midtown Crossing | ▪ Fairfax/Santa Monica |
| ▪ Wilshire/Fairfax | ▪ La Brea/Santa Monica |
| ▪ Fairfax/3 rd /Beverly | ▪ Hollywood/Highland |
| ▪ La Cienega/Beverly | ▪ Hollywood Bowl (optional) |

Fairfax

The Fairfax alternative would travel north from the existing Metro E Line (Expo) Crenshaw/Expo Station before heading northwest on San Vicente Boulevard and north on Fairfax Avenue, where it would connect with the future Metro D Line (Purple) Wilshire/Fairfax Station. It would continue north on Fairfax Avenue and turn east on Santa Monica Boulevard, connecting to the Metro B Line (Red) at the Hollywood/Highland Station with an optional terminus station at the Hollywood Bowl. The Fairfax alternative would be entirely underground (with the option of being aerial/at-grade along San Vicente Boulevard) and would include the following stations:

- Expo/Crenshaw
- Crenshaw/Adams
- Midtown Crossing
- Wilshire/Fairfax
- Fairfax/3rd/Beverly
- Fairfax/Santa Monica
- La Brea/Santa Monica
- Hollywood/Highland
- Hollywood Bowl (optional)

La Brea

The La Brea alternative would travel north from the existing Metro E Line (Expo) Crenshaw/Expo Station before heading northwest on San Vicente Boulevard and north on La Brea Avenue, where it would connect with the future Metro D Line (Purple) Wilshire/La Brea Station. From there, it would continue north on La Brea Avenue to connect with the Metro B Line (Red) at the Hollywood/Highland Station with an optional terminus station at the Hollywood Bowl. The La Brea alternative would be entirely underground and would include the following stations:

- Expo/Crenshaw
- Crenshaw/Adams
- Midtown Crossing
- Wilshire/La Brea
- La Brea/Beverly
- La Brea/Santa Monica
- Hollywood/Highland
- Hollywood Bowl (optional)

Maintenance and Storage Facility

A maintenance and storage facility (MSF) would be constructed as a stand-alone facility capable of supporting full-service maintenance of the vehicles. The MSF would be located in the immediate vicinity of the Southwestern Yard Maintenance Facility near LAX.

ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

The purpose of the EIR process is to disclose, in a public setting, the effects of the proposed project and its alternatives on the physical, human, and natural environment. Metro will evaluate all significant environmental impacts of the construction and operation of the Project. Key CEQA environmental factors to be addressed include:

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- Aesthetics
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Climate Change and Greenhouse Gases
- Communities, Population and Housing
- Construction Impacts
- Cultural Resources (Historic, Archeological, and Paleontological)
- Cumulative Impacts
- Energy and Utilities/Service Systems
- Geology and Soils
- Growth Inducing Impacts
- Hazards/Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use and Planning
- Noise and Vibration
- Parks and Recreation
- Public Services/Wildfire
- Transportation
- Tribal Cultural Resources

Project design features and mitigation measures to reduce potentially significant impacts during construction and operation will be identified in the Draft EIR.

VIRTUAL SCOPING MEETINGS

As part of the EIR scoping process, project information will be made available to the public online through a virtual scoping meeting. The purpose of the virtual scoping meeting is to provide an overview of the proposed Project, an overview of the CEQA process, and the project timeline for environmental review period. Public scoping meetings to accept both written and oral comments on the scope of the Draft EIR will be held on the following dates and times:

- Thursday, April 29, 2021: 11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.
Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87500507019>
Meeting ID: 875 0050 7019
- Thursday, May 6, 2021: 6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.
Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82996680178>
Meeting ID: 829 9668 0178
- Saturday, May 8, 2021: 10:00 a.m. – noon
Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84880363069>
Meeting ID: 848 8036 3069

The scope of the Draft EIR, including the goals and objectives, Project area and description, and the potential environmental impacts to be evaluated will be presented at the public scoping meetings. Metro

invites all interested individuals and organizations, public agencies, and Native American Tribes to participate and comment. (Participants will be able to join the meetings online or call in and will have the opportunity to provide public comment.) Spanish and Russian translation and Spanish-speaking and Russian-speaking staff will be provided at all scoping meetings. Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accommodations and other translations are available by calling (323) 466-3876 or California Relay at 711 at least 72 hours in advance of the meeting. For those unable to attend the meetings, a video recording of the formal presentation will be made available on the project website within one week of the conclusion of the meeting series. The NOP and a fact sheet will also be available in Spanish and Russian at Metro's website. For this and additional project information, please visit www.metro.net/crenshawnorth.

COMMENT DUE DATE

Written comments on the scope of the Draft EIR, including the proposed Project's objectives, Project Study Area and description, the alternatives to be considered, potential impacts to be evaluated, and the methodologies to be used in the evaluations, will be accepted during the comment period beginning on April 15, 2021 through May 28, 2021. Comments will be accepted at the public scoping meetings and written or electronic (email) comments may be sent to Metro on or before May 28, 2021 at the address below.

ADDRESS

Written or electronic (email) comments may be sent to the following addresses: Roger Martin, Project Manager, Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority, One Gateway Plaza, Mail Stop 99-22-6, Los Angeles, CA 90012, or via email at crenshawnorth@metro.net.