

Sepulveda Transit Corridor Project PDA LASRE Briefing – Sherman Oaks Neighborhood Council Stakeholder Meeting Minutes

Meeting Information:

Date:	Time:
January 4, 2024	6:30 PM – 8:30 PM
Location:	Call Info:
Sherman Oaks Library, 14245 Moorpark Street, Sherman Oaks	None

Attendee List:

Metro	LASRE Project Team
Mat Antonelli - Deputy Chief Program Management Officer	Michael Hoghooghi - Project Manager
Eimon Smith – Metro PgM Support	Girair Kotchian – Design Manager
	Mark Waier – Project Communications
Community Stakeholders	
Jeff Kalban, Chair, PLUM Committee	
Bob Anderson	
Tom Glick	
Jeffrey Hartsough	
Maria Pavlou Kalban	
Sue Steinberg	

Disclaimer:

Because Metro has not completed a CEQA review, the information contained herein does not constitute or evidence an approval by Metro of, or commitment of Metro to, any action for which prior environmental review is required under CEQA. Metro retains the absolute sole discretion to make decisions under CEQA, which discretion includes, without limitation (i) deciding not to proceed with the Project (known as the “no build” alternative) and (ii) deciding to approve the Project. There will be no approval or commitment by Metro regarding the development of the Project, unless and until Metro, as the Lead Agency, and based upon information resulting from the CEQA environmental review process, considers the impacts of the Project.

*For official information regarding the Project, please visit Metro’s project website:
<https://www.metro.net/projects/sepulvedacorridor/>*

Agenda:

A. Briefing Items

1.0 Introductions

2.0 Briefing: LASRE presented a slide show detailing the following MRT details:

- Project Overview
- Monorail/SkyRail Overview
- Alignment Alternatives
- Station Concepts
- Why LASRE is proposing SkyRail

3.0 Q & A: After the LASRE team presented, the Chair asked for the Councilmembers to give comments or questions to the LASRE team first. Once the Council completed their series of questions and comments, the Chair opened the meeting to questions from the attendees and members of the public present in the meeting.

Councilmember 1: Asked if Metro was going to include first/last mile (FLM) components in this project? LASRE responded that we connect with four Metro transit lines within the corridor, Metrolink at the Van Nuys Station, and numerous bus connections. FLM components would be evaluated through the project development process and made available to the public subject to Metro's outreach processes. LASRE designs would also support integration with other micro-mobility solutions in due course, in support of an integrated transit network for Los Angeles.

Councilmember 2: Will Alternatives 1-3 have to use eminent domain? LASRE responded that the alignment is predominately located in public right-of-way (ROW) but that there could be properties required along the alignment and at station areas. Potential property impacts would be outlined in the EIR; however, LASRE aims to minimize land acquisitions as much as possible.

Councilmember 3: "The Current Sherman Oaks Position is that they support Alternative 6 and that they have no position on the Monorail because they have not previously had a presentation from SkyRail. This could be changed after the council reflects on the conclusion of this presentation."

Councilmember 4: "I appreciate that the stations are not going to be in the middle of the freeway. And I appreciate that the Orange Line station connects to this system as well. Parking is key at the Orange Line Station. Noise is something that I am concerned with because this is a quiet mode of transportation compared with steel wheel options. I am concerned with heavy rail because of the noise."

LARSE responded that the straddle type monorails with rubber tires and the side skirts covering the bogies reduce sound significantly. The published MRT noise studies limit this to approx. 70dBa. Comparably, the background freeway noise from the I-405 corridor would likely be significantly higher.

“I appreciate the construction comments. Can this be built in multiple segments?”

LARSE responded that due to the way MRT projects have been developed, yes. LASRE would build this project in multiple segments concurrently and we have aggressive timelines to complete the project quickly. And since these projects never get cheaper over time, there are numerous motivations to finish the construction as quickly as possible. The Cairo monorail, for instance, consists of two independent lines, 108km approx. in total – about 68 miles, and the construction of the first line has taken about 2 years.

“I’ve heard that the EIR is going to be ready sometime maybe by the end of the year. How long will the public have to review and respond? The literature online states that it will be 45 days. Could we request more time?”

The Metro representative responded that we are unsure how long Metro will give for the EIR review at this point; however, given the complexity of this project Metro would factor that into their consideration.

Councilmember 5: What is the comparison to ridership on the Red Line now? Would SkyRail be able to cope with the expected capacity.

LARSE responded that we cannot formally comment on the ridership on the Red Line since those details are not part of the PDA information; However, based on anecdotal information, it seems that they are accommodating (roughly) 3,000 pphpd (passengers per hour per direction) demand. LASRE designs exceed the demand forecasts specified by Metro for the Sepulveda Transit Corridor. The monorail can address the ultimate capacity demand for this line in excess of 24,000 pphpd - significantly exceeding the demand for the project.

SkyRail is not capacity limited within the confines of the project. Other lines built internationally with the same technology and similar topology carry more than 48,000 pphpd. SkyRail can provide ample capacity to scale up or down based on demand of the line.

Councilmember 5: Can you talk about the price differences with the alternatives?

LARSE responded that cost information is not available at this time. Metro would share these details in due course as part of the EIR process.

“What are your biggest challenges with SkyRail?”

Frankly, we do not have any issues technically speaking. As engineers and designers our mission is to address any perceived, or known issues, and the team has already addressed such concerns – even at this early stage of design. Modern monorails, such as SkyRail, have been service-proven in many countries and surpass all performance expectations in terms of passenger capacity, comfort, safety, and security.

The only challenge we face, if it can be called as such, is informing this public about how Monorail as a technology (SkyRail) is able to be built very quickly and sustainably, how affordable they are in their life-cycle costs, and they would provide Angelenos with a better and more pleasant journey experience.

After the Council asked for the members of the public to ask their questions and provided comments, the Chair started to ask for speakers to speak.

Several attendees admittedly expressed their positions and/or opinions based on their individual knowledge of the technology, geography, or the project information available to-date, as summarized below.

Speaker 1: The name or the comment on the card were not legible.

Speaker 2: “I am for a heavy rail option because it will be better for the San Fernando Valley, and it will provide better bicycle facilities. In case of an emergency there is an exit on a heavy rail, not on monorail.”

Speaker 3 (Anthony Yang): “On Alt 3 everything is elevated except the part going to UCLA, why?” LARSE responded that the area near UCLA is particularly difficult to access due to development over the years. LASRE evaluated a range of project concepts to connect to UCLA that would enable acceptable journey times to passengers for this destination in conformance to the project requirements. We wanted to study multiple options.

Speaker 4: “As someone who does not own a car; I want something that is designed to get me there fast. This project is designed for tourists and not a commuter.”

Speaker 5: “I am speaking on behalf of the Westside Democrats and want to show support for Alt 4-6.”

Speaker 6 (Matt Harris): “The UCLA tunneling option negates any cost savings that this project would have. Also in emergencies, this will take forever once a tire pops.”

Speaker 7 (Bart Reed): “This is an investment for over 200 years. People that use transit, walk. They need to connect to places that allow people to connect.”

Speaker 8 (Richard): “I am a republican and want to offer my services for anyone that wants to do a PRA.”

Speaker 9: “My question has to do with the G-Line. People are going to have to walk to it, so how will that work?” LASRE responded that the Monorail Station provides a direct transfer to the G line BRT Station and this information will be included in the EIR.

Speaker 10 (Ted): “I am a long time Sherman Oaks Resident that takes the 405 all the time. I would like to see presentations on Alt 4-6.” The chair responded that they would try to get the other alternatives to do a presentation.

Speaker 11: “Can you comment to the discrepancy that this will serve less people, as per the Daily News?” LARSE responded that all the alternatives have different ridership estimates and that these are just early estimates based on the Metro model. LASRE added that the ‘catchment for the stations’ would be further amended/optimized in the later stages of the development – as this is frequently done in other international (arguably in domestic as well) projects.

Speaker 12: “We should bore a tunnel and disturb no one when this will disturb lots of people if it goes down the 405.”

Speaker 13: “What is the emergency protocol for this in case of certain events or failures?” LARSE responded that SkyRail designs conform to relevant safety and security standards set for public transit and that all such details would be reviewed and agreed with the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) and LA Metro having jurisdiction on safety certification of such programs. LASRE has already submitted its operation procedures for anticipated scenarios to Metro and that they would be refined and updated as the design progression continues.

The Chair ended the speaker's comments to complete the agenda and close out the meeting at 7:50 PM as the venue would be closing at 8 PM, sharp.