

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents background and introductory information for the proposed Coastal Transportation Corridor Specific Plan (CTCSP) and West Los Angeles Transportation Improvement and Mitigation Specific Plan (WLA TIMP) Specific Plans Amendment Project (hereafter referred to as the “Proposed Project”) in the western portion of the City of Los Angeles (the “Westside”).

Approval of the specific plan amendments would require approval from the City of Los Angeles (City). Prior to that approval, the City Council must consider the Proposed Project’s environmental effects, which are identified in this Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR). As further described below, the EIR serves to inform decision-makers and the public about the environmental effects of the Proposed Project, and has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (California Public Resources Code [PRC] Section 21000 et seq.), the Guidelines for Implementation of the California Environmental Quality Act of 1970 (State CEQA Guidelines) (14 California Code of Regulations [CCR] Section 15000 et seq.), and the City of Los Angeles Environmental Quality Act Guidelines. The City is the lead agency responsible for CEQA review of the Proposed Project.

1.1 Purpose of the EIR

The purpose of an EIR is to inform the decision-makers, regulatory agencies, and the public about the potentially significant physical impacts of a proposed project prior to consideration of project approval. CEQA was enacted by the California Legislature in 1970 and requires public agency decision-makers to consider and document the environmental effects of their actions, whenever possible, to avoid adverse effects to the environment. When a state or local agency determines that a proposed project has the potential to significantly affect the environment, an EIR is prepared. In addition, an EIR identifies alternatives that can reduce the proposed project’s significant effects while achieving the project objectives, and indicates the manner in which a proposed project’s significant effects can be mitigated or avoided. A public agency must mitigate or avoid significant environmental impacts of projects it carries out or approves whenever feasible. In instances where significant impacts cannot be avoided or mitigated, the project could nonetheless be carried out or approved if the approving agency finds that economic, legal, social, technological, sustainable, or other benefits outweigh the unavoidable significant environmental effects.

1.2 Project Overview

The Proposed Project consists of amendments to the CTCSP and WLA TIMP. The amendments include updates to the lists of transportation improvements and mitigation measures to be funded, in part, by the impact fees collected from new development; an update to the Transportation Impact Assessment (TIA) fee program, including revisions to the fees, trip generation rates, exemptions, in-lieu credits, and affordable housing credits; and a new transit-oriented development (TOD) credit. The updated project lists include the following categories of transportation improvements: transit, bicycle and pedestrian, roadway & intelligent transportation systems (ITS), and trip reduction programs. Other proposed changes include administrative amendments and minor revisions that are consistent with recent California State legislation, transportation policies in the City’s General Plan Elements, and City

of Los Angeles Department of Transportation's (LADOT) Traffic Study Policies and Procedures, and are in line with current best planning practices.

1.3 Lead, Responsible and Trustee Agencies

The lead agency is the public agency that has the principal responsibility for carrying out or approving a project that may have a significant effect upon the environment (PRC Section 21067). The City of Los Angeles has the primary responsibility for approving the project as a whole and is the appropriate public agency to act as lead agency (State CEQA Guidelines Sections 15051 and 15367), including evaluating potential impacts and identifying mitigation measures under state CEQA laws. The EIR reflects the independent judgment of the City regarding the potential environmental impacts of the Proposed Project, the level of significance of the impacts before and after mitigation, and the mitigation measures proposed to reduce impacts.

This EIR has been prepared by the City of Los Angeles Department of City Planning (DCP), in conjunction with the LADOT. The contact person for the City of Los Angeles DCP is:

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1.4 Scope and Content of the Draft EIR

The scope of the Draft EIR was established based on the Notice of Preparation (NOP) prepared and circulated pursuant to CEQA, and responses received during the review period. The NOP was published on May 22, 2014, and is included in Appendix C, *Notice of Preparation/Scoping*, of this Draft EIR. The review period, originally lasting 30 days from May 22, 2014 to June 23, 2014, was later extended by an additional 30 days to July 23, 2014. Scoping meetings were held on June 5, 2014, and June 9, 2014 to receive community input on the Proposed Project and the scope of the Draft EIR, as well as give members of the community an update to the Westside Mobility Plan. A total of 32 comment letters were received via mail, electronic mail, and comment forms submitted at the scoping meetings. Copies of the comment letters are provided in Appendix C, *Notice of Preparation/Scoping*. The Draft EIR responds to environmental issues raised during the scoping process.

In the NOP, provided in Appendix C, *Notice of Preparation/Scoping*, the City determined, pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15060(d), that the Proposed Project would have no impacts or impacts that would be less than significant on the following environmental topics: aesthetics, agricultural and forestry resources, cultural resources, geology and soils, hazards and hazardous materials, hydrology and water quality, mineral resources, population and housing, public services, recreation, and utilities and service systems. As the Proposed Project would not result in any significant impacts to these resource areas, they are not evaluated further in this Draft EIR in accordance with State CEQA Guidelines Sections 15063(c)(3)(A) and 15128.

Based on the findings of the NOP, the following environmental topics are evaluated in this Draft EIR:

- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Land Use and Planning
- Noise and Vibration
- Transportation

1.5 EIR Organization

The Draft EIR is organized as follows:

Chapter 1 – Introduction: This introduction describes the purpose and focus of the EIR, discusses the organization of the document, provides information regarding the availability of the Draft EIR and methods for providing comments, and identifies potential areas of controversy and issues to be resolved.

Chapter 2 – Executive Summary: This chapter contains a summary of the Proposed Project and allows the reader to easily reference the analysis of potentially significant impacts, proposed mitigation measures, and residual environmental impacts after mitigation. In addition, alternatives to the project that would reduce or avoid significant effects on the environment are summarized.

Chapter 3 – Project Description: The project description discusses the project background and location, identifies the project objectives, includes a description of the Proposed Project components, and summarizes related plans and programs.

Chapter 4 – Environmental Impacts: The introductory portion of Chapter 4 describes the analytical framework for the environmental review of the Proposed Project. The remainder of this chapter includes a detailed analysis of the environmental impacts of the project on air quality, biological resources, greenhouse gas emissions, land use and planning, noise and vibration, and transportation. Within each environmental topic section, discussion is provided of the setting (existing conditions and regulatory framework), impact assessment methodology, thresholds of significance, environmental impacts that could result from the Proposed Project, recommended mitigation measures that would eliminate or reduce the identified significant impacts, and the significance of the impact following mitigation.

Chapter 5 – Other CEQA Considerations: This chapter provides an assessment of cumulative impacts; evaluates growth-inducing impacts; and identifies significant irreversible environmental changes that would result from project implementation, significant environmental effects that cannot be avoided, and environmental effects of the Proposed Project found not to be significant.

Chapter 6 – Alternatives: This chapter evaluates a range of alternatives to the Proposed Project. It describes impacts that would result from each of the alternatives, compares the significant environmental impacts of the Proposed Project and project alternatives, and identifies the environmentally superior alternative. It also identifies alternatives initially considered but not carried forward for detailed review.

Chapter 7 – References and List of Acronyms: This chapter identifies the materials and documents referenced in this Draft EIR and provides definitions for acronyms and abbreviations used in the document.

Chapter 8 – List of Preparers: This chapter lists the individuals involved in preparing this Draft EIR.

Appendices: The NOP, as well as supporting background documents and technical information for the impact analyses, are presented in the Appendices.

1.6 Availability of the Draft EIR

The City solicits comments regarding environmental issues associated with project implementation from all interested parties requesting notice, responsible agencies, agencies with jurisdiction by law, trustee agencies, and other involved agencies in accordance with Section 15087 of the State CEQA Guidelines. The intent of the public review process is to provide the public and public agencies with the opportunity to comment on environmental issues associated with project implementation.

During the 60-day public review period, which begins on January 7, 2016, and ends on March 7, 2016, the Draft EIR will be available for general public review at the following locations:

City Hall

200 North Spring Street
Los Angeles, California 90012

Palms-Rancho Park Branch Library

2920 Overland Ave
Los Angeles, California 90064

Central Library

630 West 5th Street
Los Angeles, California 90071

Mar Vista Branch Library

12006 Venice Blvd
Los Angeles, California 90066

West Los Angeles Regional Library

11360 Santa Monica Boulevard
Los Angeles, California 90025

Westchester-Loyola Village Branch

7114 W Manchester Ave
Los Angeles, California 90045

Additionally, the EIR can be reviewed at, or downloaded from, the Department of City Planning's website: <http://planning.lacity.org/> (click on "Environmental" and then "Draft Environmental Impact Reports"). The Draft EIR can also be purchased on CD-ROM for \$7.50 per copy. Contact Conni Pallini-Tipton, AICP, Senior City Planner, at (213) 978-1179 or conni.pallini-tipton@lacity.org for purchase.

Please send your written/typed comments (including a name, telephone number, and contact information) on the Draft EIR to the following:

City of Los Angeles, Department of City Planning
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Because of time limits mandated by state law, written comments must be provided to the City at the earliest possible date, but no later than 5:00 p.m. on March 7, 2016.

Upon completion of the public review period, written responses to all comments on environmental issues raised by commenters will be prepared and incorporated into the Final EIR. These comments,

and their responses, will be included in the Final EIR for consideration by the City, as well as other public decision-makers.

1.7 Areas of Controversy/Issues to be Resolved

In accordance with Section 15123 of the State CEQA Guidelines, potential areas of controversy in the context of CEQA include environmental issue areas of concern known to the lead agency, including issues raised by agencies and members of the public. Issues to be resolved by the City's decision-makers include those environmental issue areas where the potential for an unavoidable and significant impact has been identified, which must be weighed against environmental benefits of the project, or where key decisions remain, such as the selection among alternatives and/or incorporation of alternative mitigation approaches.

For the Proposed Project, there is general agreement that mobility on the Westside is in need of improvement. Environmental issues of concern raised during the scoping process focused on aspects of transportation and traffic, including circulation, vehicle capacity, and congestion. A detailed analysis of transportation and traffic was conducted as part of this EIR. Results of this analysis are presented in Section 4.6, *Transportation*. Differing opinions were offered regarding the potential for changes in fees to affect future land use development, particularly the development of affordable housing. Potential impacts of the Proposed Project on land use, including potential impacts on the development of affordable housing, are evaluated in Section 4.4, *Land Use and Planning*. Other environmental issues of concern raised during scoping include safety (addressed in Section 4.6, *Transportation*), air quality (addressed in Section 4.1, *Air Quality*), and greenhouse gas emissions (addressed in Section 4.3, *Greenhouse Gas Emissions*).

Additional details related to areas of known controversy are provided in the comments letters on the NOP contained in Appendix C, *Notice of Preparation/Scoping*.

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