Los Angeles County
Metropolitan Transportation
Authority
One Gateway Plaza
3rd Floor Board Room
Los Angeles, CA

File #: 2019-0443, **File Type:** Project **Agenda Number:** 10.

PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE
SEPTEMBER 18, 2019

SUBJECT: LA RIVER PATH

ACTION: APPROVE RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION

CONSIDER:

A. RECEIVING AND FILING the Conceptual Design Report; and

B. AUTHORIZING the CEO to initiate the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR).

ISSUE

The LA River Path is a Measure M project with a projected opening date during the FY 2025-27 period. Currently, $365 million in Measure M funds are allocated for this project. This project is also included in the Twenty-Eight by '28 Initiative adopted by the Board in January 2018.

To meet the Measure M schedule, a Proposed Project needs to be identified and environmentally cleared. Initiating the environmental review will also support the application for U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) required permits. This report includes the findings from the Conceptual Design Phase and a recommendation for what alternatives to advance into environmental review.

BACKGROUND

The LA River Path is an approximately eight-mile active transportation path (e.g., walking and bicycling) along the Los Angeles River. The study area (Attachment A) extends between Elysian Valley and Maywood through downtown Los Angeles and the City of Vernon. The northern limit of the project area is the terminus of the Los Angeles River Greenway Trail at Riverside Drive and the southern limit is at Atlantic Boulevard where the Los Angeles River Bicycle Path begins in the City of Maywood. The project will close the longest remaining gap in the LA River Path to create a continuous 32-mile path for people walking, rolling and bicycling between the San Fernando Valley and Long Beach.

Many of the neighborhoods in the area surrounding the project corridor are predominately industrial with high volumes of truck traffic, deteriorated roadways, a lack of sidewalks and street lighting, and

at-grade rail crossings. Additionally, there are freight and passenger train tracks adjacent to the River along several segments of the corridor. Approximately 1 million people live within three miles of the LA River Path project corridor. Of the 85,000 people who live within ½-mile of the project corridor, 18,000 (21%) working-age people walk, bicycle, or take public transit to work.

In June 2014, the Board passed a motion (Attachment B) which directed staff to study a path, including in-channel options, for this missing segment. In 2016, Metro staff completed a feasibility study for closing this gap, which considered top of bank, channel bottom and other path treatments and found that the project was feasible. This feasibility study was approved by the Metro Board of Directors in September 2016 (Legistar File 2016-0311). In May 2018, the Board authorized the CEO to award and execute Contract #AE4779500 with CH2M Hill, Inc. for technical services to support the LA River Path (Legistar File 2018-0108).

DISCUSSION

Since May 2018, work has been underway to document the corridor's existing conditions, conduct community outreach, and to identify and screen potential alternatives. A Project Steering Committee comprised of a representative from Metro, the Cities of Los Angeles and Vernon, and the Los Angeles County Department of Public Works provides overall guidance to this project. The Steering Committee and overall project is supported by two advisory groups: a Project Development Team (PDT) and stakeholder roundtables. The PDT is comprised of Metro, USACE, City of Los Angeles, City of Vernon, Los Angeles County, and the Mountains Recreation & Conservation Authority and provides interagency coordination, technical guidance and problem-solving for the project. The stakeholder roundtables are comprised of local community-based organizations, employers and other local stakeholders who advise the project on community needs and priorities and provide overall project guidance.

The project is driven by six goals that were shaped by community input. These goals are safety, access, efficient and sustainable mobility, equity, user experience and health. The project goals are the basis of the evaluation criteria used to screen and refine potential alternatives during an early alternatives analysis. Metro relied heavily on community input on preferred access points and path types to develop potential alternatives, which were screened using these criteria. The Conceptual Design phase was completed in August 2019, leading to the development of a Conceptual Design Report (Attachment C - Executive Summary) which documents existing conditions, design guidance, community feedback and the results of the early alternatives analysis, which identified three alternatives recommended for further study during environmental review.

Community and Stakeholder Outreach

In addition to the stakeholder engagement through the project advisory committees, Metro staff also conducted an extensive community outreach effort, completing nine community outreach meetings, two online surveys and two informational videos. Additionally, staff attended numerous briefings and attended dozens of pop-up events. Through these efforts, staff obtained 4,600 in-person comments and 3,800 survey responses.

This input included feedback on the LA River Path's goals, potential access points, and preferred path types. Stakeholders and community members indicated a strong desire for a path that was

available for recreation as well as commuting and errands. Comments were categorized around project goals with the most cited themes being user experience, safety and access.

Access Points

Community input indicated a desire for access points on both banks and prioritized access points that connect neighborhoods to the east and west of the river. Preferred access points included Los Angeles State Historic Park/Main Street, Union Station, 1st Street and Washington Boulevard. These preferences were used to develop and refine alternatives.

Path Types

Because of the constrained nature of the corridor, there are limited places where the path can be located. Four primary path types were analyzed to inform the development of alternatives and Metro collected nearly 3,000 comments on preferences through community meetings and an online survey.

A top-of-bank/cantilevered path utilizes existing at-grade space and/or cantilevers over the channel at grade. This path type was the most popular with community members (40% of responses) as it would be reliably open and less subject to closures due to flooding. This path could accommodate amenities and features such as lighting, security features, landscaping and public art. Top-of-bank options are only feasible in select locations where the existing rail lines and utilities are set back to provide sufficient space for the path.

An elevated path would be above-grade supported by piers and could be utilized for ramping and crossing over roadways and other at-grade obstacles. This was the second most popular path type (32% of responses) as it would also be reliably open and could accommodate lighting, security features and public art.

An incised path cuts the path into the channel embankment and is commonly used when there is insufficient space at-grade for either a top-of-bank or elevated option. It is also utilized to go under bridges and other obstacles. This path type would be subject to closures during heavy rainfall but could utilize existing bridges that it passes under to provide lighting and other amenities. This path type was preferred by 17% of respondents.

The fourth path type evaluated is bottom-of-channel, which would locate the path on the flat bottom of the channel. This path type would not be impacted by adjacent top-of-bank conditions and would place users close to the water in the channel. This option was preferred by 11% of respondents due to its proximity to the water. This path type would be the most at-risk of seasonal flooding, would require the longest access ramps to get on and off the path, and would not be able to provide amenities and features such as lighting, landscaping, and security features as the path would be under water during rain events.

Best Performing Alternatives

Three alternatives were identified as the best performing options to advance into environmental review. All three alternatives move back and forth across the river to utilize existing space, navigate around obstacles, and provide places to get on and off the path at desired access points. Additionally, each of these utilizes a combination of top-of-bank/cantilevered, elevated and incised path types. A bottom-of-channel option, which would not be reliably open during rain and could not

accommodate many of the desired amenities, was not advanced as a primary alternative. However, Metro identified future opportunities to add a secondary path (e.g., “interpretive” nature path) near the water at the bottom of the channel as well as additional access points if additional funding were to become available.

Alternative A (Attachment D) crosses the river six times and adds 10 new access points. Alternative B (Attachment E) crosses the river seven times and adds 12 new access points. Alternative C (Attachment F) crosses the river seven times and adds 11 new access points. These alternatives contain many common access points and path types but identify some opportunities that are unique to each one that can be further evaluated to inform the project.

Environmental Review
Initiating the DEIR will allow Metro to continue to study, analyze, and seek community input on these alternatives pursuant to CEQA. This project does not anticipate using federal funds. Environmental review pursuant to NEPA will be limited to applying for required permits from USACE. Staff proposes to initiate the CEQA analysis first in order to identify a Proposed Project, thoroughly analyze and document potential impacts, and advance the design of the alternatives in order to streamline the NEPA analysis for USACE.

Equity Platform
The LA River Path Project will close the largest remaining gap to create a seamless 32-mile grade-separated corridor for walking, biking and rolling along the Los Angeles River and provide improved access to opportunities including jobs, education, and public recreational spaces. This Project is consistent with the Metro Equity Platform and will benefit existing communities, including many equity focus communities (EFC). One million people live within biking distance of the project corridor and 85,000 live within walking distance. Approximately 72% of the population located within ½ mile of the project corridor live in an EFC. Of those within biking distance, 79% of the residents are Hispanic and 29% of the residents are classified as living in poverty (2016, American Community Survey).

The LA River Path project’s three alternatives connect to local communities along the river corridor. EFCs exist along both sides of the project corridor. All three alternatives provide access to key destinations supported by the community such as Los Angeles State Historic Park/Main Street Access, Albion Park/Main Street Access, Mission Road/Cesar Chavez Avenue Access, Union Station Access, Washington Boulevard Access, Bandini-Soto Triangle Access, and Downey Road East Access.

Specifically, this Project will focus on the Equity Pillars of Listen and Learn and Focus and Deliver. During the environmental analysis, Metro will continue to engage the community in order to plan, design and implement a project that improves access to opportunities and reflects the needs of the local communities. During the conceptual design phase, robust community engagement included nine public meetings, numerous stakeholder presentations, community pop-up events, youth-focused activities, surveys and online engagement.

DETERMINATION OF SAFETY IMPACT

These actions will not have any impact on the safety of Metro customers and/or employees because

this project is in the planning process phase and no capital or operational impacts result from this Board action.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The FY20 budget includes $7.021M for Professional Services in Cost Center 4310 (Mobility Corridors Team 1), Project 474303 (LA River Path). Since this is a multi-year program, the Cost Center manager and Chief Planning Officer will be responsible for budgeting in future years.

Impact to Budget
The funding sources for the project are Measure M 2% Active Transportation Projects and Measure M 17% Highway Construction. As these funds are earmarked for the LA River Path project, they are not eligible for Metro bus and rail capital and operating expenditures.

IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

The project will support the goals of the strategic plan by adding a new high-quality mobility option along the LA River that provides outstanding trip experiences and enhances communities and lives through mobility and access to opportunity.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The Metro Board could decide not to take action. This alternative is not recommended, as this would impact commencing the project's environmental clearance process and risk delay of construction, potentially hindering the project's ability to be completed by the Twenty-Eight by '28 Initiative.

NEXT STEPS

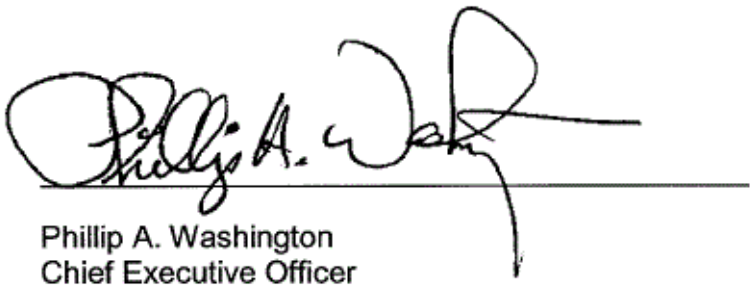
Upon Board approval, Metro Staff will initiate the Draft Environmental Impact Report and community engagement.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A - Study Area
Attachment B - June 2014 Metro Board Motion
Attachment C - Executive Summary - Conceptual Design Report
Attachment D - Alternative A
Attachment E - Alternative B
Attachment F - Alternative C

Prepared by: Maressa Sah, Principal Transportation Planner, Countywide Planning & Development, (213) 922-2462
Lauren Cencic, Senior Director, Countywide Planning & Development, (213) 922-7417
Manjeet Ranu, Senior Executive Officer, Countywide Planning & Development, (213) 418-3157

Reviewed by: James de la Loza, Chief Planning Officer, (213) 922-2920



Phillip A. Washington
Chief Executive Officer

Los Angeles River Path Project

Metro

PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE

MOTION BY:

MAYOR ERIC GARCETTI, SUPERVISOR GLORIA MOLINA, AND DIRECTOR MIKE BONIN

June 18, 2014

Los Angeles River Bikeway Connection

The City and County of Los Angeles have devoted significant time and resources in creating a Los Angeles River Revitalization Master Plan. This Plan incorporates transportation infrastructure as a key element of accessibility and mobility for the LA River, and addresses the need to have a regionally connected bikeway network. The County and many cities in the Los Angeles River Corridor, often with the assistance of the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA), have implemented major infrastructure and recreation areas along the river, its tributaries, and connecting surface streets.

In May 2014, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers recommended approval of an ambitious, $1-billion proposal to restore habitat, widen the river, create wetlands and provide pedestrian access points and bicycle paths along an 11-mile stretch of the LA River north of downtown through Elysian Park. This proposal, known as "Alternative 20," is the starting point for projects that will eventually revitalize all 51 miles of the river, from the San Fernando Valley to Long Beach.

However, the plan does not cover the most significant gap along the Los Angeles River, between the bicycle and pedestrian facilities in the Elysian Valley to the existing LA River Path that connects the City of Maywood to the City of Long Beach. This gap was also identified in MTA's Bicycle Transportation Strategic Plan adopted in 2006.

This gap is located in areas where the LA River is surrounded by active train tracks and industrial uses, which make it difficult to acquire the necessary right-of-way for placement of a bike path and pedestrian access on the river banks.

Recently a conceptual technical study was presented to MTA, which focuses on an "In River Channel Bike Path," similar to the bicycle path along the Arroyo Seco in the City of Los Angeles. As the Regional Transportation Planning Agency, MTA is best suited to coordinate regional, countywide bicycle efforts. A study of this nature will require multi-agency stakeholder coordination, and should include a detailed analysis of potential bicycle, pedestrian, and transit connections to the LA River facilities.

(CONTINUED)

WE, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board direct the Chief Executive Officer to:

A. Develop a proposed scope for studying an in-channel bike path design, with logical pedestrian linkages along ingress and egress areas, that connects the missing link from Taylor Yard to the City of Maywood;

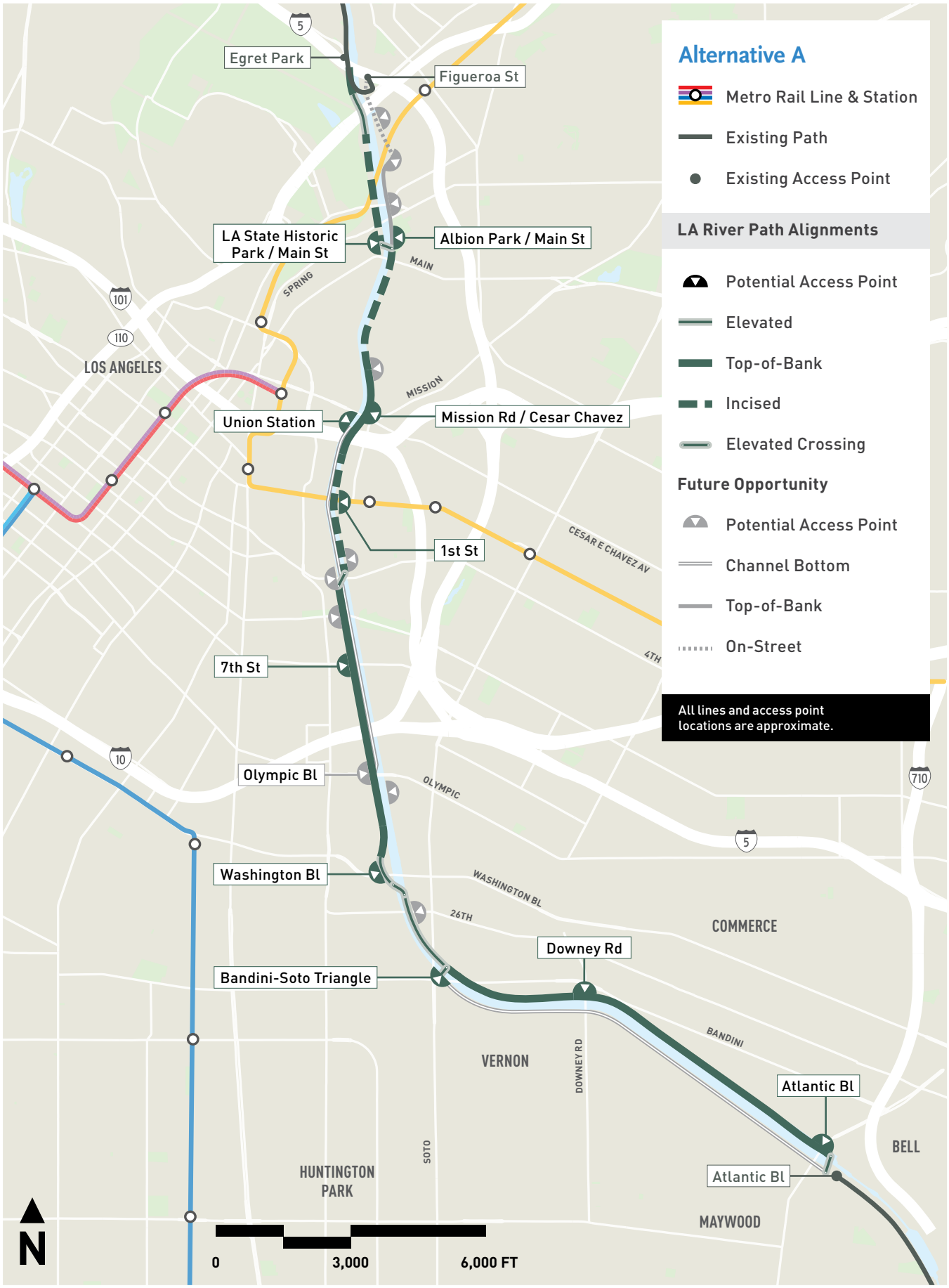
B. Recommend a project timeline and a proposed implementation strategy to advance a comprehensive bike channel study;

C. Identify and receive input from key stakeholders and study participants;

D. Report back to the Board in September 2014 on Items A - C and a possible recommendation for implementation.

Attachment C

http://libraryarchives.metro.net/DB_Attachments/2019-0443_Attachment_C_Executive_Summary_Conceptual_Design_Report.pdf


Alternative A
Metro Rail Line & Station
Existing Path
Existing Access Point
LA River Path Alignments
Potential Access Point
Elevated
Top-of-Bank
Incised
Elevated Crossing
Future Opportunity
Potential Access Point
Channel Bottom
Top-of-Bank
On-Street
All lines and access point locations are approximate.
Egret Park
Figueroa St
LA State Historic Park / Main St
Albion Park / Main St
Union Station
Mission Rd / Cesar Chavez
1st St
7th St
Olympic Bl
Washington Bl
Downey Rd
Bandini-Soto Triangle
Atlantic Bl
Atlantic Bl
LOS ANGELES
COMMERCE
VERNON
HUNTINGTON PARK
BELL
MAYWOOD
MAIN
SPRING
MISSION
CESAR E CHAVEZ AV
4TH
OLYMPIC
WASHINGTON BL
26TH
DOWNEY RD
BANDINI
SOTO
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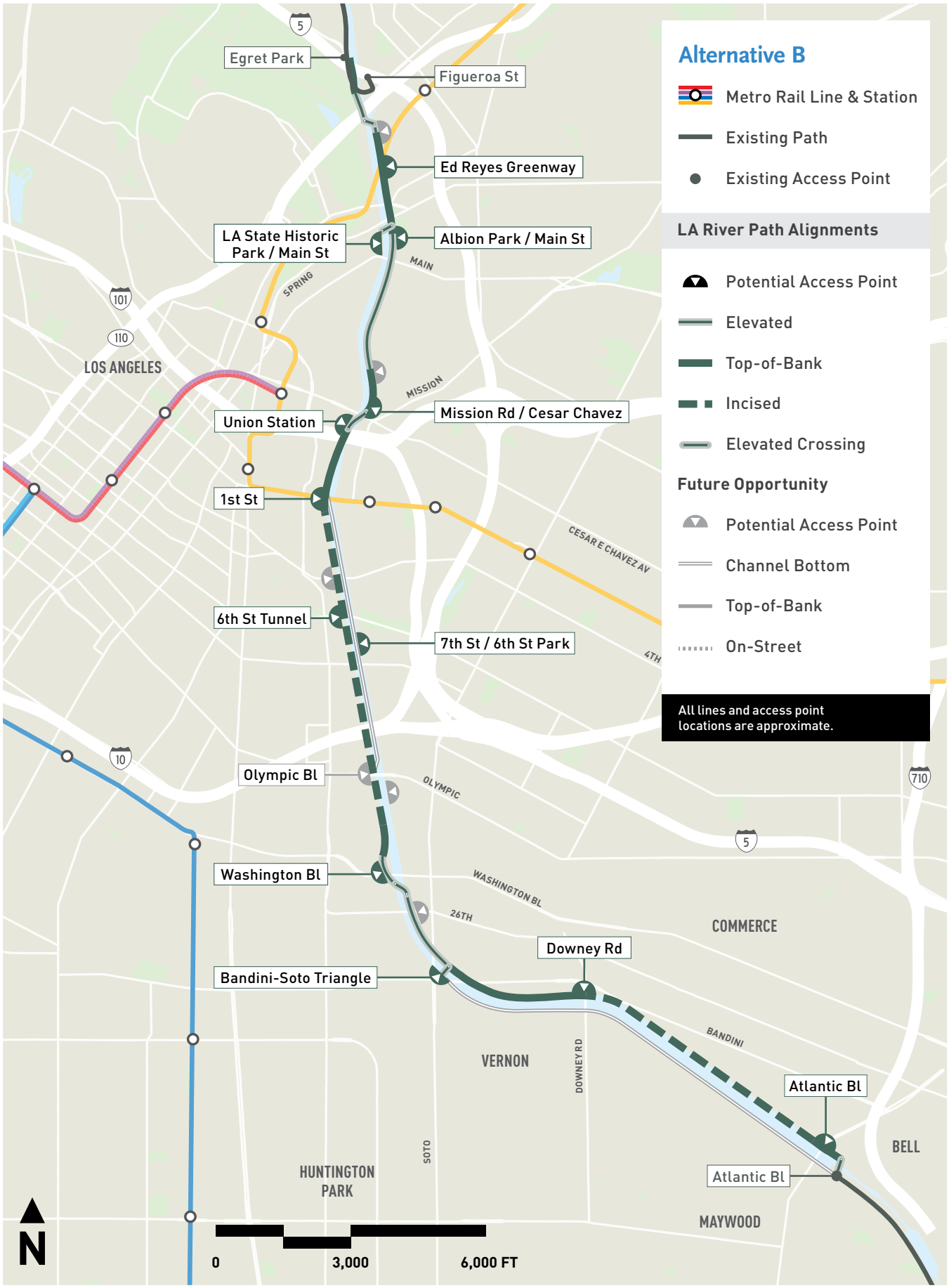
Alternative B
Metro Rail Line & Station
Existing Path
Existing Access Point
LA River Path Alignments
Potential Access Point
Elevated
Top-of-Bank
Incised
Elevated Crossing
Future Opportunity
Potential Access Point
Channel Bottom
Top-of-Bank
On-Street
All lines and access point locations are approximate.
Egret Park
Figueroa St
Ed Reyes Greenway
LA State Historic Park / Main St
Albion Park / Main St
Union Station
Mission Rd / Cesar Chavez
1st St
6th St Tunnel
7th St / 6th St Park
Olympic Bl
Washington Bl
Bandini-Soto Triangle
Downey Rd
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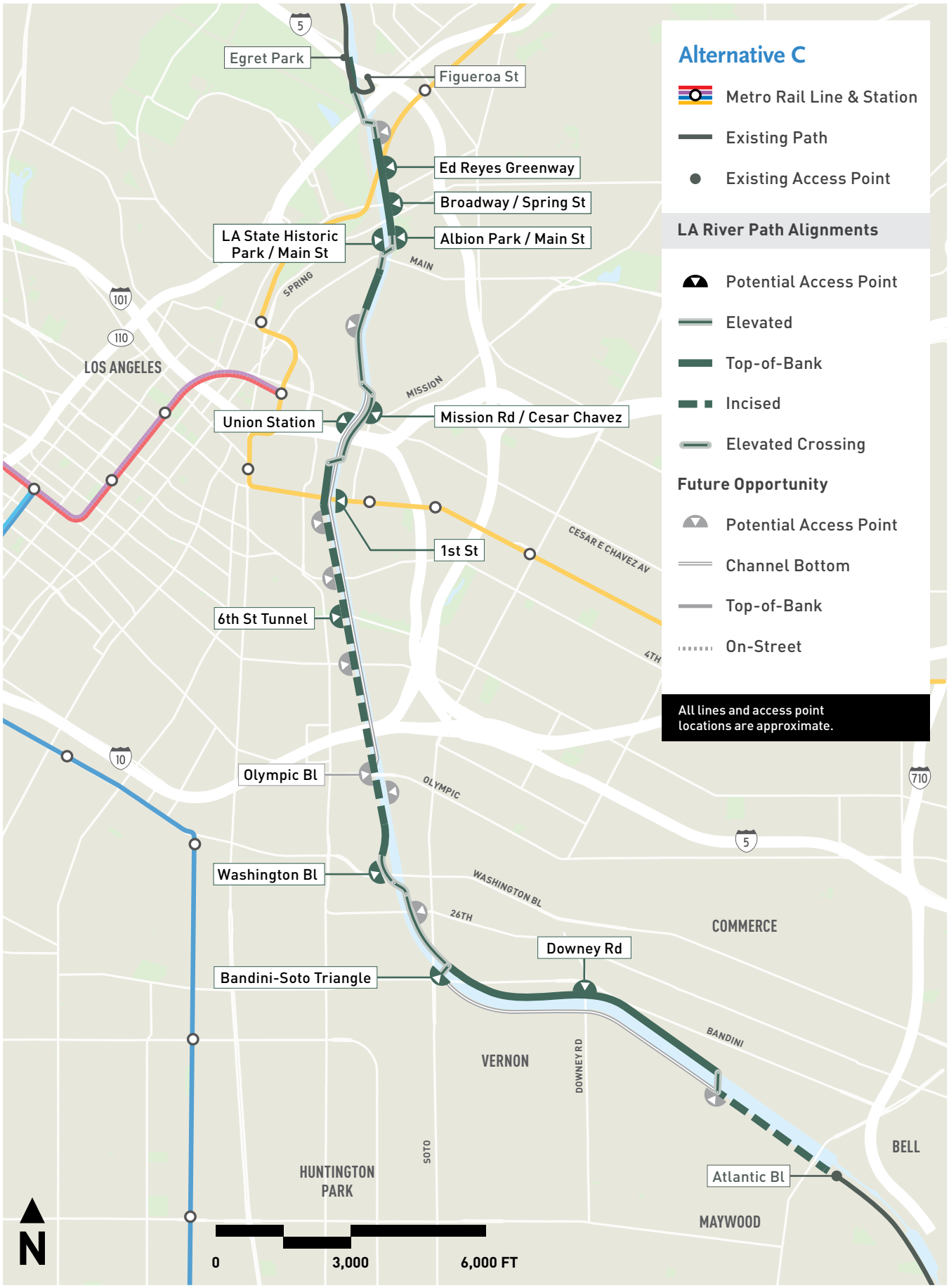
Alternative C
Metro Rail Line & Station
Existing Path
Existing Access Point
LA River Path Alignments
Potential Access Point
Elevated
Top-of-Bank
Incised
Elevated Crossing
Future Opportunity
Potential Access Point
Channel Bottom
Top-of-Bank
On-Street
All lines and access point locations are approximate.
Egret Park
Figueroa St
Ed Reyes Greenway
Broadway / Spring St
LA State Historic Park / Main St
Albion Park / Main St
Union Station
Mission Rd / Cesar Chavez
1st St
6th St Tunnel
Olympic Bl
Washington Bl
Downey Rd
Bandini-Soto Triangle
Atlantic Bl
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OLYMPIC
WASHINGTON BL
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Next stop: a more connected river path.
LA RIVER PATH
Metro
Planning and Programming - September 18, 2019
File # 2019-0443

Staff Recommendation

Consider:

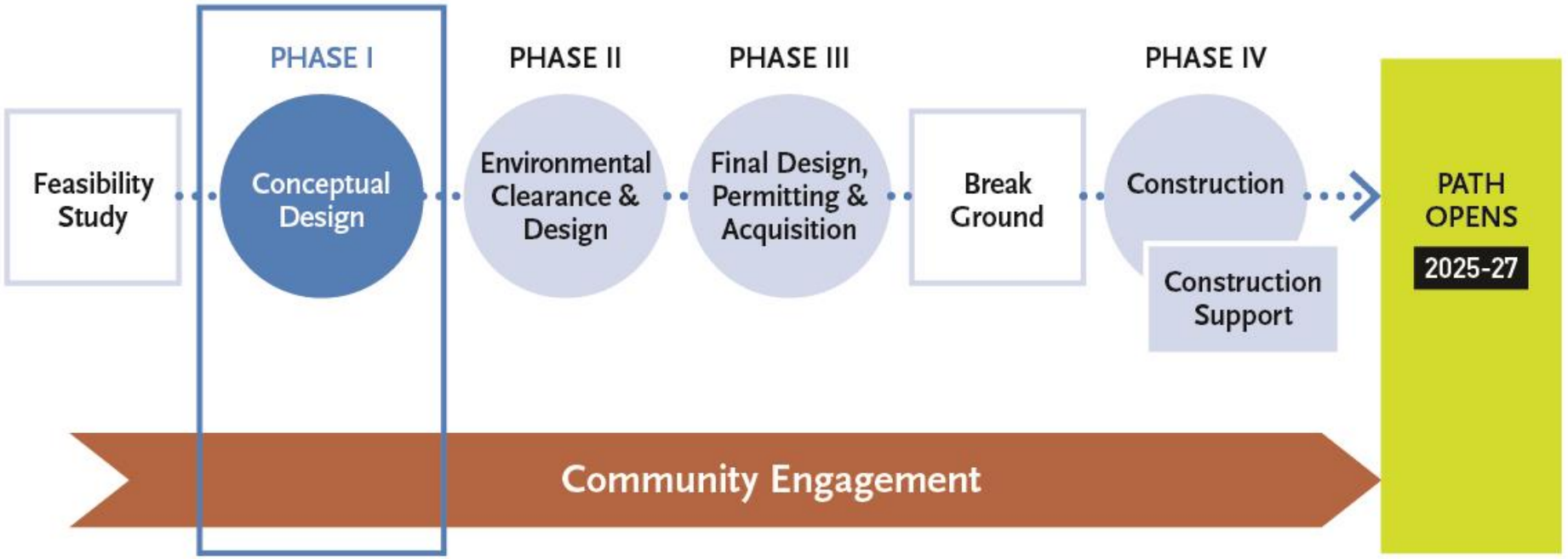
- RECEIVING AND FILING the Conceptual Design Report; and
- AUTHORIZING the CEO to initiate the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR)

Project Overview and Study Area

- **Close 8-mile gap** between Elysian Valley and Maywood
- **Create 32-mile path** from San Fernando Valley to Long Beach
- **$365M** in Measure M funding

Metro

Project Schedule

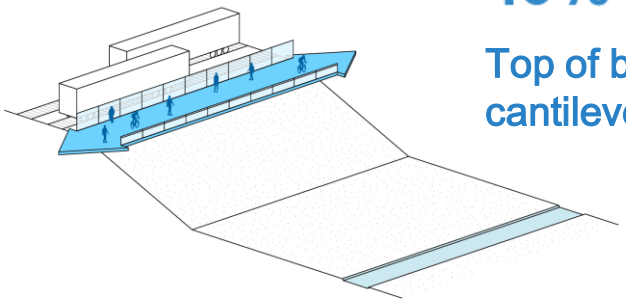


Metro

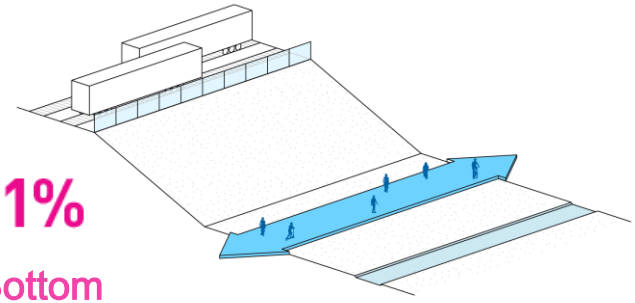
Conceptual Design

- Documented existing conditions
- Conducted community outreach
  - Stakeholder Roundtables
  - Project Development Team
  - 9 Community meetings
  - 2 Online surveys
  - Dozens of community pop-up events
- Identified and screened potential alternatives
- Identified three most promising alternatives to advance into environmental review

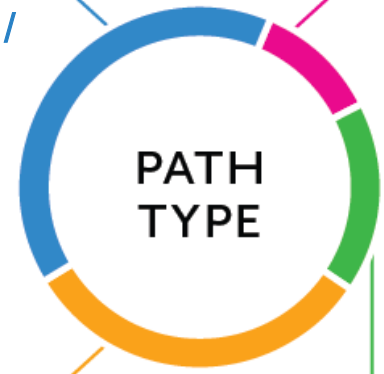
Community Input on Path Types

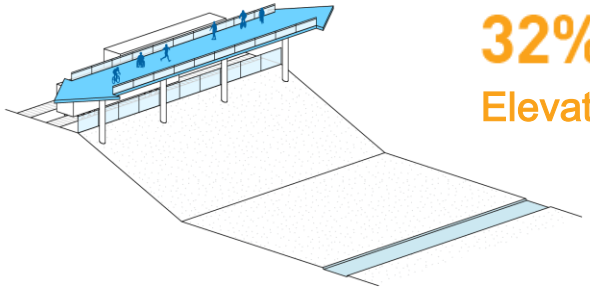


40%
Top of bank / cantilevered

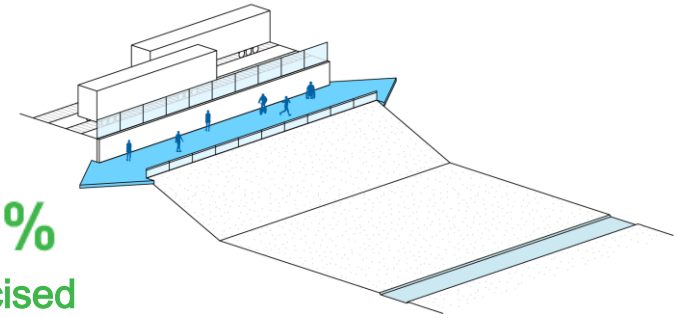


11%
Bottom of channel





32%
Elevated



17%
Incised

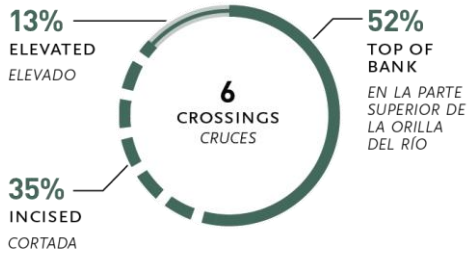
Metro

Alternative A

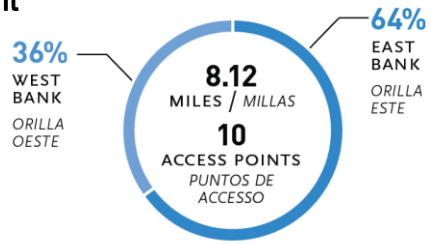
Benefits

+ *Equity:* path provides access and links communities.
+ *Health:* potential for community gathering areas.

Path Type



Alignment



Metro

- Metro Rail Line & Station
- Existing Path
- Existing Access Point

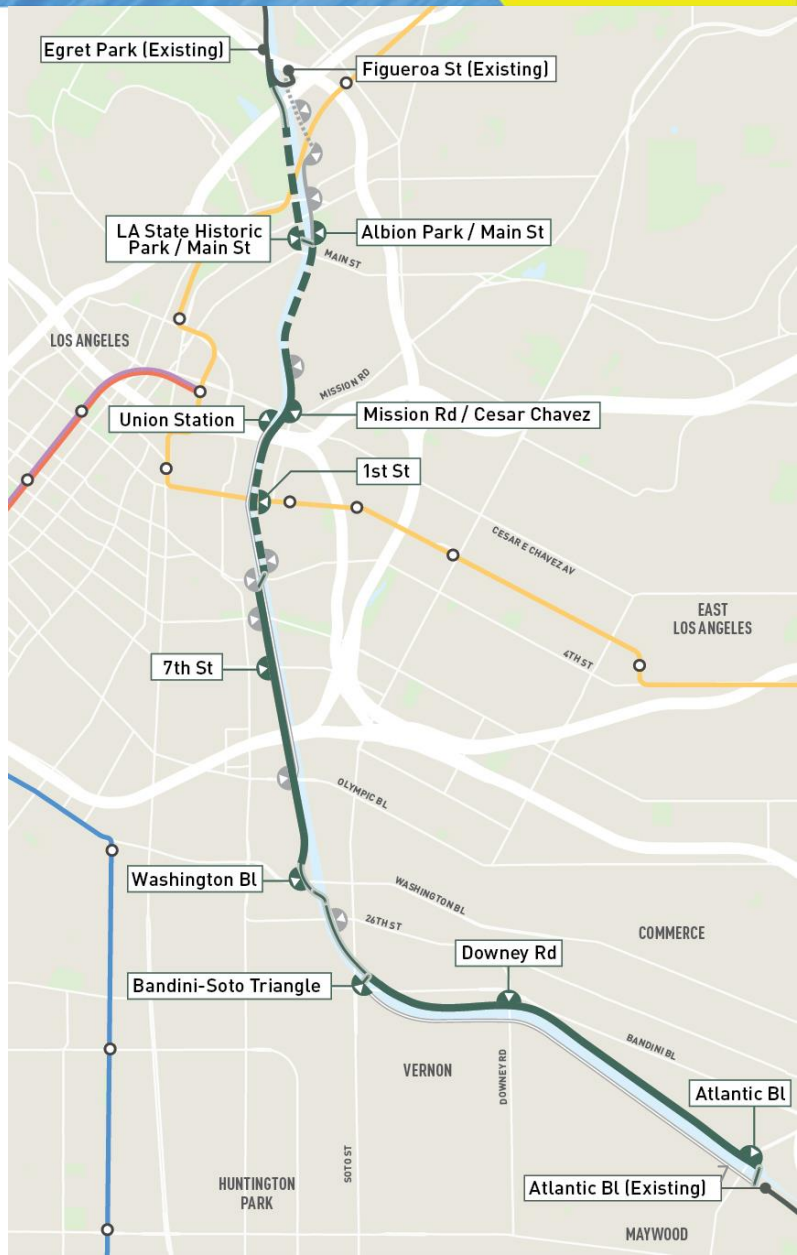
LA River Path Alignments

- Potential Access Point
- Elevated
- Top of Bank
- Incised
- Elevated Crossing

Future Opportunity

- Potential Access Point
- Channel Bottom
- Top of Bank
- On-Street

All lines and access point locations are approximate.

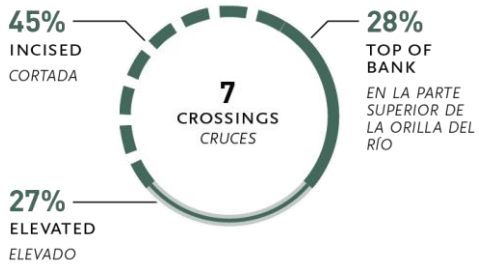


Alternative B

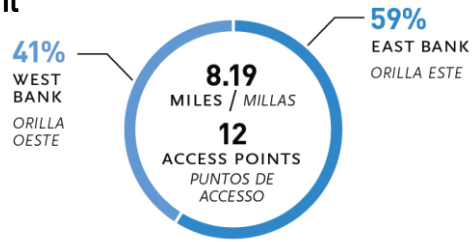
Benefits

+ *Access:* direct connections to services and job centers in Downtown LA, Little Tokyo, and Vernon
+ *User experience:* minimal grade change and unique vistas from elevated and top of bank paths

Path Type



Alignment



Metro

- Metro Rail Line & Station
- Existing Path
- Existing Access Point

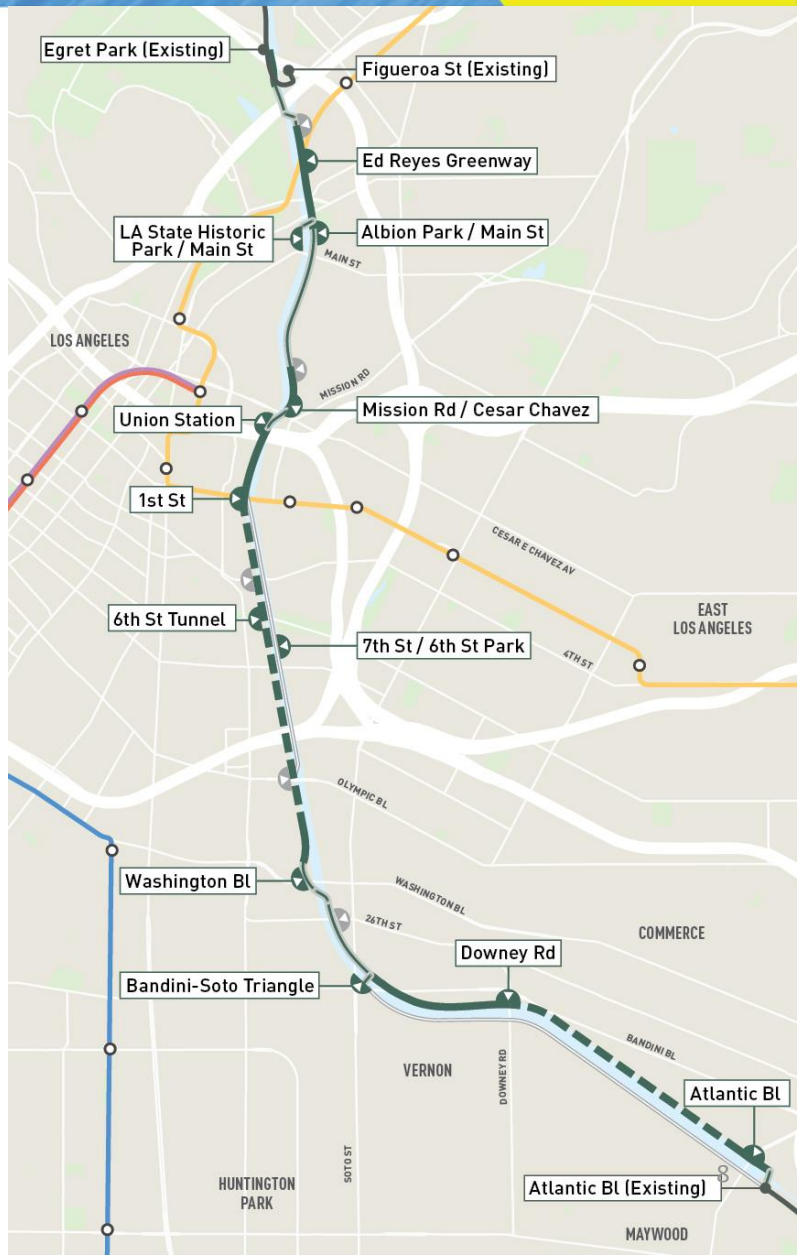
LA River Path Alignments

- Potential Access Point
- Elevated
- Top of Bank
- Incised
- Elevated Crossing

Future Opportunity

- Potential Access Point
- Channel Bottom
- Top of Bank
- On-Street

All lines and access point locations are approximate.



Alternative C

Benefits

+ *Equity:* path provides access and links communities.
+ *Efficient and sustainable mobility*: likely to remain open during flood events

Path Type

Alignment

Metro

- Metro Rail Line & Station
- Existing Path
- Existing Access Point

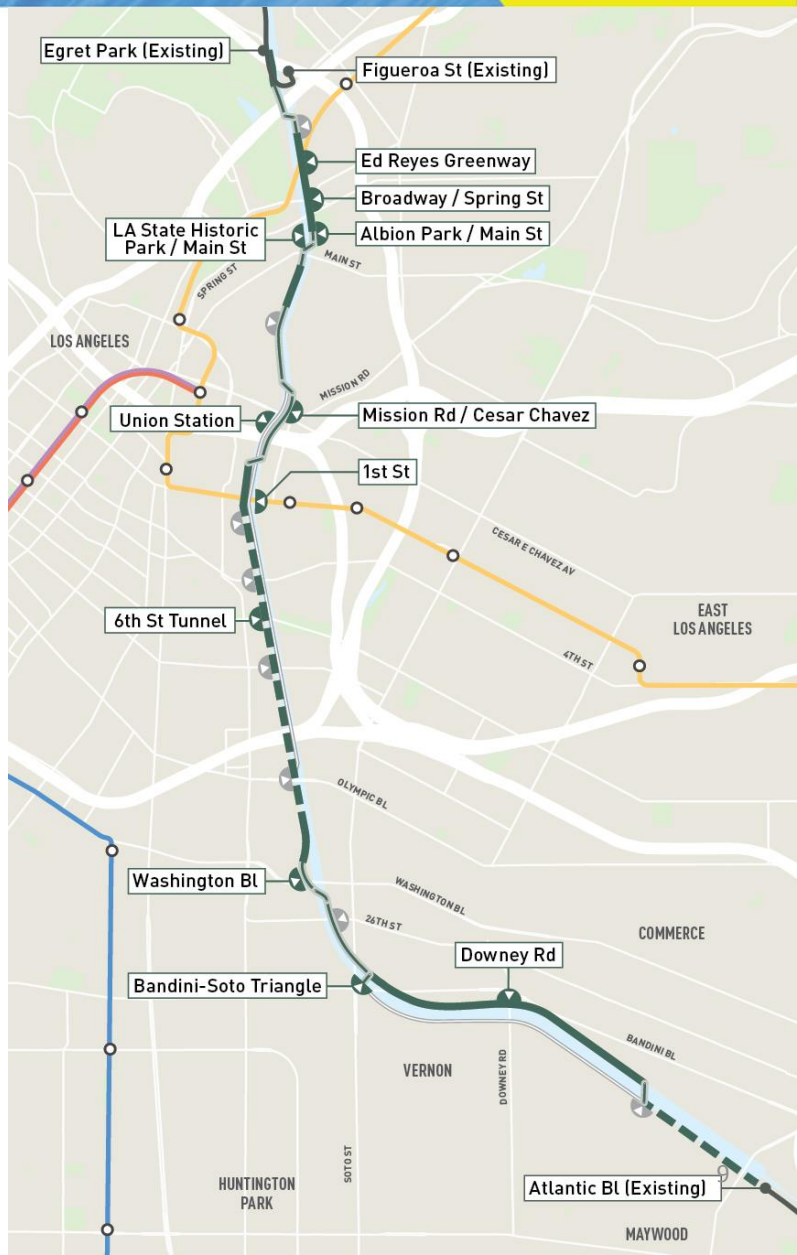
LA River Path Alignments

- Potential Access Point
- Elevated
- Top of Bank
- Incised
- Elevated Crossing

Future Opportunity

- Potential Access Point
- Channel Bottom
- Top of Bank
- On-Street

All lines and access point locations are approximate.



Proposed Next Steps

- Advance Alternatives A, B and C and initiate the CEQA analysis in order to:
  - Identify a Proposed Project
  - Document potential impacts and complete conceptual design
  - Streamline the NEPA analysis needed for USACE permits
- Fall 2019 – Conduct Scoping Meetings and ongoing community outreach