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Comments on the Expo Line Phase 2 Draft EIR

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Summary

Friends 4 Expo Transit is the grassroots group of volunteers who have been supporting the Expo Line since 2000 (and some individually for 20 years). Our motto, “Connecting Neighbors,” reflects members all along the Exposition corridor in Los Angeles, Culver City, and Santa Monica, plus the larger region.

After detailed consideration of the phase 2 Draft EIR by our Steering Committee, we:

1. **Endorse option LRT-2, the right-of-way and Colorado.** We note that the right-of-way has **2/3 the cost** of Venice-Sepulveda, **4-6* minute faster travel time**, **greater ridership**, and **fewer environmental impacts**. Colorado also has lower cost, fewer impacts, and a desirable pedestrian scale. These are detailed in the Summary Table on the next page. (*See item #12 below)

The photo on page 3 of aerial light rail along Capitol Avenue in San Jose gives an indication of the impact of elevating Expo along Sepulveda or Olympic. Not to mention property takes and loss of many mature street trees.

2. **Support the recommended station locations**, especially at **Westwood**, which has the *greatest projected boardings* (5,213) of all phase 2 stations; major bus connections to Westwood, UCLA, and Century City; and serves the neighboring community and businesses. We also support Mar Vista and Venice residents’ call for a Venice Boulevard Rapid bus line connecting the Culver City Expo station.
3. **Call for a continuous, quality bikeway**, by the Expo Authority working closely with the Cities of Los Angeles and Santa Monica, including consideration of bicycle bridges for difficult crossings at Venice and Pico Boulevards, and use of the City of Los Angeles-owned easement just north of I-10, west of Motor Avenue.
4. **Support the consistent application of the Metro Grade Crossing Policy** to both phase 1 and phase 2 of the Expo Line. See below for some detailed grade-separation considerations.
5. **Recognize the necessity of a maintenance facility** in phase 2. If it is near residences (although we note that a phase 1 maintenance option was discarded due to “proximity to residences”) it should consider enclosure to mitigate noise at night, chemical emissions (cleaning supplies, lubricants, solvents, brake shoes, etc.), and other issues not present with current uses.

Summary Table (endorsed LRT 2 highlighted)

	<i>LRT 1 — Expo ROW-Olympic</i>	<i>LRT 2 — Expo ROW-Colorado</i>	<i>LRT 3 — Venice- Sepulveda- Olympic</i>	<i>LRT 4 — Venice- Sepulveda- Colorado</i>
Performance Summary				
2030 Weekday Boardings (Phase 2 Only) (Tables 1, 2.5-1)	36,653	36,412	35,880	35,849
2030 Weekday Boardings (Phases 1 and 2 Combined) (Table 1)	64,048	63,998	62,105	62,077
Estimated Travel Time Culver City-Santa Monica (<i>worst-case</i> minutes) (page 2-36)	18.2	19.5	22.1	23.4
Likely Travel Time (omitting excess delay – see #12 below)	14	15	20	21
LRT Alternatives Capital Costs in 2008\$ (000s) (Table 4, 6.2-2)	\$969,909	\$932,423	\$1,434,786	\$1,390,811
Cost per Annual Hour of User Benefit (Tables 7, 7.3-1)	\$20.21	\$20.01	\$32.76	\$32.23
Significant Unavoidable Environmental Impacts				
Transportation/ Traffic (Table 8)			Sepulveda- Palms; Girard-Midvale- Venice	Sepulveda- Palms; Girard-Midvale- Venice
Aesthetics (Tables 8, 3-3.2)	Loss of Olympic Blvd. coral trees; Westwood station	Westwood station	Olympic Blvd. coral trees; 8,400 feet of elevated guideway	8,400 feet of elevated guideway
Socioeconomics — Displacements				
Property Acquisitions — full/partial (Table 3.16-3, not including curb cuts)	13/15	13/18	44/74	44/77
Residential Displacements (Table 3.16-4)	2 units 5 residents	1 unit 3 residents	105 units 256 residents	104 units 254 residents



San Jose aerial light rail structure example for Sepulveda and Olympic

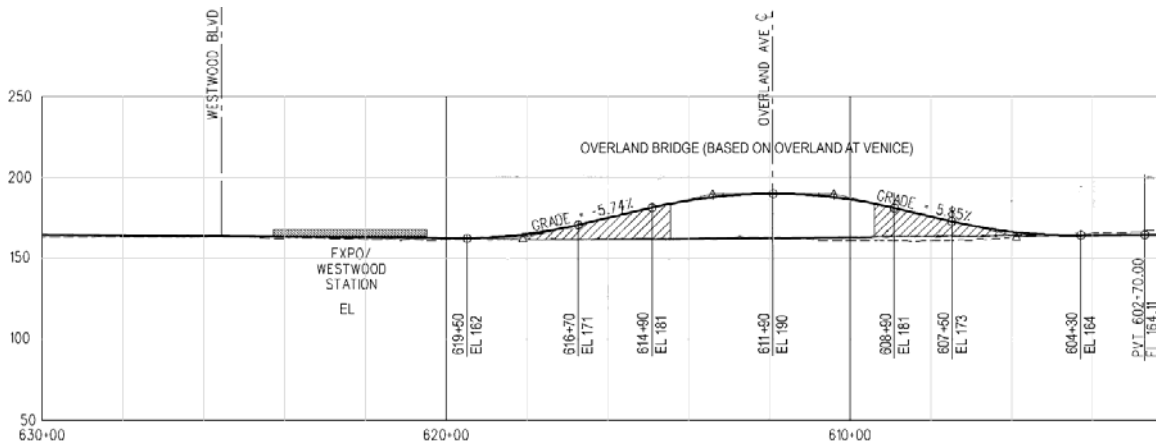
Additional Considerations

6. The proposed **loss of parkway and mature street trees**, required if the existing 5' sidewalk + 6' parkway + 6" curb shown below were narrowed 1.5' to 10' for the **Overland grade crossing**, would significantly impact neighbors and pedestrians. This is not mentioned (unlike Westwood's loss of trees) under Visual Character (page 3.3-31). (And would the power lines be put underground as partial mitigation?) These would not be necessary if lanes were narrowed six inches each.

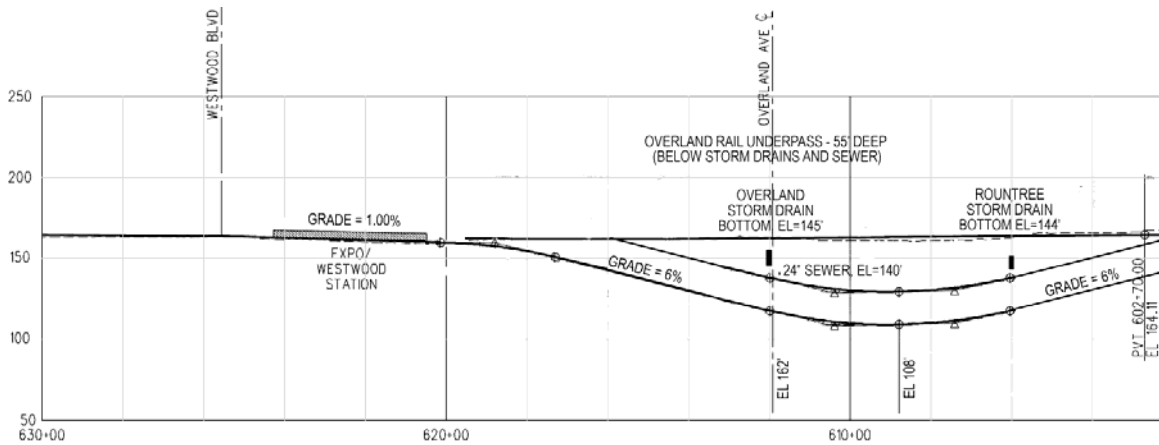


7. If further Grade Crossing analysis in response to LADOT calls for Overland to be grade separated:

A. We'd recommend a **rail bridge** be as low as possible to reduce visual impact (including removing the existing hump on Overland at the old railroad crossing), combined with landscaping and natural slopes in lower parts of its ramps. The image below shows its ramp from Richland and Selby.



B. An **underpass below the Overland and Rountree storm drains** would be as long as the Flower-Figueroa underpass but *over twice as deep* (55 feet deep vs. 25, next page), unprecedented and clearly not practicable.



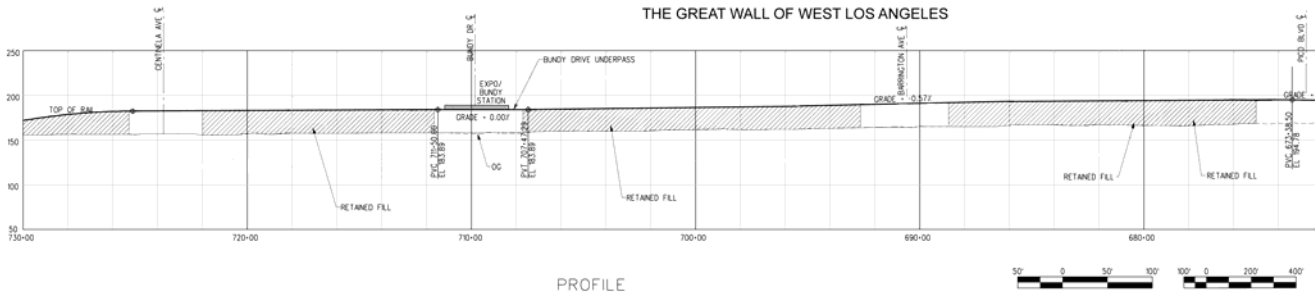
8. If a **parking lot** is provided at the **Westwood station** instead of a park/greenway, it should still be very “green” with large trees, permeable paving, landscaped buffers, shielded lighting, bioswales for urban runoff water treatment*, and park amenities added west of Westwood Blvd. (*Note that DEIR page 2-56 incorrectly assumed the *entire* flow from the Overland drain would be cleaned.)

Its limited parking spaces would likely fill early in the morning, resulting in traffic circling through the neighborhood. Preferential neighborhood parking and a paid management system like Santa Monica is seeking may be beneficial.

9. We support the **at-grade crossing at Westwood**, noting that LADOT's only objection was loss of street parking, and the width of only *one to four lots* hardly constitutes the “severe inconvenience” of “extensive walking distances”.
10. Here is a photo of southbound traffic on **Centinel** stopping across Expo during a typical PM commute. Will queue-cutter signal plans work here (page 3.2-25)?



- If Expo also bridges Barrington and Centinela, we're concerned about it becoming "**The Great Wall of West L.A.**" The Appendix E Profiles show aerial structures, not retained fill, at Sawtelle-Pico and 26th-Olympic. We similarly recommend consideration of aerial structures west of Pico to allow use of space underneath.



- The "worst-case" **travel time estimates** used in the Draft EIR (page 2-36) include *intersection delays where gated crossings are planned*. The right-of-way options should be about 4 minutes faster than stated, and Venice-Sepulveda options about 2 minutes faster.
- It is important to retain the **mature trees** along both sides of the right-of-way between the I-10 freeway tunnel and Westwood Boulevard, both for their long-standing aesthetic role in the neighborhood and to screen the future light rail line. Their role as monarch butterfly habitat is noted on DEIR page 3.6-6.

We find no mention in the DEIR of the landmark street tree on the south side of Pico, just east of the Exposition right-of-way, seen in historic photos and cited on page 10 of Friends 4 Expo Transit's Scoping Comments.

- We support the City of Santa Monica's request to **narrow the Colorado median trackway** to allow street parking on both sides. Could this also eliminate the proposed property take for an eastbound right turn lane on Colorado west of Lincoln?
- Finally, if the at-grade **4th Street station platform and tracks** for the Colorado alignment were *sloped up* like adjacent 4th Street is, they could become a run-through station toward a future Lincoln Corridor line.

We look forward to rapid progress on the Expo Line phase 2, a critical transportation improvement!