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## Court Again Refuses to Halt Orange Line Work; Metro Releases Revised Environmental Study

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By ED SCANNELL

(Oct. 22, 2004) Los Angeles Superior Court Judge David Yaffe denied a request, Friday, by Citizens Organized for Smart Transit (COST) to halt construction on the Metro Orange Line.

COST had asked the Court to stop work on the San Fernando Valley East-West Transit Corridor until the Board of Directors certifies a Revised Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR).

While allowing construction of the line to continue, Yaffe and attorneys for Metro and COST finalized the court's wording of a writ implementing an earlier decision by the California Court of Appeal. That court found that Metro should have considered a Rapid Bus Alternative in its original environmental study.

County Counsel will brief the Board in closed session at its Oct. 28 monthly meeting regarding legal issues surrounding the case before the Board considers any action in open session. Judge Yaffe gave the Board until Nov. 3 to respond to the writ.

### Environmental report issued

Meanwhile Friday, Metro released a Revised Final Environmental Impact Report (Revised FEIR) for a 30-day public review. The draft report includes the court-ordered study of a Rapid Bus alternative to the current 14-mile Metro Orange Line project now under construction from North Hollywood to Warner Center.

The Revised FEIR was prepared at the direction of the Court of Appeal, which ruled, July 19, that the east-west corridor's Final EIR also should have considered multiple Rapid Bus routes as an alternative to the Metro Orange Line project.

The Final EIR evaluated three project alternatives: a No Build Alternative, a Transportation Systems Management (TSM) Alternative (enhancement of the existing bus system), and a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Alternative (three variations including the Metro Orange Line Full BRT).

### Three alternative routes studied

Based on the court's decision, Metro and its consultants studied three Rapid Bus alternatives for the Revised FEIR including:

Three East-West Rapid Bus Routes Alternative (Sherman Way,

Vanowen Street and Victory Boulevard)

Five East-West Rapid Bus Routes Alternative (Sherman Way, Victory Boulevard, Oxnard Street, Burbank Boulevard, and Chandler Boulevard)

Rapid Bus Network Alternative (as submitted by COST, this network of nine Rapid Bus routes would consist of three east-west routes and six north-south routes)

### **Environmental report conclusions**

The Revised FEIR examined the environmental impacts and the costs and benefits of each Rapid Bus alternative and the Metro Orange Line and reached the following conclusions:

The Metro Orange Line would attract substantially more new riders than any of the Rapid Bus alternatives.

The Metro Orange Line would result in the greatest system-wide travel time savings.

The Metro Orange Line would have the most consistent improved travel time, which would not be compromised over time as the result of increasing traffic congestion.

The Rapid Bus alternatives would all have lower capital costs than the Metro Orange Line because of their minimal construction requirements. However, because the Rapid Bus alternatives would attract fewer new riders than the Metro Orange Line, the Rapid Bus alternatives exhibit poor cost-effectiveness measured on a per-new-rider basis.

The exclusive transitway operation of the Metro Orange Line has distinct land use benefits that would encourage transit oriented development at or around stations and is consistent with adopted local planning documents.

Operating costs for the Rapid Bus Network Alternative would be up to \$10 million more each year than the cost to operate the Metro Orange Line.

The Revised FEIR analyzes the Rapid Bus alternatives and is available for public review on Metro's website at [www.metro.net/projects\\_plans/](http://www.metro.net/projects_plans/) and in the Dorothy Peyton Gray Transportation Library.

### **30-day review period**

The public review period for the Revised FEIR is 30 days following approval from the Office of Planning and Research. It commences Oct. 23 and ends Nov. 22. Currently, no public hearings on the contents of the document are scheduled.

Once the public comment period has expired, Metro will evaluate and respond to the environmental issues raised in comments. The comments and responses will be incorporated into the Revised FEIR.

Upon completion, the Revised FEIR will be presented to the Metro Board Dec. 13 for consideration of certification and approval of a San Fernando Valley East-West Transit Corridor project.

