

A large crowd attended the Board meeting to support or protest motions regarding the Eastside light-rail extension and the San Fernando Valley east-west busway.



Board Approves Eastside Light-Rail, Rapid Bus, Metro Rapid, Universal Fares, Freeway Patrol Motions

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Eastside Light-Rail Line

The MTA Board voted to certify the final environmental report on a planned six-mile light-rail extension of the Metro Gold Line through East Los Angeles.

As a result of the Board action, the proposed project will be sent to the federal government as a step toward initiating final design and completion of a Full Funding Grant Agreement.



Eastside light-rail extension supporters, outfitted in blue T-shirts, listen intently to the debate.

Approval of the final environmental report includes a detailed mitigation plan, which addresses community concerns regarding impacts during construction and operation of the light rail project.

Construction of the 1.7-mile tunnel portion of the project could begin in mid-2003, construction of the at-grade portion in late 2004/early 2005. The extension could begin operations in mid-2008.

San Fernando Valley East-West Busway

The MTA Board voted to certify the final environmental report for a planned 14-mile Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system between the future Warner Center Transit Hub in the west San Fernando Valley and the Metro Red Line North Hollywood station. The action paves the way for the project's final design

phase.

The environmental report includes a detailed mitigation plan addressing community concerns regarding impacts during construction and operation of the busway project. Construction of the busway could begin in Spring 2003 and the busway could begin operations in Spring 2005.

The eastern terminus of the busway will be the Metro Red Line North Hollywood Station. The western terminus of the busway will be the Warner Center Transit Hub, which is expected to be completed by LADOT in late 2003.

Operating as an exclusive roadway for buses, the busway would provide a constant travel time across the San Fernando Valley, regardless of traffic congestion on parallel east-west routes.

Metro Rapid Expansion Program

The MTA Board has approved the implementation of the Metro Rapid Expansion Program with the development of six additional Metro Rapid Bus Lines that could begin service within 12 to 18 months.

A total of 23 corridors have been identified and prioritized into four implementation phases. Each phase of the program could take three years to implement between five and six Metro Rapid bus lines.

Phase one of the program targets six transit corridors, encompassing 92.6 miles with Metro Rapid bus lines on South Broadway, Vermont and Van Nuys. The lines should be operational within 12 to 18 months.

The remainder of the phase one lines should be completed within three years. Estimated cost for implementation of six Metro Rapid Bus lines in the first phase is \$24.6 million.

Universal Fare System

The MTA Board awarded an \$84 million contract to Cubic Transportation System, Inc., for automated fare collection equipment needed for implementation of a Universal Fare System.

With the wave of a plastic, wallet-sized Smart Card imbedded with computer chips, passengers will be able to board all Metro buses and trains and transfer to services offered by municipal operators, paratransit and Metrolink without worrying about purchasing new fare or carrying change.

The move to Smart Cards, expected to take place within three years, should vastly improve customer service and increase ridership.

Freeway Service Patrol

The MTA Board approved 12 contracts worth \$15.8 million to keep the Metro Freeway Service Patrol in operation to assist stranded motorists along Southland freeways.

Under the program, 145 tow trucks patrol 40 different designated freeway segments or "beats" covering more than 400 miles of congested freeways. The trucks are in operation during weekday peak hours and on selected freeway segments during the mid-day and weekends.

The program is provided free of charge to motorists needing assistance. Eighteen different private contractors perform this service for the Metro Freeway Service Patrol program.

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