

Frequently-Asked-Questions (FAQs) and Scoping Meeting Q&A Responses

1. What is CEQA?

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) is a California law adopted in 1970 that requires public agencies in the state to evaluate environmental impacts of proposed projects. CEQA provides for a public review period for certain types of projects, including those for which an Environmental Impact Report is prepared, allowing the public and interested agencies time to comment on a proposed project's potential environmental impacts.

Public agencies, including those at the State and local level, must comply with CEQA when considering approval of a discretionary activity which falls under the definition of a "Project". Under CEQA, a project is an activity undertaken by a public agency or private entity that which may cause either a direct physical change in the environment or a reasonably foreseeable indirect change in the environment, and the activity requires discretionary approval from the public agency.

2. What is the general process for environmental compliance under CEQA?

The general process or environmental review under CEQA consists of fulfilling procedural and substantive requirements from the CEQA and the implementing State CEQA Guidelines. For the 2020 LA River Master Plan, a broad review of the potential for the Master Plan to result in environmental impacts in multiple environmental resource areas.

If there are potential significant impacts identified, feasible mitigation measures must be identified to avoid or substantially lessen any significant environmental effects of the project.

3. What is the role of Los Angeles County, Los Angeles County Public Works, and the Los Angeles County Flood Control District?

The County of Los Angeles (County), is the Lead Agency under CEQA for the 2020 Los Angeles River Master Plan. Los Angeles County Public Works (Public Works) is the department of the County that is responsible for preparing the 2020 Los Angeles River Master Plan and the associated Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR). The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, as governing body of the County of Los Angeles, will be asked to consider the Final EIR when the LARMP is recommended for approval. Flood Control District is a Responsible Agency under CEQA for the 2020 Los Angeles River Master Plan, as some of the project components may fall upon Flood Control District right of way and the Flood Control District may be requested to consider provide certain discretionary approvals related to the 2020 LA River Master Plan.

4. What is a Program Environmental Impact Report?

An Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is an informational document which will inform public agency decision-makers and the public of any significant environmental effect(s) of a project, identifying possible ways to minimize any significant effects, and describe reasonable alternatives to the project. A Program Environmental Document (PEIR) is a type of EIR and is used to evaluate a plan or program that has multiple components or actions that are related either geographically, through application of rules or regulations, or as logical parts of a long-

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term plan.

Through this CEQA disclosure process, the PEIR improves public awareness and government transparency and provides for a higher-level assessment of policy decisions prior to the consideration of individual projects which may fall under the 2020 LA River Master Plan.

5. Why is County preparing a PEIR for the 2020 LA River Master Plan?

The County, through Public Works, is preparing the 2020 LA River Master Plan which will require discretionary approval from the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors. Since the 2020 LA River Master Plan requires discretionary approval, the County, through Public Works, is preparing a PEIR pursuant to CEQA to evaluate potential impacts to the environment from the approval of the 2020 LA River Master Plan in order to comply with CEQA.

The PEIR will be an informational document to inform agencies and the public of any significant environmental effect(s) of the 2020 LA River Master Plan, possible ways to minimize any significant effects, and reasonable alternatives to the Plan, in compliance with CEQA.

The LA River Master Plan PEIR is intended to identify and examine likely environmental effects of the proposed 2020 LA River Master Plan on a programmatic level, and proposes mitigation measures and design elements to avoid, mitigate, or offset any likely significant environmental impacts. The LA River Master Plan PEIR is an advanced planning document covering a comprehensive programmatic review of the methods (kit of parts and common elements) that may be implemented for projects along the 51-mile river in the future. No specific projects will be analyzed by this PEIR, and it is only intended to assess the impacts of the proposed development goals and policies which will be applicable to future projects proposed under the 2020 LA River Master Plan. Advanced planning improves public awareness and government transparency and provides for a higher level of assessment of policy decisions prior to consideration of individual projects.

6. What is the history of the LA River Master Plan?

In July 1991, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors unanimously approved a motion to develop the LA River Master Plan. The planning effort brought various stakeholders and the community to negotiate a consensus for the enhancement of the river. In June 1996, the Board of Supervisors adopted the LA River Master Plan. In 2016, the Board approved a motion to update the 1996 LA River Master Plan and Public Works kicked off the update process in 2018. Additional information about the 2020 LA River Master Plan is available at www.larivermasterplan.org.

7. What is the 2020 LA River Master Plan?

The 2020 LA River Master Plan is comprehensive update of the 1996 Master Plan that synthesizes more recent ideas for the LA River and brings a comprehensive vision to reimagining the river. The 2020 LA River Master Plan reflects the needs and ideas of the diverse communities, groups, and individuals with an interest in the future of the river. The LA River Master Plan provides goals as strategic directions for the future of LA River-related

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improvements and initiatives as well as the actions and methods to achieve these goals. Additional information about the LA River Master Plan is available at www.larivermasterplan.org.

8. What is the Kit of Parts?

The Kit of Parts is a recommended collection of multi-benefit design components organized within six major infrastructure and urban river typologies to meet the goals of the LA River Master Plan. These include: trails and access gateways, channel modifications, crossings and platforms, diversions, floodplain reclamation, and off channel land assets. The Kit of Parts is a set of “tools in the toolbox” to address the needs identified for a certain area. Each category includes a list of design components or a menu of options to incorporate in a project concept to address the needs in that area. For example, the channel modification kit of part may include a terraced bank or storm drain daylighting design component, or a crossings and platform kit of part may include a pedestrian bridge or a platform design component. These multi-benefit design components can be implemented individually or in combination with other design components as future projects driven by the local jurisdiction’s needs, funding, and policy decisions.

9. What are the common elements?

The common elements include pavilions, access stairs and ramps, and site furnishing such as lights, hygiene facilities, seating, trash and recycling, water fountains, guardrails, gates, bike racks, environmental graphics, emergency call boxes, and art. While recommended Kit of Part design components are mostly determined by a site’s need, common elements are more driven by cadence, either required at all project sites, or at set intervals along the LA River trail to provide safety, comfort, and wayfinding. The common elements are intended to contribute to the habitability of the river environs; promote safety, accessibility, and legibility; and to build a cohesive identity of the river corridor.

10. What is the "Proposed Project" for the 2020 LA River Master Plan PEIR?

The proposed Project for the PEIR is the 2020 LA River Master Plan. For purposes of CEQA analysis and disclosure of potential impacts, the PEIR organizes the 2020 LA River Master Plan into two Typical Projects and 6 Kit of Part categories that comprise the overall 2020 LA River Master Plan when implemented at a certain cadence along the LA River. The study area is the 51-miles of the LA River corridor, with 1-mile on each side and encompasses 17 cities and unincorporated LA County (18 jurisdictions total) through the 9 planning frames. It is anticipated that 107 projects may be implemented under the LA River Master Plan over the 25-year horizon period of the Plan, if the Plan is approved at the end of this PEIR process. There are no site-specific or project-specific analyses in this PEIR, and future proposed projects under the Master Plan would be driven by the specific needs and decision of the community where the subsequent project would be located. Later activities would undergo review to determine whether additional analysis and findings are necessary under CEQA as projects are proposed.

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11. What is a typical project?

Typical projects are projects that are most likely to be proposed throughout the 51-mile-long corridor, and one of the groupings used in the PEIR to disclose potential environmental impacts. The two typical projects identified in the PEIR, the Common Elements Typical Project and Multi-Use Trails and Access Gateways Typical Project, were identified based on the availability of construction and operations scenario assumptions from Public Works along with relatively detailed design concepts for these projects being described in the 2020 LA River Master Plan. The 2020 LA River Master Plan comprises 107 projects over the 25-year horizon period and includes the typical projects and the kit of parts.

12. Who can use this PEIR?

The PEIR can provide the County, as the lead agency, or other implementing agencies with a base reference of facts and analyses that helps avoid unnecessary repetition for future project-specific assessments by agencies on subsequent individual projects, and would allow for a comprehensive approach to the consideration of regional and cumulative impacts. When later activities involving the Master Plan or projects under the Master Plan are proposed, if the PEIR is certified and the 2020 LA River Master Plan is approved, a determination will be made at that time by the implementing agency (i.e., the public agency) what additional analysis under CEQA is necessary in light of the PEIR.

13. How do I know if a project will be constructed in my community?

Public agencies and project proponents would take into consideration the needs of a community when proposing future projects under the Master Plan. In addition to consideration of the local jurisdictions' needs, the public agency and project proponent would have to consider funding and other policy decisions in their decision to construct a project. Community notification of proposed individual projects under the Master Plan is anticipated to occur on a project-by-project basis, and as needed based on requirements of local jurisdictions responsible for implementing the proposed projects.

14. Will specific projects be approved if the Master Plan is adopted and the PEIR is certified by the County?

No. Approval of the proposed Master Plan would not approve individual specific projects. Implementing agencies that want to rely on the PEIR for future project approvals are responsible for ensuring CEQA compliance for each of the subsequent projects proposed for implementation under the 2020 LA River Master Plan, and may tier from the PEIR.

15. What happens during the public circulation period for the Draft PEIR (the public review period)? What are the next steps?

Once the public Draft PEIR is completed, a Notice of Availability will be prepared to provide public with notice of the availability of the Draft PEIR for public review and the County will hold a 45-day public comment period on the Draft PEIR. The Notice of Availability will be filed for posting with the LA County Clerk, as well as be sent to any person who has filed a written request for Notification with the Lead Agency. In addition, the Notice of Availability will be published in at least one newspaper of general circulation or more, and may be mailed to

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owners and occupants of property contiguous to the LA River. County will also provide the public with updates on the LA River Master Plan CEQA website (<https://pw.lacounty.gov/go/larmpceqa>), twitter account (https://twitter.com/larmp_update), Facebook account (https://twitter.com/larmp_update). Interested parties can sign up for email updates at www.larivermasterplan.org.

During the 45-day public review period, the County will hold a Draft PEIR public meeting to present the Draft PEIR. This public meeting will be open to all and will provide an additional opportunity for public input on the Draft PEIR. Comments will be received from members of the public, public agencies and others which are submitted in writing before the close of the public review period addressed in "Responses to Comments" during the final preparation of the Final PEIR as appropriate, and the County will comply with requirements in CEQA for the provision of responses to Public agencies.

16. After the PEIR is certified, what are the next steps for projects implemented under the 2020 LA River Master Plan?

The PEIR is intended to serve as the foundation for any necessary future environmental compliance for projects to be implemented under the 2020 LA River Master Plan; this concept is commonly known as tiering under CEQA. As individual projects are proposed for implementation under the LA River Master Plan, once details are developed, the implementing agency will conduct CEQA analysis for proposed individual projects as appropriate or may determine, if appropriate, that no additional CEQA analysis is required or that a proposed project is exempt from CEQA.

17. What was the public notification process for scoping?

On July 7, 2020, the Notice of Preparation (NOP) was sent to the Office of Planning and Research and filed with the Los Angeles County Clerk. A copy of the NOP was also certified mailed to responsible and trustee agencies. Public Works also published an English version of the notice in newspapers, including the LA Times, Press Telegram, Glendale Independent, Grunion Gazette, L.A. Watts Times, and Paramount Journal. A Spanish version of the notice as published in Excelsior Los Angeles, Excelsior Orange County, and La Prensa. E-mail blasts were sent to the 41-member steering committee, the Internal County Team, and other interested parties who signed up for more information about the LA River Master Plan on the www.larivermasterplan.org website. Lastly, social media posts advertising the scoping meeting were posted on the LA River Master Plan Twitter account (https://twitter.com/larmp_update) and Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/LARMPUpdate/>).

18. Who do I contact if I have questions about the Master Plan?

Please email LARiver@pw.lacounty.gov for questions related to the LA River Master Plan.

19. Who do I contact if I have questions about the PEIR?

Please email LARiverCEQA@pw.lacounty.gov for questions regarding CEQA or the PEIR.