Rail~Volution 2010
Little Tokyo, Los Angeles, CA
A Case Study in Building Community Consensus

Ann Kerman, Community Relations Manager
Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro)
The Project

Regional Connector Transit Corridor Project

- A less than 2-mile LRT link in Downtown Los Angeles
- Connecting 3 LRT lines across Los Angeles County
- Increasing transit and access into Downtown and across the region
- 3 to 4 new stations in Downtown Los Angeles
  - Bunker Hill, Broadway, Financial District & Little Tokyo
Regional Connector
The Missing Link
Regional Connector
Proposed/New
**The Background**

- **Project is currently in the environmental review phase**
  - Draft EIS/EIR released September 3, 2010
  - Comment period ended October 18, 2010
  - Staff-recommended LPA to Metro Board of Directors October 28, 2010

- **Study began in 2007 with 33 conceptual build alternatives**
  - Screened down to 8 alternatives during scoping
  - 2 build alternatives at conclusion of Alternatives Analysis (1/09)
The Little Tokyo Story

- Last of 3 Japantowns in the United States
- Cultural and spiritual center for Japanese Americans
- National historic district adjacent
- Rich in architecture and history
- In recent years, has developed into one of the most pedestrian-oriented & vibrant night life destinations in Los Angeles
Little Tokyo
Pre-World War II
Little Tokyo
Early Regional Connector Concept
May 11, 2009

Ms. Dolores Roybal Saltarelli  
Project Manager  
METRO  
1 Gateway Plaza  
MS 99/2252  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Dear Ms. Roybal Saltarelli:

The Little Tokyo Community Council (LTCC) is a council of more than 100 stakeholder organizations dedicated to the future vitality of our historic and cultural neighborhood. On behalf of LTCC, I take this opportunity to express our concerns related to the proposed METRO Regional Connector. While we recognize the importance and need for efficient public transportation for the Los Angeles area, we believe that the proposed alignments can have irreparable negative impact on our community unless specific issues are responsibly addressed and analyzed.

The concerns of LTCC in respect to the proposed Regional Connector alternatives include:

- **Impact of construction on local businesses**
  Disruption of business due to construction, and resulting diversion of traffic for an extended period of time can have devastating effects on small businesses.

- **Loss of public parking**
  Loss of convenient and available parking will impact negatively on public institutions and businesses, discouraging visitors and customers.

- **Impact to key Little Tokyo property owners**
  Potential loss and/or construction on major properties in Little Tokyo eliminates potential for future development benefiting our community. Every consideration should be given to longtime community stakeholders who face loss or devaluation of property.

- **Noise Pollution**
  On-going noise from construction negatively impacts, business, community programming, and daily activity.
May 11, 2009

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Project Manager
METRO
1 Gateway Plaza
MS99/22/52
Los Angeles, CA 90012

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- **Impact to key Little Tokyo property owners**
  Potential loss of housing and/or construction of major properties in Little Tokyo eliminates potential for future development benefiting community. Every consideration should be given to longtime community stakeholders who face loss or devaluation of property.

- **Noise Pollution**
  On-going noise from construction negatively impacts, business, community programming, and daily activity.
Voices of community’s opposition

> “Little Tokyo is fragile, cannot withstand 4 years of construction”

> “Everything that makes Little Tokyo special will be destroyed”

> “Project will divide the community”

> “Cannot support any of the alternatives”
Early intervention

What are the real concerns and issues?

- Trust
- Fear
- Lack of knowledge/information

Bringing the right stakeholders to the table
The Little Tokyo Working Group

Model

- Working Group created as a committee of the Little Tokyo Community Council
  - Representing over 100 organizations
- Chaired by community members, but staffed by Metro
- Met bi-weekly
- Developed matrix of issues
  - Included in Draft EIS/EIR
- Developed new alternative embraced by community
The Little Tokyo Working Group

Outcomes

- A third build alternative was added to the Draft EIS/EIR
- Hired an independent consultant to work with the community and help them understand the environmental process
- Solicited candidate mitigation measures to include in the Draft EIS/EIR
Dear Mr. Najarian:

The Little Tokyo Community Council (LTCC) would like to thank the Metropolitan Transportation Authority's for its response to the Little Tokyo community by presenting for consideration a concept for the Third Build Alternative for the Downtown Regional Connector.

The LTCC adopted the following motion at its November 24, 2009 meeting:

**MOTION**

The Little Tokyo Community Council supports the further exploration of the concept of the Third Build Alternative as presented by the Metro Planners.

We respectfully urge the Metropolitan Transit Authority Board of Directors to adopt the Third Build Alternative as one of the options for the Metro Planners to further explore for the Downtown Regional Connector, as part of the FIR study.

We thank the Metropolitan Transit Authority for their consideration of the concerns of the Historic Little Tokyo. We look forward to working with the Metro Planners as they further explore the Third Build Alternative.

Sincerely,

[Signature]
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[Signature]
Lessons Learned

- Early intervention a must
- Listen, listen, and listen some more
- Build relationships
- Outreach never stops
- Provide a mechanism for regular dialogue
Thank you!