

Metro releases new environmental study for Link Union Station

Agency to seek federal money for run-through tracks and expanded passenger concourse

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JUNE 24, 2024, 8:00AM STEVEN SHARP 20 COMMENTS



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For a decade, Metro has been cooking up plans for a **revamp of historic Union Station in Downtown Los Angeles** (<https://la.urbanize.city/tags/link-us>), looking to couple long-proposed run-through tracks with an expansion of its passenger concourse and new opportunities for commercial development. With **more than \$1 trillion in funds available nationwide** (<https://la.urbanize.city/post/federal-infrastructure-bill-los-angeles>) after President Biden signed the landmark 2021 infrastructure bill into law, Metro is now taking steps to chase some of that federal money.

Last week, Metro released a **supplemental environmental impact report for the Link Union Station project** (<https://www.linkunionstation.com/>), which will also evaluate the project under the National Environmental Policy Act - making it eligible for federal funding. The highlights of the plans outlined in the document include the construction of new run-through tracks along the south side of the station, allowing trains to cross above the US-101 Freeway rather than entering

and exiting through the existing throat tracks to the north. Plans also call for raising the rail yard itself to provide clearance above the freeway, the expansion of the existing passageway below the rail yard to accommodate more passengers, upgrades to the throat tracks, and either the construction of new individual station platform canopies or a large "grand canopy" which would cover all station platforms.

The project - in particular the construction of the run-through tracks - are key for the first phase of the California High Speed Rail project, **which would make a stop at Union Station before proceeding toward its eventual southern terminus in Anaheim** (<https://la.urbanize.city/post/how-california-high-speed-rail-would-reach-anaheim>). The new tracks would also be used by Amtrak Pacific Surfliner trains and **Metrolink** (<https://la.urbanize.city/tags/metrolink>), which is relying on through-routing at Union Station as part of a \$10-billion strategy to boost service frequency and ridership on its more than 500-mile network.

Not discussed in the new environmental study are potential changes to Link Union Station which were unveiled earlier this year. While Metro has secured nearly \$1 billion for the construction of the project, its estimate cost has ballooned to nearly \$2 billion as of one June 2023. To account for that, Metro has proposed reducing the number of station platforms which would have access to the run-through tracks from seven to four. Likewise, the number of run-through tracks crossing the freeway could be reduced from four to two.

Some early work, such as the relocation of utilities along the project's route, has already commenced, and is expected to continue through Summer 2025. Metro previously announced that it expected that heavy construction could begin as early as mid-2026, following environmental clearances.

Pricey as it may be, the Biden administration has already shown a willingness to spend money on upgrading passenger rail serving the Los Angeles area. The Brightline West high-speed rail line, now under construction between Las Vegas and Rancho Cucamonga, **has been awarded \$6.5 billion from the U.S. Department of Transportation** (<https://la.urbanize.city/post/southern-california-vegas-high-speed-rail-line-gets-25b-more-federal-funding>).

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S

Silver_Lake_Lover91

2 months ago

Those renderings would look a lot better with a couple 40 story residential towers on the property with limited parking to take advantage of all these upgrades to the single most transit rich building in the county.

120ReplyShare ›

L

LABergen

2 months ago

I quite like the idea of a Grand Canopy instead of the individual ones. Something about other train stations with grand canopies that seems timeless.

110ReplyShare ›

B

BretMC

2 months ago

Whatever they do, will we finally get some development in that Northeast corner of Downtown finally? I've always thought maybe it's held up because of this project? it's sitting there so woefully underdeveloped/undeveloped and it would be nice to see this get some major density finally instead of what's there. It's about as transit rich as things go in the city: you're adjacent to Union Station and the Little Tokyo station and a future station for the B & D lines!

100ReplyShare ›



Mr. F

2 months ago edited

Glad to see this moving along, but curious about the compromises. A private train company like Brightline is awarded \$6.5 billion from the U.S. Department of Transportation — so at what stage did Union Station believe it needed to shrink its ambitions, and reduce the number of station platforms and run through tracks? Did they get a sense of a ceiling for those \$1trillion in federal funds, or was this self-imposed? Can't help but wonder if this isn't just more of our leadership's general lack of aspiration.

60ReplyShare ›

A

ARoH → Mr. F

2 months ago

Good questions.

I've noted before that it seemed like the [this project](#) made the full pass through option obsolete. The grade separation just doesn't look tall enough to fit the buses under for the eastern-most 2 or 3 tracks. So I assume the full version would be much more expensive than they expected due to their own short-sightedness. Seemed like the typical project integration disfunction they're so good at

But I'd love to know why/when too.

8 0 Reply Share ›

P

Paxton

2 months ago

The utility of this project, while still great, is hugely diminished without the northward leg of the run through tracks.

4 0 Reply Share ›

S

Shawn

2 months ago edited

Not discussed in the new environmental study...

I've only skimmed it but I think that those things are discussed. The "Build" description is in Section 2.7.1. A table summarizing which tracks will do what in the interim and complete project is in Table 2.5. It lists two run-through tracks initially for Amtrak/Metrolink and then adding 2 more at full build out for HSR. I think that it also lists \$2.9 billion now as the cost for full buildout.

4 0 Reply Share ›



Granadico

2 months ago edited

Almost looks like there's more cars in the Future than the Current when the hopeful reality would be the opposite and there'd be less cars on the road.

3 0 Reply Share ›

A

ARoH

→ Granadico

2 months ago

Did you say this backward?

1 0 Reply Share ›

N

NIMBY Slayer: Textured Stucco 🤔

→ ARoH 2 months ago

Or maybe he just works for Chevron? 😂

4 0 Reply Share ›



Granadico

→ ARoH

2 months ago

Damn you're right.

0 0 Reply Share ›

A

ARoH

2 months ago

Wow. It says "Including Value Engineering" right on the presentation slide.

3 0 Reply Share ›

S

Shawn

→ ARoH

2 months ago

Is that a problem?

0 0 Reply Share ›

A

ARoH → Shawn



2 months ago

Fringe profiteer language making it to infrastructure? Yeah- sums up LA's transit plight perfectly.

5 0 Reply Share ›



Matt → ARoH



2 months ago

Just the reality now. This was supposed to be a \$1B project and now is almost 3 times that. With a bankrupt federal, state and local government that is a huge problem. Word is Metro is starting to really panic as sales taxes are coming in much lower than projected while expenses are still rising fast. Something gotta give.

2 1 Reply Share ›

L

LABergen → Matt



2 months ago

Just watched a video by RMTransit speaking about how the Olympics affect transit. An interesting topic was how Vancouver's Olympics saw record numbers for their transit system, and post Olympic numbers have stayed higher than pre Olympic numbers ever since, because it helped change the perception on transit for actual citizens. Not saying this will be replicated in LA, but the Olympics should be the greatest advertisement opportunity for Metro in some time. Hopefully the new lines/ extensions can be coupled with better service and safety. Add on a generation of more climate conscious citizens, I'd say there's a chance that Olympics could have a similar affect like seen in Vancouver.

Metro should be doing their absolute best strive for Olympic/ Post-Olympic greatness.

7 0 Reply Share ›



Matt → LABergen



2 months ago

It sorta happened in 84. In fact, we have much lower transit usage now than we did in 84 and 85 despite spending tens of billions on rail. Very sad, how we have let bus stops turn into trash dumps and our Metro system become drug infested and violent. Until that changes, we won't have a viable transit system.

2 1 Reply Share ›

A

ARoH → Matt



2 months ago

Our gov isn't bankrupt. What are you talking about? It's all made up.

But if it actually was... this would make the case for more centralized power- aka much a bigger government that has direct control of the resources it needs to build projects like this, so "costs", in the monetary sense, aren't so much a consideration.

Metro should be panicking- a lot of senior leadership should lose their jobs and their siloed departments/projects should fold into each other. Cutting back on the scope of necessary transit infrastructure is short-sighted and almost always screws us over in the long run. They should be looking to minimize all their roadway commitments that they don't need to improve mass transit.

4 0 Reply Share ›

D

Paxton → ARoH





2 months ago

Weasel words are weaselly.

1 0 Reply Share ›



Jeremy Stutes



2 months ago

please don't value engineer this project's track numbers. build it right the first time.

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