ITEM #5

# Community Planning Bureau

City Hall • 200 N. Spring Street, Room 667 • Los Angeles, CA 90012

LOS ANGELES CITY PLANNING DEPARTMENT

September 8, 2009

TO: Ad Hoc River Committee
City Council

FROM: Vince Bertoni
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Department of City Planning

SUBJECT: **CALIFORNIA HIGH SPEED RAIL ALIGNMENT AND STATION OPTIONS FOR THE CITY OF LOS ANGELES**

On May 6, 2009, the City Council adopted a motion of the Ad Hoc River Committee instructing the Department of City Planning to work with the Department of Transportation, and any other appropriate City departments, to assess the impacts of the state high speed rail project on adopted goals and policies of plans that fall within the proposed routes. The motion also directed City Planning to work with other departments to establish a cohesive City vision and official City position on high speed rail alignments. This report is the result of a collaborative effort by City staff to evaluate the proposed high speed rail project, and includes input from the Department of City Planning, Department of Transportation, Department of Public Works – Bureau of Engineering, Department of General Services, and the Community Redevelopment Agency of the City of Los Angeles.

**Project Summary**

The California High Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA) has released two draft Alternatives Analysis reports that assess a series of high speed rail options through the City limits, with various segments analyzed in aerial, at-grade, trench, and tunnel configurations. The routing of the proposed rail line near Downtown Los Angeles generally follows existing rail corridors, entering the City of Los Angeles at the southeast border with the City of Vernon and running parallel to the Los Angeles River, north to the City's boundary with Glendale.

**Summary of Recommendations and Next Steps**

Upon review of the draft Alternatives Analysis reports, Staff concludes that the CHSRA should continue to study two viable alternatives for a Downtown Los Angeles station location as well as continue to analyze multiple alternatives for alignments through the City in their upcoming Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIS/DEIR). Staff has also requested that the CHSRA respond to a number of questions regarding the project, which would help inform a discussion of potential impacts. We understand that Council District 1 has coordinated with the CHSRA to have a presentation on these and other questions at the September 14, 2009 meeting of the City Council's Ad Hoc River Committee.

The CHSRA is working to finalize the draft Alternatives Analysis reports as soon as possible, based upon input from local jurisdictions and agencies, and is anticipating the release of the DEIS/DEIR for the LA to Anaheim project segment in Spring 2010. Staff recommends that the City continue to work

with the CHSRA to refine alignment alternatives and recommend mitigations for any potential negative impacts that may be identified as part of the environmental analysis. In addition, Staff has identified the need for the City to develop a vision for high speed rail and to engage in more detailed station area planning along with the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) and the CHSRA. In the short term, staff has also identified the need to continue to coordinate with Metro, DOT, BOE, GSD and the Police and Fire Departments to further identify issues associated with the potential Union Station East/Vignes Street Station. In the longer term, the existing Alameda District Specific Plan may need to be amended and/or expanded in the future to appropriately coordinate development in the vicinity of a future high speed rail station in Downtown. Also, future planning efforts will need to be coordinated with the selection of a high speed rail station location in or near Sylmar.

**Requests to California High Speed Rail Authority**

- Continue study of both the Union Station aerial station option and a second station option, described herein as the Union Station East/Vignes option, to be located east of Patsaouras Transit Plaza with the shortest pedestrian connection to Patsaouras Plaza;

- Continue study of additional alignments approaching each of these station locations from the south and north; and,

- Include a consolidated trench option for study in the DEIS/DEIR for the alignment sections from 1st Street to 7th Street, and from the Metrolink bridge north of Union Station to the 110 Freeway continuing north to Rio de Los Angeles State Park.

**Recommended Council Actions**

Staff requests that the Council provide direction as follows:

- Direct Staff to continue working with the CHSRA as a participating agency.

- Direct Staff to continue working with City departments to explore the possibility of a Union Station East/Vignes Station.

- Direct Staff to continue working with other City departments to provide a formal comment letter to the CHSRA on the recently released Draft Alternatives Analysis reports.

- Direct the Department of City Planning to work with the Department of Transportation to explore hiring a consultant to assist with the preparation of comments on project alternatives and the development of feasible mitigation options.

**Report Overview**

Staff has prepared this report as an initial assessment of the impacts of the proposed project on the City's adopted plans which express official policy objectives for the areas adjacent to and surrounding the project corridor. These plans include the following:

- Framework and Transportation Elements of the General Plan;
- Central City North, Boyle Heights, and Northeast Los Angeles Community Plans;
- Alameda District Specific Plan;
- Adelante Eastside, Central Industrial, and Little Tokyo Redevelopment Plans;
- Los Angeles River Improvement Overlay;
- Los Angeles River Revitalization Master Plan; and,
- Cornfield Arroyo Seco Specific Plan (currently under development).

These planning documents provide a framework for evaluating the proposed high speed rail project alignments in consideration of the potential impacts on the City's related goals and objectives, especially as they pertain to the following:

1) mobility and transportation connectivity;
2) economic development, and
3) river revitalization and access.

This report is structured to provide a description of station options and alternative alignments, followed by a discussion of the potential impacts of each on these policy areas.

**1. STATION LOCATION:**
**Downtown Los Angeles**

***Description:***
The draft Alternatives Analysis report for the Los Angeles to Anaheim segment analyzes three options for a Downtown Los Angeles station location and configuration:

- Aerial station built atop the existing rail tracks at Union Station;
- Deep tunnel station built under the Metro Rail subway tracks at Union Station; and
- Trench station built to the east of Union Station (also known as the "West Bank" alternative due to its location near the western edge of the Los Angeles River).

The draft Alternatives Analysis recommends that only one of these station options, the aerial tracks at Union Station, be carried forward to be analyzed in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (DEIS/DEIR). The report concludes that the deep tunnel station option poses major constructability issues and is therefore not practicable or feasible, and that a West Bank trench station poses "significant impacts to Metro and City of Los Angeles services and substantial costs for ROW acquisition and relocation" (Alternatives Analysis Report, page 86). The analysis did conclude, however, that a West Bank trench station would have a smaller capital cost ($506 million) than an aerial station at Union Station ($590 million).

In the City Planning Department's letter to the California High Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA) dated August 4, 2009, it was conveyed that the Department of City Planning and Department of Transportation believe that at least two station options and alignments should continue to be studied for Downtown Los Angeles. In the letter, the West Bank station option was specifically requested to be carried forward as a second alternative to be evaluated in the DEIS /DEIR, while additional station options and configurations were undergoing review by City staff as to their possible viability.

Subsequent to the issuance of this request, staff from various City departments, including Transportation, Public Works/Engineering, and City Planning, as well as the Community Redevelopment Agency, have identified a station alternative that would be located farther west of the West Bank station as described in the Alternatives Analysis report, and near the east side of Union Station's Patsaouras Transit Plaza and Vignes Street. This alternative location, which will be referred to in this document as the "Union Station East/Vignes Option" and which may be feasible as an aerial or trench station, was not assessed in the draft Alternatives Analysis but is proposed to be included in the City's comment letter to the CHSRA for their additional consideration in the DEIS/DEIR. This report will primarily focus on the need to include two alternatives for California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) purposes and a policy discussion of the following two station locations:

- Aerial station built atop the existing rail tracks at Union Station (Union Station aerial option); and
- Aerial or trench station located to the east of Patsaouras Transit Plaza (Union Station East/Vignes option)

***Policy Discussion:***
*Mobility and Transportation Connectivity Impacts of Station Options*

Both the Union Station aerial option and Union Station East/Vignes option would be able to achieve the City's goals for multimodal connectivity, with the primary difference being a vertical or horizontal connection needed to allow for convenient transfers between high speed rail and regional and local transit systems.

The aerial configuration above the existing tracks at Union Station could be well integrated through new escalators and elevators that could reach Metrolink, Amtrak, and Metro Rail platforms on lower levels of the station. With closer proximity to historic Union Station's Alameda Street frontage, this alternative would also provide for the most direct pedestrian connections with the rest of Downtown. The Union Station Aerial option would clearly reinforce Union Station as the transit hub of the City and the region, meeting objectives of the Framework Element, Transportation Element, and the Alameda District Specific Plan. Some areas of concern, however, relate to potential capacity constraints at the site and the scalability of the station in its existing context. CHSRA has alleviated some of these concerns by modeling hypothetical scenarios for expansion of the station to the south, across the 101 Freeway near Commercial Street, where a third entry could be constructed to provide new vehicular parking and loading and pedestrian ingress and egress into Union Station via an elevated pedestrian bridge over the freeway.

The Union Station East/Vignes concept could also meet the objectives of the General Plan if new horizontal pedestrian connections were constructed over or under Vignes Street in order to provide high speed rail passengers with direct access to existing Union Station. Development of this site can be envisioned as a horizontal expansion of Union Station. The distance from high speed rail tracks to existing Union Station transit connections could potentially be reduced depending on the exact placement of station platforms to the east of Patsaouras Transit Plaza and Vignes Street. The Union Station East/Vignes option may require the acquisition of portions of two publicly owned parcels. Depending on the size of this station site, and whether it would require partial or full utilization of the City-owned site on the south side of Cesar Chavez Avenue and the Metro-owned site on the north, a new high speed rail station at this location could be scalable over time and allow for the development of expanded passenger loading, drop-off, and support facilities to serve station passengers as well as an expanded footprint of the current Union Station property.

Staff recommends that the City formally ask the CHSRA to analyze this station option as part of the DEIS/DEIR currently underway, in order to fully identify any potential impacts of this alternative and to compare with the impacts of an aerial alternative atop Union Station. Preliminary issues related to a Union Station East/Vignes concept include potential impacts to the City's Piper Technical Facility and the Metro Regional Rebuild Center as well as the reconfiguration of the street network to facilitate site development. Also, this option would place the station slightly farther from Downtown L.A.'s central business district.

In the full environmental review, the CHSRA could assess whether this option would require a partial or full relocation or reconfiguration of existing facilities at the Piper Technical Facility and the Metro Regional Rebuild Center sites, as well as identify possible mitigation measures in conjunction with the City and Metro. Further detail on the possible configuration of the station site would also allow for an assessment of necessary street improvements and/or reconfiguration to ensure maximum connectivity and appropriate facilities for vehicle drop-off and loading.

The additional distance of the station to the central business district should be studied for any potential impacts on system ridership and connectivity with local transportation systems. A horizontal connection to Union Station East/Vignes may or may not be longer or less desirable than a vertical connection at Union Station. If the Union Station East/Vignes concept is carried forward as a viable alternative to be studied in the DEIS/DEIR, this could be analyzed in further detail to ensure that a new high speed rail station meets both local and regional goals of creating a seamless multimodal transportation hub in Downtown of Los Angeles

*River Revitalization Impacts of Station Options*

In the immediate station vicinity, the Los Angeles River (River) flows several hundred to a thousand feet to the east and thus is not as directly affected by this component of the project. A Union Station

East/Vignes concept may present more opportunity than the Union Station aerial concept for improved pedestrian connections to the River, but this depends more on how the alignments approach the two station locations from the north and south along the banks of the River than the station location itself. This will be discussed in further detail below.

In May 2007, the City Council approved the Los Angeles River Revitalization Plan (LARRMP) which set forth goals, policies, and objectives that envisioned the restoration of a functional ecosystem and a continuous River Greenway and identified opportunities to connect neighborhoods to the River. The LARRMP was not yet adopted when the high speed rail project's program level EIS/EIR was approved by the CHSRA in 2005, so this is new information that the project level DEIS/DEIR should address in both the Los Angeles to Anaheim segment and the Los Angeles to Palmdale segment. The DEIS/DEIR should identify mitigation measures that promote the goals outlined in the LARRMP. The high speed rail project provides an opportunity to realize the City's intent to implement the LARRMP through partnerships with other government agencies.

*Economic Development Impacts of Station Options*

In the station vicinity, both the Union Station aerial option and Union Station East/Vignes options would provide tremendous potential for the City to realize economic development goals for the surrounding area. A central tenet of the Framework Element of the General Plan is for transit stations to function as a primary focal point of the City's development. The existing Alameda District Specific Plan has envisioned significant new development at and around Union Station that could be advanced with the addition of high speed rail service to this site. The Central City Community Plan also envisions a future "Park 101" freeway cap park that would help to knit back together the historic neighborhoods surrounding Union Station and the adjacent Civic Center which were divided by the construction of the 101 Freeway. The Union Station East/Vignes station option also has the potential to create new economic development opportunities as part of an expanded redevelopment on the east side of Union Station. New high speed rail service to Downtown L.A. will support and enhance the following objectives of the Transportation Element:

- Provide improved transportation services to support Citywide economic development activities and related economic revitalization initiatives.

- Actively seek opportunities for joint development projects which integrate land use and transportation facilities.

Through transformative design and master planning, the Union Station East/Vignes station concept could be linked in with Union Station to the west while also allowing for redevelopment in conjunction with the Los Angeles River Revitalization Master Plan (LARRMP). The existing Alameda District Specific Plan could potentially be expanded to cover a new, enlarged transit center that encompasses both historic Union Station and a new high speed rail station, with a renewed focus on regional transit, jobs, housing, and the Los Angeles River Greenway as envisioned in the LARRMP. Both station locations seem to be able to advance economic development objectives as adopted by the City in the Framework Element, Transportation Element, Community Plan, and Specific Plan for the area.

**2. ALIGNMENTS: LOS ANGELES TO ANAHEIM SEGMENT**
**Alternatives from Hobart Yard/City of Vernon to 1st Street Bridge**

***Description:***
The high speed rail alignment that is proposed to be carried forward in the DEIS/DEIR would enter the City from the southeast in an aerial configuration on the south side of the intersection of Washington Boulevard and Grande Vista Avenue, after leaving the Hobart Yard in the City of Vernon. This aerial track section would cross the Los Angeles River (River) on a new bridge to be constructed south of the historic Olympic Boulevard Bridge. Once on the west bank of the river, the high speed rail alignment would transition to an at-grade configuration along the existing rail right-of-way and pass under the historic bridges at Olympic, 7th Street, 6th Street, and 4th Street. The alignment would head north to a high speed rail station at or near Union Station, as discussed above.

A second alternative was also studied for this same segment that would have required a new aerial structure to cross over each of the historic bridges along this part of the River; however, this alternative was not recommended to be carried forward to the DEIS/DEIR due to the tremendous visual and historic impacts that would be created by spanning over all the River's bridges along this segment.

Staff has identified a third option for this segment, which was not considered in the AA report and which may warrant further study. This third option would entail the consolidation of rail and utility lines into a below grade trench where it abuts the west bank of the River from Olympic Boulevard to 1st Street. A rail trench, which could be capped over in sections, would reduce the visual and physical obtrusion of introducing high speed rail on this important corridor while further mitigating safety and noise concerns.

***Policy Discussion:***
*River Revitalization Impacts along the Hobart Yard/City of Vernon to 1st Street Bridge Alignment*

The City of Los Angeles has adopted a number of plans and policies aimed at expanding open space opportunities and revitalizing the River as a green corridor, particularly in the vicinity of Downtown Los Angeles. Today, the River corridor through Downtown is lined with passenger and freight rail lines, as well as major utility lines, rail maintenance facilities, and industrial land uses. The River Greenway proposed in the LARRMP calls for a dedicated bicycle path on the west bank of the River and a multi-use trail on the east bank. To ensure consistency with the LARRMP, connections from the surrounding communities to the Greenway should not be impeded and opportunities should be sought that enhance and facilitate access to this important regional asset.

In addition to calling for a continuous River Greenway, the LARRMP foresees providing green arterial connections to the River and increasing direct pedestrian and visual access to the River. The proposed at-grade configuration of the high speed rail alignment along existing rail rights-of-way in this area would do the least to promote goals of improved River access and would simply prolong the existing unfavorable condition by placing what could be considered additional obstacles between communities and the River.

The proposed alignment through this corridor raises questions as to how the potential placement of new rail infrastructure along the riverbank might enhance or hinder the City's ability to meet River revitalization goals. City staff, in conjunction with other agencies that are involved in implementing the LARRMP, recommend that the CHSRA consider the viability of a trench option where the alignment abuts the River. This corridor already contains a convergence of rail and utility lines that pose challenges to River access. A trench that consolidates this infrastructure should be considered as a means to lessen the cumulative visual, economic, and environmental impacts that the addition of high speed rail service is likely to exacerbate.

Nonetheless, the CHSRA-proposed at-grade alignment under the existing bridges may still allow for opportunities to provide access from these bridges down to the River. For example, a land bridge might be constructed atop various portions of the existing at-grade rail tracks to cover over them and thereby remove these challenging barriers to River access. The high speed rail Alternatives Analysis report does not present either of these as a component of the project, but neither does the recommended alignment appear to preclude these access improvements from being constructed. The DEIS/DEIR should address this issue and consider possible mitigation measures that address River access.

*Economic Development Impacts along the Hobart Yard/City of Vernon to 1st Street Bridge Alignment*

The high speed rail project alignment should also be evaluated in the context of the City's economic development strategies for the surrounding area. The Department of City Planning, and the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA/LA), at the direction of the Mayor's office, completed an Industrial Land Use Policy Project (ILUP) in 2008 that reinforced the economic importance of retaining existing industrial lands and set forth a series of strategies to restrain future pressures to convert such lands to non-industrial uses. The ILUP, in conjunction with the development of the LARRMP, resulted in the vision of a Clean Tech Corridor for the stretch of industrial lands along the River from Washington Boulevard north to the Arroyo Seco confluence. The introduction of clean technologies to this area acknowledges that the goals of both the LARRMP and the ILUP are not mutually exclusive; and that industrial uses, especially those of clean technologies can co-exist with the limited residential uses that exist in the Artists-in-Residence District, can enhance future pedestrian and bicycle connections to the River, and can include stormwater mitigations that would improve the water quality of stormwater runoff and assist in the restoration of the currently degraded ecosystem. The Corridor is anchored on its southern boundary by a Clean Tech Manufacturing Center which is currently being developed by CRA/LA and which will serve as a model for future clean technology oriented developments.

The majority of the land immediately to the west of the proposed alignment is zoned for industrial uses, but the Artists-in-Residence District, stretching from 1st Street to 7th Street along the west bank of the River, encompasses a number of existing and planned live-work residential projects, consistent with the goals of the Central City North Community Plan. The Framework Element of the City's General Plan supports the connection of neighborhoods to regional open space resources such as the River Greenway, and the Central City North Community Plan contains a number of goals related to river revitalization efforts, including the acquisition of vacant land for open space and the utilization of public lands along the River for recreation and pedestrian and bicycle access.

In this corridor, the high speed rail project passes through or directly adjacent to the following CRA/LA project areas: Adelante Eastside, Central Industrial, and Little Tokyo. Each redevelopment project area has defined geographic boundaries and a redevelopment plan to guide revitalization of blighted areas and assurance that the blighting conditions, once removed, will not return. Although these plans did not directly anticipate the high speed rail project, they articulate a redevelopment vision for these areas which the project should help to implement. The massive investment in infrastructure that will come to these areas via the new rail system could be a very positive catalyst for achieving redevelopment goals. Some questions however remain as to how the proposed alignments might negatively impact economic development goals, including: 1) how the construction and operation of the system will affect sensitive uses in the vicinity, such as residential units and cultural landmarks, in terms of noise, vibration, and aesthetics (e.g., shade and shadow); 2) how the project will affect future use of the surrounding land; and, 3) how right-of-way acquisitions may impact key development sites or displace existing job-producing uses. The City and CRA/LA should continue to work with the CHSRA to ascertain and recommend mitigations for any potential impacts as part of the DEIS/DEIR currently underway.

**Alternatives from 1st Street Bridge to Downtown Los Angeles Station**

***Description:***
From the 1st Street Bridge to a new Downtown Los Angeles high speed rail station north of the 101 Freeway, different alignments would be required in order to access each of the two proposed station options already discussed in this report. The Union Station aerial option takes the station's southern approach alignment into an aerial configuration that would cross over the 1st Street Bridge and veer to the northwest and away from the river's edge. The aerial structure would cross diagonally over the intersection of Vignes Street and Banning Street, curving between the City's Personnel Building and the Nishi Hompa Hongwanji Buddhist Temple, and then continue northward across a recently constructed City facility housing the Personnel Department's Medical Services Division and the existing Department of Water and Power's Temple Street Facility, finally bridging over the 101 Freeway to land above the existing tracks at Union Station.

The Union Station East/Vignes option posed by City staff (see page 4) can be considered a modification of the West Bank trench option assessed in the Alternatives Analysis report, which continues the at-grade configuration under the 1st Street Bridge and begins lowering into a trench configuration that would run under the 101 Freeway to reach a station under Cesar Chavez Avenue. If a Union Station East/Vignes option is in a trench configuration, then the consolidation of existing west bank rail tracks north of 1st Street would be needed in order to allow for the high speed rail tracks to cross above or below them in a trench. If the Union Station East/Vignes station option is explored in an aerial configuration, the tracks could potentially become elevated north of the 1st Street Bridge rather than to the south, eliminating the need for an aerial structure to cross over the historic bridge. An aerial structure that rises north of 1st Street would have fewer potential visual impacts than a Union Station aerial option approach.

***Policy Discussion:***
*Mobility and Transportation Connectivity Impacts along the 1st Street Bridge to Downtown Los Angeles Station Alignment*

Beyond the station area itself which has already been described in detail, the project corridor should be evaluated for the extent to which the various alignment alternatives may improve or degrade the quality of the pedestrian environment along the route. In addition to pedestrian and bicycle accessibility goals of the LARRMP, the Central City North Community Plan seeks to promote walking and bicycling for recreation and as viable modes of transportation in the area. It is not anticipated that the high speed rail alternative proposed for this segment would sever existing linkages in the pedestrian and bicycle network but nor does the currently proposed Project alignment provide improvements to this network. A project alternative involving a consolidated trench configuration, similar to the one studied in the Alternatives Analysis report for the West Bank station approach, may provide new opportunities to expand non-motorized access across the rail rights-of-way and also further River goals.

An aerial approach, such as the one proposed for this segment in the Alternatives Analysis report, has the potential to impact the quality of the pedestrian environment on the streets below, including the 1st Street Bridge. The placement of an aerial guideway structure directly over streets and sidewalks could create corridors that would be undesirable for pedestrian activity in conflict with City objectives. The DEIS/DEIR should assess impacts such as these and identify appropriate mitigation measures to minimize impacts on pedestrian connectivity and affected properties.

*River Revitalization Impacts along the 1st Street Bridge to Downtown Los Angeles Station Alignment*

A Union Station East/Vignes station option would allow for an alternative alignment for the project that could be beneficial for improved River access in that it could result in the removal of existing barriers along this stretch if trench segments are capped over and opened up to the public. The Metro Red and

Purple Line subways also surface in the area south of the 101 Freeway and coordination with Metro would be needed in order to maximize the benefits that could be afforded by this alternative. The CHSRA-proposed southern aerial approach to Union Station may have greater community impacts than a trench approach to a Union Station East/Vignes station option, as the aerial approach has potential aesthetic and noise issues that would need to be addressed in the Artists-in-Residence District and Little Tokyo neighborhoods in order to ensure the continued revitalization of these areas. The CHSRA-proposed aerial alignment neither detracts from, nor contributes to, improved River access along the segment from 1st Street north to the 101 Freeway crossing since it diverges from the River's edge at 1st Street. If this alignment is chosen, the existing at-grade rail facilities along this stretch of the River would likely remain in place.

**3. ALIGNMENTS: LOS ANGELES TO PALMDALE SEGMENT**
**Alternatives from Downtown Los Angeles Station to Interstate 5**

***Description:***
A separate Draft Alternatives Analysis report has been released for the portion of the Los Angeles to Palmdale project segment that extends from Los Angeles Union Station north to State Route 134 in the City of Glendale. The report analyzes three alternative alignments, referred to as LAP1A, LAP1B, and LAP1C, for the route between existing Union Station and the 5 Freeway.

Alternative LAP1A proceeds north from Union Station on an aerial structure, veers east along the existing Metrolink tracks, crosses the River, and then heads north along the east bank of the River in a trench. Alternative LAP1B heads out from Union Station on an aerial structure alongside the William Mead Housing project, turns east over Main Street and upon reaching the River turns north along the River bank. After crossing above the Spring and Broadway bridges, the train would descend to grade and continue north alongside the Metro Midway Yard before crossing the River at the location of the existing Metrolink bridge just south of Interstate 5. Alternative LAP1C follows an identical path of the LAP1B alternative with the exception that instead of descending to grade it would continue on a viaduct along Metro Midway Yard before rising to pass over the interchange of Interstate 5 and State Route 110 on an 80 foot tall viaduct.

After evaluating these alternatives in the context of the City's mobility, economic development, and River revitalization goals, Staff has identified Alternative LAP1A as the CHSRA-identified alignment that may best advance the City's numerous objectives for this corridor. These alignments are all based upon connecting with Union Station as an aerial high speed rail station. While the Union Station aerial option is the only station option proposed for further consideration by the CHSRA, City Staff recommends the consideration of a second station option (Union Station East/Vignes) in the DEIS/DEIR. Alternative alignments that would connect with a Union Station East/Vignes station option were not considered in the draft Alternatives Analysis report.

Staff has identified potential alignments leading north from a Union Station East/Vignes station option that would need to be studied in conjunction with that station location. Should the DEIS/DEIR consider the Union Station East/Vignes Option in a trench configuration, the high speed rail tracks could continue in a consolidated trench along with the other existing rail lines and utility infrastructure along the west bank of the River before crossing just south of the 5 Freeway at the location of the existing Metrolink bridge. Alternatively, if the Union Station East/Vignes station option is considered in an aerial configuration, the high speed rail tracks could cross the River at the existing Metrolink tracks and continue in a trench on the east side of the River, as presented for the LAP1A alignment (described above). Each of these new alternatives would need to be analyzed in the DEIS/DEIR in order to fully assess the benefits and impacts of a consolidated west or east bank trench solution.

***Policy Discussion:***
*Mobility and Transportation Connectivity Impacts along the Downtown Los Angeles Station to Interstate 5 Alignment*

Project alternatives with trench configurations, such as Alternative LAP1A and the City staff-identified alternatives leading north from a Union Station East/Vignes station option, may actually present opportunities to improve pedestrian and bicycle connectivity in the area if they are capped over and can remove the existing rail infrastructure impediments through consolidation. Alternative LA1PA is the only CHSRA-identified option that would allow for a rail trench configuration through this corridor, and, as such, it has clear advantages that could include the consolidation of all rail, including new high speed rail tracks and existing Amtrak and Metrolink tracks, into a trench on the east side of the River. A trench has the advantage of facilitating pedestrian connections at the surface through decking over segments of the alignment and providing communities with new access to the River Greenway in this

area. While not stated explicitly in the Alternatives Analysis, this trench could potentially also incorporate the current Metrolink tracks that run along the west bank of the River (given enough right-of-way along the east bank), which would result in improved connectivity on both sides of the River.

Project alternatives with aerial configurations, such as Alternative LAP1B and LAP1C north of Union Station above Main Street, have the potential to impact the quality of the pedestrian environment on the street below. The placement of an aerial guideway structure directly over streets and sidewalks could create corridors that may be undesirable for pedestrian activity and may be in conflict with plan objectives.

Impacts to local mobility and connectivity should be assessed as part of the project's environmental review, in that the project has the potential to be designed in a way that improves pedestrian mobility and lessens community impacts in support of adopted City policies.

*River Revitalization Impacts along the Downtown Los Angeles Station to Interstate 5 Alignment*

In addition to improved connectivity, land adjacent to a new rail trench also has the potential to be developed with parks and open space. Trenching would reduce visual impairment on the area and help to reconnect the River to adjacent communities. The removal of at-grade tracks and the potential parklands that could result from a capped rail trench would provide sufficient room to fully develop the proposed River Greenway along both River banks which would further the goals of the LARRMP.

Aerial tracks through this area, as proposed in Alternatives LAP1B and LAP1C, could interfere with efforts to improve River access and would result in the addition of significant new rail infrastructure in an area where it is envisioned by the LARRMP to be removed, consolidated, or covered. If aerial tracks are pursued, mitigation measures would need to be investigated to minimize these impacts.

The Arroyo Seco confluence is a particularly sensitive area, ecologically, historically, visually, and culturally, and the proposed high speed rail crossing at this location is an at-grade trestle, similar to the existing rail crossing. The importance of the confluence of the Arroyo Seco and Los Angeles River cannot be underscored, as this location is recognized as one of the areas first described by early settlers and long served native populations with fresh water, shade, and food. The area is currently impacted by both concrete linings and the aerial freeways that crisscross above, and the addition of at-grade high speed rail tracks has the potential to exacerbate this condition. The project's DEIS/DEIR should consider opportunities for wildlife, pedestrians, and bicyclists alike to cross the River and Arroyo Seco at this point, and support the City's effort to complete the Rim of the Valley Trail through the area. Other potential mitigations could include the removal of the Arroyo Seco's concrete lining beneath the new rail crossing, aiding in River restoration efforts envisioned in the LARRMP.

*Economic Development Impacts along the Downtown Los Angeles Station to Interstate 5 Alignment*

Alternatives LAP1B and LAP1C would likely impose impacts upon the "Cornfields" area that may discourage, or even prohibit, the revitalization efforts currently contemplated for the area as described in the March 2009 Draft of the Cornfield Arroyo Seco Specific Plan (currently under development by the City Planning Department). The aerial structures contained in these alignments should be studied with respect to visual impacts to the William Mead public housing community, the Los Angeles State Historic Park, Ann Street Elementary School, Main Street, and the River Corridor, as well as economic development goals related to the future use of surrounding land. This area is identified as a part of the City's Clean Tech Corridor, and the high speed rail project should be constructed and operated in a way that ensures the future viability of adjacent land for use by clean technology industries.

In Alternative LAP1C, the aerial structure along Main Street and the west bank of the River would reach farther north before descending to grade level, thereby extending the range of potential impacts that a

new elevated structure could have along the River corridor. The high speed rail project's DEIS/DEIR should consider the City's planning efforts and economic development strategies for this area in its analysis of aerial structure impacts, particularly related to noise, vibration, and shade/shadow impacts.

**Alternatives from Interstate 5 to State Route 2**

***Description:***
There are two alternative alignments proposed for this segment through the Taylor Yard area. One alternative is identified as the San Fernando Road Alignment and the other is the titled the Existing Metrolink Alignment. Both alignments run adjacent to the Rio de Los Angeles State Park and both involve trench configurations, which may pose new opportunities to connect to the River in this area.

The San Fernando Road Alignment would move the existing Metrolink tracks into a new trench which could facilitate future access from the State Park to the River. In addition, removal of the rail barrier could open up opportunities for ecosystem restoration. At the same time this alignment would add rail infrastructure alongside an already busy vehicular arterial and could create further barriers for the community to access the River if not sufficiently decked over. Alternatively, appropriate design features could establish the trench as a "green" amenity. Details would need to be closely followed to ensure that such improvements were designed.

The Existing Metrolink Alignment trench utilizes the current rail right-of-way through Taylor Yard, and could be designed as described for the Road Alignment so that access is facilitated between the State Park and the River. Both the San Fernando Road and Existing Metrolink Alignments are recommended by the Alternatives Analysis report to be carried forward for further study in the Los Angeles to Palmdale DEIS/DEIR, which is several months behind the projected timeline for the Los Angeles to Anaheim segment.

***Policy Discussion:***
*River Revitalization Impacts along the Interstate 5 to State Route 2 Alignment*

This alignment is within the area of the U.S. Army Corps' L.A. River Ecosystem Restoration Feasibility Study and potential interference with habitat creation or River channel changes in this area should be avoided. Due to the proposed configuration of each of the two alternative alignments in a trench configuration, and that the trench structure is described as having a cap at certain intervals to allow for pedestrian access, neither of the two alternative appears to exacerbate the existing barriers to the River currently posed by Metrolink tracks and San Fernando Road. If the San Fernando Road Alignment is chosen through Taylor Yard and is able to consolidate existing Metrolink tracks from the current rail right-of-way along the River, the high speed rail project may actually improve River access by removing the existing infrastructure barrier. Access to the River from the Rio de Los Angeles Park would then become unimpeded and additional space would allow for ecosystem restoration to occur much as described in the LARRMP. Based on this initial information, therefore, the San Fernando Road alignment seems to offer more benefits to River revitalization than the Existing Metrolink Alignment. If the existing right-of-way alignment is chosen, River access could still be improved by capping over a new trench through this corridor; although, it may not allow for the additional benefits of broader ecosystem restoration that could be achieved through a relocation of the existing rail corridor to a trench along San Fernando Road.

*Economic Development Impacts along the Interstate 5 to State Route 2 Alignment*

The Taylor Yard area is also contained within the study area of a potential Northeast Los Angeles River Redevelopment Plan, which stretches from the 110 Freeway on the south to the 134 Freeway on the north. On August 12, 2009, the City Council authorized CRA/LA to conduct planning and feasibility

studies for a possible future redevelopment project in this area, with a focus on improving the viability of industrial land and implementing key elements of the LARRMP. Existing industrial operations such as the Media Center complex at the north end of Taylor Yard could benefit from a consolidated rail trench that might yield a better configuration of land for job-producing uses. As with the City's River revitalization goals, economic development goals seem to be most enhanced through the San Fernando Road trench alternative with extensive capping to allow for better access across the rail lines. Both alternatives will be studied further in the Los Angeles to Palmdale DEIS/DEIR, which will allow for a more informed discussion of potential benefits and impacts.

**Alternatives from State Route 2 to State Route 134**

***Description:***
From the 2 Freeway north to the 134 Freeway, there is only a single high speed rail alignment considered in the Alternatives Analysis report. This alignment follows the existing rail right-of-way that straddles the City's border with Glendale and is proposed to be built in an at-grade configuration either to the west or east of the existing Metrolink tracks, with some right-of-way widening necessary.

***Policy Discussion:***
*Mobility and Transportation Connectivity Impacts along the State Route 2 to State Route 134 Alignment*

The addition of high speed rail tracks to this corridor may potentially result in reduced access to the industrial areas of the City of Los Angeles that lie along this corridor between the Los Angeles River to the west and the existing Metrolink tracks to the east. Potential impacts to the local street network are of particular concern, especially for truck access to industrial parcels, but also for pedestrian access to the River from points east. The Alternatives Analysis report notes that local roads with existing grade crossings in this area could be closed as a result of the project. There are three at-grade crossings of the existing railway at Chevy Chase Drive, Broadway and Doran Street that would need to be closed or grade separated. Grade separation would be achieved by realigning the roads above or below the railway. The DEIS/DEIR should consider the impacts of any potential closures on the local transportation system.

*River Revitalization Impacts along the State Route 2 to State Route 134 Alignment*

The northern portion of this corridor is adjacent to the LARRMP's "River Glen" opportunity area, which is one of five target areas described in the LARRMP. A key water quality improvement project is envisioned at the confluence of the Verdugo Wash and the Los Angeles River, just north of the 134 Freeway, but this is outside of the area described in the Alternatives Analysis report so information about a proposed crossing here is not yet known. Although the alignment south of the 134 Freeway is not directly along the bank of the River, an at-grade configuration in the rail right-of-way along San Fernando Road could reduce connectivity and River access if grade crossings are too limited. The project's environmental analysis should consider River access impacts in addition to transportation system impacts as a result of any possible closures.

*Economic Development Impacts along the State Route 2 to State Route 134 Alignment*

In addition to planned water quality improvements, the River Glen opportunity area is also identified as an industrial retention area for this segment of the River. The industrial district between the rail right-of-way and the River currently suffers from the lack of a functioning circulation system, and the City's economic development strategies envision infrastructure improvements that would improve transportation connectivity in order to promote the location of job-producing industrial uses in this area. This area is also within the above-mentioned CRA/LA study area for redevelopment. As described previously, any road closures should be carefully studied as they could negatively impact connectivity in

this corridor, and, in turn, hamper the City's economic development goals. The design of new grade crossings should consider the needs of large trucks that serve the area, in particular with regard to height and grade requirements.

**Sylmar/Northeast San Fernando Valley Station and Alignments**

***Considerations for Future Alternatives Analysis Report:***
The high speed rail corridor re-enters Los Angeles at the City's border with Burbank near San Fernando Road and Hollywood Way in Sun Valley and continues along the existing rail corridor through Pacoima and the City of San Fernando, with a potential new station at Sylmar. The Alternatives Analysis report for this section of the Los Angeles to Palmdale project segment has not been released as of the date of this report and, as such, has not been analyzed to the same level of detail as the segments near Downtown and along the Los Angeles River. Initial concerns for this corridor are the selection of an appropriate station site to serve the San Fernando Valley and the extent of aerial structures that may potentially create visual barriers between communities along the route. Staff recommends continuing coordination with the CHSRA on this alignment to ensure that the City receives more detailed information as it becomes available.

**4. OTHER HIGH SPEED RAIL ISSUES:**
**Cultural and Historic Preservation**

The high speed rail corridor, particularly in the vicinity of Downtown Los Angeles and in proximity to the Los Angeles River, contains some of the oldest and most historically important resources in the City of Los Angeles. In particular, the series of River bridges extending from Olympic Boulevard on the south to Broadway on the north crisscross the rail alignment and will require further study to evaluate potential impacts. Staff recommends that the DEIS/DEIR appropriately assess any potential impacts to these significant structures and work with the City's Office of Historic Resources to identify possible mitigation measures as necessary.

ITEM #3 Ad Hoc River 09-0252

# CITY OF LOS ANGELES SPEAKER CARD

| Date | THE CITY COUNCIL'S RULES OF DECORUM WILL BE ENFORCED. | Council File No., Agenda Item, or Case No. |
|---|---|---|
| 3/23/09 | | Item #3 |

I wish to speak before the City Council Ad Hoc River Committee
Name of City Agency, Department, Committee or Council

Do you wish to provide general public comment, or to speak for or against a proposal on the agenda? ( ) For proposal ( ) Against proposal (✓) General comments

Name: Lewis MacAdams

Business or Organization Affiliation: Friends of the LA River

Address: _____
Street City State Zip

Business phone: 323-223-0585 Representing: _____

**CHECK HERE IF YOU ARE A PAID SPEAKER AND PROVIDE CLIENT INFORMATION BELOW:** ☐

Client Name: _____ Phone #: _____

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Please see reverse of card for important information and submit this entire card to the presiding officer or chairperson.

**NOTE: THIS IS A PUBLIC DOCUMENT.**