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

File #: 2021-0024, **File Type:** Program **Agenda Number:** 47.

EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
JUNE 17, 2021

SUBJECT: LOS ANGELES AERIAL RAPID TRANSIT PROJECT UPDATE

ACTION: RECEIVE AND FILE

RECOMMENDATION

RECEIVE AND FILE status report on the Los Angeles Aerial Rapid Transit project.

ISSUE

This Board report updates the Board of Directors on the status of the Los Angeles Aerial Rapid Transit project ("Project"). Metro is serving as the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) lead agency for the Project, which is completely funded by Aerial Rapid Transit Technologies LLC (ARTT), including Metro staff time. Project status updates to the Board have been presented twice in the past two years, in April 2019 and September 2020.

BACKGROUND

ARTT, a private company, submitted an Unsolicited Proposal to Metro in April 2018 to fund/finance, design, construct, operate, and maintain the Los Angeles Aerial Rapid Transit gondola connecting Union Station and Dodger Stadium. After reviewing the Phase 1 submittal, Metro requested a Phase II of ARTT's Unsolicited Proposal for the Project. In December 2018, Metro formally concluded the Unsolicited Proposal process and began exclusive negotiations with ARTT. The Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between ARTT and Metro was executed in April 2019. In accordance with the MOA, Metro will act as the lead agency for the Project's environmental clearance.

CEQA lead agency as defined under CEQA is the public agency which has the principal responsibility for carrying out or approving a project which may have a significant effect upon the environment. Cities and counties are frequently CEQA lead agencies for real estate developments, but this is the first time Metro is serving as the CEQA lead agency for a privately initiated and funded project.

DISCUSSION

Alignment
The Project would connect Union Station and the Dodger Stadium via an aerial gondola system. The Project will be generally located in the public right-of-way with stations, towers, and a junction at

various points along the alignment. The Notice of Preparation included two alignment alternatives, referred to as the Broadway Alignment and Spring Street Alignment. Based on stakeholder comments, ARTT is now focusing on the Broadway Alignment as the preferred alignment. Commencing at Union Station, the alignment follows Alameda Street and then continues along Spring Street in a northeast direction through the community of Chinatown to the southernmost corner of the Los Angeles State Historic Park. The alignment would then continue northeast over the western edge of the Los Angeles State Historic Park and the Metro L Line (Gold) to the intersection of North Broadway and Bishops Road. At this intersection, the proposed Project alignment would turn and continue northwest following Bishops Road toward its terminus at Dodger Station. The terminus stations are proposed above Alameda Street adjacent to Union Station and El Pueblo and at Dodger Stadium.

On May 19, 2021, ARTT announced the decision to select its preferred route as the Broadway Alignment, which proposes an intermediate Chinatown / State Park Station at the southern entrance to the Los Angeles State Historic Park. The Chinatown / State Park Station will offer convenient transfers to the Metro L Line (Gold) Chinatown Station. The Station would enhance access to the Los Angeles State Historic Park, identified in Metro's "Transit to Parks Strategic Plan," and include enhancements and additions to the Park's current facilities. The Project also proposes pedestrian improvements between the L Line (Gold) Chinatown Station and the Chinatown / State Park Station.

The Project includes a non-passenger junction at the intersection of North Broadway and Bishops Road and three towers to support the cables and cabins, two along Alameda Street and one on the Dodger Stadium property. Included as Attachment A is the Broadway Alignment with station locations.

Fares

Fares for the Project are still being determined, however ARTT has committed to incorporating equity principles into the community outreach plan, such as providing affordable fares to residents and employees of businesses in adjacent communities (see Attachment B).

Community Engagement

Per the MOA between ARTT and Metro, ARTT bears responsibility for all costs associated with community outreach and public coordination. ARTT established a community outreach plan to garner meaningful engagement and feedback which occurred in four phases. The first phase consisted of the project's kick-off (pre-scoping) period, which included preparation of the community outreach plan. The outreach plan, in accordance with CEQA requirements, was approved by Metro staff in December 2019. The second phase consisted of the Notice of Preparation (NOP) and scoping meetings. The third phase will be the release of the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR). The fourth and final phase will be the approval of the Environmental Impact Report.

The NOP was released in October 2020, followed by the public scoping period that lasted through mid-November 2020. In connection with the NOP and public scoping period, Metro mailed 1,312 NOP postcards and ARTT mailed 1,312 mailers to owners and occupants within 500 feet of the alignment, with additional printed advertisements in the Los Angeles Times, the Chinese Daily, and La Opinion. ARTT sent five email blasts, with approximately 3,250 total (cumulative) emails sent, including five Instagram posts and six Twitter posts. The Project's website via Metro or the Project

website was accessed by 4,617 users.

Due to the pandemic and stay-at-home orders, the scoping meeting was held virtually and had 75 attendees. Comments during the public scoping period were accepted through the virtual open house, email, and mail. Over 300 comments were received during the NOP public scoping process. The virtual open house was open for the entire scoping period and had 741 visitors (Attachment C).

ARTT launched a robust online social media approach in March 2021 and began a neighborhood walk program in April 2021 that includes multilingual walkers and language-specific flyers. As of May 24, 2021, ARTT's walkers had knocked on over 2,500 doors and directly connected with over 1,500 households. ARTT plans to continue its neighborhood walk efforts over the coming months. In May 2021, ARTT commenced a business engagement program, also including multilingual walkers and language-specific flyers.

ARTT held additional local community outreach meetings on June 3, 2021, at 6:00 p.m. and June 5 at 10:00 a.m. to ensure the surrounding communities and stakeholders remain informed with the most up to date information. The meeting notice was advertised on the Project website, Metro's website, via email, text messages, social media, as well as added notice from local elected officials in the area.

Metro/ARTT coordination
Among other items, Metro and ARTT are having an ongoing dialogue regarding the use of Union Station (during and after construction) and potential parking and Transportation Network Company impacts. Metro and ARTT will continue to coordinate schedules for future Forecourt, Link US, West Santa Ana Branch and Alameda Street improvements.

Equity Platform
Metro is the CEQA oversight agency, and that role includes defining impacts on the surrounding communities and addressing mitigations for any adverse impacts. ARTT has voluntarily agreed to adopt Metro's Equity Platform and Metro staff will provide its oversight and review through the parameters of the Equity Platform.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no financial impact to Metro for the CEQA process as all costs will be paid for by ARTT. The MOA between ARTT and Metro provides that no Metro funds will be used in the design, construction, or operation of the Project and all of Metro's staff and consultant time will be paid by ARTT.

Impact to Budget
There is no impact to the budget.

IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

The proposed Project aligns with Strategic Plan Goal 1: Provide high-quality mobility options that enable people to spend less time traveling. The Project has the potential to provide an efficient mobility alternative for people to travel to Dodger Stadium car-free.

NEXT STEPS

The DEIR is expected to be released during fall 2021. Staff will continue to oversee the CEQA process and will report back to the Board at key milestones, including the release of the DEIR and certification of the Final EIR prior to approving the Project.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A - Broadway Alignment with Station Locations
Attachment B - Fare Letter to Metro from ARTT
Attachment C - Community Outreach During NOP Scoping Period

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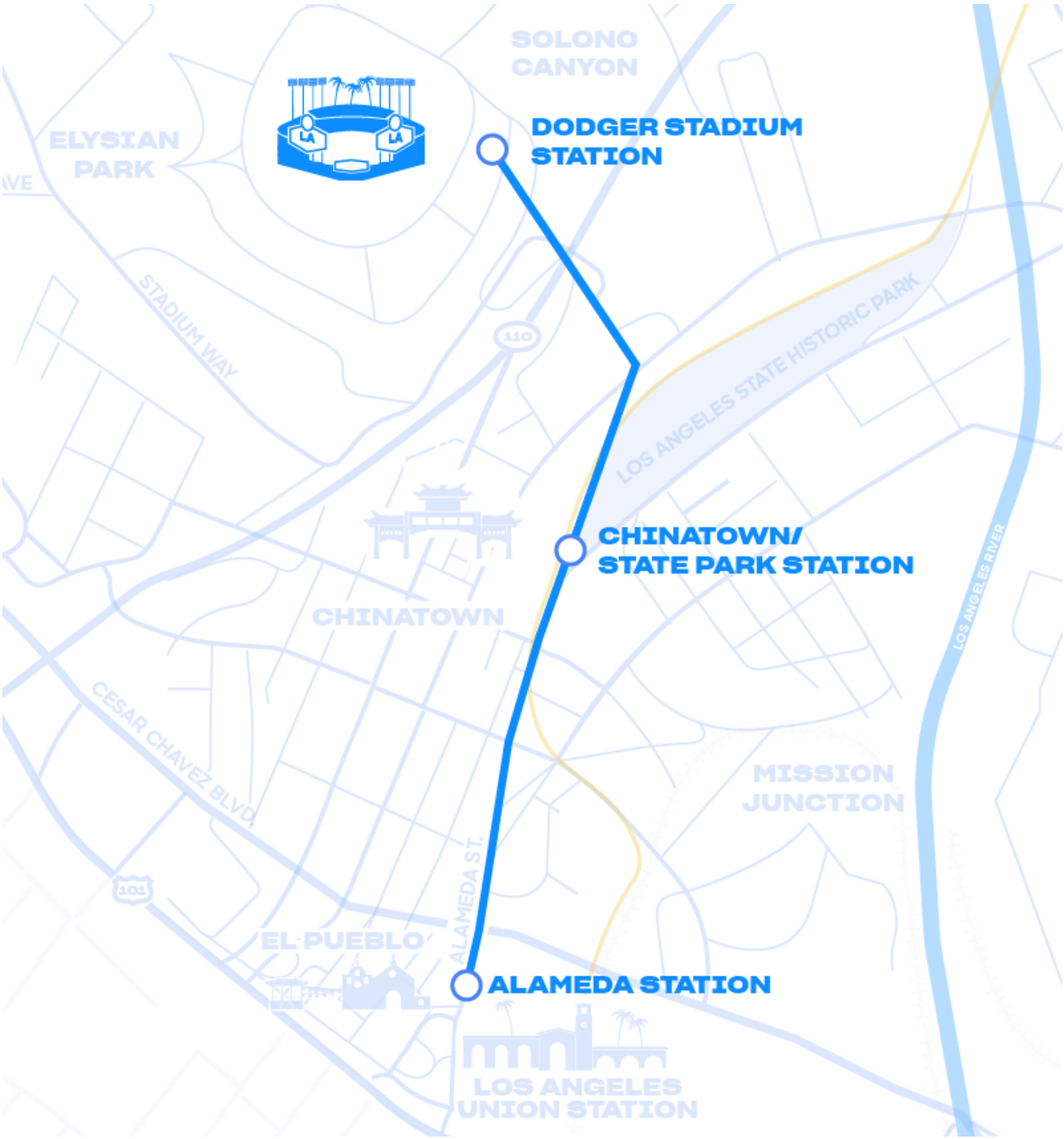
Reviewed by: Jim de la Loza, Chief Planning Officer, (213) 922-2920

Stephanie N. Wiggins
Chief Executive Officer

Attachment A



ATTACHMENT B

LA ART

June 2, 2021

Ms. Holly Rockwell, Senior Executive Officer
Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority
1 Gateway Plaza, 22nd Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Dear Ms. Rockwell,

On behalf of Los Angeles Aerial Rapid Transit (LA ART), we would first like to thank you and your colleagues at the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) for your partnership as we work together to bring a zero-emission permanent transit link via an aerial rapid transit system to Dodger Stadium. As you know, the preferred alignment has now been identified after public input from the fall 2020 Notice of Preparation scoping process. That alignment, referenced as the Broadway Alignment, travels north from Metro's Union Station along Alameda Street to an intermediate LA ART station proposed adjacent to Metro's Chinatown L Line (Gold) station, and then flying directly adjacent to Metro's tracks adjacent to the Los Angeles State Historic Park, before crossing above North Broadway and along Bishops Road to the Dodger Stadium property.

During the Notice of Preparation scoping process, we received comments about the potential to provide increased transit access to several communities and parks in close proximity to the proposed route. Such community access supports LA ART's and Metro's shared objective to improve connections for regional public transit access by connecting LA ART to Union Station and the growing Metro transit system so that in addition to Dodger fans, improved transit access will be provided for community residents and businesses, as well as park visitors, to enhance the viability of public transit as an additional mobility option. Metro's Transit to Parks program also identifies the potential for Metro system riders from other areas of Los Angeles to

take transit to parks including Elysian Park and Los Angeles State Historic Park.

LA ART's primary goal is to provide service to Dodger games and stadium events, estimated at approximately 100 days per year, mostly in afternoon and evening hours. This goal also maximizes the emission reduction benefits of the LA ART project by replacing automobile trips that are currently utilized for stadium access through adjacent local communities (targeting replacement of 3,000 car trips per event day). To ensure convenient access for event attendees during those pre- and post-event times, LA ART anticipates coordinating special fares for system access reserved for event attendees including time-window ticket reservations.

In addition to event service, LA ART would continue operations daily and provide first/last mile transit service connections to/from the Metro system in communities adjacent to the LA ART route. To that end, we have been working with Metro staff to explore the viability of ensuring that outside of event times, residents and employees of businesses in adjacent communities can ride the system at an affordable fare to access Metro's regional transit system (the "Community Access Program"). We recognize that the Historic Cultural North Neighborhood Council encompasses the route and many adjacent neighborhoods. We are also reaching out to local businesses and institutions, meeting recently with the Chinatown Business Improvement District as well as tenants and institutions in El Pueblo, for example, and will ensure that employees of such businesses and institutions are also included in the Community Access Program. Accordingly, attached is a map with proposed boundaries to identify the locations where this special program will apply for LA ART access outside of event-day periods (the "Community Access Program Area") (see attached map).

Recognizing that the LA ART project will need to reach operational coordination agreements with Metro, including to encourage seamless transfers from Metro's regional transit hub at Union Station to the LA ART system, we propose that outside of event-day periods, residents and employees of businesses located within the Community Access Program Area should be able to utilize their Metro system access pass or individual fare in order to also utilize the LA ART system at no additional cost. If an individual already utilizes one of Metro's special fare offerings (e.g., LIFE program fares, etc.) to encourage transit access for which many Community Access Program Area residents are already eligible, including for seniors and students, or if Metro implements its *Fareless System Initiative,* LA ART access would be consistent with such programs. Coordinating with Metro staff who have developed other innovative transit access programs, we believe this approach is technically feasible. Importantly, it provides significant equity benefits: in addition to reducing emissions in the area adjacent to the LA ART route, the LA ART project can enhance mobility for local residents, including those with limited financial resources and no access to a vehicle.

We respectfully request that Metro work with LA ART to determine the details so that under the Community Access Program, we can ensure LA ART access and seamless transfers between LA ART and the Metro system on the same terms available to Metro riders. Your consideration is very much appreciated, as this offer to provide communities adjacent to LA ART with affordable and enhanced mobility options is consistent with our shared goals including cleaner air, a thriving economy, and improving equity in Los Angeles.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Rivera
Vice President, External Affairs

Cc: David Grannis
Lucinda Starrett, Esq.
Beth Gordie, Esq.

LA ART Community Access Program Area (as proposed June 2021)
DODGER STADIUM
SOLANO CANYON
LOS ANGELES RIVER
DODGER STADIUM STATION
LA STATE HISTORIC PARK
VICTOR HEIGHTS
MISSION JUNCTION
CHINATOWN / STATE PARK STATION
CHINATOWN
WILLIAM MEAD HOMES
EL PUEBLO
ALAMEDA STATION
LA ART ROUTE
ALAMEDA ST
UNION STATION
LOS ANGELES RIVER
110
101

Attachment C

- Virtual Open House during entire Scoping Period
    - 741 visitors
- Virtual Scoping Meeting
    - 75 attendees
- Metro Website
- Project Website
    - 4,617 Users
- NOP Mailing
    - 1,312 – 500 owners and occupants
    - 132 – agency and interested party mailing list
- NOP Print Advertisements
    - LA Times
    - Chinese Daily
    - La Opinion
- ARTT Mailer
    - 1,312 – 500 owners and occupants
    - 132 – agencies and interested parties
- Social Media
    - Instagram – 5 posts
    - Twitter – 6 posts, with 30 re-tweets from other users
- E-Blasts
    - 5 E-blasts, approx. 3,250 total emails sent (cumulative)
- Project Briefings
    - Stakeholders and public sector leadership
- NOP Total Comments
    - 303
    - 65 – Virtual Open House
    - 51 – Virtual Scoping Meeting
    - 11 – Verbal
    - 40 – Written
    - 185 – Emails to Metro

LA ART

Metro EMC Meeting

June 17, 2021

LA ART offers environmental and safety benefits

High-Capacity, Zero-Emission, Quiet Operation

- LA ART's system capacity can move 8,000 to 10,000 people to/ from each Dodger game using environmentally friendly, zero-emission technology
- Aerial technology offers wonderful views of Los Angeles with quiet operations

Reduce Congestion and GHG Emissions, Improve Safety and Air Quality

- LA ART's capacity could replace 3,000 cars trips to/from Stadium events to ease congestion, including on neighborhood streets and SR-110
- Reductions in VMT and congestion lead to reduced GHG emissions and improved air quality and safety
- The emission reductions benefit communities burdened by pollution

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LA ART offers many community benefits

Provide Community Access

- Operate daily to connect communities from Elysian Park to Union Station, including El Pueblo, Chinatown, Mission Junction, and Solano Canyon

Increase Park Access

- Provide a transit connection to Elysian Park and at Los Angeles State Historic Park

Link Chinatown and the Los Angeles State Historic Park

- Create a pedestrian link between Metro's L Line (Gold) Chinatown Station and the Park, including landscape and hardscape improvements and shade structures

Connect the Los Angeles State Historic Park and North Broadway

- Support State Park's proposed but unfunded pedestrian/bicycle bridge to North Broadway

Enhance visibility and increase visitors to El Pueblo and Chinatown

- Proximity of LA ART to El Pueblo and Chinatown encourages visitors to support local businesses and cultural institutions, and encourage Dodger fans to dine in local restaurants before games

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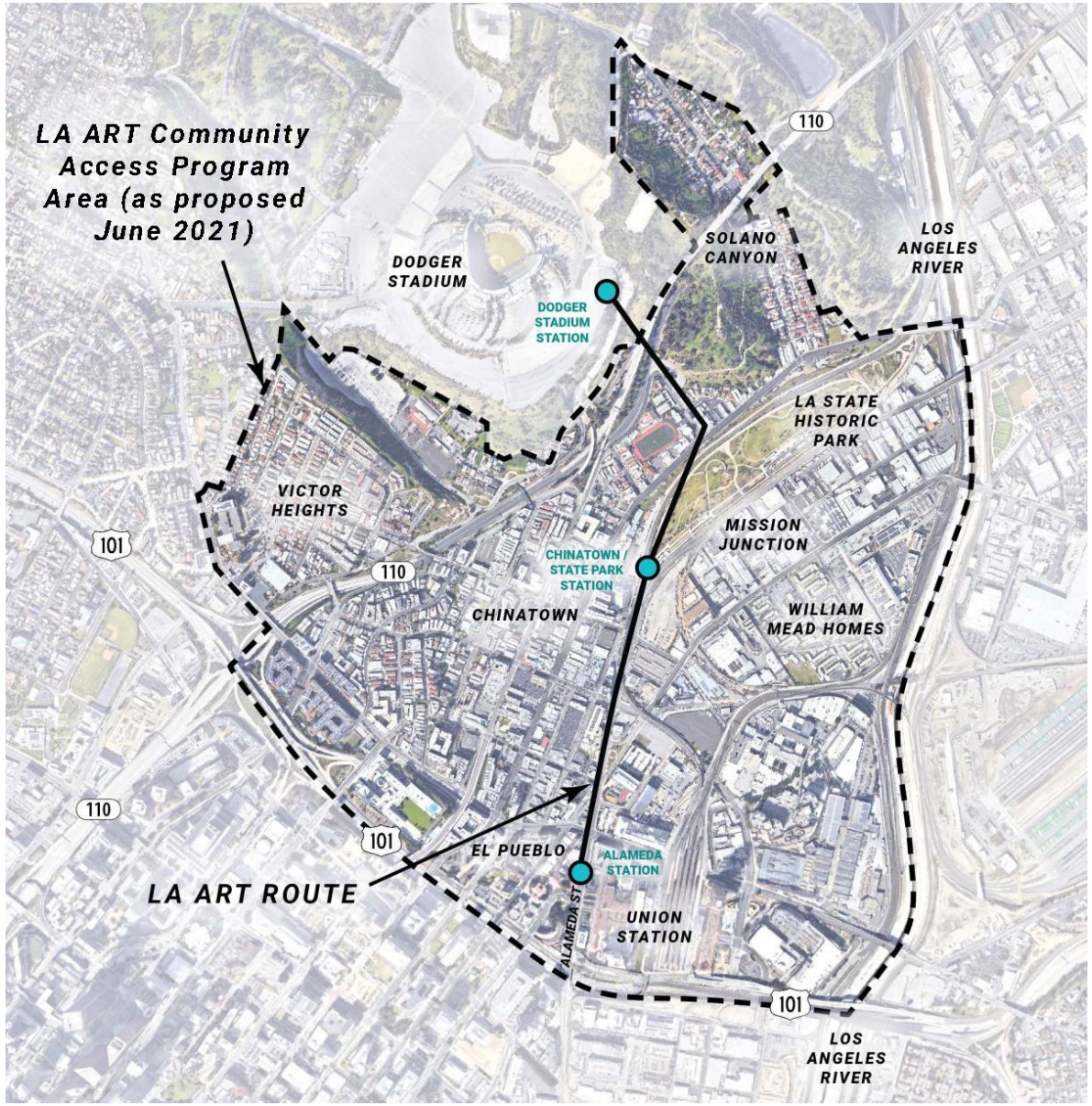
LA ART is committed to providing accessible fares to encourage fan and community ridership



- Fan ridership will be encouraged during event periods (before and after events), likely with time-reserved tickets coordinated with event attendance
- Important to maximize emission reduction benefits and traffic reduction, including transfers from transit
- For the majority of daily operations, for community ridership, LA ART has proposed to Metro that residents and employees of businesses in adjacent communities could utilize their Metro system access for LA ART system rides (LA ART Community Access Program)

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LA ART conducted robust outreach during the NOP Scoping Period and project updates respond to stakeholder comments

Overview of NOP Scoping Period Community Outreach

- Virtual Open House during entire Scoping Period (740+ visits)
- Virtual Scoping Meeting (75 attendees)
- Metro Website and LA ART Website (4,615+ visits)
- NOP Mailing and ARTT Mailer (2,880+ mailed)
- NOP Print Advertisements
  - LA Times
  - Chinese Daily
  - La Opinion
- Social Media, E-Blasts (approx. 3,300 posts/emails)
- Project Briefings
  - Stakeholders and Public Sector Leadership

Key thematic comments during NOP Scoping Period

Support Broadway v. Spring Street Alignment

- Support for Broadway Alignment over Spring Street Alignment
- ~75% of comments could support or do support the Broadway Alignment

Support Chinatown Station

- Requests for a "Chinatown Station" closer to the core of Chinatown
- Support for easy connection to Metro's L Line Station

Design

- Concern about size and scale of stations
- Requests for a revised station design that acknowledges the context of the surrounding area

Support Accessible Fares

- Supports accessible fares for local community members

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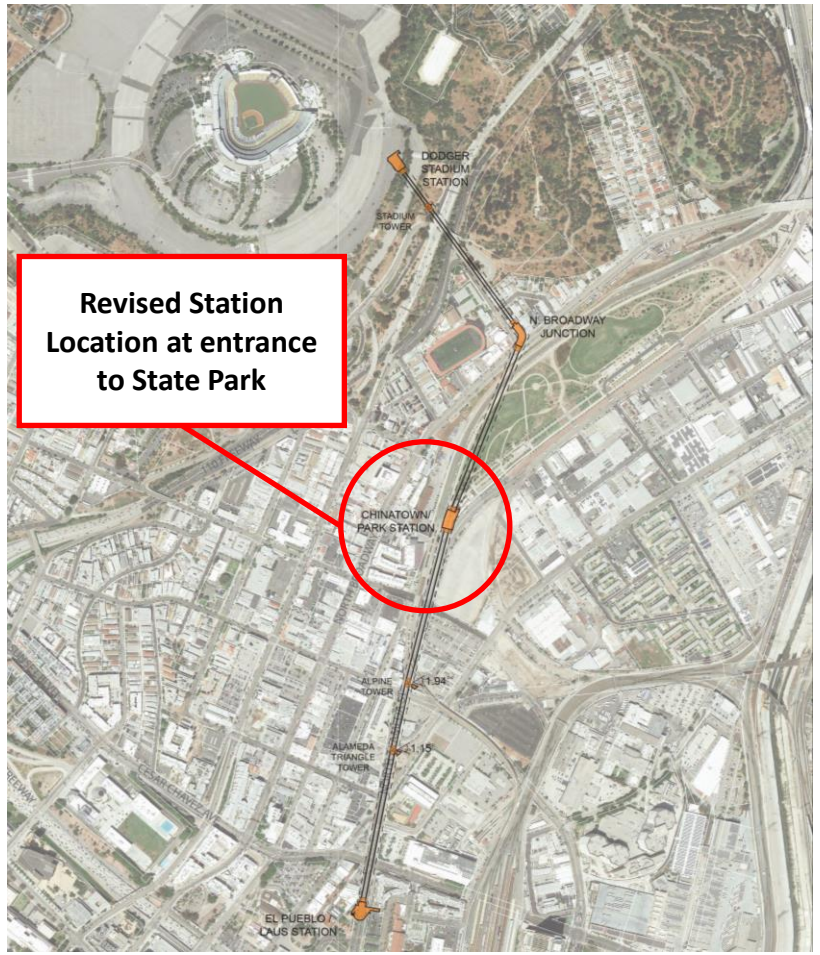
In response to stakeholder comments, the Broadway Alignment will be analyzed in the Draft EIR

Spring Street Alignment



Broadway Alignment

- The Broadway Alignment is primary alignment in the Draft EIR, rather than Spring Street
- Broadway Alignment includes proposed station to respond to stakeholders requests for an intermediate "Chinatown Station"
- Responds to Metro request for a closer connection to the L Line (Gold) Chinatown Station
- Provides access to Chinatown, Los Angeles State Historic Park, William Mead Homes, and the Los Angeles River

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The proposed Chinatown / State Parks Station is a short walk from the L Line (Gold) Chinatown Station

- Chinatown / State Parks Station and Metro's L Line Chinatown Station are approximately **500 feet apart**
- **Ground level walk about ~3 minutes** and does not require crossing any streets
  - With additional station walk time for platforms and vertical circulation, passenger can transfer in about 4-5 minutes
- Attractive ADA-compliant walking path for pedestrian transfers can be created including landscaping and driveway safety measures

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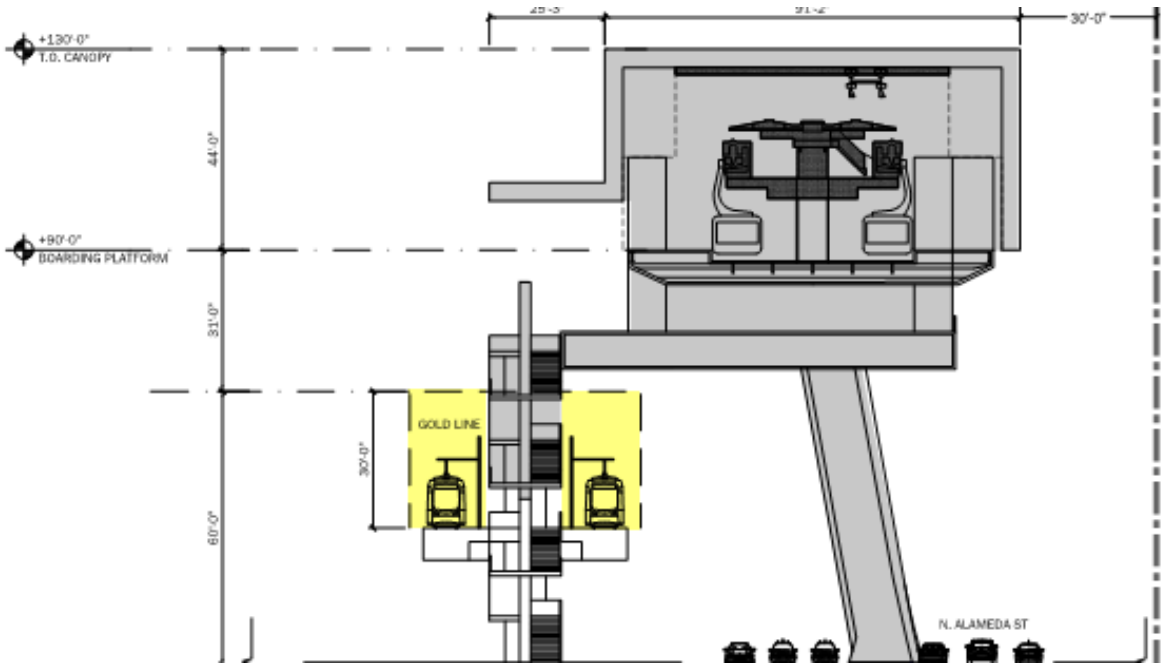
LA ART and Metro analyzed a direct connection to the L Line (Gold) Chinatown Station, which was found to be infeasible



Impacts and Required Coordination

- LA ART station would need to be located in Alameda near College Street, creating a large structure with height required above L Line
- With high location above Metro catenary system, platforms, vehicles, tracks and passengers, additional infrastructure would be needed to ensure protection from damage from above
- Insertion of stair between Metro's tracks would impact the foundation of the L Line Station
- L Line Station would need to be closed during construction requiring a "bus bridge"
- Future maintenance and repair activities would likely require closure of both Stations
- Ability of existing L Line platform and vertical circulation to handle passenger transfer capacity would require further study
- Metro bus stops at the L Line Station would likely need to be relocated

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The Chinatown/State Park Station will enhance pedestrian access to Chinatown and the L Line and provide Park amenities

Proposed Chinatown / State Park Station footprint with potential Park amenities

Walkway improvements along Alameda Street to connect from Metro's L Line (Gold) station to the Park

Proposed plaza and potential location for the Park's farmers market at base of Chinatown / State Park Station

View of Chinatown / State Park Station from the northern end of the Park

Potential restrooms and concession and seating improvements in the Park

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Potential public access improvements to Los Angeles State Historic Park

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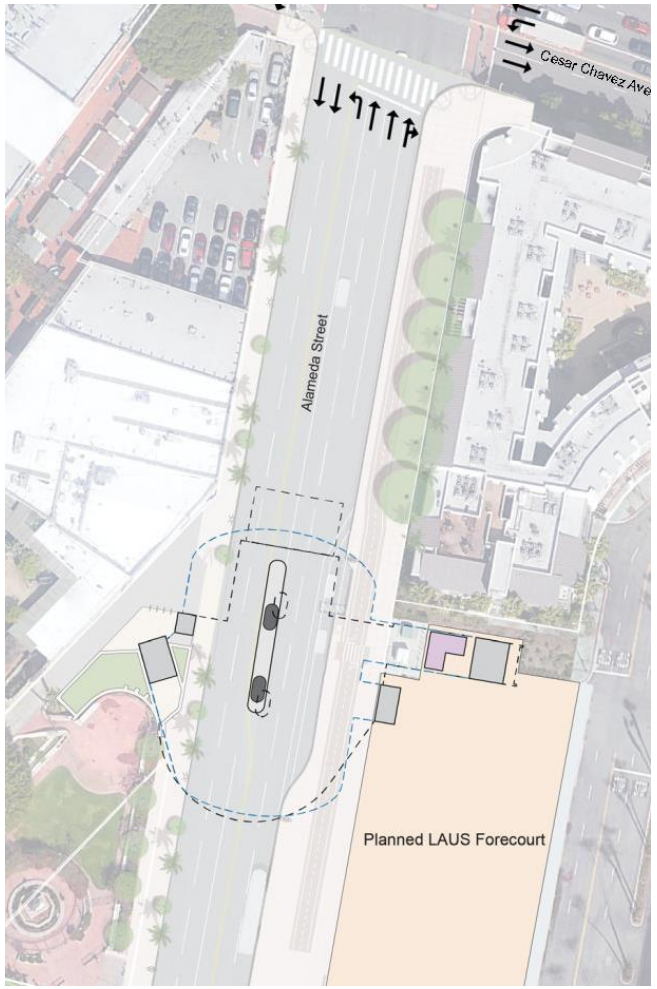
Redesigned Alameda Station considers the context of Union Station and El Pueblo



Potential pedestrian plaza at El Pueblo

View looking north towards Alameda Station along Alameda Street

View of Alameda Station through the planned Forecourt at Union Station

Station is not visible from Los Angeles Street looking towards Union Station

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Dodger Stadium Station will provide an improved pedestrian experience at Dodger Stadium

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Projected Project Review and Implementation Schedule[1]

- **Fall 2020** Notice of Preparation
- **Fall 2021** Draft EIR with Public Comment Period and Two Public Meetings
- **2022** Final EIR with Responses to Comments and Metro Board
- **2022 – 2023** Right of Way Approvals, Commencement of Construction Planning, and Financing Implementation Process
- **2024 – 2026** Financing Implementation, Bidding Process, and Construction
- **2026 – 2027** Completion of Construction, Commencement of System Testing and Inspections
- **2028** Commencement of Operations

[1] Subject to change; each step builds on successful/timely completion of prior tasks

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LA ART is underway with an active outreach program in Spring/Summer 2021

- **Community Meetings (June 3rd and 5th)** – over 100 participants
- **Door to Door Canvassing and Local Business Outreach**
- **Phone/Text Outreach, Mailers, Email Communication**
- **Additional Community Organization Briefings**
- **Social Media Communication/Friends of the Gondola**
- **Website Updates**
- **Print Advertisement** – LA Times, La Opinion, Chinese Daily

Metrics as of June 6

1300+

Individuals and businesses near route support project

Informational pamphlet being handed out in local communities available in Chinese, Spanish, and English

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