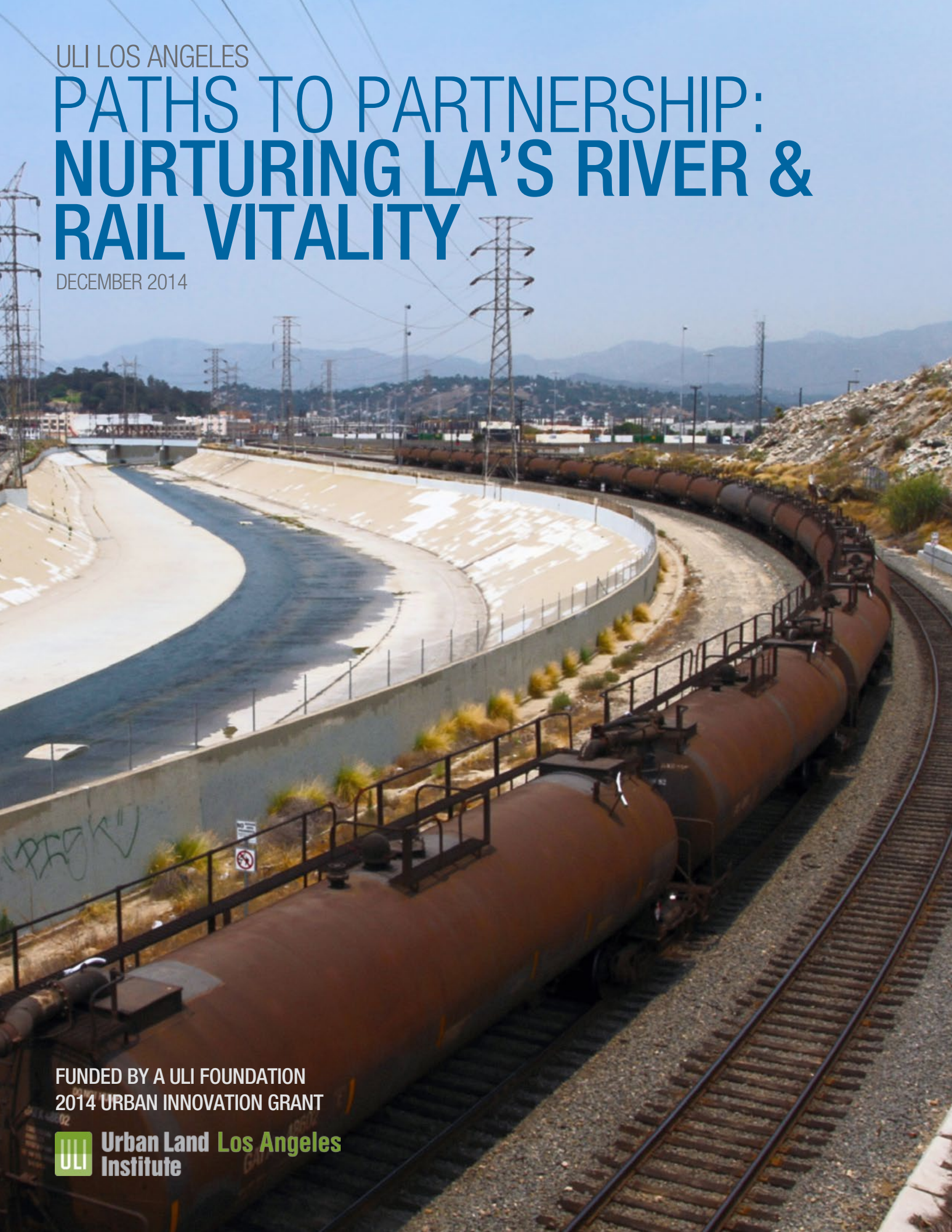
ULI LOS ANGELES

PATHS TO PARTNERSHIP: NURTURING LA'S RIVER & RAIL VITALITY

DECEMBER 2014



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Molly M. Strauss
Editor, The Planning Report

Photographer

John Dlugolecki

Graphic Designer

Stephen Sampson

Interviewees

Carol Armstrong
Project Manager, City of Los Angeles River Project Office

Maria Camacho
Greenway 2020 Director, LA River Revitalization Corporation

Don Sepulveda, P.E.
Executive Officer – Regional Rail, Metro

Nicholas Saponara
Director Countywide Planning and Development, Metro

Marie Sullivan
Transportation Planner, Metro

Cung Nguyen, P.E.
Senior Civil Engineer, County of Los Angeles, Department of Public Works

Deborah Weintraub, Chief Deputy City Engineer, City of Los Angeles Bureau of Engineering

Kevin Kim, P.E.
County of Los Angeles, Department of Public Works

John C Wade
Manager Terminal Operations, Union Pacific

Todd A. Kiepen
Director Terminal Operations, Union Pacific

Lupe C. Valdez
Director Public Affairs, Union Pacific

Lewis MacAdams
Friends of the LA River

Gill Hicks
Freight Rail Expert

Joseph Syrnick
CEO Schuylkill Banks Park

Stephen Miller
Blogger and former Rails to Trails staff member

Heather Deutch
former Rails to Trails planner for the Metropolitan Branch Trail

Barry Bergman
Rails to Trails, Western Region

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The revitalization of the Los Angeles (LA) River is one of the most exciting urban projects in the nation. Transforming the river is at the forefront of Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti's agenda; and the United States Army Corps of Engineers recently recommended the approval of a $1.08 billion plan to restore a significant portion of the 51-mile waterway. At this catalytic moment, coordination among stakeholders is essential.

A major element of the revitalization effort focuses on increasing access to and along the river itself. But many of the most exciting and challenging opportunities reside in Downtown LA, where the river is abutted by active rail tracks and rail yards. This rail infrastructure for both goods and passenger movement is, and will continue to be, critical to the regional economy. Therefore, plans for increased public river access present a significant challenge for ensuring both public safety and uncompromised rail operations. Rail and river interests have distinct goals and, as a result, have historically done little joint planning, despite the need for coordination.

Coordination is particularly critical because the rail companies and public agencies are planning major initiatives that could impact the location of tracks and facilities, as well as the quantity of cargo passing adjacent to the LA River. These initiatives must be part of the LA River planning process and, reciprocally, river restoration must be part of rail planning efforts. A sample of initiatives with potential relevance to the LA River is included in this report.

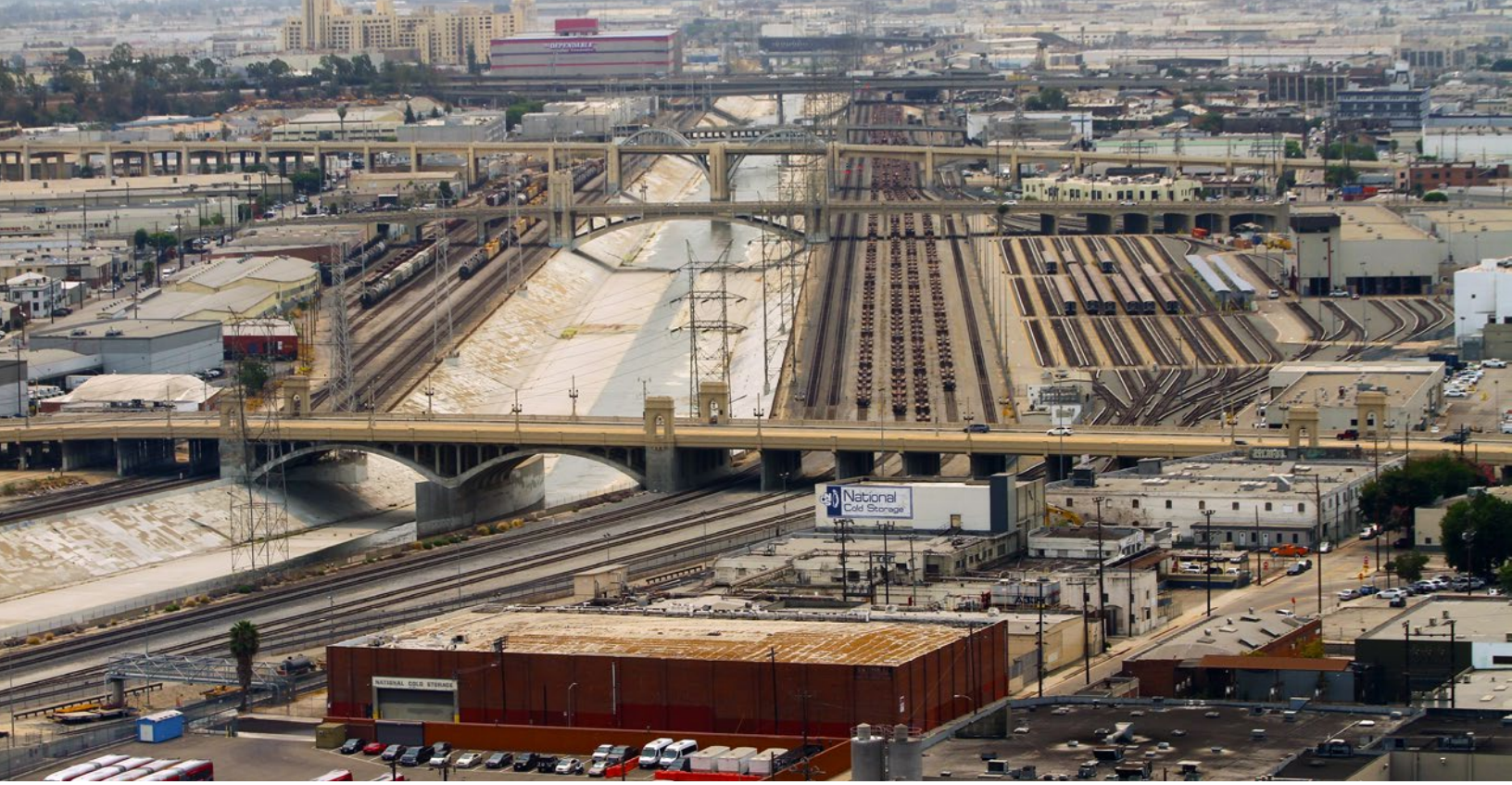
The revitalization of the LA River is a legacy project. It has the potential to create a critical open space amenity for the region, connect some of Los Angeles County's most culturally rich and distinct neighborhoods, provide a non-vehicular transportation corridor through downtown and the region, restore an ecological asset, foster economic development, and redress historic environmental injustices. However, moving forward effectively with revitalization efforts will require coordination among the project's many major stakeholders, including rail agencies and companies, each of which has its own goals and long-term plans. For instance, the recently recommended Army Corps' Alternative 20 includes the redevelopment of Union Pacific's Los Angeles Transportation Center. Communication and negotiation between LA River and rail interests will be required to realize the full vision for a revitalized River.

This report includes four case studies that demonstrate how other cities have coordinated with rail and other private interests to realize a major open space investment. The cases demonstrate that creative solutions to similar challenges have worked in the past and highlight the importance of including major stakeholders in planning efforts—particularly private property owners. The case studies demonstrate that an independent convener can prove helpful.

Rail interests must be included as a major stakeholder in LA River revitalization long-term planning initiatives. Similarly, river interests should be consulted in long-term rail planning initiatives. River redevelopment and revitalization is a complex process that requires a table and a convener to hold the stakeholders together over time. Though a convener can take many forms, as the case studies demonstrate, a recognized leader is essential to ensure effective outreach and coordination.

More than one "table" exists now, and we recommend that the railroads be invited to participate in each one. Encouraging their active participation in both public sector advisory committees and leadership groups (e.g., the Los Angeles River Cooperation Committee) and non-profit organizations (e.g., the Los Angeles River Revitalization Corporation, Friends of the Los Angeles River), either as a member or regular attendee, would be one way to improve coordination, communication, and cooperation between river and rail interests. This integration—combined with consulting technical experts knowledgeable about rail operations when formulating plans—would create a mechanism for more meaningful stakeholder input.

Revitalization of the LA River will be incremental; many small steps can lead to the changes envisioned in bold public agency plans for the waterway and its surroundings. Undertaking a single, clearly defined pilot revitalization project that offers mutually beneficial outcomes to river and rail interests could provide a valuable opportunity to establish a process for coordination that will prove useful going forward. ULI recommends selecting one project as a case study to promote collaboration and comprehensive engagement.



INTRODUCTION

The LA River runs through Los Angeles County to the ocean at Long Beach. Originally, Spanish colonists who formed El Pueblo de Nuestra Señora la Reina de los Ángeles in the late 18th century located their settlement near this water source.[1] However, flooding continually inundated the river's surroundings. After a particularly serious flood in 1938, the US Army Corps of Engineers began to channelize the river—a project completed in 1960. Since then, the LA River has been viewed primarily as a flood control channel. Efforts to re-envision the waterway as a river once again began in the 1980s, and have since gained traction.

Large-scale investment and energy currently surrounds efforts to revitalize the LA River. In May 2014, the US Army Corps of Engineers announced that it would recommend a $1.08-billion ecosystem restoration plan along an 11-mile stretch of the river in the City of Los Angeles and bordering the cities of Burbank and Glendale. This was the culmination of extensive efforts by local organizations and government officials to convince federal agencies that a restoration project on such a large scale was a worthy investment in Los Angeles. In addition to the federal focus on the 11-mile stretch, the City, County, State, and numerous nonprofit organizations are teaming up to prioritize a continuous greenway along all 51 miles on both sides of the river, which the Los Angeles River Revitalization Corporation has branded "Greenway 2020." While certain decisions regarding revitalization have now been made, many more are still to come.

Efforts to complete the greenway and increase river access hinge on the critical section of the LA River flowing through Downtown Los Angeles. Rail ownership of land adjacent to the river in this corridor is seen to conflict with revitalization objectives. Rail transport is pivotal to the regional economy, providing both goods movement and passenger travel. To date, rail and river interests have struggled to communicate successfully. Creating public river access without compromising safety and rail operations is a major challenge.

Interest in revitalizing urban waterways is not unique to Los Angeles. Cities across the United States and beyond are looking to reconnect to their waterfronts, creating public access in areas previously utilized primarily by industry.[2] Many have already taken significant action to realize these ends. Baltimore, New York City, and Nashville are among the municipalities focusing on such endeavors.[3]

Across the United States, recreational and active transportation opportunities are increasingly being located in close proximity to active rail lines. A recent study by the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy identified 161 trails located adjacent to active rail lines in 41 states, with 33 located in California. "The total mileage of trails located completely or partially along active railroad corridors is 1,397 miles, up from 523 miles in 2000," conclude study authors

Kelly Pack and Pat Tomes. Of the 88 rails-with-trails surveyed in their study, Pack and Tomes found that "28 percent are located adjacent to rail corridors owned by Class I railroads."

Rail contributes significantly to the Southern California economy, with 34 percent of jobs connected to the goods movement industry.[4] Freight rail serves as an extension of the region's sea ports, which processed $336 billion in maritime cargo in 2010. The greater Los Angeles area is served by two Class I railroads and a network of passenger rail lines.

A plethora of organizations, agencies, and companies possess an interest in the LA River. Neighborhoods adjacent to the waterway are changing quickly—with a real estate boom occurring in Downtown Los Angeles—and these changes can only be expected to accelerate. As a recommendation of the City's 2007 Los Angeles River Revitalization Master Plan, the Los Angeles City Council approved two ordinances in July 2014 establishing the River Improvement Overlay District and the LA River Improvement Overlay Zone—to encourage river-sensitive or "riverly" development adjacent to or near the waterway.[5] At this catalytic moment, following the Army Corps' decision, coordination among stakeholders is critical.

Credit: Tom Ipri, flickr user tomspix

Schuylkill River Trail, Philadelphia. Municipalities across the nation are locating pedestrian and bicycle trails along urban rivers, often adjacent to rail lines.

In Los Angeles, trails run adjacent to rail in several locations, including the Watts Towers Crescent Greenway and Rio de Los Angeles State Park, pictured here.

The following report does not intend to yield direct recommendations for river revitalization outcomes or projects. Rather, it seeks to highlight process challenges and opportunities surrounding revitalization efforts. This document includes:

- General history of the relationship between rail entities and urban rivers, and an overview of Los Angeles's particular rail-river interactions
- A review of activity surrounding LA River revitalization to date
- Factors affecting access along the river in Downtown LA
- An explanation of rail companies' planned initiatives that could impact revitalization
- A list of river revitalization plans that are viewed as potentially problematic from the perspective of rail companies
- Four case studies where other US cities coordinated with rail and private interests to realize a trail project
- Primary challenges facing revitalization efforts
- Select practical conclusions
- A discussion of the need for coordination among stakeholders

Methodology

This report was financed through an Urban Innovation Grant from the Urban Land Institute Foundation. Research, site tours, and interviews with key stakeholders including Metro, Union Pacific Railroad, LA River Revitalization Corporation, Friends of the LA River, Los Angeles County Department of Public Works, and City of Los Angeles River Project Office were conducted from April to June of 2014. Work was guided by a Steering Committee made up of members from ULI LA's Land Use Leadership Committee.

CHAPTER 1:
EXPLORING THE RIVER/RAIL CONFLUENCE

RAIL CONTEXT

As the United States urbanized in the 18th and 19th centuries, industrial facilities tended to locate along riverbanks—since transportation occurred primarily over water. When railroads succeeded ships as the primary transporter of goods in the 19th and 20th centuries, they followed rivers because of the existing industrial infrastructure situated there, and because rivers generally constitute optimum gradients for train movement. When rail companies first arrived in the region, the Los Angeles River Valley proved an attractive area, providing an "easily developable right-of-way." [6]

As rivers became cleaner and urban populations grew following World War II, railroads often became barriers to public use and enjoyment of these natural resources. In that same time period, railroads increased activity via more frequent service and longer trains.

Today, rail is the dominant mode of transportation for cargo traveling lengthy distances and for bulky, relatively lower-value or less delivery time-sensitive products.[7] It carries over 40 percent of freight traveling between cities in the United States, about 70 percent of vehicles manufactured domestically, and 67 percent of coal traveling to power plants. [8]

Railroads arrived in California during the 1870s, and today the state provides an essential link in the national freight rail network. Railroads in California operated more than 6,863 track miles in 2011, transporting over 6.5 million carloads of product that totaled over 156 million tons.[9] 29 railroads comprise the system within the state, including both Class I and Class III lines.

California's ports, taken together, are the busiest in the country. They see nearly half of all containerized cargo entering the nation by water.[10] 34 percent of jobs employing 2.9 million people in the Southern California region depend on the goods movement industry.[11] The Los Angeles Customs District, which includes three seaports—Los Angeles, Long Beach, and Hueneme—processed $336 billion in maritime cargo in 2010. Much of this cargo must travel to its final destination over land. The rail system serves, in part, as an extension of the ports—moving products and resources from the sea to destinations inland. Both the Port of Long Beach and the Port of Los Angeles are located at the mouth of the LA River.

The Los Angeles area is served by two Class I railroads: the BNSF Railway and the Union Pacific Railroad (UP). Nationally, BNSF totals 32,500 route miles, with about 43,000 employees that serve over 40 ports.[12] UP, the principal operating company of the Union Pacific Corporation, covers a 31,800-mile route through 23 states,

with 46,500 employees. [13] The two railroads flank the LA River through much of Downtown, and rail activity in the area is centered around LA's Union Station.

According to the Southern California Association of Governments, port traffic is expected to triple by 2035 (as measured by container volume).[14] This freight—along with the industries connected to it—rely on an effective transportation system to link products traveling by air or sea to the rest of the state and country. Projected cargo increases generate an increase in frequency and length of freight trains in the region. Southern California also relies upon a network of passenger rail systems:

- **The Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro)** oversees transit and transportation for 88 cities, and additional unincorporated areas, under its jurisdiction. Metro is currently undergoing an ambitious build-out of light and heavy rail infrastructure, funded through Measure R—a half-cent sales tax bond measure passed in 2008. In 2000, Metro rail ridership totaled about 3.6 million. By 2013, it had climbed to over 10 million—nearly tripling in just over a decade. [15]

- **Metrolink** provides rail regionally in Southern California and is governed by the Southern California Regional Rail Authority, a joint powers authority consisting of Metro, Orange County Transportation Authority, Riverside County Transportation Commission, San Bernardino Associated Governments, and Ventura County Transportation Commission. Metrolink connects six counties with its 512-mile route, seven service lines, 55 stations, and 44,000 daily boardings.[16] Its 2013-14 operating budget totaled $211.2 million.[17]

- **Amtrak**—the National Railroad Passenger Corporation—also services Los Angeles. Nationally, it operates in 46 states, Washington, D.C., and three Canadian provinces, with 21,000 route miles. [18] In 2013, Amtrak served 31.6 million passengers. The company earned $2.877 billion in revenue in fiscal year 2012.[19] Within California, Amtrak ran 70 trains per day with over $196 million in procurement in 2013.[20]

- Finally, the promised introduction of **high-speed rail** in California could add an additional passenger mode to the existing Los Angeles options. California High Speed Rail aims to connect Los Angeles' Union Station with San Francisco's Transbay Terminal by 2029, in under three hours at speeds up to 200 miles per hour.[21] Eventually, the system would span from San Diego to Sacramento with a total of 24 stations across 800 miles.[22]

RIVER CONTEXT

The LA River's planning complexity is reflected by the many entities that have some jurisdiction over it. While it runs exclusively through LA County, it crosses 13 separate cities with independent land-use authority adjacent to the river: Bell, Bell Gardens, Burbank, Compton, Cudahy, Glendale, Long Beach, Los Angeles, Lynwood, Maywood, Paramount, South Gate, and Vernon. [23]

Credit: Flickr user Kb4067

As the Los Angeles River winds its way to the Pacific Ocean it passes through downtown Los Angeles.

While the LA County Department of Public Works and the US Army Corps of Engineers are charged with operation and maintenance duties, additional public bodies also have a stake in the river, including: Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation, Los Angeles County Mosquito Abatement District, Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority, California Department of Transportation, California Department of Fish and Game, California Department of Water Resources, California Regional Water Quality Control Board, Southern California Regional Rail Authority, US Environmental Protection Agency, Federal Emergency Management Agency, and the US Department of the Interior's US Fish and Wildlife Service. [24] Flood management remains a primary role for the river.

The County's Los Angeles River Master Plan describes the division of ownership as follows: "Outside the flood control right-of-way, the greatest amount of continuous open space adjacent to the river is held in fee or as easements by railroads and by public utility districts and companies. These include Southern California Edison, Metropolitan Water District, Southern Pacific Transportation Company, Union Pacific Railroad, Santa Fe Railroad, and the City of Los Angeles Department of Water and Power. Some other large open areas such as Elysian and Griffith Parks are owned by the City of Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation." [25]

It goes on to say: "Several areas along the river share overlapping easements held by agencies providing different services. For example, the stretch of river between Los Feliz Boulevard and Colorado Boulevard is owned by the City of Los Angeles. The city has granted a flood control easement to the Corps of Engineers (for maintenance of the flood control channel). The Los Angeles County Department of Public Works is the permitting authority for this same reach of the river and those reaches operated and maintained by the Corps. In addition, the City of Los Angeles Department of Water and Power has an easement for the maintenance of their power transmission towers." [26]

LA RIVER ACTIVITY REVIEW

Efforts to re-envision the Los Angeles River as a multi-use waterway, rather than a single-purpose flood control channel, began in the 1980s with the formation of Lewis MacAdams' Friends of the Los Angeles River. [27] Decades after the river was first channelized, Los Angeles County, the City of Los Angeles, and the Army Corps of Engineers undertook planning processes with the intention of revitalization, reflecting a growing desire to return the river to its more natural setting and open it up for public use.

County Plan

In 1996, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors adopted its Los Angeles River Master Plan, which covers all 51 miles of the waterway through its 13 jurisdictions. The Plan cites "citizen interest in the river since the mid-1980s" [28] as the impetus for the document. The creation of the Master Plan was formally proposed by a Task Force studying the river within the City of Los Angeles, which had been formed by Mayor Tom Bradley. The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors voted to embark on the plan in 1991. In summary, "the Master Plan advocates environmental enhancement, recreational opportunities, and economic development throughout the LA River and Tujunga Wash corridors." [29] The County now partners with the City and the US Army Corps of Engineers on implementation of their river plans via the Los Angeles River Memorandum of Understanding and its recommended establishment of the Los Angeles River Cooperation Committee.

City Plan

Under the leadership of then-Councilmember Ed Reyes, founder of the City Council's Ad Hoc Committee on the Los Angeles River, the City of Los Angeles undertook its own master planning process for the section of the LA River within its limits. In April 2007, the City of Los Angeles adopted the Los Angeles River Revitalization Master Plan—offering "a bold vision for transforming the River over the next several generations" focusing on the 32 miles that flow through 10 council districts. [30] The plan includes 240 projects of varying sizes and its estimated total build out cost exceeds $2 billion. [31] Broad goals identified in the master plan are as follows: enhance flood storage, enhance water quality, enable safe public access, and restore a functional riparian ecosystem. [32] As stated above, the City partners with the County and Army Corps on implementation of its plan via the Los Angeles River Cooperation Committee and reports regularly to the City Council's Arts, Parks, Health, Aging and River Committee.

Renderings like this one from the 2007 Los Angeles River Revitalization Master Plan show the City of LA's vision for a revitalized LA River that serves as recreational space and restores habitat.

ARBOR Study

The Los Angeles River Ecosystem Restoration Feasibility Study—referred to as the ARBOR Study, for "Alternative with Restoration Benefits and Opportunities for Revitalization" [33]—is a project of the US Army Corps of Engineers with the City of Los Angeles serving as local sponsor. [34] The process began in 2006, with a completed draft released in September 2013. The study yielded four alternatives: Alt. 10 (cost: $374,782,639), Alt. 13 ($453,406,057), Alt. 16 ($803,928,734), and Alt. 20 ($1,080,627,339).[35] The ARBOR alternatives focused on recommendations for ecosystem restoration along 11 miles of the Los Angeles River, from approximately Griffith Park to Downtown Los Angeles.

Despite the Army Corps' initial support for Alternative 13, efforts by Los Angeles City Council, Mayor Eric Garcetti, advocacy groups, and approximately 500 comments submitted during the public review process, persuaded the Corps to recommend the more comprehensive Alternative 20, a decision announced in May 2014.

Additional steps must be taken before Alternative 20 is officially selected. Congress must authorize construction in a future Water Resources Development Act (WRDA), and a separate act of Congress will be necessary to appropriate funds for its implementation. [36] Thus, while preliminary design can commence, construction on the Study's recommended projects must wait until it is authorized and funds are appropriated in future bills.

LA River Greenway Trail System

In 2009, the City of Los Angeles created the nonprofit Los Angeles River Revitalization Corporation (LARRC), in order to garner private sector support for implementation of the City's Plan and associated projects. The LARRC led the effort to create Greenway 2020, a greenway advocacy campaign launched in June 2013 and now incorporated into city policy through Mayor Garcetti's Department of Transportation Strategic Plan, to create a continuous non-motorized transportation corridor along both sides of the city's 32 miles that exist within the 51-mile river corridor by 2020. Greenway 2020 envisions the incorporation of recreational trails, along with supporting amenities, along all 51 miles of the river using right of way owned or controlled by the City of Los Angeles, Los Angeles County, the Army Corps, and other parties. Greenway 2020 seeks to meet the goals of both the City and County master planning documents that envision continuous access along the river. Approximately 45 discontinuous miles of access currently exist on both sides of the river. The LARRC seeks to elevate the concept of Greenway 2020 to be a cornerstone of river planning, connecting all communities along the river to create a transportation, economic development, tourism, and recreational magnet.

Momentum around Greenway 2020 has been built incrementally. For example, as one step, NBC/Universal contributed $13.5 million to build a 1.7-mile bike path along its studio (on the south bank of the river from Lankershim/Cahuenga to Barham) and to fund the feasibility study for connecting it westward to Whitsett Avenue in Studio City and eastward to Riverside/Zoo Drive at Griffith Park. Once built, it will be possible to travel from Studio City to Griffith Park to Downtown LA on a Class I Bikeway.

Within the City of Los Angeles, there are approximately 20 miles of publicly-accessible trails along both sides of the river. Currently there are critical gaps in the San Fernando Valley and between Elysian Valley at Taylor Yard and the LA River Path that connects the City of Maywood to the City of Long Beach.[37] Both segments have been identified as critical gaps in Metro's Bicycle Transportation Strategic Plan.

The Los Angeles Department of City Planning's 2010 Bicycle Plan, a component of the City of Los Angeles Transportation Element and adopted in March 2011, outlines a process for increasing bicycling in the city by improving the network of paths that exist, expanding from 334 miles to 1,684 miles over 35 years. One prong of the document's three-pronged approach is a Green Bikeway Network that explicitly seeks to improve access to river channels like the LA River.[38] The river bike path was also included as a priority in the County's 2012 Bicycle Plan. Coupled with that, the September 2014 release of the Los Angeles City Department of Transportation Strategic Plan calls for the "Build Out of the LA River Path by 2020."

Rail yards in and around Downtown LA along the Los Angeles River include Union Pacific's LATC.

FACTORS AFFECTING ACCESS ALONG THE RIVER IN DOWNTOWN LA:

The following factors impact efforts seeking increased river access:

Unimproved ROW and Tracks

Along the top of the LA River channel in Downtown LA, there is approximately 20 feet of unimproved right of way in most areas. Rail interests have expressed uncertainty about ownership, and thus this matter requires further investigation. Metro officials are skeptical about possibilities for public access due to the presence of electrical towers and signal facilities in this area. While electrical towers and signal facilities will need to be negotiated in instances where they exist, they do not necessarily prohibit public access to the river, generally speaking. Beyond that, rail tracks exist along both banks of the river. Given this, railroads have a major stake in revitalization efforts.

Neighborhood Access

Providing access to the LA River for neighborhoods in close proximity, particularly along the eastern bank, is a high priority for the City of Los Angeles and community groups. These neighborhoods are often considered "park deficient" and have been historically underserved in terms of access to nature and recreation.

Red Line Yard

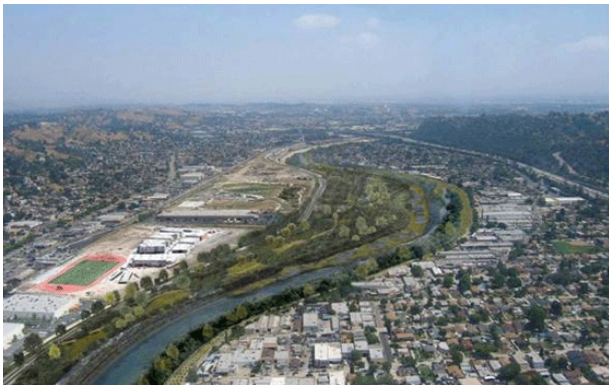
In the Arts District of Downtown Los Angeles, the Metro Red/Purple Line Maintenance Yard (Division 20 or Santa Fe Yard) separates the neighborhood from the LA River. In addition to Division 20, right-of-way owned by BNSF south of the 101 Freeway that is currently utilized for storage further constrains access between the river and the community to the west in the vicinity of Division 20.

LATC/Piggyback Yard

The Los Angeles Transportation Center (LATC), also referred to as Piggyback Yard, is a 120-acre site at 750 Lamar Street owned and operated by the Union Pacific Railroad as a rail yard, less than a mile northeast of Downtown Los Angeles, with the LA River bordering it to the west for three-quarters of a mile. A description of the facility by the California Environmental Protection Agency's Air Resources Board states, "The UP LATC is an intermodal container facility handling about 250,000 container lifts per year, 5 percent international and 95 domestic [as of 2005]… Cargo containers are received, sorted, and distributed from the facility."[39] The LATC site has been the subject of numerous community proposals, including a soccer stadium.[40] Currently, the LATC is included under Alternative 20 in the ARBOR study, which proposes 113 acres of riparian habitat.[41] The ARBOR Study indicates that the site is expected to contain contaminated soils, given its usage similarity with Taylor Yard—although it has been paved for several decades.[42]

The Piggyback Yard Feasibility Study—prepared by Friends of the LA River and the LA River Revitalization Corporation with Geosyntec Consultants, ELP Advisors, and Mia Lehrer + Associates on behalf of the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy in June 2013—"outlines the development and hydrological programs that will transform Piggyback Yard from a concrete industrial landscape to a 'River Destination' with the LA River featured as its primary asset." [43] The document follows principles outlined in the Piggyback Yard Conceptual Master Plan developed in 2010 by Michael Maltzan Architecture, Chee Salette Architecture Office, Mia Lehrer + Associates, and Perkins+Will.[44] According to Union Pacific, the owner of the property, they were not consulted during the study.

At present, the LA River passes alongside Taylor Yard, looking downstream.



The ARBOR Study includes a rendering of the same Taylor Yard stretch, revitalized.

Taylor Yard

Taylor Yard was a 247-acre Union Pacific rail complex with over two miles of frontage along the LA River opposite Elysian Valley, just north of the Arroyo Seco.

In 2000, Proposition 12—the Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air and Coastal Protection Bond Act—appeared on the ballot, and Californians voted in favor. This action allocated

In the Southern California region, 34 percent of jobs are linked to the goods movement industry.

$1.364 billion to California State Parks, with $519 million for additions and improvements to the State Park System and the remaining $845 million going to local parks in the form of grants.[45] With this legislation in place, the state approved $45 million to purchase land at Taylor Yard to create a state park. After legal action and community activism, Phase One of the park opened to the public on Earth Day 2007.[46]

Parcels of the Taylor Yard complex were sold by Union Pacific over the years and now host a variety of uses, including the Sonia Sotomayor Learning Academies LAUSD High School, two State Parks (Río de Los Angeles State Park and the Bowtie Park (yet to be developed), a Federal Express facility, and the Metro/ McCormack Baron Salazar housing development (in construction).

Trammel Crow has expressed interest in purchasing the remaining 41-acre G2 parcel of the Taylor Yard complex. That scenario was opposed by environmental and community coalitions, who have fought for years to have the site converted into a public park with ecosystem benefits—serving as the first opportunity to break the river from its concrete channel. As of October 2014, the City of Los Angeles was in active negotiations with UP for acquisition of the G-2 parcel and may use local Proposition O water quality funds to help acquire the property. The Los Angeles City Council moved to begin negotiations on the G2 parcel—directly adjacent to the River and the neighboring communities of Cypress Park and Glassell Park—in December 2013. The land is contaminated from its historical use but has been described as "the 'crown jewel' of any large-scale restoration of the river." [47, 48]

REVIEW OF RAIL PLANS:

A number of initiatives planned by rail organizations should be synchronized with LA River revitalization plans. These projects will affect the location of tracks and facilities, as well as the quantity of cargo passing adjacent to the waterway, and could impact the rail entities' flexibility in accommodating river revitalization. The following review of rail projects is not a comprehensive list, but rather a sample of initiatives with potential relevance to the LA River.

Metro

Several transportation investments are planned or under development in and around Division 20, between the redeveloping Arts District and the waterfront. With Metro, Amtrak, and BNSF operating trains and performing maintenance in this area, the obstacles to providing transverse access to the river from the Arts District (and Downtown and beyond) are substantial.

Metro's Southern California Regional Interconnector Project (SCRIP), at a cost of $350 million, would install four sections of track to allow Amtrak and Metrolink trains to run through Union Station. Since all tracks at the station currently dead-end, this improvement would reduce travel time by as much as 15-20 minutes for passengers and expand the station's capacity by 40-50 percent. The LA Times reports, "The interconnector will significantly reduce turnaround times by extending several tracks out the south end of the station. They will cross over the 101 Freeway, turn to the left and connect with existing tracks heading north, south and east."[49] The project is expected to commence construction in 2017, with completion slated for the end of 2019 or beginning of 2020. [50]

Rail tracks running adjacent to the LA River complicate plans for public access.

Metro may add one or two stations to the Red or Purple Line in the Arts District. Metro CEO Art Leahy was quoted in January saying that he had directed Metro staff to evaluate establishing stations at 1st and 6th streets, where tracks presently exist.[51] Metro staff had already reviewed the conceptual feasibility of the project, extending lines from their current terminus at Union Station to the Metro Red/Purple Line Maintenance Yard (Division 20 or Santa Fe Yard), in 2010.[52] However, increased investment and economic activity in the Arts District may impact these plans. The nearly-complete 510,000-square-foot One Santa Fe mixed-use project, which includes 438 rental units, considers itself a possible "portal" for a Metro station.[53]

Metro is also developing a linkages action plan (branded "ConnectUS") that is considering options for enhancing pedestrian and bike access around Union Station and to Little Tokyo. The study seeks to improve access to the LA River.[54]

Union Pacific Railroad

As indicated above, Union Pacific owns the Los Angeles Transportation Center (LATC), also referred to as the Golden Pig or Piggyback Yard.

The company has stated: "Currently, the LATC operates at near fluid capacity and UP plans to undertake major improvements to the railyard in the near future. This $100 million modernization project will ensure the most efficient operation and utilization of the LATC, with a particular emphasis on future growth." [55]

Beyond this, the company has invested in eight Generator-Set switcher locomotives ("GenSets") at the LATC site, at an approximate cost of $1.5 million dollars each. Since 2012, UP also updated its cargo handling equipment at the LATC at costs over $3 million.[56] These dollars recently invested in the yard impact Union Pacific's willingness to relocate the facility.

Los Angeles' network of passenger rail includes Amtrak, seen here along the LA River.

Union Pacific also has plans to update the Intermodal Container Transfer Facility (ICTF), a 277-acre, near-dock rail yard situated about 5 miles from the San Pedro Bay ports that opened in 1986. The UP operates the ICTF through a lease agreement with the Joint Powers Authority involving the LA and Long Beach ports. Plans call for $400 million to modernize the facility for increased capacity and sustainability. The initiative includes: investing in GenSets, new electric-powered cranes to take the place of diesel-powered ones, new gates for drayage trucks, new lighting to reduce glare, and a re-routing of truck traffic to new entrance gates.[57] This modernization process will not occur near the Downtown Los Angeles portion of the LA River.

BNSF Railway

The BNSF is planning the largest railway capital investment in the region: construction of the Southern California International Gateway (SCIG). The facility would be situated on an industrial site between the Terminal Island Freeway, Sepulveda Boulevard, and the Pacific Coast Highway, about five miles north of the ports. The project is intended to decrease the amount of miles cargo is

California's High-Speed Rail Authority intends to connect Palmdale with Los Angeles' Union Station, and is considering several alignments adjacent to the river through Downtown.

transported via truck from ship to rail by performing the transfer closer to the San Pedro Bay ports. SCIG would occupy 185 acres.[58, 59] BNSF expects to spend $500 million to build the facility.[60] It is currently under environmental review, but is anticipated to become operational in 2016. While Los Angeles City Council voted to approve SCIG in May 2013, the City of Long Beach, Natural Resources Defense Council, and additional plaintiffs have sued the city over the decision. [61, 62]

Amtrak

See Metro section on page 11 for information on SCRIP, which would also impact Amtrak.

Metrolink

In February, Metrolink introduced Positive Train Control—a collision avoidance system—in Revenue Demonstration Service and is working to get the full system operational by early-to-mid 2015, before federal law requires it on December 31, 2015. Metrolink will cover the $210.9 million cost of development, installation, and deployment of the full system through 34 local, state, and federal grants.[63] Implementing Positive Train Control across the Metrolink system may include physical right-of-way improvements adjacent to the river.

High Speed Rail

Bringing high-speed rail to California is a top priority for Governor Jerry Brown, but legal and engineering challenges create uncertainty regarding the train's arrival in Los Angeles, and its eventual route if it does.

Currently, construction Package 1 reaches 29 miles from Madera County to Fresno County,[64] while Construction Package 2-3 consists of over 60 miles between Fresno and the Tulare-Kern County line.[65]

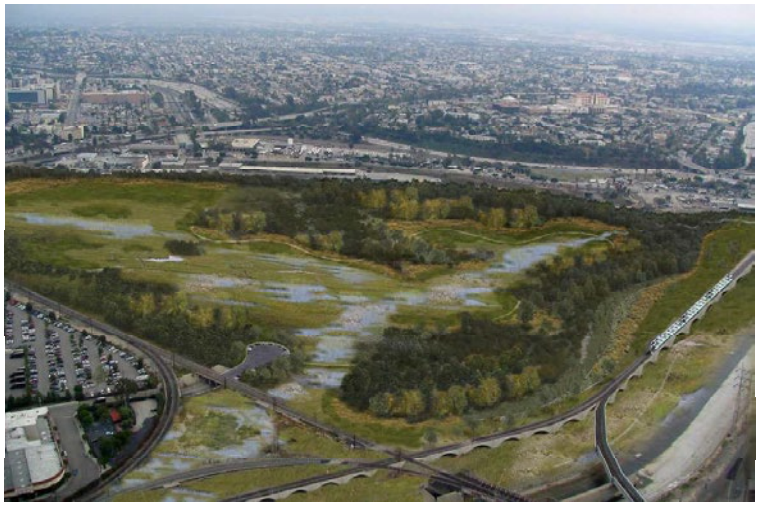
High Speed Rail officials announced plans in late June 2014 to begin construction of tracks from Burbank to Palmdale in Los Angeles County while concurrently building the Central Valley segments. The High Speed Rail Authority forecasts that the segment stretching from Palmdale to Union Station will total $13.5 billion.[66] However, reaching Union Station will prove "the more difficult political and engineering task."[67] Officials have yet to set a date for this segment.

A number of alternatives for connecting Los Angeles to Sylmar, and then to Palmdale, are under consideration. In March 2011, a supplemental alternative analysis included engineering options for five subsections: Los Angeles' Union Station, between Union Station and the Metrolink Central Maintenance Facility, between Metrolink CMF and SR 2, between SR 2 and Sylmar, and then beyond Sylmar to Palmdale.

The analysis for the second segment—Union Station to Metrolink CMF—listed above attempted to address concerns that construction would impact the Río de Los Angeles State Park at Taylor Yard.[68] The document therefore provides options that minimize effects on the park. Four alternatives are presented, with three recommended for further consideration. These include: two choices for placement of a bored tunnel, as well as the option of an elevated viaduct. The tunnel could pass beneath the LA State Historic Park and rise to ground level just beyond the Taylor Yard Bowtie State Park.[69]

The third segment—Metrolink CMF to SR 2—also raised concerns about the impact on Río de Los Angeles State Park. Alternatives evaluated included: a bored tunnel beneath the park, a partially covered trench or at-grade alignment following the existing Metrolink/Amtrak/freight corridor, and a partially covered trench that would follow the San Fernando Road. The tunnel alternative and the Metrolink alignment at-grade alternatives were recommended for further consideration.[70]

Metro's Union Station Master Plan accounts for uncertainties around high-speed rail's arrival, eventual route, and interface with the station. Jenna Hornstock, Metro's Deputy Executive Officer of Countywide Planning, noted in an interview, "We will be showing



This rendering from the ARBOR Study depicts the conversion of LATC to riparian/wetland habitat.

an illustrative approach to HSR at the station, but in the end the California High Speed Rail Authority has to go through its design, engineering, and environmental process to determine where the station will be."[71] Beyond that, the High Speed Rail Authority still faces significant legal challenges to its plans throughout the state. The placement of HSR tracks and a HSR station adjacent to Union Station could impact river revitalization in the future.

All three of the High Speed Rail alignments will converge on Union Station, which will accommodate the majority of statewide passengers (Anaheim to LA, San Diego to LA, and Palmdale to LA). This will happen within one block of the LA River.

Other Plans

Additional rail projects over the next 20 years in the vicinity of the LA River include grade separation, bridge projects, and the possible increase of capacity between Taylor Yard and Union Station.

Credit: Flickr user Cynthinee

Since the US Environmental Protection Agency deemed the Los Angeles River to be a "Traditional Navigable Water" in 2010, public boating opportunities have flourished.

RAIL PERSPECTIVE ON LA RIVER REVITALIZATION AND RESTORATION

LATC Acquisition

In a letter submitted by Union Pacific to comment on the US Army Corps of Engineers' September 2013 Draft Los Angeles River Ecosystem Restoration Integrated Feasibility Report (Draft IFR of the ARBOR Study), dated November 18, 2013, UP expressed objections to all four draft alternatives proposed, because they each entailed conversion of approximately 80 percent of the LATC from industrial railroad use to riparian/wetland habitat.
UP states in its letter that the Draft IFR includes "unrealistic and unachievable conclusory assumptions about the feasibility of relocating the LATC."[72] The rail company goes on to say, "Only the Federal Surface Transportation Board (STB) has authority to regulate the use of railroad property… Thus, Union Pacific's continued operation of the LATC cannot be disturbed except as directed by the STB. Accordingly, the Draft IFR's assumption that a project requiring relocation of the LATC is feasible may not be realistic."[73]

The Army Corps was able to move forward with recommendations during the ARBOR Study process because UP provided a letter stating the following:

> *"It is possible that, 20 years or more in the future, a sale or exchange agreement could be reached, but only if, on terms acceptable to UP management in its sole discretion, the City acquires, in cooperation with UP, a suitable replacement facility with all necessary permits and approvals for UP to use as a rail yard comparable to LATC in terms of capacity, function and compatibility with the UP system and customer needs."*

The Corps is considering whether this statement is adequate for its purposes. However, if UP proves unwilling to relocate LATC operations and sell the property, the City of Los Angeles and Army Corps may not be able to realize the full scope of Alternative 20.

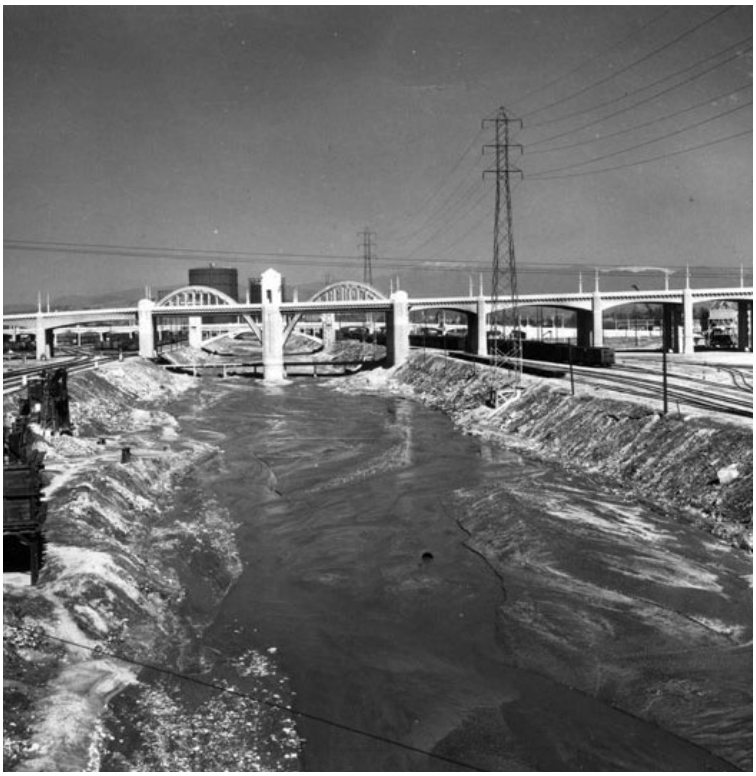
Metrolink Central Maintenance Facility

Metro officials have expressed concern about the impact of revitalization efforts on the Metrolink Central Maintenance Facility, located within Taylor Yard. It has serviced locomotives and rail cars since the 1920s, with Metrolink beginning to use it in 1991. A 1992 Memorandum of Understanding with LA City Council and Metro codified use of the facility.[74]

The city, under the auspices of the City Council and Mayor Garcetti, is negotiating to purchase the G2 parcel of Taylor Yard from Union Pacific and expect an agreement by the end of 2014.[75] This area is adjacent to the Metrolink Maintenance Facility.[76, 77] Metrolink is currently studying the health impact of its maintenance facility, in response to community concerns in Elysian Valley and requests of US Congressman Adam Schiff and City Councilman Gil Cedillo.[78]

Additional Concerns

Metro officials have indicated that single-track viaducts are operationally prohibitive from the authority's perspective.[79]



Credit: LA Public Library photo collection

Looking north from the Seventh Street Viaduct to the Sixth Street Viaduct along the LA river in 1937..

CHAPTER 2:

PRECEDENTS FOR EFFECTIVE COORDINATION

CASE STUDIES

In partnership with HR&A Advisors, ULI has developed four case studies that demonstrate how other cities have coordinated with rail and other private interests to realize a major open space investment. In Philadelphia, Minneapolis, Charlotte, and Washington D.C., passenger and freight rail stakeholders have worked with private land owners and public agencies to introduce new recreation and active transportation opportunities in close proximity to active rail.

Though the typology of these precedents offers a direct parallel to the creation of a continuous greenway along the LA River, the lessons provided by the case studies are not limited to rail-trail issues. The successes of these projects in solving the challenges of leadership, cooperation and negotiation, engineering and design, and safety and liability could prove instructive to stakeholders in Los Angeles.

Credit: Kyle Gradinger, flickr user kgradinger

SCHUYLKILL RIVER TRAIL

The Schuylkill River Trail in Philadelphia totals 18 miles, 3 of which follow the Southeast Philadelphia Transit Authority (SEPTA)/Conshohocken Recycling and Rail Transfer, LLC/ CSX rail line, which serves both freight and commuter rail and carries 6 to 10 trains per day at speeds of about 20-40 miles per hour. The trail, which runs between rail tracks and the river in central Philadelphia, is used by an estimated 216,000 people annually. It is connected to Schuylkill Banks, a linear park that hosts a variety of entertainment and recreational events throughout the year.

When the idea for a trail was proposed, CSX was concerned about the increased liability of having a trail alongside its active tracks and a crossing over its rail lines in such a densely populated area. As a result, CSX sued the City of Philadelphia in federal court in an effort to stop the trail project. But when the case appeared to favor the City, CSX changed course and cooperated in building the Schuylkill River Connector Bridge and adjacent park (Schuylkill Banks).

Lesson for the LA River revitalization effort:
Rail companies are opportunistic and more than ever like to demonstrate their goodwill to the communities they serve or transit through.

- Now, CSX often uses the Schuylkill River Connector Bridge for positive public relations. The bridge has won several planning and design awards and CSX values the positive press.
- CSX has become so proud of its cooperation to implement the park that it has sponsored the summer film festival on Schuylkill River Bank park.

Credit: Flickr user rococohobo

CEDAR LAKES TRAIL

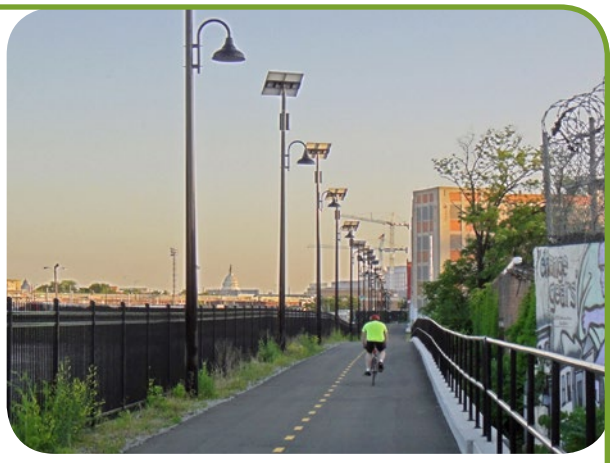
Cedar Lakes Trail in Minneapolis is 7.9 miles long and runs along a mainline track of the BNSF Railway (BNSF) carrying 10 to 12 trains per day at speeds of up to 60 mph. An estimated 700,000 people use the trail annually, about a third of which are commuters. Part of the trail actually consists of three separate paths: two unidirectional paths for bicyclists and a multidirectional trail for pedestrians. The trail travels directly under Target Field, the home of the Minnesota Twins professional baseball team.

The trail-creation process began with a longstanding goal to link the Warehouse District to both serene landscapes and wooded suburbs. The link necessary to realize this goal fell on private property next to BNSF tracks, planned for a new stadium. Because of the enormity and importance of the project, stadium developers succeeded in persuading BNSF to move its tracks to make way for a bike path to cross under the stadium.

Lesson for the LA River revitalization effort:
Leverage private development interests when possible.

- Although planned and proposed private development may increase the value of trail land for acquisition, developers are sometimes better able to sit at the negotiation table with rail companies than public or non-profit entities.
- Developers often understand the value of a nearby open space amenity to their project and therefore can be willing advocates for its implementation.
- Politically prominent projects, especially those that involve public investment, can help bring rail companies to the negotiating table.

Credit: Elvert Barnes, flickr user perspective



Credit: Payton Chung, flickr user paytonc

METROPOLITAN BRANCH TRAIL

The Metropolitan Branch Trail runs for 8 miles, from Union Station in the District of Columbia to Silver Spring in Maryland. It runs alongside a CSX corridor that Amtrak and a regional commuter railroad operate on. A separate segment of the trail is located within a few feet of Metro, D.C.'s rapid transit system. The freight traffic on the line averages 21 trains a day. There are 17 commuter trains a day, 7 eastbound in the morning and 10 westbound in the afternoon and evening.

When trail development was under consideration, a rail company was already in negotiations to sell a desirable portion of land that would contribute greatly to the trail network. In order not to lose the opportunity to acquire this land for the trail, the D.C. Department of Transportation used eminent domain to acquire the property instead. Eminent domain, though effective here, may prove less so in the future due to a recent supreme court decision *(Marvin M. Brandt Revocable Trust et al. v. United States)*.

As a separate challenge for Metropolitan Branch Trail development, a critical piece of the ROW necessary to complete the trail was owned by Pepco, a local utility company. It had significant development potential because of its location next to a station in Eckington, an emerging neighborhood. The D.C. Department of Transportation negotiated a sizeable tax write-off benefitting the utility company, in exchange for the right-of-way along its land. The tax write-off was established by using the least conservative assessed value of the land and wound up amounting to $2M for a 1,200-foot stretch of land. Since significant land value would be created for the utility, the company benefited from both a one-time tax write-off and the value appreciation.

Lesson 1 for the LA River revitalization effort:
Legal action can and has been used before to acquire land from a private rail company for public benefit as a trail, although the legal landscape for rails and trails is evolving rapidly.

- A recent U.S. Supreme Court case *(Marvin M. Brandt Revocable Trust et al. v. United States)* will have implications for rail to trail conversations and perhaps the use of eminent domain for ROW acquisition.
- Although litigation should always be considered a last resort, the threat or actual use of eminent domain can be a useful tactic for both public and private parties.

Lesson 2 for the LA River revitalization effort:
In situations where significant land value will be created, private land owners can achieve a combination of a one-time benefit from a tax write-off plus value appreciation over time.

Credit: Charlotte Center City partners

Credit: Charlotte Center City partners

CHARLOTTE RAIL TRAIL

Charlotte's Rail Trail will transform 3.3 miles of path, 2 of which travel alongside the LYNX Blue Line light rail tracks. The Rail Trail will be a vibrant public park that winds through the heart of Charlotte, connecting community, commerce and culture. It will connect seven diverse neighborhoods in Center City and it will utilize both the existing Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS) pathway and more than 70 underutilized spaces with diverse ownership. The ownership situation and limited public-sector appetite for acquisition complicates cohesiveness and implementation of the Vision Plan. To resolve this, a partnership has been structured such that public and private stakeholders have appropriate development, operations, and maintenance responsibilities. A private non-profit will likely manage operations and maintenance, with comprehensive insurance. Design standards will ensure that private landowners' development will yield a cohesive public realm, with incentives under development to encourage landowners to create significant public spaces. This demonstrates that, even for a trail on a public right of way, the rail entity need not take responsibility for development, funding, or operations and maintenance.

It is relevant to note that a third-party convener proved necessary for this process to occur. HR&A, serving as a consultant, was encouraged to meet with all possible stakeholders—which proved manageable because only 5-6 agencies were involved in the public sector, and because private stakeholders were willing participants. HR&A notes that, on occasions when consensus among private stakeholders proves more difficult, individual or special-interest round tables may be necessary.

Lesson for the LA River revitalization effort:
Even for a trail on public right of way, the rail entity need not take responsibility for development, funding or O&M.

LESSONS

These four case studies demonstrate how other cities have coordinated with rail and other private interests to realize a major open space investment. The cases demonstrate that creative solutions to similar challenges have worked in the past. They also highlight the importance of including the most directly affected stakeholders in planning efforts—particularly private property owners—and the need to carefully consider issues from the perspective of all parties. An independent convener can prove helpful when numerous stakeholders with disparate interests are involved.

CHAPTER 3:
CHARTING A COURSE FOR SUCCESS

PRIMARY CHALLENGES

The most significant challenge facing LA River revitalization is developing and holding consensus among the plethora of stakeholders involved.

See River Context for a list of entities with governmental jurisdiction over the LA River. Beyond these, numerous organizations, public agencies, and community groups have a stake in actions around the waterway. A partial list of these groups include:

- LA River Revitalization Corporation: See LA River Revitalization Corporation.
- Friends of the Los Angeles River (FOLAR): A non-profit founded in 1986 with the mission to protect and restore the natural and historic heritage of the LA River and its riparian habitat through inclusive planning, education, and wise stewardship.
- Mountains Recreation & Conservation Authority: A governmental entity established in 1985—comprised of a partnership between the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, the Conejo Recreation and Parks District, and the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District—dedicated to the preservation and management of local open space and parkland, watershed lands, trails, and wildlife habitat.
- Los Angeles County Bicycle Coalition: A membership-based non-profit created in 1998 to build a better, more bike-able Los Angeles County.
- LA Conservation Corps: A non-profit founded in 1986 that seeks to provide at-risk young adults and school-age children with opportunities for success through job skills training, education, and work experience with an emphasis on conservation and service projects that benefit the community.
- The Trust for Public Land: A national non-profit that aims to create parks and protect land for people, ensuring healthy, livable communities for generations to come.
- Additional community-based parties include: Northeast Los Angeles Riverfront Collaborative, Arroyo Seco Foundation, Mujeres de la Tierra, Save LA River Open Space, Village Gardeners, and North East Trees, among others.[80]
- Neighborhood Councils, including the 14 that have banded together as the Alliance of River Communities.
- Rail: LA-area railroads with tracks and facilities adjacent to the LA River have a stake in the revitalization designs.

Going beyond the diverse entities weighing in, the sheer quantity of distinct ideas for revitalization presents a challenge. The City Master Plan contains 240 proposed projects. [81] Absent a method of coordination and consultation, projects will be stalled or nullified.

One example where coordination could have been improved occurred during the ARBOR Study. Mayor Eric Garcetti's staff convened a working group of railroad interests that developed a matrix of comments on the proposed alternatives. However, those stakeholders felt that their inclusion occurred later in the process than would have been preferable, and only UP submitted a formal comment on the ARBOR study— referenced under LATC. (It remains unclear whether this working group will continue to meet now that the Army Corps has selected its preferred alternative.) Although the establishment of the working group ultimately provided a foundation for improved coordination, including rail at an earlier stage in the process could have prevented inaccuracies regarding rail activity found in the ARBOR study document.

Since the ARBOR Study is federal and the rail interests are often guided by federal parties (e.g., the Surface Transportation Board must ensure the viability of competition between UP and BNSF, the Federal Railroad Administration is the parent of the California High Speed Rail project, and many river viaducts are federally funded), coordination should also occur at the federal level. Furthermore, although the Urban Waters Federal Partnership has prioritized the LA River watershed and facilitated meetings with the HSR management, this should be formalized regionally.

Moving forward, focusing on revitalization projects that prove mutually beneficial to rail and river interests could generate consensus and prove to all parties that cooperation is feasible. For instance, master agreements on easement use and design guidelines could be further considered in order to provide planning certainty and more collaboratively-supported outcomes.

NEED FOR COORDINATION

River revitalization is a continuing process that requires a table and a convener to hold the stakeholders together over time. Change will happen incrementally, and thus stakeholders must find an arrangement for management purposes that allows them to coordinate efforts.

Chapter 9 of the City's LA River Revitalization Master Plan addresses these questions. It identifies two discrete areas that require management: the River channel—including the river proper and its associated concrete lining, maintenance access paths, landscaping, fencing, and bridge piers; and the River Corridor—including adjoining private property, as well as public roads, bridges, and landscaping. [82]

The objectives for river management outlined by the Master Plan are as follows:

1. Effective Implementation
2. Focused on the Plan
3. Viable Over Time
4. Financially Self-Sustaining
5. Agile
6. Achievable and Accountable

The plan recommends a three-tiered structure comprised of The Los Angeles River Authority—a governmental component; the Los Angeles River Revitalization Corporation—an entrepreneurial component; and the Los Angeles River Foundation—a philanthropic component. The Los Angeles River Authority would be a Joint Powers Authority between the City and the County of Los Angeles, with the US Army Corps participating through a Memorandum of Understanding. The Los Angeles River Revitalization Corporation was formed in 2009, and is working to align policy, implement projects, and advocate for the transformation of the river. The Los Angeles River Foundation would be a non-profit established by private individuals for the purpose of furthering environmental, educational, cultural, social justice, and sustainability for the River and the related communities. In June 2014, Mayor Garcetti launched the Mayor's Fund for Los Angeles, a non-profit organization established to help fund initiatives including LA River revitalization. [83]

The Los Angeles River Cooperation Committee is comprised of the County of Los Angeles Flood Control District and the City of Los Angeles, in conjunction with the Army Corps in an advisory capacity.[84] The group was formed through the 2009 Los Angeles River Memorandum of Understanding.[85] LARCC meets at least twice yearly to assess projects early and provide evaluation as to whether they are in the service of the City and County river master plans. The following entities sit on the committee:

- City Engineer of the City of Los Angeles (co-chair)
- Chief Engineer of the Los Angeles County Flood Control District (co-chair)
- Director of the City of Los Angeles' Bureau of Sanitation
- The City of Los Angeles' Department of Recreation and Parks
- The City of Los Angeles' Department of Water and Power
- The Los Angeles County Flood Control District's Watershed Management Division
- The Los Angeles County Flood Control District's Water Resources Division
- The Los Angeles County Flood Control District's Flood Maintenance Division
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (to serve on the LARCC in an advisory capacity)

While the LARCC provides a valuable service in ensuring that projects align with priorities at the City and County for the LA River, the committee lacks decision-making power.

Rail interests must be included as a major stakeholder in LA River revitalization long-term planning initiatives. River redevelopment and revitalization is a continuing process that requires a table and a convener to hold the stakeholders together over time. Change will happen incrementally, and stakeholders must find an arrangement for management purposes that allows them to coordinate efforts. More than one such "table" exists now.

Encouraging the active participation of rail interests in both public sector advisory committees and leadership groups (e.g. the Los Angeles River Cooperation Committee) and non-profit organizations (e.g The Los Angeles River Revitalization Corporation, Friends of the Los Angeles River), either as a member or regular attendee, would be one way to invite them into the conversation. Furthermore, because rail and river interests are regional in nature and cross multiple jurisdictions, it makes sense that regional entities be brought together in supporting LA River revitalization that is compatible with long-term rail expansion.

Such integration—combined with consulting technical experts knowledgeable about international trade, rail operations, flood management, civil engineering, social justice and entrepreneurship, and economic development when formulating plans—would create a mechanism for more complete stakeholder input. The consequences of failing to coordinate efforts effectively could result in stalled projects and loss of funding.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR COOPERATION

Creative solutions to creating a continuous river greenway and increasing public access to the waterfront may offer win-win possibilities for government/river interests and rail. Such undertakings are valuable opportunities for partnership and could help establish a process for coordination that will prove useful going forward. ULI recommends selecting a project with a clearly defined scope and relatively short duration as a case study to demonstrate successful partnership and comprehensive engagement. Due to their intention to increase public access in close proximity to rail facilities along the river, two current projects could provide such an opportunity:

- A proposal by Linear City Development, wHY and Geosyntec Consultants to construct a 8-mile in-channel bike path that would provide the "missing link" to the continuous greenway, from Barclay Street in the City of Los Angeles to the existing river bike bath in the City of Maywood. At the end of June, a motion introduced by Councilmember José Huizar was adopted by the Los Angeles City Council to authorize and instruct the Bureau of Engineering and the Departments of City Planning and Transportation to prioritize implementation of the project.[86] Metro's Board of Directors also passed a motion in late June that directed the Chief Executive Officer to report back in September with a proposed scope for study of the project; a recommended timeline and proposed implantation strategy; and input from stakeholders and study participants.[87] Plans for the project have identified at least four points of access to the LA River that do not require crossing rail property, which could prove useful for future initiatives.

- The replacement of the historic Sixth Street Viaduct east of downtown Los Angeles with a new multi-modal bridge. After winning an international design competition in 2012, engineering firm HNTB, in collaboration with Michael Maltzan Architecture, has been working with the City of Los Angeles, Bureau of Engineering and the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) to finalize the design of the more than $400 million viaduct. Due to be constructed by the end of 2018, the bridge is being designed to provide access to public open space on both sides of the river and to connect to the proposed in-channel bike-path.

Portions of the LA River already support habitat.

CONCLUSIONS

LA River revitalization efforts promise benefits to millions of residents of the City and County of Los Angeles—restoring critical habitat for wildlife species and providing new access to nature and recreation for historically-underserved communities. These longstanding endeavors must be supported.

Freight transportation is critical to the Southern California economy, and is dependent on an effective rail network. However, river revitalization plans can be synchronized with industry needs for safety and more expansive operations.

The most significant challenge facing LA River revitalization is developing and holding consensus among the plethora of stakeholders involved. River revitalization is a continuing process that requires a table and a convener to hold the stakeholders together over time. Though a convener can take many forms, as the Case Studies demonstrate, a recognized leader is essential to ensuring effective outreach and coordination.

Change will proceed incrementally, and stakeholders must find an arrangement for management purposes that allows them to coordinate efforts. We note that more than one "table" exists now. As a first step, we recommend that the railroads regularly participate in each one.

Our case studies demonstrate that it is possible to accomplish safe public access with the support of rail interests. Rail companies are opportunistic and more than ever like to demonstrate their goodwill to the communities they serve or transit through. Leveraging private development interests for public-serving amenities can work well.

Working with rail entities that own critical parcels along the LA River is particularly urgent, if revitalization plans are to see fruition. The active participation of rail stakeholders as a member or regular attendee in the various river groups is one way to ensure the rail perspective is represented in the conversation. This integration—combined with consulting technical experts knowledgeable about rail operations when formulating plans—would create a mechanism for more complete stakeholder input. The consequences of failing to coordinate efforts effectively could impact funding and result in stalled projects.

Creative solutions to creating a continuous greenway and increasing public access to the waterfront may offer win-win possibilities for government/river interests and rail. As the Rails-to-Trails report concludes, rails-with-trails can provide multiple benefits: offering a safe transportation option for cyclists and pedestrians while reducing "the incentive to trespass or use the tracks as a shortcut." Such undertakings are valuable opportunities for partnership and could help establish a process for coordination that will prove useful in the future.

Moving forward, private-property holders adjacent to the LA River—beyond rail entities—will also require engagement to realize revitalization efforts. These same strategies could prove useful in that effort.

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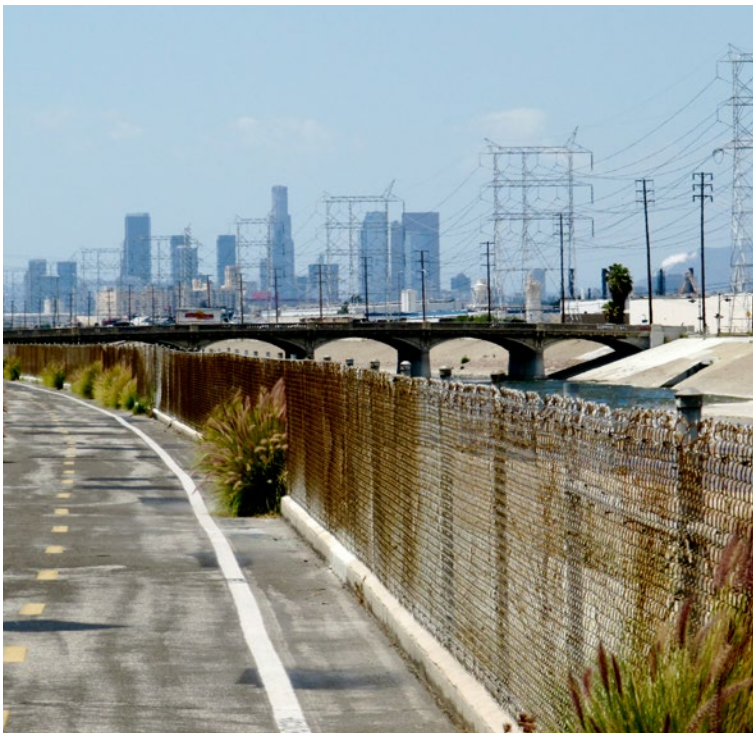

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"The river is 51 miles long--and lined with as much possibility as concrete."

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