


[Home](#)
[CEO Hotline](#)
[Viewpoint](#)
[Classified Ads](#)
[Archives](#)
[Metro.net](#) (web)

## Resources

[Safety](#)
[Pressroom](#) (web)

[CEO Hotline](#)
[Metro Projects](#)
[Facts at a Glance](#)  
(web)

[Archives](#)
[Events Calendar](#)
[Research Center/  
Library](#)
[Metro Cafe](#) (pdf)

[Metro Classifieds](#)
[Retirement  
Round-up](#)

## Metro Info

[Strategic Plan](#) (pdf)

[Org Chart](#) (pdf)

[Policies](#)
[Training](#)
[Help Desk](#)
[Intranet Policy](#)

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## Board OKs Orange Line's Revised Final Environmental Report

### The Board also approves acceleration of project construction work

- [Three project alternatives](#)
- [Environmental impacts, costs, benefits](#)

By ED SCANNELL

(Dec. 14, 2004) The Board of Directors has once again given its stamp of approval to the Metro Orange Line transitway project.

On Monday, the Board certified a Revised Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) for the San Fernando Valley East-West Transit Corridor.

A draft version of the report, released Oct. 22 for a 30-day public review, concluded that the Orange Line, under construction since January 2003, is superior to each of three Rapid Bus alternatives studied in the revised report.

The Board also approved spending up to \$7.9 million to accelerate construction of the 14-mile transitway to maintain its scheduled opening in late August 2005.

### Opens in 8 months

"These actions are significant because they have brought the Metro Orange Line project closer to completion," said Board Chairman Frank Roberts. "The acceleration of construction means that the opening of this vital east-west alternative to the 101 Freeway is just eight months away."

The Revised FEIR was prepared at the direction of the California Court of Appeal, which ruled July 19, 2004 that the study should have included an evaluation of Rapid Bus alternatives to the Metro Orange Line project. The public's comments and Metro's responses were incorporated into the Revised FEIR.

"The Metro Orange Line project is clearly superior to the other options we looked at," said Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky. "This revised environmental study confirms the view that this project will provide the greatest transportation benefits to cross-Valley commuters."

### Valley to join regional network

"When the Metro Orange Line is completed next year, the San Fernando Valley will, for the first time in more than 50 years, be integrated into the regional public transportation network," Yaroslavsky added.

When the Metro Orange Line opens, new 60-foot articulated Metro Liner buses will whisk commuters from Warner Center to North Hollywood in approximately 40 minutes and provide a convenient connection to Metro Rail at the North Hollywood station.

Thirteen stations will dot the Metro Orange Line at approximately one-mile intervals and approximately 3,300 parking spaces will be available at key stations.

### **Three project alternatives**

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).

Metro and a team of consultants studied three Rapid Bus alternatives for inclusion in the Revised FEIR:

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); and a

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

### **Environmental impacts, costs, benefits**

The Revised FEIR examined the environmental impacts, costs and benefits of each Rapid Bus alternative 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 maintain the most consistent 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.

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