

Chapter 5

Comments and Coordination

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5.1 Introduction

The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) NEPA Regulations (40 CFR Part 1500 *et seq.*) and the State CEQA Guidelines (14 CCR, Sections 15082-15083) recommend that federal, state, and local lead agencies use a public scoping process to help identify the various issues to be addressed in the environmental document. Scoping allows public agencies and the general public to learn about the proposed project and to provide suggestions regarding alternatives and the types of impacts to be evaluated.

The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), authorizing U.S. highway and transit programs, was signed into law on August 10, 2005. Numerous provisions of the law are aimed at improving the environmental review process for transportation projects. One of the key requirements of SAFETEA-LU related to public involvement is that the lead agency must provide the “opportunity for involvement” to participating agencies and the public in developing the purpose and need and the range of alternatives to be considered for a proposed project.

Public involvement, agency coordination, and Native American tribal coordination were carried out during the development process of the proposed project by means of formal scoping meetings, participating agency coordination meetings, community meetings, potentially affected property owner meetings, political representative meetings, notification letters, and the creation and maintenance of a project Web site.

Ongoing coordination meetings with affected business owners and groups, government agencies, railroads, and utility companies are being conducted to update interested parties on the status of the proposed project, obtain public and agency input, and resolve issues. Letters describing the proposed project and inviting comment were sent to Native American groups and other individuals known to have an interest in the proposed project.

This chapter summarizes the results of the City of Los Angeles and Caltrans’ efforts to fully identify, address, and resolve project-related issues through early and continuing public involvement and agency coordination. A Public Outreach Report was compiled to provide a record of all the meetings held and the comments received.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁷ Diverse Strategies for Organizing, 2008. Public Outreach Report – Scoping Phase for 6th Street Viaduct Seismic Improvement Project. September.

5.2 Pre-Scoping Activities

Several public outreach activities were conducted prior to the formal CEQA/NEPA scoping process to disseminate information about the viaduct improvement proposal and the actions undertaken by the City and Caltrans.

5.2.1 Initial Project Information Meetings

In October 2006, prior to commencement of the formal environmental review process, the Project Development Team (PDT) initiated widespread notification of government agencies and the public about proposed project information meetings. Notices were mailed to interested agencies and residents within a 2,000-ft radius of the viaduct; published in newspapers (the *Los Angeles Times* and *La Opinion*); and hand-delivered to residents and property owners in the immediate vicinity of the viaduct. Two proposed project information meetings were held – one on January 23, 2007, at the Artshare Los Angeles (west side of the Los Angeles River) and one on January 25, 2007, at St. Isabel Church (east side of the Los Angeles River). Approximately 80 people attended the meetings, listened to the proposed project information presentation, asked questions, and provided suggestions.

Several other proposed project information meetings were conducted upon request. These meetings were held with the Boyle Heights Neighborhood Council (BHNC) Land Use Committee (February 13, 2007), the BHNC Quadrant 4 (March 12, 2007), the Downtown Los Angeles Neighborhood Council (March 13, 2007), the BHNC Quadrant 3 (May 9, 2007), the Boyle Heights Resident Homeowner Association (May 19, 2007), and the Downtown Arts District Business Improvement District (October 3, 2007).

5.2.2 Community Advisory Committee Formation

Following the proposed project information meetings, a Community Advisory Committee (CAC) was formed. Twenty-five (25) potential members were identified by PDT members based on their representation of affected neighborhoods, businesses and various other stakeholders, and their willingness to serve as conduits between the project design team and their constituents. As of March 2008, six CAC meetings were conducted, as summarized below:

- CAC Meeting No. 1 was held March 29, 2007, at Benjamin Franklin Library, 2200 E. 1st Street. Seventeen (17) members attended the meeting. The PDT presented project information to CAC members and informed them about the objective of the CAC meetings and the role of its members. All members were provided the opportunity to ask questions related to the proposed project and express their concerns.

- CAC Meeting No. 2 took place May 10, 2007, at the Boyle Heights Youth Technology Center, 1600 E. 4th Street. Fifteen (15) members and 2 guests attended the meeting. The members were divided into 5 small groups to discuss the issues and opportunities associated with the proposed project.
- CAC Meeting No. 3 took place June 28, 2007, at the Boyle Heights Youth Technology Center, 1600 E. 4th Street. Thirteen (13) members attended the meeting. The objective of this meeting was to provide CAC members with an opportunity to participate in development of the purpose and need statement for use as a guide in proposed project alternative development and in the environmental document preparation.
- CAC Meeting No. 4 took place August 28, 2007, at the Boyle Heights Youth Technology Center, 1600 E. 4th Street. Seventeen (17) members attended the meeting. The objective of this meeting was to provide CAC members with an opportunity to view possible replacement bridge types. CAC members also participated in a workshop for expressing their personal preferences among numerous potential bridge types, as input for the project team.
- CAC Meeting No. 5 took place November 8, 2007, at the Boyle Heights Youth Technology Center, 1600 E. 4th Street. Eighteen (18) members attended the meeting. The objective of this meeting was to update CAC members on the screening of replacement bridge types and alignments, retrofit technologies, and status of the environmental review process.
- CAC Meeting No. 6 took place March 26, 2008, at the 6th Street Viaduct site. Fifteen (15) CAC members participated in the site tour. They had an opportunity to see first-hand the cracks in structural concrete elements as a result of the alkali silica reaction (ASR) and the constraints affecting project implementation.
- CAC Meeting No. 7 took place October 28, 2008, at the Boyle Heights Youth Technology Center, 1600 E. 4th Street. Eleven (11) members attended the meeting. The objective of this meeting was to update CAC members on the current project status and present a status update of the environmental analysis process. Most of the CAC members present at the meeting were in support of the replacement alternative with the modern bridge type.
- CAC Meeting No. 8 took place February 12, 2009, at the Boyle Heights Youth Technology Center, 1600 E. 4th Street. Fifty (50) people were present at the meeting. Representatives of Council District 14, the President of the City of Los Angeles Board of Public Works, and the City of Los Angeles City Engineer participated in the meeting. The objective of this meeting was to brief the CAC members on the Administrative Draft EIR/EIS that was under review by Caltrans Headquarters and Legal Office. A few CAC members were vocal about the

bridge type (cable-supported concept) recommended by the PDT. The team explained to the CAC that no final decision had been made regarding project alternatives, and that the public would have opportunities to provide input about the proposed project alternatives during the circulation and public hearing for the Draft EIR/EIS.

- CAC Meeting No. 9 took place on April 7, 2009, at the Boyle Heights Senior Center, 2839 E. 3rd Street, Los Angeles. Approximately forty (40) people were present at the meeting. The Council member for Council District 14 and the City Engineer participated in the meeting. The objective of the meeting was to brief the members about modifications made to the Draft EIR/EIS based on feedback received during the previous meeting. In addition, the design team solicited input from members regarding architectural elements that should be considered as part of the various replacement bridge types. The City displayed renderings of 7 bridge types for review and feedback from the members. The team explained that the members and the public will have opportunities to provide feedback related to the bridge type during the public review process. The team informed the members that the Draft EIR/EIS will not include a staff-recommended bridge type.

Additional CAC meetings will be held as the proposed project proceeds to keep the public informed of project progress and to allow them to provide input at key milestones.

5.3 Scoping Process

The scoping process was initiated by widespread notification of government agencies and the public via publication of a Notice of Intent (NOI) and a Notice of Preparation (NOP) announcing initiation of the Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS). The NOI was published in the *Federal Register* (Volume 72, Number 169) on August 31, 2007, in accordance with NEPA. The NOP was posted on the City of Los Angeles Web site¹¹⁸, the project's public Web site¹¹⁹, and with the Los Angeles County Clerk/Recorder throughout the public review period (July 23, 2007, to September 13, 2007), in accordance with CEQA. Other notification activities included placement of public notices in newspapers of general circulation; mailing the NOP to potentially affected government agencies, residents, and businesses; and translation of public documents from English to Spanish. Other project information was also posted on the public Web site indicated above.

¹¹⁸ http://eng.lacity.org/techdocs/emg/Environmental_Review_Documents.htm

¹¹⁹ http://www.la6thstreetviaduct.org/TheProject/documents/NOP_Public.pdf

5.3.1 Mailings

The NOP was mailed to government agencies, business groups, neighborhood associations, property owners, and other stakeholders on July 23, 2007. These groups were invited to scoping meetings held on August 14 and 16, 2007.

A scoping meeting invitation, which gave details about the proposed project and announced the times and locations of the public scoping meetings, was mailed to more than 1,500 occupants within a 2,000-ft radius of the proposed project corridor.

5.3.2 Public Noticing

Advertisements announcing the scoping meetings were placed in the *Los Angeles Times* and *La Opinion*. The *Los Angeles Times* is circulated throughout the county and read by millions of subscribers. *La Opinion* is circulated to the Latino community of Los Angeles.

The notices were published in English and Spanish to accommodate the diversity of the affected communities. An English advertisement was placed in the *Los Angeles Times* on July 27, 2007, and a Spanish advertisement was placed in *La Opinion* on July 27, 2007.

5.3.3 Scoping Meetings

Two separate scoping meetings were held on August 24, 2007; one was for government and public agencies and the other for the general public. The meetings were held at the Artshare Los Angeles, which is located at 326 S. Hewitt Street in Los Angeles on the west side of the Los Angeles River. The agency meeting took place from 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., and the general public meeting took place from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. Another scoping meeting was held on August 26, 2007, at the Boyle Heights Youth Technology Center, which is located at 1600 E. 4th Street on the east side of the river and within the Boyle Heights community.

The agenda for these meetings included an introduction of the proposed project team members, a PowerPoint presentation on the proposed project, and a question and answer period. Attendees also participated in an open house. Display boards illustrating the proposed project limits and alternatives were placed throughout the room for attendees to view and interact with project representatives. The meetings were staffed by individuals representing the City of Los Angeles and the project consultant team. At both public meetings, Spanish interpreters were available to accommodate any non-English speakers.

5.3.4 Participating Agency Coordination

Section 6002 of SAFETEA-LU requires that all transportation projects requiring an EIS, for which the original NOI was published in the *Federal Register* after August 10, 2005, must have a plan established for coordinating public and agency participation and comment during the environmental review process. It is the responsibility of the lead agencies to develop the coordination plan to facilitate and document the interaction between the lead agencies and participating and cooperating agencies and the public.

As of July 1, 2007, Caltrans assumed FHWA's authority and responsibility for compliance with NEPA and other environmental laws. The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between FHWA and Caltrans concerning the State of California's Participation in the Surface Transportation Project Delivery Pilot Program allows Caltrans to serve as the federal lead agency on this project.

As part of the Scoping Process and in accordance with the Section 6002 requirement, Caltrans prepared a Coordination Plan for this proposed project (see Appendix J). A summary of the coordination activities is provided below:

5.3.4.1 Invitation to Become Coordination/Participating Agencies

Cooperating agencies are the federal agencies, other than the federal lead agency, which have jurisdiction by law or special expertise with respect to any environmental impact involved in a proposed project or project alternative. Cooperating agencies are also participating agencies. No cooperating agencies were identified for this project.

Participating agencies are federal, state, regional, or local agencies that may have an interest in the project. A list of pertinent federal, state, and local agencies was developed. A letter of invitation to participate in the project was sent on July 26, 2007, to agencies likely to have an interest. The rest of the agencies on the list received notification regarding the project through the NOI and NOP. Nine agencies responded to the letter of invitation, as shown in Table 5-1.

**Table 5-1
Participating Agency List**

Participating Agencies	Contact Person/Title	Phone/E-mail/Address
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	Theodore Masigat Engineering Division, Operations, Los Angeles District	(213) 452-3393 theodore.j.masigat@usace.army.mil 915 Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA 90017
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	Phuong Trinh Regulatory Division, Los Angeles District	(213) 452-3372 Phuong.h.trinh@usace.army.mil 915 Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA 90017
*U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	Gabe Brooks Right-of-Way Division, Los Angeles District	915 Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA 90017

**Table 5-1
Participating Agency List**

Participating Agencies	Contact Person/Title	Phone/E-mail/Address
*U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	Ken Wong Permits, Los Angeles District	915 Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA 90017
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency	Susan Sturges Environmental Review Office Community and Ecosystems Division	(415) 947-4188 sturges.susan@epa.gov 75 Hawthorne Street, San Francisco, CA 94105
Advisory Council on Historic Preservation	Carol Legard Federal Highway Liaison Office of Federal Agency Programs	(202) 606-8522 clegard@achp.gov 1100 Pennsylvania Avenue NW Suite 809 Old Post Office Building Washington, DC 20004
*U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Los Angeles Field Office	William Vasquez CPD Field Office Director	611 West 6 th Street, Suite 800 Los Angeles, CA 90017
*U.S. Department of Commerce	Environmental Review Section	14 th and Constitution NW, Room 6800 Washington, DC 20230
U.S. Department of Homeland Security Federal Emergency Management Agency	Gregor Blackburn, CFM, Branch Chief Floodplain Management and Insurance Branch	(510) 627-7190 1111 Broadway, Suite 1200, Oakland, CA 94607-4052
*U.S. Department of Energy	Environmental Review Section	1000 Independence Avenue SW 4G-064 Washington, DC 20585
*Federal Railroad Administration Office of Railroad Development	David Valenstein	400 Seventh Street SW MS20 Washington, DC 20590
City of Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation	David Attaway Environmental Supervisor	(213) 928-9130 4155 S. Saint Louis Street, Los Angeles, CA 90033
City of Los Angeles Bureau of Engineering Real Estate Group	Frank Viramontes Chief Real Estate Officer II	(213) 485-5447 frank.viramontes@lacity.org Department of Public Works, Bureau of Engineering Real Estate Division 600 S. Spring Street, 7 th Floor, Stop 515 Los Angeles, CA 90014
Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority	John C. Miller, P.E. Engineering Project Manager	(213) 922-2000 millerjo@mta.net 1 Gateway Plaza Mail Stop: 99-22-1 Los Angeles, CA 90012-2932
SCRRA—Metrolink	Laurene Lopez Community Relations/Environmental Review Administrator	(213) 452-0288 lopezl@scrna.net SCRRA—Metrolink 700 South Flower Street, 26 th Floor Los Angeles, CA 90017
<p>Note:</p> <p>* Federal agency not responding to the letter of invitation to become a participating agency.</p> <p>Per SAFETEA-LU, a federal agency invited shall be designated as a participating agency unless the agency declines the invitation by the deadline specified and states that the agency (1) has no jurisdiction or authority with respect to the project, (2) has no expertise or information relevant to the project, and (3) does not intend to submit comments on the project.</p>		

5.3.4.2 Coordination Meetings

Three coordination meetings were held during the Section 6002 environmental review process. The first meeting was held on October 31, 2007, at the Caltrans District 7 Office to provide the participating agencies with project information and to discuss the roles and responsibilities of the participating agencies. Caltrans provided the participating agencies with the opportunity for their involvement in developing the draft purpose and need statement. The meeting also allowed the participating agencies to advise and provide input on the technical studies. In addition, Caltrans provided the agencies with information regarding the range of alternatives being considered and further studied. They commented on this material, and a brief discussion was held after this information was presented. A site visit was also conducted following the first meeting.

The second participating agency meeting was held on February 4, 2008. An update of the project status was presented to the agencies. Caltrans outlined the next stages in the participating agency role in the environmental review process, including discussion of technical studies and methodologies, as well as social, economic, and environmental impacts within the project area. In addition, Caltrans provided the agencies with the opportunity to comment on anticipated issues that might arise in the future. Floodplain issues, railroad concerns, and the Los Angeles River Revitalization Plan were the main topics that the agencies noted.

The third meeting was held on October 20, 2008. Caltrans provided an update to the participating agencies on the project status. A summary of the Alkali Silica Reaction (ASR) Workshop was presented. In addition, Caltrans discussed the environmental analysis results. Additional participating agency meetings will be held as the EIR/EIS progresses.

A list of all agencies invited to become a participating agency or cooperating agency is located in the Coordination Plan (Appendix J).

During the project development period, Caltrans had several meetings with public agencies. Caltrans, City of Los Angeles, and State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) held a meeting on April 6, 2009. The main focus was the discussion of Alkali Silica Reaction and possible mitigation measures. A field review was conducted after the meeting.

Caltrans and the City of Los Angeles held a meeting on February 4, 2009, with the Los Angeles Office of Historic Resources. The main purpose of this meeting was to discuss the proposed measures to be included in the Section 106 Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) for the various bridges undergoing improvement.

In addition, Caltrans, the City of Los Angeles Department of Public Works Bureau of Engineering, and the City of Los Angeles Planning Department had a meeting with the Los

Angeles Conservancy on October 29, 2007. The purpose of this meeting was to provide detailed information about the project development process and other background information. The meeting also provided a forum for the Los Angeles Conservancy to ask questions and gain a better understanding of the issues surrounding the project.

Additional coordination meetings with federal, state, and local agencies are ongoing, and they will continue throughout the planning stage of the proposed project. In addition, various historical society/historic preservation groups and Native American individuals/organizations have been contacted and kept informed about the status of project development.

5.4 Public Participation

Public participation has been an important aspect of this project. A series of meetings with affected property owners, community groups, and interested agencies has been carried out throughout the project development period and will continue as the project moves forward. Representatives from the City of Los Angeles Department of Public Works Bureau of Engineering, Caltrans, and the project consultant team have presented project information and answered questions from the attendees at numerous meetings. Several methods were used to inform the public of meetings, such as newspaper notices, invitations sent to affected property owners and community groups, invitations to become a participating agency and/or cooperating agency, and the NOP/NOI.

The community and property owner meetings carried out to date consist of the following:

- Boyle Heights Neighborhood Council Land Use Committee – February 13, 2007
- Boyle Heights Neighborhood Council Quadrant 4 – March 12, 2007
- Downtown Los Angeles Neighborhood Council – March 13, 2007
- Boyle Heights Neighborhood Council Quadrant 3 – May 9, 2007
- Boyle Heights Resident Homeowner Association – May 19, 2007
- Downtown Arts District Business Improvement District – October 3, 2007
- Community Redevelopment Agency of Los Angeles, Eastside Region – October 4, 2007
- Los Angeles Conservancy – October 29, 2007
- City of Los Angeles Interdepartment Planning Staff – March 24, 2008
- City of Los Angeles Interdepartment Planning Staff – April 4, 2008
- American Institute of Architects – April 23, 2008
- ASR Workshop – August 27, 2008
- Central City East Association – December 3, 2008
- City of Los Angeles Office of Historic Resources – February 4, 2009

In addition to the above-mentioned meetings, a CAC was formed, and nine meetings have been conducted. Refer to Section 5.2.2 for more detailed information regarding the CAC.

The Public Outreach Report¹²⁰ was also prepared to summarize the project outreach activities and the comments received. The report is available for review at the City of Los Angeles Department of Public Works Bureau of Engineering, Bridge Improvement Program, and Caltrans District 7 office.

5.5 Business Survey

A business survey was conducted to acquire information on business operations and identify issues and concerns of businesses located within the vicinity of the project construction limits. More than 100 survey questionnaires were distributed to local businesses within the project area. Forty (40) businesses were interviewed by the outreach team. The information collected was evaluated to determine the potential effects on businesses and employees as a result of project implementation.

5.6 Comments and Responding to Comments

Numerous questions and concerns were raised at the public information meetings, scoping meetings, and coordination meetings. In addition, 23 written comments were received during the scoping period.

The main issues and concerns that were expressed include:

- Historic resource preservation
- Public safety
- Costs and funding
- Preference for either retrofit or replacement of the viaduct
- Design and development opportunities
- Management of homeless residents
- Integration of the proposed Los Angeles River Revitalization Project
- Business impacts due to right-of-way acquisitions
- Construction impacts, including traffic detours
- Traffic volumes and speed on the viaduct
- Loss of industrial land use area
- Impacts to railroad operation

¹²⁰ Public Outreach Report – Scoping Phase for 6th Street Viaduct Seismic Improvement Project. September 2008.

Most of the comments raised at the various meetings were responded to by the project team to the extent that the information was available at the time. Written responses to selected substantive comments were prepared, and follow-up meetings with the commenting parties were held to respond to the issues of concern. All comments received were considered during the project development/preliminary design phase and in the Draft EIR/EIS preparation.

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