

Metro Rapid

LA's Successful Program Sparks Nationwide Interest

(March 6) The success of Los Angeles' Metro Rapid bus demonstration program has sparked new interest in Bus Rapid Transit projects by the federal government, cities, transit organizations and bus manufacturers across the nation.

This week, representatives from the MTA are participating in a two-day Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) workshop in Pasadena. The workshop is one of the steps in an international design and planning competition sponsored by the Federal Transit Administration and transit agencies in Massachusetts and Oregon.

More than 35 design and planning teams are expected to present their concepts for high-tech transit vehicles and BRT systems during the workshop at the Arts Center College of Design in Pasadena.

The competition calls for vehicles designed with low floors and multiple doorways, possibly on both sides of the bus. They should be light-weight vehicles with large windows, good interior lighting, intelligent control systems and low-noise, clean-air propulsion systems.

The proposed transit systems in which the vehicles would operate might include charging stations for electric vehicles, automated parking lots, instant car or bicycle rentals for passengers and communication services.

"Los Angeles is prominent in the Bus Rapid Transit program because our city is the first to have a system that is making a dramatic improvement in passenger travel times," says Rex Gephart, Metro Rapid project coordinator and a member of the BRT competition's technical advisory committee.

"Most other concepts are still in the design stage," he says. "But, in LA, we're looking at the possibility of exclusive lanes on arterial streets and dedicated bus lanes on former rail rights-of-way. We also have asked for manufacturers' proposals for large-capacity buses for use in expanding the Metro Rapid program."

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