



# NEWS

February 26, 1997

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## MTA BOARD APPROVES PLAN THAT WOULD REDUCE CONGESTION ON SANTA MONICA BOULEVARD, SAVE DRIVERS MILLIONS OF DOLLARS

The MTA Board today approved a plan to relieve traffic congestion, improve safety, enhance the bus system and beautify Santa Monica Boulevard between the 405 Freeway and the Beverly Hills city limits at Moreno Drive (also known as California Route 2).

When renovation of Santa Monica Boulevard is completed in 2001 traffic conflicts will be appreciably reduced as a result of the reconfiguration of "Big Santa Monica" and "Little Santa Monica" boulevards.

The Board action means a search for a consultant, who will produce an Environmental Assessment/ Environmental Impact Report and preliminary engineering study on the 2.5-mile Santa Monica Boulevard Transit Parkway Project, can now begin.

This particular stretch Santa Monica Boulevard, formerly part of Route 66, once featured the Red Pacific Electric Railway Red Car line and has been the focus of various transportation related studies for at least the last 40 years.

"When Santa Monica Boulevard is reconfigured, the wait will drop from 96 to 36 seconds at many intersections," said MTA Board Chairman Larry Zarian.

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There were seven concepts studied, however, the "Classic Boulevard" plan received the most positive feedback during six MTA-sponsored public workshops that were attended by nearly 1,000 people in 1996.

The "Classic Boulevard" would feature a center roadway with three lanes in each direction, bicycle lanes, a landscaped median, and frontage roads on both sides for parking and access to local streets. The project, which would cost up to \$68.2 million, includes priority treatment for buses, on-ramp improvements at the San Diego Freeway interchange, landscaping and urban design improvements.

Steadier traffic flow, a safer ride, faster bus rides and wider sidewalks are among the benefits the community will reap. In fact, the time saved by drivers and passengers in the year 2015 will be worth nearly \$9.5 million annually. Additional savings to drivers and passengers are calculated by less vehicle wear and tear, fewer accidents, saved fuel and less work hours lost due to traffic congestion and gridlock.

"Not only will the new Santa Monica Boulevard have a beautiful new look, but this is a classic example of the way the MTA reaches out to the community, asks for feedback and then develops a better plan as a result," Zarian said.

In addition to workshops, the MTA also held over 20 meetings with smaller groups, and convened a community task force, a practice that will continue while environmental studies are undertaken. The MTA has also communicated with the community through a public survey and a 11,000 circulation newsletter.

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