

Beverly Hills and the Wilshire Route

Matthew Barrett

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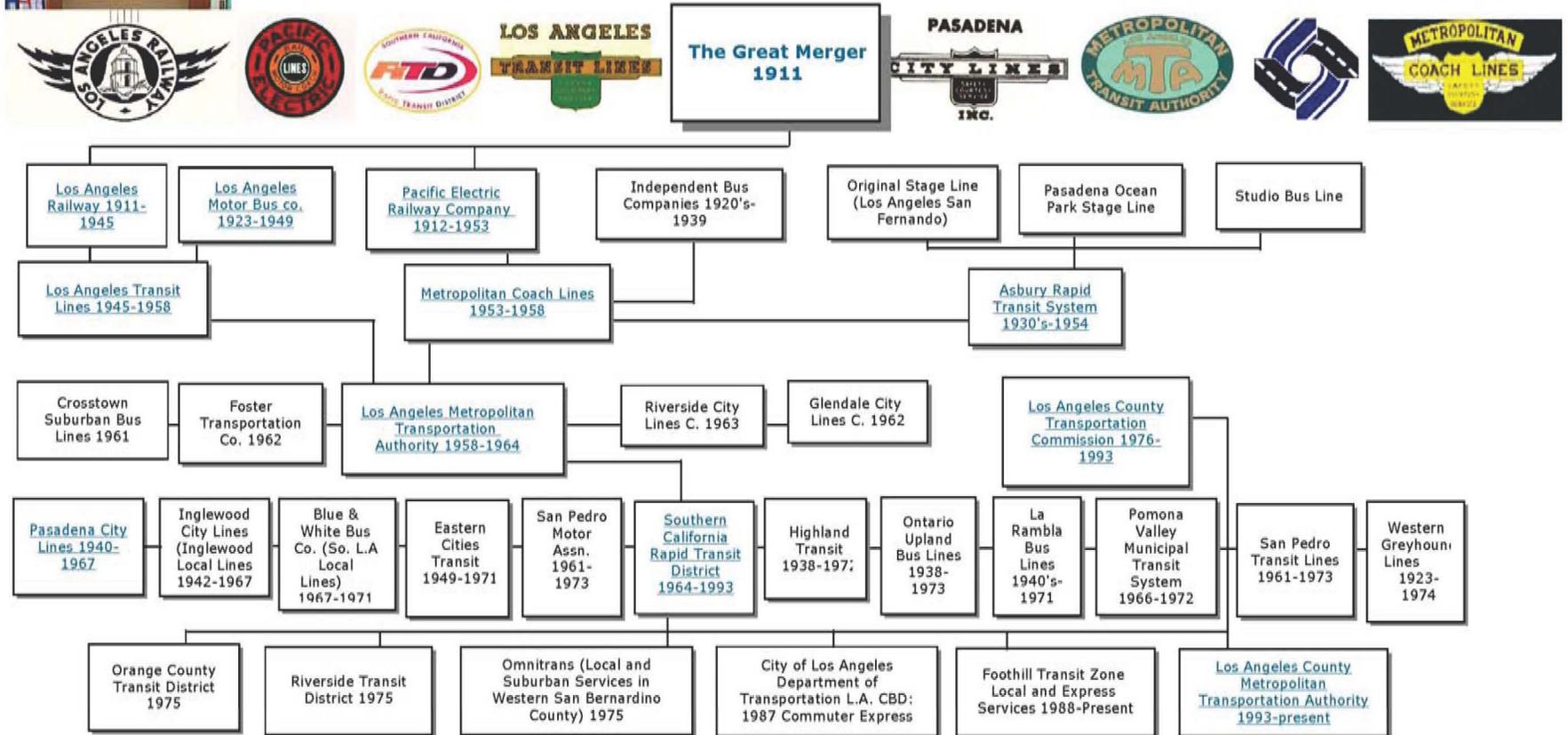
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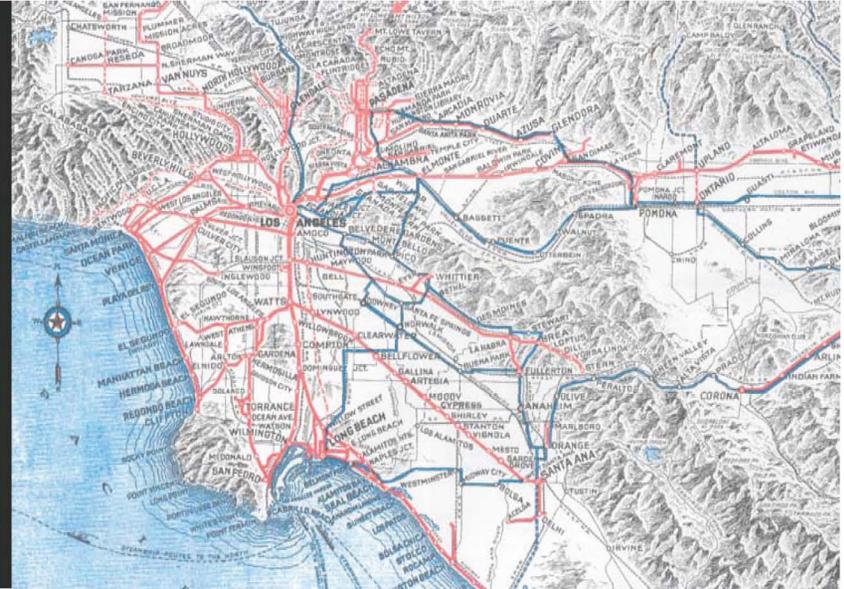
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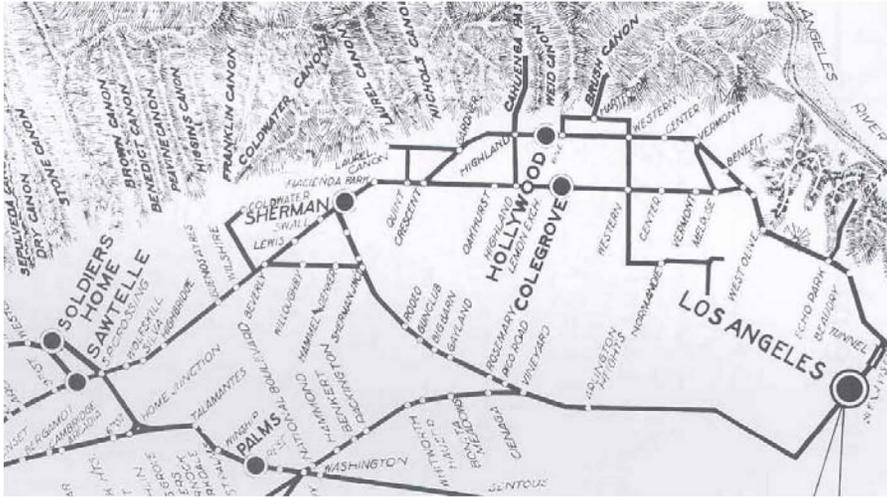
Pacific Electric (1901-1953)



Pacific Electric system map, 1943

- Made concept of suburbia possible.
- Connected the suburbs and the city center, served Los Angeles, San Bernardino, Riverside and Orange Counties, also ran some connecting buses.
- Peak number of rail lines around 1925, peak ridership during WWII due to rationing.
- The clean air “Metrolink” commuter rail of its day, only much more extensive with 1,100 track miles, 2,700 trains a day, and multiple hubs.

Pacific Electric Rail Service in Beverly Hills



- Pacific Electric's Santa Monica and Hollywood lines served Beverly Hills. Rails were originally built in 1897 by Pasadena & Pacific Railway and later acquired by Pacific Electric as it assembled its interurban system. Tracks existed on San Vicente, Burton Way and Santa Monica Boulevard. Last rail service to Beverly Hills ran on Sept. 26, 1954.
- Also a short Rodeo Line constructed in 1907 ran north from Santa Monica Blvd to Sunset, ending at the Beverly Hills Hotel. Hotel was constructed five years later in 1912. Service on the Rodeo Line ended Jan. 15, 1923.

Beverly Hills and the Wilshire Route

Wilshire Boulevard has the dubious distinction of being the only major street in LA to have streetcar rail banned from it. The elite who built their mansions on Wilshire, pre-Beverly Hills, and before automobiles were commonplace, didn't want the clanging bells of streetcars in their front yards.

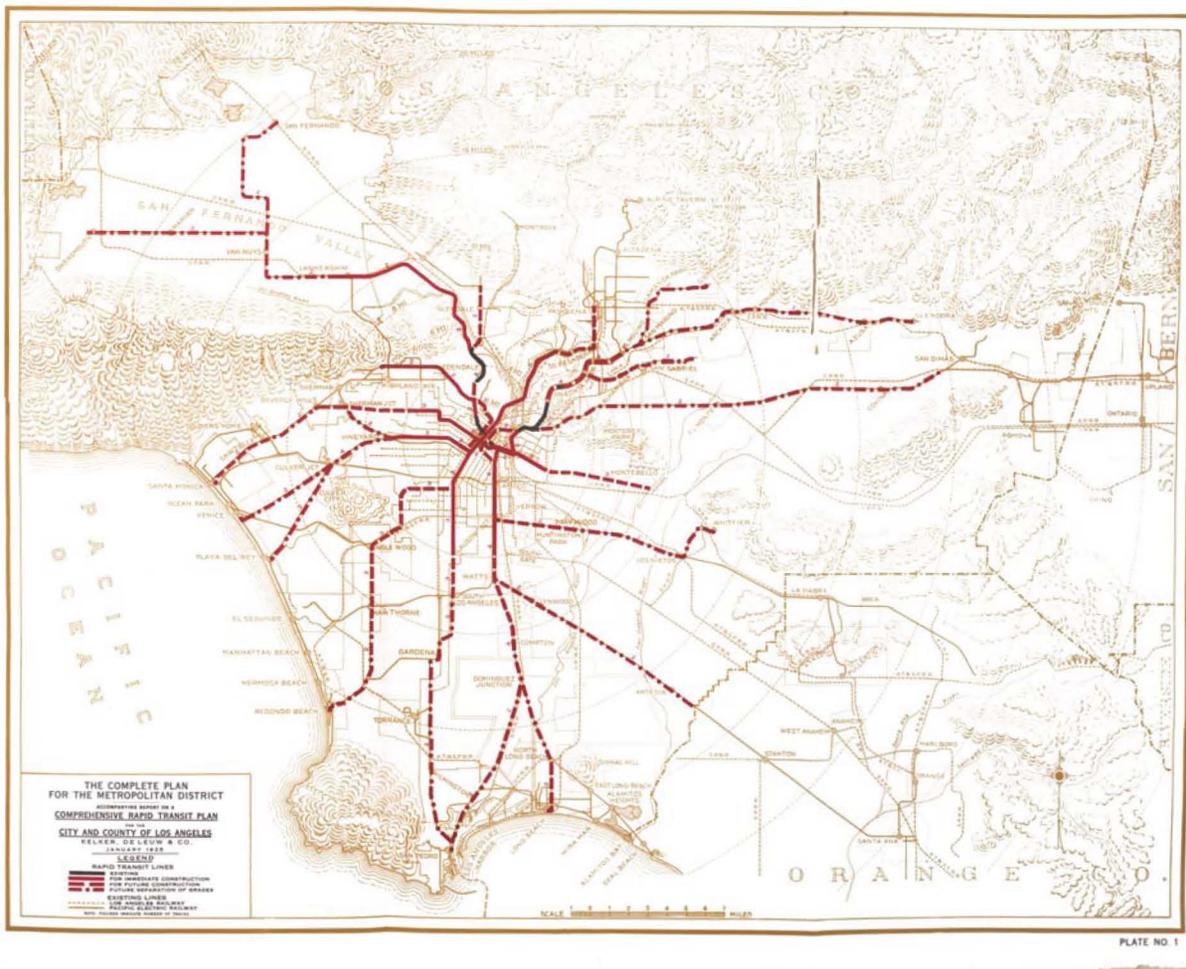
Bus service on Wilshire was provided by a separate company formed by Pacific Electric, Los Angeles Motor Bus Company (1923-1949). Service was extended from Wilshire/Fairfax to Wilshire/Santa Monica Blvd in 1928, to Wilshire/Westwood in 1929, and Wilshire/Ocean Ave in 1932.

In 1928, bus service ran weekdays every 20 minutes during peak hours and every 30 minutes off peak from 6am-11pm.

Today, both Metro Local Line 20/21 and Metro Rapid Line 720 buses run every 2-4 minutes during peak hours and every 10-12 minutes off peak, 24 hours a day. In May '06 Metro's bus ridership on Wilshire averaged 64,800 boardings per weekday.

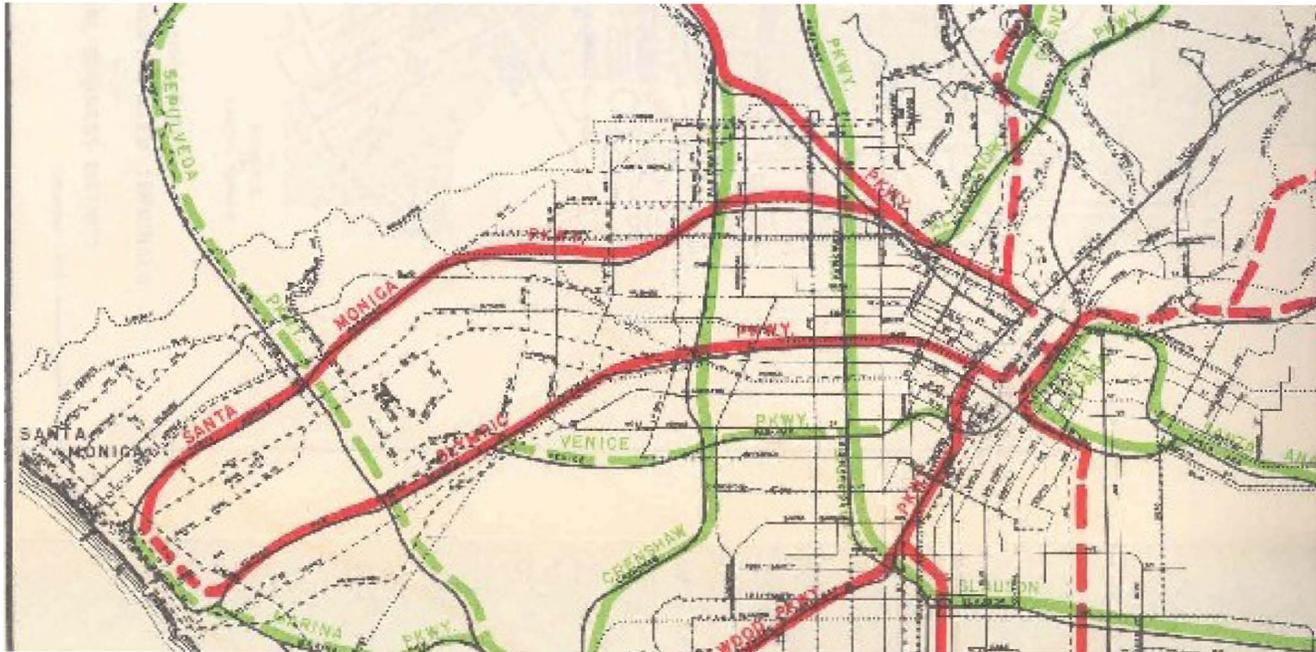


Kelker, De Leuw & Co. - Comprehensive Rail Rapid Transit Plan 1925



- 1925 plan commissioned by the City and County of Los Angeles.
- Recommended 153 miles of subway, elevated and at-grade rail, projected cost of \$133,385,000.
- Envisioned 3 Westside subways: from downtown across Hollywood Blvd. to La Brea; subway along Third to La Brea, then elevated rail to Wilshire Blvd and out to the ocean; and subway across Pico to Rimpau then elevated rail to Venice Beach.
- Rejected by voters who opposed elevated rail, its cost, and taxation to benefit privately held Pacific Electric.

Beverly Hills Freeway Proposal



The “Beverly Hills Freeway” was the name for a never-built freeway intended to link the Los Angeles districts of Westwood and Echo Park along the route of Santa Monica Boulevard. It was to combine with the Glendale Freeway and provide a direct link between the Foothill (I-210) and San Diego (I-405) freeways. This segment of CA-2 actually was originally intended to be the "Santa Monica Freeway," as it would have followed the alignment of, or completely replaced, Santa Monica Boulevard.

Beverly Hills and the Wilshire Route

- First attempt at coordinated regional rail rapid transit planning begins in 1951 with the formation of the Los Angeles Metropolitan Transit Authority (LAMTA) by the State.
- LAMTA's enabling legislation is amended to allow it to purchase the two main private transit operators, operate service and set fares – effective March 3, 1958.
- Its initial 1954 planning study of one monorail line, 45 miles/\$165 million, then grows in 1960 to a 75 mile/\$529 million monorail plan with elevated rail along Wilshire.
- In a Los Angeles Times article titled “Wilshire Area Fights Any Overhead Cars”, stakeholders voice strong opposition to any elevated monorail.
 - Edward Tufte of the Beverly Hills Public Works Department is quoted: “Our city does not want an overhead facility.” City Councilman Harold Henry states: “If we have to have it, it should be a subway.” Stuart M. Ketchum of the Hancock Park Homeowners Association states “An overhead system either north or south of Wilshire would be seriously detrimental to property values.”



Beverly Hills and the Wilshire Route

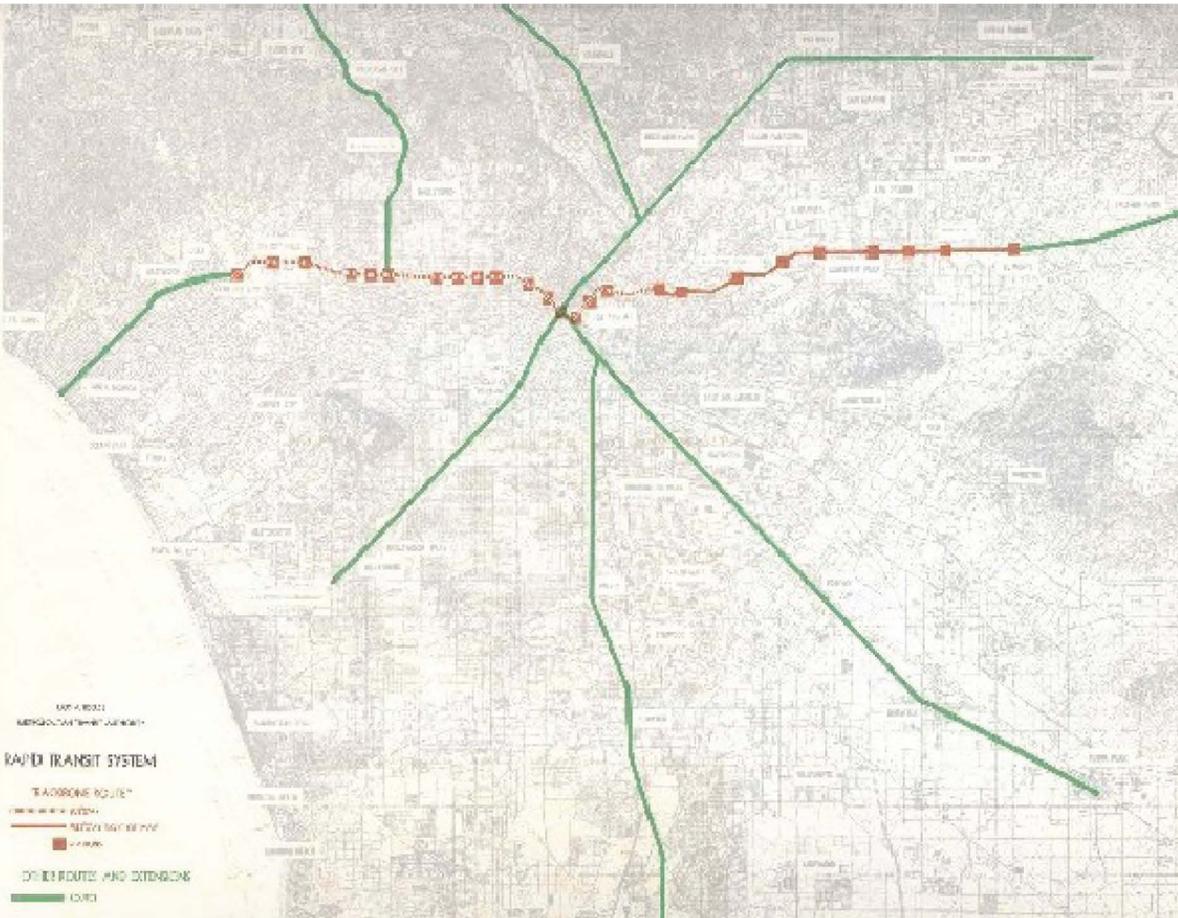


- LAMTA revises its rail rapid transit plan to a “backbone route” with at-grade rail from El Monte to Downtown Los Angeles and then subway under Wilshire Boulevard to Century City. 23 miles/\$192 million.
- Inauguration ceremonies are held for the Backbone Route’s Wilshire subway construction. The first event is held on January 12, 1962 at the corner of 1st and Broadway with Governor Edmund G. Brown. Two weeks later on January 23, a second ceremony is held at the corner of Linden Drive and Wilshire with Beverly Hills Mayor Jack Freeman and members of the LAMTA Board.



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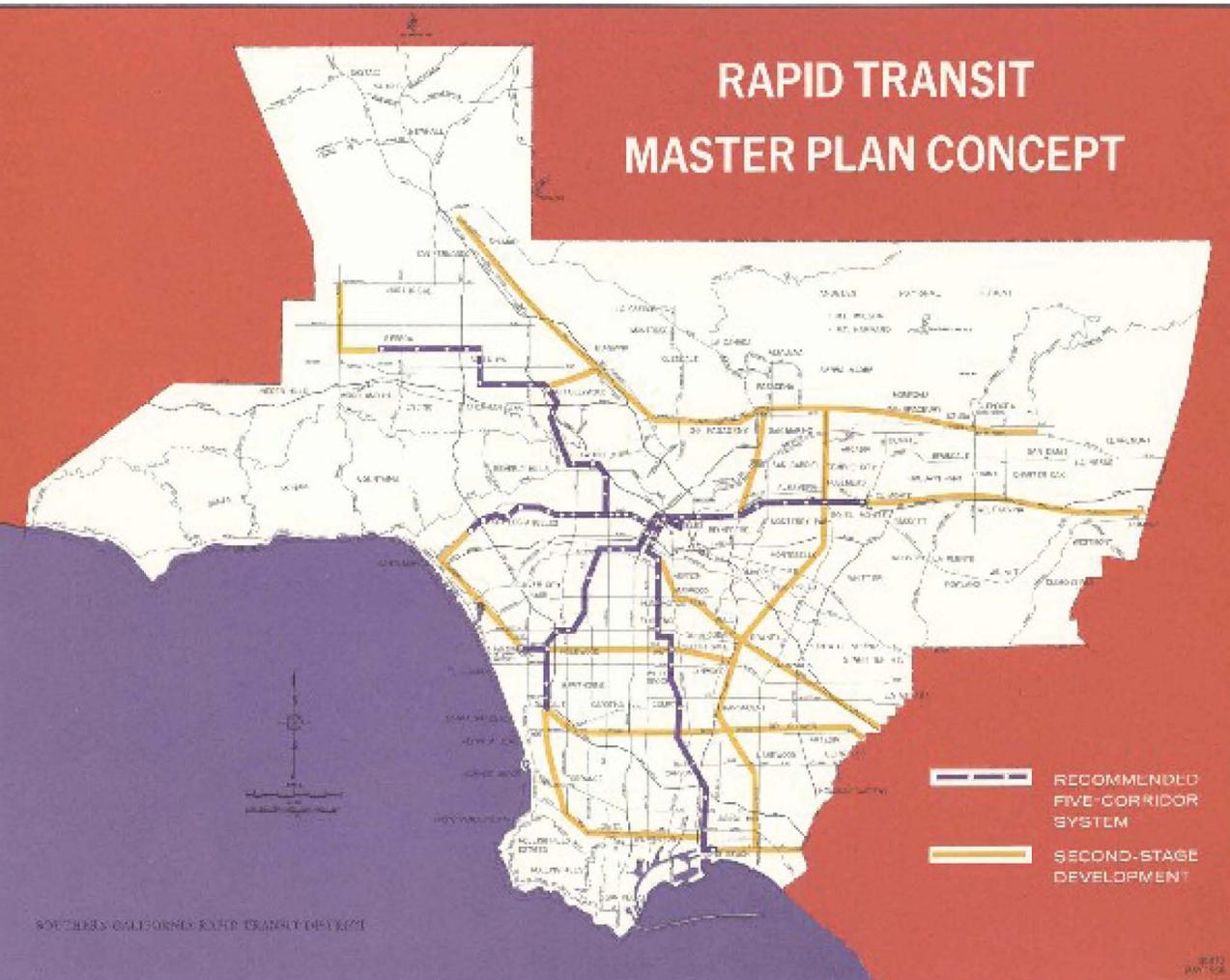
- 1962 Backbone Route Rail Rapid Transit Plan called for underground stations at:
 - Wilshire/Alvarado
 - Wilshire/Vermont
 - Wilshire/Normandie
 - Wilshire/Western
 - Wilshire/Crenshaw
 - Wilshire/La Brea
 - Wilshire/Masselin
 - Wilshire/Fairfax
 - Wilshire/Robertson (Clark)
 - Wilshire/Beverly Drive
 - Santa Monica/Century Park East
- Underground stations planned to also serve as civil defense shelters.

Beverly Hills and the Wilshire Route

- LAMTA's proposed "Backbone Route" project is derailed:
 - LAMTA had no power of eminent domain, no bonding ability, and no authority raise tax revenues. It was mired in political battles and controversy over monorail proposals, and its board was viewed as powerless.
 - There were no federal or state funding programs for mass transit. No federal Urban Mass Transit Administration (UMTA, now FTA) yet, and no California Transportation Commission.
- LAMTA is replaced by the State in late 1964 with the Southern California Rapid Transit District (SCRTD) via legislation sponsored by Sen. Rees (D-Beverly Hills).
- SCRTD is given the powers the first LA MTA lacked as well as a larger board appointed by local elected officials
- Federal government creates UMTA that same year.
- SCRTD presents its rail rapid transit plan to voters in 1968, and then again in 1974, and again (reluctantly) in 1976 – all rejected.

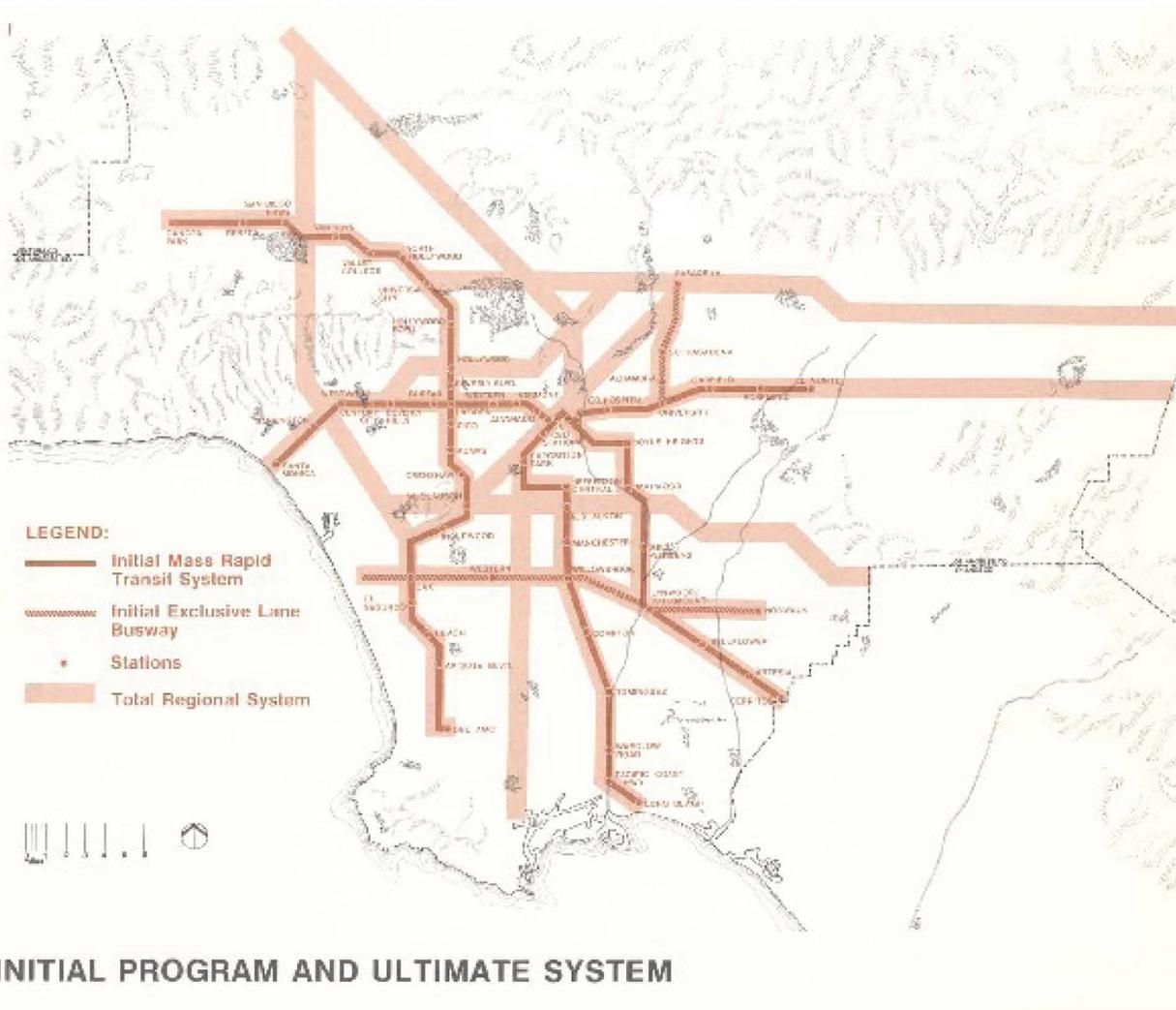


Beverly Hills and the Wilshire Route



- 1968 rail rapid transit plan concept map for a ballot initiative.
- Initial 62 mile four corridor system that could expand to 300 miles, projected cost of \$2.5 billion, 8.5 year construction period.
- Underground Wilshire station included Crenshaw, La Brea, Fairfax, La Cienega, Beverly Hills, Century City, Westwood, ending at Barrington.
- Ballot initiative failed.

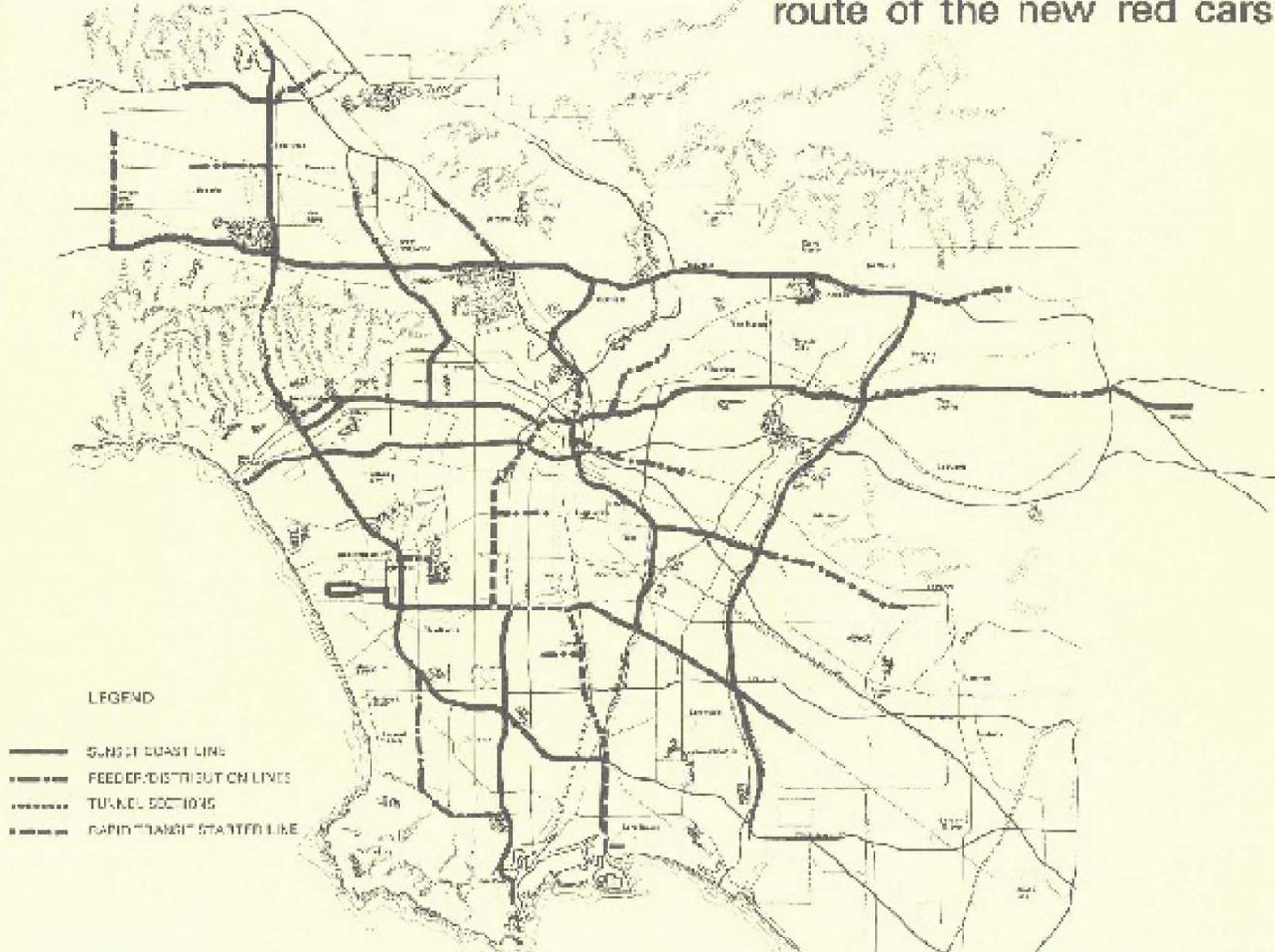
Beverly Hills and the Wilshire Route



- 1974 rail rapid transit concept map for a ballot initiative.
- Initial 116 miles of rail rapid transit that would eventually expand to a 250 mile system with 24 miles of exclusive lane busways. Projected cost of \$6.6 billion, 12 year construction period.
- Underground Wilshire stations included Crenshaw, La Brea, Fairfax, La Cienega, Beverly Hills, Century City, Westwood, Barrington, and Santa Monica.
- Ballot initiative failed.

Beverly Hills and the Wilshire Route

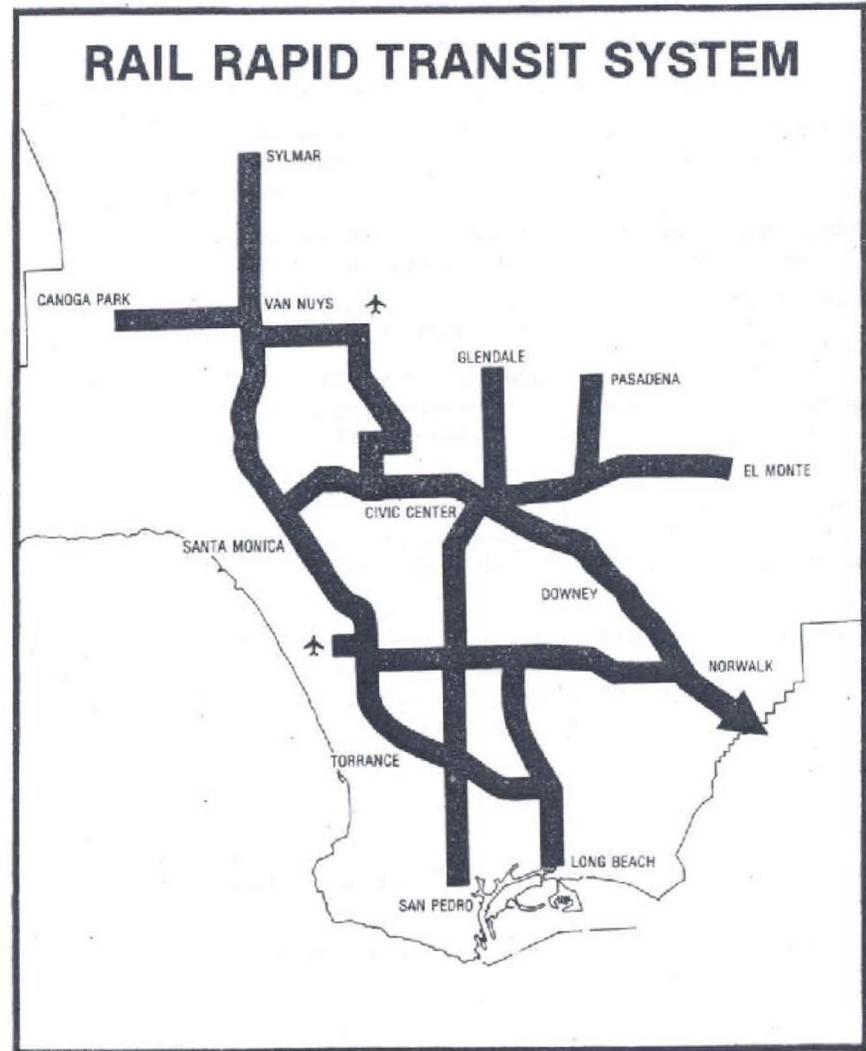
route of the new red cars



- 1976 “Sunset Coast” rail rapid transit plan for a ballot initiative.
- 281 mile system, 230 miles of heavy rail and 51 miles of light rail, projected cost of \$7.5 billion.
- System proposed mostly elevated rail, including along the Wilshire corridor.
- Ballot initiative failed by a wide margin.

Beverly Hills and the Wilshire Route

- Time for a new approach –
- State created the Los Angeles County Transportation Commission (LACTC) in 1976 to coordinate between municipal transit operators and SCRTD, plan countywide transportation improvements and ensure efficient use of transportation funding.
- In 1980, a majority of Los Angeles County voters approved Proposition A, a half cent sales tax for transportation improvements, including 35% for rail construction and 25% for local return.



Beverly Hills and the Wilshire Route

- A 1985 methane gas explosion at Fairfax and Third prompts a change in federal law tied to SCRTD's full funding grant agreement for its subway project. A methane gas risk zone is identified along the Wilshire corridor in the Miracle Mile area and the future route is changed to head north on Vermont instead of Fairfax.
- SCRTD re-considered its rail rapid transit planning and decides on a five station "starter line" subway in downtown Los Angeles that could expand to Hollywood and over the Cahuenga Pass to the San Fernando Valley. Using Federal and state funding, construction begins in 1986.
- LACTC had begun its own rail rapid transit planning shortly after the passage of Prop A in 1980. Construction started on the Metro Blue and Metro Green light rail projects, and in 1988, the LACTC negotiated with SCRTD to consolidate all rail planning and construction under a single authority, a move that would eventually result in the merger of the two agencies.

Beverly Hills and the Wilshire Route

- In 1993, SCRTD and LACTC merge to form the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (LACMTA or “Metro”) and “Orange Line” is officially dropped as a name for the western extension of the the Metro Red Line.
- In 1994, Pico/San Vicente, south of the methane risk zone, is seriously considered for a western extension of the subway from Wilshire/Western, until further study reveals high levels of hydrogen sulfide gas underground.
- In February 1995, Mayor Vicki Reynolds writes to Metro’s CEO that the Beverly Hills City Council continues to strongly support a Metro Red Line Western Extension that will serve the population and employment densities of the Wilshire Corridor. It also states that while this support does not extend to to an endorsement of any specific alignment or rail station locations, Beverly Hills does support including Wilshire Boulevard in any supplemental EIS/EIR process.

Beverly Hills and the Wilshire Route

- The federal ban on tunneling from Rossmore to San Vicente, community opposition to elevated, at grade or trenched rail, the discovery of hydrogen sulfide at Pico San Vicente, and finally a 1996 County proposition that banned the use of local sales tax revenues for tunneling - all seemed to work against extending the subway west.
- Options for serving the needs of the Wilshire corridor appeared few, if any, until now -
 - Positive report from a panel of experts chosen by Congressman Waxman and the American Public Transit Association
 - Improved tunneling technologies available
 - Willingness to overturn federal ban on tunneling in Miracle Mile area
 - Much stronger community-wide support for the project than in decades past

Dorothy Peyton Gray Transportation Library

<http://www.metro.net/library>

- Originally the library of the Los Angeles Railway (1895-1945), first opened in 1937.
- Library began computer cataloging into OCLC's World Catalog using Library of Congress Subject Headings and honoring interlibrary loan requests from outside institutions in 1976.
- Renamed the Dorothy Peyton Gray Transportation Library by the LACMTA Board of Directors in 2001 to honor the distinguished career of its longest serving librarian.
- Transportation research library for employees, consultants, students, academics, other government agencies and the general public.
- Partner of the National Transportation Library.
- Partner of the National Academy of Sciences Transportation Research Board.
- Largest transit operator-owned library, fourth largest transportation library collection after U.C. Berkeley, Northwestern University and the U.S. DOT's Volpe Center.
- Archive of Greater L.A. transit history from 1873 to the present.
- Participant in Getty/USC's L.A. as Subject collection of less visible cultural archives.