Chapter 9
Recommended Locally Preferred Alternative and Alternatives for Evaluation in Draft SEIS/SEIR
9.0 RECOMMENDED LOCALLY PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE AND
ALTERNATIVES FOR EVALUATION IN DRAFT SEIS/SEIR

This chapter summarizes the comparative evaluation of alternatives and scoping
process results and presents the recommended Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) and
alternatives to be evaluated in the Mid-Coast Corridor Transit Project Draft Supplemental

9.1 Summary of Results

The comparative evaluation of alternatives conducted for the Mid-Coast Corridor Transit
Project considered a Transportation Systems Management (TSM) Alternative, seven
light rail transit (LRT) alternatives, four bus rapid transit (BRT) alternatives, and a
Commuter Rail Alternative. Based on the evaluation results described in Chapter 6.0 of
this Final Comparative Evaluation of Alternatives Report, three alternatives were
recommended to the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) Board of
Directors (Board) for presentation at California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) scoping:
LRT Alternatives 1 (combined LRT Alternatives 1, 4, and 5), 3, and 6. The three LRT
alternatives effectively meet project goals, improve regional mobility, are cost effective or
near cost effective, and are anticipated to be competitive for Federal Transit Administration
(FTA) New Starts funding.

The remaining LRT alternatives (LRT Alternatives 2 and 7) were recommended for
elimination from scoping. While similar, LRT Alternative 2 was found to be higher in
capital costs, lower in user benefits, and lower in cost effectiveness than LRT Alternative
1. LRT Alternative 7 was found not to be as effective as the other LRT alternatives, as
evidenced by ridership, user benefits, and travel time savings, and would not provide
direct service to the University of California, San Diego (UCSD) West Campus, which is an
important project goal.

It also was recommended that the TSM Alternative, all four of the BRT alternatives, and
the Commuter Rail Alternative be eliminated from further consideration as build
alternatives. Compared to the LRT alternatives, these alternatives were not as effective
in meeting the project goals or in improving regional mobility and accessibility. Also,
they were not cost effective and were unlikely to be competitive for FTA New Starts
funds.

On April 23, 2010, the SANDAG Board approved LRT Alternatives 1 (combining LRT
Alternatives 1, 4, and 5), 3, and 6 to be carried forward for consideration at scoping for
the Draft SEIS/SEIR. The scoping period extended from May 3 through June 1, 2010.

As identified in Chapter 8.0 of this report, public comments during the scoping period
were overwhelmingly in favor of LRT Alternative 1 (combined LRT Alternatives 1, 4, and
5) and opposed to LRT Alternative 3, with an alignment along the Metropolitan Transit
System (MTS)/San Diego Northern Railway (SDNR) railroad right-of-way through Rose
Canyon. Less than five comments supported LRT Alternatives 3 and 6, the BRT
alternatives, or some other alternative not previously evaluated. The consideration of
alternatives not previously considered included a qualitative review, which concluded that
none of the new alternatives proposed during scoping would satisfy the project purpose and need at less cost, with greater effectiveness, or less environmental or community impacts. The only refinement to the alternatives suggested during scoping, and recommended to carry forward for further study during preparation of the Draft SEIS/SEIR, is the consideration of an additional LRT station at the Veterans Administration (VA) Medical Center.

The findings of the Draft Comparative Evaluation of Alternatives Report and information provided by the public or agencies during CEQA scoping support reconfirmation of the previously selected LPA, as revised.

9.2 Recommended LPA and Alternatives for Evaluation in the Draft SEIS/SEIR

Based on the results of the comparative evaluation of alternatives and consideration of comments received during scoping, it is recommended that the previously adopted LPA, as refined to include direct service to UCSD and University Towne Centre (UTC), be reconfirmed by selecting LRT Alternative 1 as the LPA for the Mid-Coast Corridor Transit Project. It also is recommended that LRT Alternative 1 and the No-Build Alternative be carried forward for evaluation in the Draft SEIS/SEIR. LRT Alternative 1 received strong public support during the scoping process and the MTS Board voted unanimously to support the alternative. LRT Alternative 1 includes three alignment options in the vicinity of Voigt Drive, which will allow for the selection of a specific alignment to avoid potential environmental impacts that may be discovered during the environmental review process.

Elimination of LRT Alternatives 3 and 6 from further consideration is recommended based on the additional information and comments received during the scoping period. Elimination of LRT Alternative 3 is recommended because of public opposition and comments about potential environmental impacts to Rose Canyon. Although this alternative would maximize using the MTS/SDNR right-of-way and provide more direct service to UTC, LRT Alternative 3 had the highest potential for significant biological impacts. Further, LRT Alternative 3 was analyzed in the previously adopted Mid-Coast Corridor Alternatives Analysis/Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Draft Environmental Impact Report (AA/DEIS/DEIR) (MTDB 1995a) and it was eliminated after completion of the environmental review process due to concern regarding many of the same potential impacts identified during the recent scoping process. In addition, the California Department of Fish and Game raised concerns during scoping regarding the potential for LRT Alternative 3 to adversely impact California gnatcatcher habitat located within the canyon near Thornton Hospital on the UCSD East Campus. Based on these reasons, elimination of LRT Alternative 3 is recommended.

Elimination of LRT Alternative 6 is recommended because its performance is not significantly distinguishable from LRT Alternative 1 and its impacts are potentially greater. MTS raised concerns regarding the tight curves through an alignment section that could result in noise and additional maintenance. The California Department of Fish and Game raised concerns regarding potential adverse impacts on California gnatcatcher habitat located within the canyon near Thornton Hospital. In addition to these concerns, LRT Alternative 6 would result in elimination of a through-traffic lane on Executive Drive and potential impacts to access to private property. The Lawrence Family Jewish Community Center, which has its main entrance on Executive Drive, raised this concern. The primary benefit of LRT Alternative 6 is the avoidance of impacts to Voigt Drive. However, an
alternative that avoids affecting Voigt Drive is incorporated into LRT Alternative 1 and its variations (LRT Alternatives 1, 4, and 5). Based on the concerns raised during scoping, the similarities in environmental consequences and performance of LRT Alternatives 1 and 6, and the strong support for LRT Alternative 1, elimination of LRT Alternative 6 from further consideration is recommended.

The No-Build Alternative is required to be included in the SEIS/SEIR in compliance with National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and CEQA requirements. The No-Build Alternative will serve as a baseline in assessing the environmental impacts of the build alternatives evaluated in the SEIS/SEIR.

9.3 Description of Alternatives for Evaluation in the Draft SEIS/SEIR

The No-Build Alternative and recommended LPA are described in this section. This alternatives description is subject to refinements during preliminary engineering and Draft SEIS/SEIR evaluation.

9.3.1 No-Build Alternative

The No-Build Alternative includes all of the highway and transit facilities identified in the Revenue Constrained Scenario of the 2030 San Diego Regional Transportation Plan: Pathways for the Future (RTP) (SANDAG 2007). Figure 9-1 shows the following major projects included in the RTP Revenue Constrained Scenario that are located within the Mid-Coast Corridor and are part of the No-Build Alternative background transportation network. The major RTP improvements that are included in the No-Build Alternative are:

- Double tracking of SDNR railroad and other rail improvements with an increase in frequency of service of the COASTER to 20 minutes during peak and 60 minutes during off-peak periods.
- High-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes on Interstate 5 (I-5) from I-8 north to Oceanside, with direct access ramps (DARs) at various locations, of which the DAR at Voigt Drive would be located within the Mid-Coast Corridor. The HOV lanes would be restricted to vehicles with two or more occupants.
- Combination of HOV and Managed Lanes on I-805 from I-5 to South Bay, with DARs at Carroll Canyon Road and Nobel Drive.

The Mid-Coast Corridor No-Build Alternative transit system is shown in Figure 9-2. The regional transit system consists of MTS and North County Transit District bus, light rail, and commuter rail services that are projected to be operating in 2030. UCSD operated shuttle services also are included in the No-Build Alternative transit system.

The Mid-Coast Corridor LRT project included in the RTP Revenue Constrained Scenario is excluded from the No-Build Alternative in order to represent conditions in the corridor without the LRT project. Excluding the Mid-Coast Corridor LRT project from the No-Build Alternative would require more direct transit service between Downtown San Diego, Old Town Transit Center (OTTC), and University City.
Figure 9-1. No-Build Alternative Transportation Improvements
Figure 9-2. No-Build Alternative Transit System
To replace the loss of service under the No-Build Alternative, the existing transit Route 150, operating between Downtown San Diego, OTTC, and University City, is included in the alternative. The existing Route 150 was eliminated in the RTP Revenue Constrained Scenario with the inclusion of the Mid-Coast Corridor LRT line. Under the No-Build Alternative, the route would be modified to operate within the proposed HOV lanes on I-5 from OTTC north to Nobel Drive. This HOV lane operation modification would improve travel times over the existing Route 150 operation in the I-5 general-purpose lanes north to Gilman Drive. The modification of the route to exit the HOV lanes at Nobel Drive instead of at Gilman Drive would increase the route’s utilization of the HOV lanes and improve travel times over the Gilman Drive routing. The new Route 150 would operate at 15-minute intervals during peak periods (i.e., 6:00 to 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 to 6:00 p.m.) and 30-minute intervals during the off-peak and the midday period (i.e., 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.). Articulated buses would be used in the operation of the service. The route assumes a fixed fare of $2.50 per one-way trip.

The No-Build Alternative also includes improvements to the Trolley system. As shown in Figure 9-3, the Trolley Green Line would be extended from OTTC to the 12th and Imperial Transit Center via the Convention Center. Other changes to the Trolley system include terminating the Trolley Blue Line at Santa Fe Depot and the Trolley Orange Line at America Plaza. All Trolley lines would be operated at 7.5-minute frequencies all day except the Trolley Orange Line, which would operate at 7.5 minutes during peak and 15 minutes during off-peak periods.

### 9.3.2 Recommended LPA

The recommended LPA is a refinement of the LPA options the SANDAG Board adopted in 2003. The recommended LPA (Figure 9-4) would extend the Trolley system from OTTC north via the existing MTS/SDNR right-of-way and I-5 corridor to the UCSD West Campus, and then east along one of the following three alignment options to a terminus at the UTC Transit Center:

- An at-grade alignment on Voigt Drive and an aerial alignment on Genesee Avenue;
- An aerial alignment along the south side of Voigt Drive and on Genesee Avenue; or,
- An at- and below-grade alignment south of Voigt Drive and an aerial alignment on Genesee Avenue.

The recommended LPA would add eight new LRT stations located at Tecolote Road, Clairemont Drive, Balboa Avenue, Nobel Drive, UCSD West, UCSD East, Executive Drive, and the UTC Transit Center. An additional station location at the VA Medical Center also will be considered during the Draft SEIS/SEIR.

### 9.3.2.1 Alignment and Station Locations

The recommended LPA proposes the use of the existing LRT tracks from Santa Fe Depot north to a point just south of San Diego River where the alignment would cross the San Diego River on a new LRT bridge located parallel to and east of the existing railroad bridge and west of the existing Trolley Green Line LRT bridge. After crossing the river, the LRT alignment would continue north next to the existing SDNR tracks to the proposed at-grade station at Tecolote Road (under the existing Tecolote Road overcrossing). The
Figure 9-3. No-Build Alternative Trolley System
Figure 9-4. Recommended LPA and Alignment Options
Tecolote Road Station would be located on City of San Diego right-of-way, directly under the Tecolote Road overcrossing, just south of Tecolote Road and west of West Morena Boulevard. The station would include a parking lot.

North of the Tecolote Road Station, the LRT alignment would continue along the east side of the existing SDNR tracks to the proposed at-grade station at Clairemont Drive, which would be partially located below the Clairemont Drive overcrossing. A joint-use parking facility on the east side of Morena Boulevard is being considered.

The LRT alignment would then continue north to the proposed Balboa Avenue Station, which would be at grade south of Balboa Avenue. This station would include transfer facilities for feeder bus routes and a parking lot located immediately east of the station.

North of Balboa Avenue, the alignment would be located along the east side of the existing SDNR tracks, generally within the existing MTS/SDNR right-of-way. South of the SR 52, the LRT alignment would transition to an aerial structure in order to cross over to the west side of the SDNR tracks, allowing the LRT alignment to continue north along I-5, while the SDNR tracks head east to Genesee Avenue.

North of SR 52, the LRT alignment would leave the MTS/SDNR right-of-way and travel along the east side of I-5, crossing under La Jolla Colony Drive in a cut-and-cover tunnel. North of the cut-and-cover tunnel, the LRT alignment would continue along the east side of I-5, generally within or adjacent to the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) right-of-way and transition to an aerial structure in order to cross I-5 south of Nobel Drive. The aerial structure would continue north along the west side of I-5 to an aerial station at La Jolla Village Square (Nobel Drive Station). A joint-use parking structure is proposed at this station, which would replace the parking spaces lost with the aerial guideway and transit station. Continuing north from the Nobel Drive Station, the alignment would remain in an aerial configuration along the west side of I-5 until returning to grade just north of the I-5/La Jolla Village Drive interchange.

North of La Jolla Village Drive interchange, the alignment would proceed at grade along the west side of I-5 and east side of the VA Medical Center. The recommended LPA includes consideration of a station at the VA Medical Center. North of the VA Medical Center, the LRT alignment would enter a cut-and-cover tunnel and cross under Gilman Drive and the surface parking lot located north of Gilman Drive. North of the tunnel, the alignment would enter Pepper Canyon and continue at grade along the bottom of the canyon to the UCSD West Station, which would be at grade.

At-Grade Alignment Option on Voigt Drive
After exiting the UCSD West Station, the LRT alignment would enter a short tunnel, turn east, and surface in the median of Voigt Drive. Currently, Voigt Drive does not have a median. In order to accommodate the LRT in the median, Voigt Drive would be widened and realigned. Once on Voigt Drive, the alignment would run at grade in the center of the roadway, crossing over I-5 on the reconstructed Voigt Drive overcrossing that is being proposed as part of the I-5 North Coast Project. The I-5 North Coast Project proposes to lower the elevation of the Voigt Drive overcrossing, add north facing DARs in the center of the overcrossing, realign Voigt Drive to connect to Genesee Avenue, and realign Campus Point Drive to connect to Voigt Drive. The at-grade UCSD East Station
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is proposed to be located in the median of Voigt Drive, just west of the realigned Campus Point Drive.

The LRT alignment would continue at grade to Genesee Avenue, where it would turn south and transition to an aerial structure just before the intersection of Genesee Avenue and Regents Road. The LRT movements through the Voigt Drive intersections with realigned Campus Point Drive and Genesee Avenue would be traffic signal controlled. The LRT alignment would continue south in an aerial configuration to the proposed Executive Drive Station and UTC Transit Center Station. The Executive Drive Station would provide drop-off and pick-up access only, while the UTC Transit Center Station would include opportunities for a shared parking facility with the Westfield UTC shopping center. Both stations would have aerial platforms. This option would have a total length of 10.94 miles.

Aerial Alignment Option along the South Side of Voigt Drive
From the UCSD West Station, the LRT alignment would enter a cut-and-cover tunnel segment just north of the station and exit the tunnel along the south side of Voigt Drive. The alignment would immediately transition to an aerial structure along the south side of Voigt Drive and travel adjacent to the eastbound lanes of Voigt Drive, crossing over Gilman Drive, I-5, and the proposed future Voigt Drive DAR. The aerial alignment would continue east to the aerial UCSD East Station. The UCSD East Station would be located east of the realigned Campus Point Drive.

From the UCSD East Station, the LRT alignment would continue in an aerial configuration crossing the UCSD East Campus parking lots, Regents Road, and southbound lanes of Genesee Avenue. The aerial LRT alignment would then continue south in the median of Genesee Avenue to aerial stations at Executive Drive Station and UTC Transit Center. This option would have a total length of 10.88 miles.

Alignment Option South of Voigt Drive
The UCSD West Station would be located slightly south of the station site described for the other options. After exiting the UCSD West Station, the LRT alignment would enter a short tunnel, turn east, and quickly ascend to grade and then onto an aerial structure to cross both Gilman Drive and I-5. The LRT alignment would descend back to grade near the south end of the existing baseball diamond parking lot and continue east, where the alignment would transition to a cut-and-cover configuration to cross the planned future soccer fields and the realigned Campus Point Drive, as proposed by the I-5 North Coast Project.

East of the realigned Campus Point Drive, the LRT alignment would transition to an at-grade configuration and enter the UCSD East Station, which is proposed to be located in the southeast quadrant of the re-aligned Voigt Drive and Genesee Avenue intersection, but outside of the Voigt Drive right-of-way.

After exiting the UCSD East Station, the LRT alignment would travel parallel to Genesee Avenue and transition to an aerial configuration prior to crossing Regents Road and entering the median of Genesee Avenue. The aerial alignment would then continue south in the median of Genesee Avenue to the Executive Drive and UTC Transit Center Stations. This option would have a total length of 10.82 miles.
9.3.2.2 Operating Plan

A conceptual operating plan has been developed for the recommended LPA for ridership forecasting and capital and operating cost estimating purposes. Hours of service would be similar to those operated on the existing Trolley Blue, Green, and Orange Lines. Weekday LRT service in 2030 would operate every 7.5 minutes during peak periods (i.e., 6:00 to 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 to 6:00 p.m.) and the off-peak midday period (i.e., 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.). The fare structure would be the same as the No-Build Alternative.

The proposed recommended LPA operating plan for the recommended LPA provides for the extension of the Trolley Blue Line to University City (Figure 9-5). The plan provides for the operation of a single line operating from the existing San Ysidro/International Border Station on the south to the proposed UTC Transit Center Station in University City, with stops at all 29 intermediate stations. By extending the Trolley Blue Line to University City, LRT would be able to connect the major travel markets in University City with Downtown San Diego and South San Diego and South Bay without a transfer in downtown. This direct connection is particularly important in serving home-to-college trips because UCSD is located in University City and a large percentage of the trips to the university originate in the travel markets to the south of Downtown San Diego. The recommended LPA would also provide direct service between University City and Uptown, as well as areas of Mission Bay to the west and Clairemont to the east. The major travel market of Mission Valley would be served by a transfer to the Trolley Green Line at OTTC.

With the new LRT service, the service provided by Route 150 operating between Downtown San Diego and University City would be duplicated and therefore, eliminated. In addition to these modifications, several other routes would be modified to improve access to the proposed LRT stations. The frequency of service for the connecting bus routes would also be modified to improve the transfer of passengers between the bus and LRT system.
Figure 9-5. 2030 Recommended LPA Operating Plan