



Artist's rendering of proposed San Fernando Valley east-west busway shows a section of the busway, complete with pedestrian path, bike path, and landscaping on the busway near Coldwater Cyn Blvd. Rendering artist: George Bungarda. Illustration courtesy of Gruen Associates.

MTA Releases Draft Environmental Report On Proposed San Fernando Valley East-West Busway

By ED SCANNELL

(May 15, 2001) The MTA has released a draft environmental study of a proposed 14-mile Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) busway that would speed the travel of thousands of commuters between the Warner Center Transit Hub in the west San Fernando Valley and the Metro Red Line subway station in North Hollywood.

Operating as an exclusive roadway for buses, the busway would reduce travel time between North Hollywood and the planned Warner Center Transit Hub to approximately 30 minutes, including stops. It currently takes 55 minutes to make the same trip via on-street bus service.

The busway would pass through communities that include North Hollywood, Valley Glen, Van Nuys, Sherman Oaks, Encino, Tarzana and Woodland Hills. It would link such activity centers as Warner Center, Pierce College, the Sepulveda Basin Recreation Area, the Van Nuys Government Center, Valley College and North Hollywood.

Release of the draft environmental study (Draft EIS/EIR) signals the beginning of a 45-day comment period that will include two public hearings. The first is scheduled June 21 at Pierce College; a second hearing will be held, June 26, at LA Valley College. Both meetings will begin at 5 p.m.

May be considered in July

Following the 45-day public comment period, the MTA Board will take the project under consideration tentatively at its July meeting. At that time, the Board may designate the Locally Preferred Alternative for the corridor. This designation would allow continuation of preliminary engineering for the project and work on the Final EIR/EIS.

Final design and construction of the busway could start in late 2002. The project likely would be completed in 2005.

The 26-foot wide Bus Rapid Transit busway would be built in the median of the Burbank/Chandler right-of-way. Typically 100 feet wide, the right-of-way was purchased by the MTA from Southern Pacific in 1991.

Thirteen busway stations would be located at major cross streets and trip destinations, spaced approximately one mile apart along the route.

While service frequencies would be adjusted as demand for service grows, initially during peak travel periods, the time between bus arrivals would vary between seven minutes to 10 minutes in each direction. A passenger information system at each station would inform travelers when the next bus is due to arrive.

Amenities and park-n-ride lots

Stations would have amenities typically associated with rail transit, such as covered waiting platforms, secure lighting and appealing design. Park-n-ride lots located at various locations along the route would provide parking for approximately 3,000 vehicles, augmenting existing parking spaces at the Metro Red Line North Hollywood Station.

The Los Angeles Department of Transportation may employ technology to briefly extend the duration of green signal lights to allow the smooth flow of buses operating on the busway, while not adversely impacting north-south traffic.

The busway would be fully landscaped with groundcover, trees and other plantings, including over 4,000 new trees.

Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) buses and other clean fuel technologies are under consideration for deployment along the busway. The MTA currently operates the largest fleet of CNG-fueled buses in North America.

The project will include room for a cross-valley bikeway. The MTA will initiate the bikeway design as part of the busway design and will seek funding so the two projects could be built concurrently.

The cost of the full BRT, including the busway, stations, landscaping, environmental mitigation, park-n-ride lots, new buses, and traffic signals is estimated at approximately \$285 million. _

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