



NEWS

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STUDY UNDERWAY ON WILSHIRE BOULEVARD, EASTSIDE AND SAN FERNANDO VALLEY CORRIDORS

MTA BOARD ORDERS ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STUDY OF EXPOSITION RIGHT-OF-WAY ALTERNATIVES

The MTA Board Thursday authorized MTA CEO Julian Burke to begin the draft environmental phase on two additional potential alternatives using the Exposition right-of-way to improve transit mobility on the Westside. The action follows last month's decision by the MTA Board to begin draft environmental studies of transit alternatives for Wilshire Boulevard, the Eastside and the San Fernando Valley.

The alternatives, which were first discussed at a special MTA Board workshop on Feb. 4, 2000, were recommended by staff and consultants based on an analysis of projected costs, potential ridership, cost effectiveness, travel time savings, environmental issues and community input. The draft environmental phase will include significant additional public input on the following alternatives:

MID-CITY/WESTSIDE

Bus Rapid Transit/Exposition Right-Of-Way

This alternative would consist of an exclusive bus lane on the Exposition railroad right-of-way from Figueroa Street to downtown Santa Monica, with consideration of minimal operable segments to Crenshaw, La Cienega and Venice/Robertson Boulevards.

As amended by the Board, this alternative would include a modification of the route from Venice/Robertson Boulevards along Venice Boulevard to Sepulveda Boulevard, continue north on Sepulveda and rejoin the Exposition right-of-way heading to downtown Santa Monica.

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The Board also directed the staff to study the feasibility of a tunnel segment past USC from Figueroa Street to west of Vermont Avenue.

Bus Rapid Transit in this corridor can achieve similar ridership to light rail transit at less cost and provide connections to downtown Los Angeles, USC, Exposition Park and the Harbor Freeway Transitway from key centers in Santa Monica, West Los Angeles and Culver City.

Light Rail Transit/Exposition Right-Of-Way

This alternative would consist of an extension of the Metro Blue Line at Washington Boulevard to the Exposition right-of-way and would then operate on the Exposition right-of-way to downtown Santa Monica, with consideration of minimal operable segments to Crenshaw, La Cienega and Venice/Robertson Boulevards.

As amended by the Board, this alternative would include a modification of the route from Venice/Robertson Boulevards along Venice Boulevard to Sepulveda Boulevard, continue north on Sepulveda and rejoin the Exposition right-of-way heading to downtown Santa Monica.

Bus Rapid Transit/Wilshire Corridor

This alternative calls for an exclusive bus lane on Wilshire Boulevard (curb or center lane) from Vermont Avenue to Santa Monica with consideration of minimal operable segments to San Vicente Boulevard (east of La Cienega Boulevard), Santa Monica Boulevard and San Vicente Boulevard (west of I-405).

Bus Rapid Transit can serve the high volume Wilshire Corridor at low cost, serve as an interim solution to feed the Metro Red Line and, as congestion grows, operate at faster speeds on an exclusive bus lane than Metro Rapid Bus which will operate in mixed traffic.

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EASTSIDE

Light Rail Transit/Bus Rapid Transit

Based on the recommendation by staff and consultants as amended by the MTA Board, the draft environmental phase will include study of two potential alternatives: Light Rail Transit and Bus Rapid Transit from Union Station to Atlantic Boulevard via First Street to Lorena Street, then transitioning to Third Street and proceeding east via Third Street/Beverly Boulevard to Atlantic including a tunnel segment between First/Boyle and First/Lorena. In amending the recommendation, the Board also issued the policy directive that the preferred mode of transportation would be light rail.

SAN FERNANDO VALLEY EAST-WEST

Bus Rapid Transit

Buses would operate at-grade on an exclusive busway from the Metro Red Line North Hollywood Station to Warner Center (14 miles) via the Burbank/Chandler right-of-way which parallels several major streets including Chandler Boulevard, Oxnard Street, Victory Boulevard and Topham Street.

This alternative would have the lowest capital, operating and maintenance costs. It would provide substantial cross valley travel time savings over local and rapid bus and future speeds would not be affected by future automobile traffic congestion.

The draft environmental phase for this corridor will include consideration of a minimal operable segment between Woodman Avenue and Balboa Boulevard with Rapid Bus connections at each end. In North Hollywood, Oxnard Street is being considered as a route alignment alternative to Chandler Boulevard.

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On February 24, 2000, the MTA Board approved a financing plan formulated by MTA CEO Julian Burke that urged the Board to "proceed with a united request to Sacramento for new state funding" for the projects. Burke's plan noted that "substantial additional state funding out of the existing state general fund surplus may be available for important state transportation projects that can be completed in five to seven years."

In January 1998, the MTA Board suspended work on Eastside and Mid-City Metro Red Line extensions and planning work on the San Fernando Valley East-West Transit Corridor.

The MTA Board awarded contracts in July 1999 to conduct the three corridor studies from which the alternatives chosen today were selected. The lead consultant for each corridor is as follows: Korve Engineering, Inc. (Mid-City/Westside); Jenkins/Gales & Martinez/Parsons Brinckerhoff (Eastside); and Gruen Associates (San Fernando Valley East-West).

After completion of the draft environmental phase, the Board will be asked to select one alternative in each corridor for final environmental clearance. The selected alternatives will require approval by the Federal Transit Administration and the California Transportation Commission.

Completion of these projects will have to recognize MTA's continuing obligations under the 1996 Consent Decree which requires MTA to meet a schedule of reductions in the number of standees on Metro buses and to add new bus service.

In addition to the review of potential transit alternatives by staff, since the January 1998 suspension of the two Metro Red Line extensions, MTA has embarked on a thorough overhaul of the Metro Bus System. The MTA Board approved the Accelerated Bus Procurement Plan and an additional procurement which, combined, called for the purchase of 2,403 new buses through FY 2004.

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The MTA Board also recently approved the Metro Rapid Bus pilot project in which buses will whisk passengers along the Ventura Boulevard and Whittier/Wilshire corridors, two of the most congested corridors in Los Angeles County. Metro Rapid buses will operate with signal priority, thereby reducing the travel time of passengers by as much as 25 percent.

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