The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) are preparing a Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement/Subsequent Environmental Impact Report (SEIS/SEIR) for the Mid-Coast Corridor Transit Project in San Diego, California. FTA is serving as lead agency for the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and SANDAG is serving as lead agency for the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

The Scoping Information Brochure provides information about the Mid-Coast Corridor Transit Project, the scoping process and its relationship to subsequent project development milestones.

**PROJECT BACKGROUND**

The Draft SEIS/SEIR will build upon and update previous transit planning, engineering, and environmental studies and decisions for the Mid-Coast Corridor. The Draft SEIS/SEIR will include an analysis of changed conditions in the Mid-Coast Corridor since the previous environmental studies were completed.

The Mid-Coast Corridor LRT Project is included in the 2030 San Diego Regional Transportation Plan: Pathways for the Future (RTP) (SANDAG 2007) under both the Revenue Constrained and the Reasonably Expected Revenue Scenarios. TransNet will provide funding for 50 percent of the project’s capital cost, with the remaining 50 percent anticipated to come from the FTA Section 5309 New Starts program. Securing these funds will require successfully completing the FTA New Starts requirements.

**SCOPING**

In the scoping process, SANDAG will inform the public and involved agencies about the project. It will describe the transportation problems and needs to be addressed in the Mid-Coast Corridor, the alternatives under consideration, the criteria to be used for evaluating the alternatives, and the environmental issues to be studied. The goal of scoping is to encourage active two-way communication of issues and concerns to help shape the scope of the Draft SEIS/SEIR.

The alternatives recommended to be carried forward, and the alternatives recommended for elimination, will be presented for review and comment at scoping. Once all comments have been considered, the SANDAG Board of Directors and FTA will make a final decision on the alternatives to be carried forward for further evaluation in the Draft SEIS/SEIR.

**Purpose and Need for the Project**

The purpose and need for the Mid-Coast Corridor Transit Project focuses on improving mobility and accessibility and attracting transit-supportive land uses and economic development to smart growth centers in the Mid-Coast Corridor.

The study area for the project, shown in Figure 1 extends from OTTC on the south to the I-5/Interstate 805 (I-805) interchange on the north, and is bound by the Pacific Ocean on the west and the I-805 and State Route 163 (SR 163) on the east. More broadly, the term “Mid-Coast Corridor” refers to a larger geographic area that includes not only the project study area but also Downtown San Diego and the area between downtown and Old Town.
Description of the Mid-Coast Corridor

The Mid-Coast Corridor is anchored by University City on the north and Downtown San Diego on the south. University City is a designated Urban Center and mixed-use core and has the second most dense land uses in San Diego County. In addition to the UCSD campus, the Westfield UTC shopping center, and four regional hospitals, the University City area contains several high-density residential developments and is a significant employment center for the region with numerous high- and mid-rise office developments in the vicinity of UTC. Downtown San Diego, at the south end of the Mid-Coast Corridor, is the region’s only identified Metropolitan Center, and has the region’s densest land uses and high-rise development.

Significant growth is projected in the Mid-Coast Corridor. By 2030, SANDAG projects that the Mid-Coast Corridor’s population will exceed a quarter million, 14 percent more than in 2003. Employment in the corridor also is projected to increase by 14 percent, to almost 200,000 jobs. Increased population and employment will lead to increased travel demand in the corridor. Additionally, the SANDAG Regional Comprehensive Plan (RCP) (SANDAG 2004) identified for both the Downtown San Diego and University City areas as places of high residential and employment densities.

The SANDAG RTP envisions that these dense population and employment centers at both the northern and southern ends of the corridor will be served by improved transit. This improved system would attract new transit riders with service that has greater frequency, speed, and reliability than is possible with the current system composed of buses, commuter rail, and LRT extending only to the OTTC. The existing COASTER commuter rail service has widely spaced stations and therefore, provides limited service to the specific areas of transit opportunity within the study area. The speed and reliability of bus service are hindered by roadway congestion. With increased congestion projected to occur in the
future, the level of service, reliability, and efficiency of the existing transit system will decrease, with no additional priority improvements for transit.

**Goals and Objectives**

The SANDAG RTP was developed to meet the region’s long-term mobility needs, better connect transportation and land use policy decisions, and create a transportation network that will serve the people of this region well into the 21st century. Adopted by SANDAG in 2007, the RTP specifies seven policy objectives to guide the further planning and development of the transportation system: Livability, Mobility, Efficiency, Accessibility, Reliability, Sustainability, and Equity.

The Mid-Coast Corridor’s current transportation system does not satisfactorily meet these RTP policy objectives. To enhance the performance of the transportation system, the needs listed in Table 1 have been identified. Project goals have been established to help identify alternatives that address these needs and to guide the evaluation of these alternatives. Further objectives were established to account for other regional policy objectives that were not fully reflected in the project need, but have a bearing on the evaluation (Table 2).

**Table 1. Mid-Coast Corridor Transit Project Goals**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Need</th>
<th>Project Goals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transportation Capacity Needs to be Expanded</td>
<td>Increase the overall capacity of the transportation system serving the study area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternatives to Congested Highways and Roadways Need to be Provided</td>
<td>Reduce auto-person trips and vehicles miles traveled (VMT) and vehicle hours traveled (VHT)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvements that Complement and Integrate With Existing Transit Systems Need to be Provided</td>
<td>Link study area transit services with existing transit facilities and services to improve regional connectivity and mobility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transit Improvements that Minimize Dependence on Auto Travel Need to be Provided</td>
<td>Increase transit ridership and mode share</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transit Needs to be Reliable and Competitive with the Auto Travel Time</td>
<td>Increase transit on-time performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reduce the disparity between highway and transit speeds and travel times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transit Needs to Effectively Serve the UCSD and University City Areas</td>
<td>Provide fast and efficient transit service to the University City area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provide direct transit connections to the UCSD West Campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transit Needs to Better Support -- and be Supported by -- Planned Development and Growth in the Corridor</td>
<td>Provide high-capacity and quality transit service to those parts of the study area with existing or planned density and other transit friendly characteristics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Help shape local land use planning to help foster transit-oriented development (TOD) near stations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2. SANDAG Regional Policy Objectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regional Goals</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Livability: Focus transit investments in areas with compatible land uses that</td>
<td>Maintain consistency with regional and local plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>support an efficient transit system</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sustainability: Improve air quality and reduce GHG emissions</td>
<td>Reduce GHG emissions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Limit potential impacts to sensitive habitats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equity: Provide equitable levels of transportation service and avoid</td>
<td>Improve access for low-income, minority, elderly, and disabled persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>disparate impacts</td>
<td>Avoid adverse impacts to low-income, minority, elderly, and disabled persons</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Alternatives Evaluated in the Draft Comparative Evaluation of Alternatives Report

The first step in preparing the Draft SEIS/SEIR was the development and evaluation of alternatives for public and agency consideration during CEQA scoping. The corridor’s transportation needs were defined, and transit alternatives were identified for meeting these needs. These alternatives were evaluated against the project goals, objectives, and criteria. The Draft Comparative Evaluation of Alternatives Report summarizes this process, presents the evaluation results, and recommends a smaller set of alternatives for consideration in CEQA scoping.

The evaluation considered a No-Build Alternative and several build alternatives consisting of a relatively low-cost TSM Alternative, seven LRT alternatives, four BRT alternatives, and one Commuter Rail Alternative. In identifying the range of alternatives, consideration was given to changed conditions since the previous LPA was adopted in 1995 and updated in 2003. Alternative alignments also were identified from stakeholder input from UCSD, Metropolitan Transit System (MTS), the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), North County Transit District (NCTD) and the City of San Diego.

Alternatives Proposed for Scoping

The SANDAG Board approved three LRT alternatives and the No Build Alternative for presentation at scoping (Figure 2). Each LRT alternative would extend the existing Trolley system from OTTC north to University City, with service to UCSD and UTC. The No Build Alternative is required by NEPA and CEQA, and it will serve as the basis for comparing environmental impacts in the Draft SEIS/SEIR. At the conclusion of scoping, the SANDAG Board will make a final decision on what alternatives to include in the Draft SEIS/SEIR. A brief discussion of each alternative is provided below.

No-Build Alternative

The No-Build Alternative includes existing transit services and the highway and transit improvements from the RTP Revenue Constrained Scenario (i.e. improvements for which funding can be reasonably expected.) Within the Mid-Coast Corridor, the major capital improvement projects in the No-Build Alternative (and in each of the other alternatives) are listed below:

- HOV lanes on I-5, from Interstate 8 (I-8) north to I-805 and beyond, with Direct Access Ramps (DARs) at Voigt Drive
- HOV lanes on I-805, from I-5 to Carroll Canyon Road, and Managed Lanes on I-805, from Carroll Canyon Road to South Bay with DARs at Carroll Canyon Road and Nobel Drive
- Double tracking the SDNR tracks within the MTS/SDNR right-of-way
Figure 2. LRT Alternatives Recommended for Scoping

Mid-Coast Corridor Transit Project
April 2010

Alternatives for Scoping
- LRT – Alternative 1 (Combinations 1, 4, and 6)
- LRT – Alternative 3
- LRT – Alternative 5
- Trolley Station
- "UCSD East location differs by alignment"
- "Crestline station is for illustrative purposes; locations are not exact"

Existing Rail
- Trolley – Green Line
- Trolley – Blue Line
- COASTER Line
- Trolley Station
- COASTER Station
- Transit Center

0 Miles 1 2
In addition to these capital improvements, transit operating improvements are included in the No-Build Alternative. These include modifying the existing Route 150 of the MTS bus system, which operates between Downtown San Diego and University City. The modified route would operate within the planned I-5 HOV lanes, from OTTC north to Nobel Drive, and would serve UCSD and UTC with 15-minute service during peak periods and 30-minute service during the mid-day or off-peak period.

Improvements to the existing Trolley service also are included in the RTP Revenue Constrained Scenario. Based on the RTP, the No-Build Alternative provides for 7.5-minute service all day on all lines except the Trolley Orange Line, which would provide 7.5-minute service during peak periods and 15-minute service during the off-peak period.

**Light Rail Transit Alternatives**

Three LRT alternatives are being presented during scoping for extending the Trolley system from OTTC north to University City. These include LRT alternatives 1 (combines 1, 4 and 5), 3 and 6. Each alternative would use the existing Trolley tracks from the Santa Fe Depot north past OTTC, to a point just south of the San Diego River. From there, the alternatives would follow the MTS/San Diego Northern Railway (SDNR) right-of-way to a point just north of SR 52 in University City. Stations would be located within the MTS/SDNR right-of-way along Morena Boulevard at Tecolote Road, Clairemont Drive, and Balboa Avenue.

LRT Alternative 1 is a refinement of LPA adopted by the SANDAG Board of Directors in 2003. North of SR 52, this alternative would follow the I-5 corridor north to the UCSD West Campus, follow Voigt Drive to Genesee Avenue and continue to the terminal station at the UTC Transit Center. Stations would be located at Nobel Drive, UCSD West, UCSD East, Executive Drive, and the UTC Transit Center. Alternative 1 includes three alignment options on or adjacent to Voigt Drive. The first option would be aligned at-grade on Voigt Drive. The second option would provide an aerial alignment along the south side of Voigt Drive, while the third option would provide for an alignment just to the south of Voigt Drive.

LRT Alternative 3 was developed to avoid potential conflicts with the planned I-5 widening to accommodate the future HOV lanes. Although it was evaluated in the 1995 AA/DEIS/DEIR, the planned I-5 widening merited its reconsideration. Unlike the other LRT alternatives, LRT Alternative 3 would follow the existing MTS/SDNR right-of-way east to Genesee Avenue. At this point, LRT Alternative 3 would exit the MTS/SDNR right-of-way and transition below grade (via a new tunnel), which would proceed north under Genesee Avenue and then turn west under Executive Drive, rising to grade west of Regents Road on the UCSD East Campus. The alternative would continue west, with a terminal station on the UCSD West Campus. Within University City, this alternative would include a below-grade station at the UTC Transit Center and at-grade stations at UCSD East (at Thornton Hospital) and UCSD West. This alternative would minimize right-of-way acquisitions by using the existing MTS/SDNR right-of-way east to Genesee Avenue.

LRT Alternative 6 is similar to Alternative 1, but it would avoid Voigt Drive by leaving the UCSD West Campus and crossing over to the east side of I-5 south of Voigt Drive. On the UCSD East Campus, this alternative would include a station at Thornton Hospital instead of on Voigt Drive.

Each of the LRT alternatives would operate as an extension of the Trolley Blue Line to University City. The extended Blue Line would operate as a single line from the existing San Ysidro Transit Center Station on the south to University City on the north, with stops at all intermediate stations. The LRT line would provide 7.5-minute service during peak and off-peak periods. By extending the Trolley Blue Line to University City, the LRT alternatives would connect the major travel markets in University City with Downtown San Diego, South San Diego, and South Bay without a transfer.
ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

The types of impacts to be evaluated in the SEIS/SEIR include:

- Transportation
- Lane use, zoning, and economic development
- Land acquisition, displacements, and relocations
- Parklands/recreation areas and cultural resources (including historical, archeological, and paleontological resources)
- Neighborhood compatibility and environmental justice
- Visual and aesthetic impacts
- Natural resources (including air quality, noise and vibration, wetlands, water resources, geology/soils, and hazardous materials)
- Energy use
- Safety and security
- Wildlife and ecosystems (including endangered species)
- Indirect and cumulative development effects

The evaluation of impacts will be summarized in a Draft SEIS/SEIR document which will be circulated for public and agency comment. A public hearing will be held to present the results documented in the Draft SEIS/SEIR and to hear all comments. A Final SEIS/SEIR will then be prepared to update and document any changes made as a result of comments received during circulation of the Draft SEIS/SEIR. The Final SEIS/SEIR will also identify measures to mitigate any adverse effects identified.

PROJECT TIMELINE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>May 2010</th>
<th>Summer 2010/Summer 2011</th>
<th>Fall 2011</th>
<th>Summer 2012</th>
<th>Fall 2013/Fall 2015</th>
<th>Fall 2015/Winter 2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scoping Process</td>
<td>Preparation of Draft SEIS/SEIR</td>
<td>Draft SEIS/SEIR</td>
<td>Final SEIS/SEIR</td>
<td>Final Design/Construction</td>
<td>Revenue Service</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

SANDAG invites all interested individuals and organizations, public agencies, and Native American Tribes to comment on the scope of the Draft SEIS/SEIR, including the project’s purpose and need, the alternatives to be studied, and the impacts to be evaluated. Comments should focus on alternatives that may be less costly or have less environmental or community impacts while achieving similar transportation objectives, and the identification of any significant social, economic, or environmental issues relating to the alternatives.

Scoping Meeting Schedule

**Wednesday, May 5, 2010**
SANDAG
Board Room (7th Floor)
401 B Street, San Diego, CA, 92101
4 to 7 p.m.
Bus stop/Transit stations located at
4th/B St. & 5th Ave. Trolley Station.

**Thursday, May 20, 2010**
Clairemont High School
Cafeteria
4150 Ute Drive, San Diego, CA, 92117
4 to 7 p.m.
Bus stop located at Clairemont Dr./Ute Dr.

**Tuesday, May 11, 2010**
University of California, San Diego (UCSD)
Price Center East Ballroom
9500 Gilman Drive
La Jolla, CA 92093
3 to 6 p.m.
Bus stop located at Gilman Dr./Myers Dr. on UCSD campus.

**Tuesday, May 25, 2010**
Caltrans District 11 Office
Garcia Conference Room
4050 Taylor Street, San Diego, CA 92110
4 to 7 p.m.
Bus stop/Transit station located at
Taylor St./Juan St. & Old Town Transit Center.

Project informational materials will be available at the Scoping meetings and on the SANDAG Web site (www.sandag.org/midcoast). Copies of the materials can also be obtained by contacting midcoast@sandag.org or (619) 595-5620.

Please submit comments on the proposed scope of the Draft SEIS/SEIR by June 1, 2010. Comments on the proposed scope of the Draft SEIS/SEIR can be submitted in person, either verbally or in writing, at any of the five Scoping Meetings. Written comments can also be provided via U.S. mail or email on or before June 1, 2010.

**Mail to:** Mid-Coast Comments
SANDAG
401 B Street, Suite 800
San Diego, CA 92101

**e-mail to:** midcoast@sandag.org

**Fax to:** (619) 699-1905

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), SANDAG will accommodate persons who require assistance in order to participate in the Scoping meetings listed above. If such assistance is required, please contact SANDAG at (619) 595-5620 at least 72 hours in advance of the meeting. To request materials in an alternative format, please call (619) 595-5620, (619) 699-1904 (TTY), or fax (619) 699-1905.