

FACT SHEET

Digital Signs: LA Metro's Transportation Communication Network (TCN)

Summary

The proposed Metro Transportation Communication Network (TCN) Ordinance is a City Council initiated amendment to the Zoning Code that would permit up to 49 sign structures with digital displays on Metro owned lots throughout the City of Los Angeles. Metro is proposing these digital signs along several local freeways and major streets. The digital signs would allow off-site advertising, generating revenue that will go towards transportation related projects in the City, as well as provide real time traffic updates, Metro service alerts, and emergency alerts including Amber and Silver Alerts.

Background

On June 28, 2022, City Council adopted a motion ([Council File 22-0392](#)) directing the Department of City Planning to prepare an ordinance that would amend the Los Angeles Municipal Code to permit digital signage related to Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transit Authority's (Metro) Transportation Communication Network (TCN). Metro's TCN program proposes up to 49 off-site signs with digital displays to be erected throughout the City on Metro-owned lots only. These signs will permit off-site advertising for revenue generation and incorporate technology to help manage traffic and display service alerts. 33 TCN sign support structures and digital displays will be oriented towards the freeways and the remaining 16 will face major intersections and light rail lines located on commercial, manufacturing and public facilities zones.

A Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) ([Contract #139852](#)) was signed in early 2022 by the City of Los Angeles and Metro to share the advertising revenue in a 50/50 split between both parties if an ordinance is adopted. Any revenue collected is earmarked for local transportation projects in the City and will be overseen by the Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT). In addition, the revenue generated from off-site advertising will help fund projects that are consistent with the goals of Metro's Vision 2028 plan, as negotiated in the agreement at the request of the City Council by the City's Chief Administrative Office and will remain in place for 20 years until 2042.

Currently there is a Citywide ban on off-site digital billboards within Los Angeles city limits, and any new billboard must be located within an approved sign district in order to be operative. As such the City Council directed the Department of City Planning to prepare an ordinance(s) that would permit digital signage as proposed in the Metro TCN. To that end, two ordinances are proposed; one will create a new Supplemental Use District (SUD) permitting signage unique to the Metro TCN program and a second companion ordinance applies this SUD on specific Metro owned properties Citywide to allow for up to 49 off-site digital display signs to operate.

Key Provisions

The proposed Ordinances include the following provisions:

- Permit the Transportation Communication Network (TCN) Program within a new Sign District on noncontiguous Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transit Authority (Metro) owned parcels in the City.
- Create process for permitting the structures including:
 - Administrative review for freeway adjacent TCN structures and displays where detailed plans and renderings are provided and a project permit compliance process for those proposed along major streets where detailed plans and rendering are not currently available.
- Include development and design standards based on each site location.

- Regulate the location of signs which are in close proximity to highways & major corridors, in addition to requiring the orienting of the sign faces away from adjacent lots and other sensitive uses.
- Establish illumination standards for day and night time operations, impose hours of operation, and require louver technology built into the sign face that aims to direct visibility to roadways and limit light spillage onto adjacent properties.
- Incorporate a five year operational review of the TCN structures and digital displays along major streets to determine whether any operational adjustments are warranted based on an analysis of traffic data in the area.
- A sign reduction program aimed at reducing static off-site signs throughout the City that proposes:
 - Removal of 200 off-site signs on Metro owned lots; and
 - Take down ratio of 3 to 1 existing static signs within a defined radius around each of the proposed TCN structures and digital displays along major streets.

New Zoning Code

On May 3, 2023 the City Council began the process of adopting the new Zoning Code as part of the Community Plan updates for Downtown Los Angeles. Once fully adopted the new Zoning Code, known as Chapter 1A of the Los Angeles Municipal Code (LAMC), will apply to Downtown only (except for Article 13: Administration). Chapter 1A will be expanded to other Community Plan areas as those plans are updated over the coming years.

To account for the forthcoming code, the draft ordinance proposes a parallel edit, identical in content, to the Chapter 1 TCN SUD which establishes a new Section in Article 8 of Chapter 1A of the LAMC and creates a new TCN SUD, permitting signage unique to the Metro TCN program in the Downtown Los Angeles Community Plan area.

Frequently Asked Questions

Where will the proposed signs be located?

There will be up to 49 TCN sign support structures with 86 sign faces. 33 sign support structures will be oriented towards the freeway while 16 will be oriented towards major corridors and public transit stops. These signs will cover 22 of the 35 Community Plan Areas listed below:


Arleta / Pacoima - 2 TCN Sign Support Structures and 4 Digital Display Sign Faces.	Sherman Oaks / Studio City / Toluca Lake / Cahuenga Pass - 3 TCN Sign Support Structures and 4 Digital Display Sign Faces.
Boyle Heights - 4 TCN Sign Support Structures and 8 Digital Display Sign Faces.	Southeast Los Angeles - 2 TCN Sign Support Structures and 4 Digital Display Sign Faces.
Central City - 4 TCN Sign Support Structures and 6 Digital Display Sign Faces.	South Los Angeles - 2 TCN Sign Support Structures and 3 Digital Display Sign Faces.
Central City North - 7 TCN Sign Support Structures and 14 Digital Display Sign Faces.	Silver Lake / Echo Park / Elysian Valley - 1 TCN Sign Support Structures and 2 Digital Display Sign Faces.
Encino / Tarzana - 1 TCN Sign Support Structure and 2 Digital Display Sign Faces.	Sun Valley / LaTuna Canyon - 1 TCN Sign Support Structure and 2 Digital Display Sign Faces.
Granada Hills / Knollwood - 1 TCN Sign Support Structures and 2 Digital Display Sign Face.	Sylmar - 1 TCN Sign Support Structure and 1 Digital Display Sign Faces.
Hollywood - 2 TCN Sign Support Structure and 4 Digital Display Sign Faces.	Van Nuys / North Sherman Oaks - 2 TCN Sign Support Structure and 3 Digital Display Sign Faces.

Los Angeles International Airport - 1 TCN Sign Support Structure and 2 Digital Display Sign Faces.	West Adams / Baldwin Hills / Leimert - 2 TCN Sign Support Structure and 3 Digital Display Sign Faces.
Northeast Los Angeles - 4 TCN Sign Support Structure and 8 Digital Display Sign Faces.	Westchester / Playa Del Rey - 3 TCN Sign Support Structures and 6 Digital Display Sign Faces.
North Hollywood / Valley Village - 3 TCN Sign Support Structures and 3 Digital Display Sign Faces.	West Los Angeles - 5 TCN Sign Support Structures and 7 Digital Display Sign Faces.
Palms / Mar Vista / Del Rey - 2 TCN Sign Support Structures and 4 Digital Display Sign Faces.	Wilshire - 1 TCN Sign Support Structure and 2 Digital Display Sign Faces.

Is there an Environmental Assessment?

Yes. This project requires an environmental assessment pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Metro is the lead agency on the CEQA analysis. The City is a responsible party since Metro’s assessment will cover any City ordinances to regulate the program. Metro contracted with Eystone Environmental as the lead consultant for this assessment. The Initial Study and Notice of Preparation was released in mid-May 2022, and it was determined that an Environmental Impact Study (EIR) was required to assess the project’s potential impacts. Scoping meetings took place on May 19, 2022 and May 21, 2022. The Draft EIR was released and was open for public comment from September 9, 2022 through Oct 24, 2022. During the comment period Metro held virtual information meetings on October 6, 2022 and October 7, 2022.

The Draft EIR did identify four sites with significant and unavoidable impacts related to Aesthetics, Land Use and Historic Resources. These four sites are no longer considered a part of the Metro’s TCN and therefore are not a part of the proposed TCN Ordinances.



In November 2022, Metro released the Final EIR. The Metro Board approved the Final EIR unanimously on January 26, 2023 at the Metro Board of Directors meeting that was held virtually.

How do the proposed ordinances modify the Metro TCN project as proposed in the EIR?

The proposed Metro TCN ordinances include some best practices from previously approved sign districts citywide. These include imposing limitations such as a mandatory sign reduction program, signage permitting requirements, location restrictions, site maintenance standards, and illumination standards. The proposed ordinances limit the Metro TCN digital signs to 49 displays on non-contiguous Metro owned lots only.

These signs will be located on Metro owned lots, however they are planned to be adjacent to the public right of way. As such the proposed ordinance will require additional limitations:

- The maximum sign area is to not exceed 51,000 square feet for the overall TCN program.
- TCN structures will be permitted on properties located in the C, M or PF zones only.
- Not allowed within 200 feet near any ecological preserve, state or national park, or scenic highway.
- Distancing requirements of 500 feet from any other digital display sign on the same side of the highway.
- Sets illumination standards for day and night time, and imposes hours of operation from 7am to midnight daily.
- Places an eight second refresh rate between images with no animation or flashing images, only still images are allowed.
- Site maintenance requirements.

What is the process for the approval and permitting of the proposed signs?


The Freeway Facing TCN Structures will require an administrative review process pursuant to LAMC Section 12.32 S.4 while the Non-Freeway Facing TCN Structures will be subject to a discretionary Project Permit Compliance process pursuant to LAMC Section 11.5.7 C.

The Project Permit Compliance process will allow for applications to be batched by Community Plan Area and require submission of a complete sign package including renderings, site plans, elevations and sign illumination plans. In addition, findings are required for non-freeway facing signs related to compliance with the district regulations, compatibility and the citywide ban exception. The discretionary review process will allow for modifications and approvals for non-freeway facing signs and will be appealable to the City Planning Commission (CPC).

The proposed administrative review process for Non-Freeway Facing TCN Structures is contingent upon the submission of site plans, elevations and renderings of those proposed signs. The process in the proposed ordinances may change depending on the level of information provided prior to review by the City Planning Commission.

Will other agencies have a role in the permitting and monitoring of the proposed signs?

After the Department of City Planning application and entitlement process has been completed, including verification of the required off-site sign reduction program, and the signage permit process has been initiated, the Los Angeles Department of Building and Safety (LADBS) will be responsible for final permitting of the TCN Structures and Digital Display Sign Faces within the program. This includes verification and documenting the ordinances sign takedown requirements. LADBS will review the structures and sign faces for engineering specs, illumination standards, grading (import/export of earth) and zoning/land use compliance. The Fire Department will check the materials and review the TCN structure locations to ensure they do not block or restrict access



to any building entryway, doors or windows. The Bureau of Engineering (BOE) will verify that all signs have a valid address and the Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT) will conduct a hazard review analysis for compliance with California Department of Transportations (Caltrans) signs near highways requirements.

Lastly, after the signs have been in operation for five years, LADOT will review the operational data during a required Plan Approval process. The traffic and collision data collected near the non-freeway sites may result in future operational changes within the TCN Program.

Where will the existing billboard takedowns occur?

The Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) that initiated this program requires Metro to remove 200 static billboards citywide. The removal of the off-site signs is limited to Metro owned properties. The sign removal will occur primarily in West LA, Downtown LA and the East San Fernando Valley. These takedowns have no relation to the proposed location of the TCN structures and will be required prior to completing the entitlement process for freeway facing signs.

In addition to the removal of 200 static billboards, the ordinance proposes a second takedown provision that requires an additional 3 square feet of off-site static sign area to be removed for every 1 square foot of proposed digital display sign area for the non-freeway facing signs. The additional signage takedowns are required to occur within a 1,500 square feet radius of the new signs, however the radius may be expanded if the inventory of signs is limited near the proposed sign.

What is a TCN District and how does it differ from the current Sign District allowance in the Zoning Code?

Currently, implementation of a sign district requires signs to operate on contiguous lots zoned C, M or R5, and whose land use designation on an adopted community plan shows as Regional Center, Regional Commercial Center or High Intensity Commercial. The TCN District will create specific

allowances for the TCN district while adhering to the City’s existing ban on billboards outside of a supplemental use district or specific plan. Furthermore, this TCN district will operate on non-contiguous Metro owned lots that are zoned for C, M and PF uses. The enabling language has been crafted narrowly to only permit this program for Metro and any expansion would require a legislative action including approval by City Council.

What do the proposed signs look like?

While the site plans, elevations and renderings have not been submitted for all signs, below are preliminary examples illustrating what the proposed signs will look like:





San Fernando Rd & Sepulveda Blvd (5 Freeway)



San Fernando Rd & Sepulveda Blvd (5 Freeway)



105 Freeway and Aviation Blvd

What are the next steps in the process?

City Planning released the draft ordinances on June 14, 2023. In early summer a staff level public hearing will be held, including a webinar providing an overview of the program. The hearing will provide the public an opportunity to offer feedback on the proposed ordinances. Following the public hearing, a Staff Recommendation Report will be prepared for the City Planning Commission (CPC). Public feedback, including comments provided at the hearing, will help to inform this report and may result in changes to the proposed ordinances. Following consideration by the CPC, the ordinances would move to the Planning and Land Use Management (PLUM) Committee of the City Council before eventually heading to the full City Council for consideration.

Who can I contact for more information?

Please submit your questions and comments for the proposed Ordinances to Terri Osborne at terri.osborne@lacity.org or (213) 482-7084.

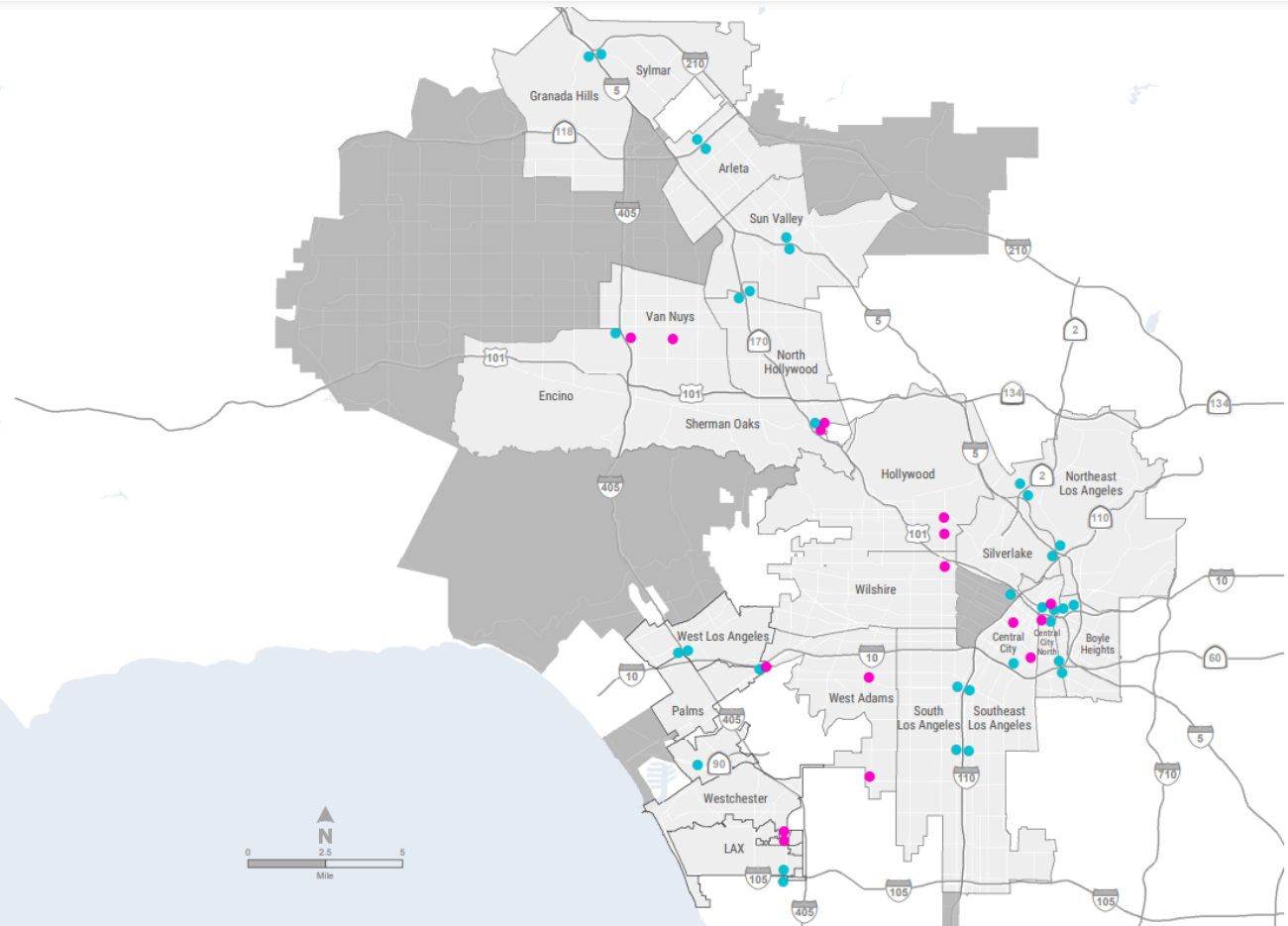
For more information on the Environmental Impact Report and its updates can be located by visiting metro.net/tcn or by phone by contacting Mr. Shine Ling at (213) 944-3410.

Citywide Map of Proposed TCN Sites

Approximate Locations of the Transportation Communications Network (TCN)

- Freeway Facing TCN Structures*
- Non-Freeway Facing TCN Structures*

Community Plan	# of TCN Structures
Arleta	2
Boyle Heights	4
Central City	3
Central City North	5
Encino	1
Granada Hills	1
Hollywood	2
LAX	1
North Hollywood	2
Northeast Los Angeles	4
Palms/Mar Vista/Del Rey	1
Sherman Oaks	3
Silver Lake	1
South Los Angeles	2
Southeast Los Angeles	2
Sun Valley	2
Sylmar	1
Van Nuys	2
West Adams	2
West Los Angeles	4
Westchester	3
Wilshire	1



* Structures may contain up to two digital display Faces.