

**POSTED IN COMMUNITY - Southeast Cities Back WSAB Little Tokyo Station**  
by JK Yamamoto September 28, 2021



The West Santa Ana Branch Transit Corridor project would connect Downtown Los Angeles, Huntington Park, Bell, Cudahy, South Gate, Downey, Bellflower and Artesia. Elected officials representing cities on the southeast end of Los Angeles County voted unanimously Sept. 21 to support the addition of a new Little Tokyo station on a proposed light rail alignment from the city of Artesia to Union Station.

The action follows a review of Metro’s Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (DEIR/EIS) for the proposed \$9.8 billion, 19.3-mile alignment, known as

the West Santa Ana Branch (WSAB), which would connect southeast cities to Downtown Los Angeles.

Earlier, the Little Tokyo Business Association, Japanese American Nation Museum, and St. Francis Xavier Japanese Catholic Center announced support for the new alignment as well as the addition of a station near 2<sup>nd</sup> and Alameda streets in Little Tokyo. The alignment would travel underground along Alameda and is one of four alternatives being considered, including an alignment to 7<sup>th</sup> and Metro/8<sup>th</sup> and Figueroa Street in Downtown L.A.; Pioneer Station in Artesia to Slauson and the A Line (Blue); and Pioneer Station to the 105 Freeway (Green Line).

Meanwhile, residents in condominiums facing Alameda are asking that the suggested station entrance east of Alameda be moved away from their purview, citing construction and security concerns.

The vote by the Eco-Rapid Transit Board of Directors follows a review of the DEIR/EIS, which was released July 30 by Metro. Board Chair and Artesia City Councilmember Ali Sajjad Taj stated, "This is an important step in the process of bringing this important rail line to our communities."

The station provides access to the Metro Regional Connector scheduled to open next fall and offers the ability to transfer to destinations in East Los Angeles and eventually Whittier. Downey City Councilmember Sean Ashton, who has long-standing family ties to Higashi Honganji Buddhist Temple, emphasized, "It is important that we all support the line from Artesia to Union Station. We need to do this project right. This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity."

The Metro Board of Directors is scheduled to select a locally preferred alternative in December or January.

Eco-Rapid Transit (ERT) consists of 12 members: Artesia, Bell, Bell Gardens, Cerritos, Cudahy, Downey, Glendale, Huntington Park, Maywood, Paramount, South Gate, and the Burbank Glendale Pasadena Airport Authority.

"This line will serve a population of 1.4 million people through some of the densest parts of L.A. County. Communities such as Maywood, Cudahy, and Huntington Park have densities that rival Manhattan," points out planning consultant Michael R. Kodama, who serves as ERT executive director.

"For our communities, this is also a question of fairness and equity. As environmental justice communities who have been overlooked, only by working together have we been able to bring this transformative project to our communities. It rights a wrong that should have been addressed a long time ago and becomes a catalyst for economic and community development opportunities for our residents and businesses."

It is estimated that the new light rail could reduce travel time from hours by bus to under 40 minutes in the corridor.

About \$4 billion has been raised to build the project, partly through the Measure M sales tax approved by L.A. voters in 2016. Still, Metro faces challenges in obtaining the additional \$4-\$5 billion needed to build the project.

Metro is accepting comments on the project until Sept. 28. Online comment form is available at <https://metro.commentinput.com/comment/index?id=GtJAg>.