



NEWS

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IN AN EFFORT TO AVOID HYDROGEN SULFIDE DEPOSITS, MTA BOARD APPROVES FUNDS TO STUDY OPTIONS FOR DESIGN OF METRO RED LINE MID-CITY EXTENSION

In an effort to determine whether tunneling through hydrogen sulfide gas deposits in the Mid-City area can be avoided, the MTA Board of Directors has approved funds to study alternative subway designs that would extend the Metro Red Line from the Wilshire/Western station as far as Pico/San Vicente.

The two proposals now under study include shallow tunnels with either single-level or above-ground stations. The Mid-City Extension would pass through an area where naturally occurring concentrations of hydrogen sulfide have been found in a subsurface layer of sandy soil.

The Board, which had suspended the Mid-City subway project in January, voted during its July 27 meeting to authorize up to \$650,000 for an environmental impact study and a community outreach program and up to \$1 million for engineering support services and research. Neither dollar figure would affect the MTA's FY 1994-95 budget, but would be paid for out of local funds already programmed for the Mid-City Red Line extension. Staff also is seeking Federal Transportation Administration approval to qualify the expenditures for reimbursement.

"The MTA remains committed to providing rail service to transit riders in the Mid-City area," said Ed Edelman, MTA chairman and Los Angeles County supervisor. "We're developing various options that will allow us to accomplish that safely and cost-effectively."

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"Our engineers believe that a Mid-City Red Line extension can be built and operated safely, but different design and construction methods would be required to ensure that the tunnels are built well above the gas deposits," said Franklin E. White, MTA chief executive officer. "One proposal envisions portions of the Mid-City extension being built above ground -- a significant departure from the original subway design.

"It's important for the environmental analysis to take into account possible impacts on the community of the various designs and construction methods," White said. "We will initiate a public outreach effort to hear from the people who live and work along the proposed Mid-City rail alignment."

"The most important criteria for this project are public safety and operational performance," said Edward McSpedon, MTA's executive officer for construction and president of the Rail Construction Corporation (RCC). "We won't recommend a system that would in any way create an undue risk to those who build, operate, ride or live near it."

The Mid-City Extension would run from the Wilshire/Western station west under Wilshire Boulevard and turn south on Crenshaw Boulevard. A station would be constructed at the intersection of Olympic and Crenshaw boulevards. At Pico Boulevard, the line would turn west, terminating with a station at San Vicente Boulevard.

The two proposals under study are:

- ◆ A subway with tunnels at a shallower depth than previously designed and with two underground, single-level stations. Instead of using a tunnel boring machine all the way, a "cut and cover" trench would be dug wide enough to accommodate the rail tracks and the two stations. It would be covered over after the rail facilities were installed. Some tunnel boring would be required on the curves, but excavation would not be deep enough to penetrate the hydrogen sulfide layer.

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- ◆ A combination of the same cut-and-cover construction and boring of shallow tunnels, but with two aerial stations, rather than underground stations. These construction methods would increase the vertical distance between the subway and the upper extremity of the hydrogen sulfide layer. To reach the two above-ground stations, the tracks would emerge from below the surface and ascend to aerial guideways.

A geotechnical evaluation earlier this year indicated that extending the Mid-City alignment west beyond the planned Pico/San Vicente station would be feasible with respect to hydrogen sulfide, although alternative construction methods similar to those proposed for the Mid-City segment might be required as far as Fairfax Avenue. Further geotechnical investigations will be conducted to confirm that analysis.

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