



NEWS

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CONTACT: WENDY TAYLOR/JIM SMART
MTA PRESS RELATIONS
(213) 244-6899, 244-6347
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MTA STUDIES MONEY-SAVING TECHNOLOGY FOR FUTURE RAIL PROJECTS

At an MTA workshop last week where MTA board members reviewed proposed elements of a new Long Range Transportation Plan for Los Angeles County, Glendale Councilman and MTA Vice Chair Larry Zarian asked the MTA staff to perform an in-depth study of the technology alternatives for rail corridors where right-of-way is already available.

The use of diesel multiple units (DMUs) on existing rights-of-way is one alternative suggested by Councilman Zarian.

For example, said Zarian, construction costs for light rail in the Burbank-Glendale-Los Angeles corridor is currently estimated to cost \$559 million, but using DMUs could save more than \$300 million. Also known as "railbus," DMUs are similar to light rail technology, but by using existing right-of-way and grade crossings, and by postponing electrification, the cost is significantly less.

"Our initial analysis shows that a DMU or railbus could save more than \$300 million in costs for the Burbank-Glendale-Los Angeles connection alone," said Zarian. "In fact, if we use this technology, it may be possible to add several lines and increase bus service with money currently allotted for just one line."

In addition, construction work can be reduced to under three years, which would also increase the feasibility of this line, and the work would coincide with construction of a new terminal at the new Burbank-Glendale-Pasadena Airport.

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"In line with our ongoing efforts to cut costs, a rail-air intermodal station sounds like a project that should be explored," said Franklin White, the MTA's chief executive officer. "We don't want to miss a potential opportunity to build an all inclusive multi-modal system to serve both bus and rail riders, alleviate more of the gridlock on our highways and surface streets, and, at the same time, improve L.A.'s air quality," added White.

In determining financial scenarios for the MTA's Long Range Plan, MTA staff has been requested to consider the cost impact of DMU technology for several future rail corridors. Staff is expected to provide initial results of the analysis at another workshop before the MTA's Finance, Budget and Efficiency Committee on January 20. Councilman Zarian co-chairs this workshop with Los Angeles County Supervisor and MTA Board Member, Yvonne Brathwaite Burke.

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