



NEWS

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CONTACT: ED SCANNELL/MARC LITTMAN
MTA MEDIA RELATIONS
(213) 922-2703/922-2700
WWW.MTA.NET/PRESS/PRESSROOM
E-MAIL: mediarelations@mta.net

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CONSTRUCTION OF 14-MILE PROJECT COULD BEGIN IN 2003

MTA CERTIFIES FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT ON SAN FERNANDO VALLEY EAST-WEST BUSWAY; FINAL DESIGN TO GET UNDERWAY

The MTA Board today voted to certify the final environmental report for a planned 14-mile Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system, also called a "busway," that would speed the daily travel of thousands of commuters between the future Warner Center Transit Hub in the west San Fernando Valley and the Metro Red Line subway station in North Hollywood. Today's action paves the way for the project's final design phase.

The Final Environmental Impact Report (Final EIR) for the San Fernando Valley East-West Transit Corridor Project includes responses to the public comments received following last year's release of the Draft EIS/EIR, and a refined project analysis. It also includes a detailed mitigation plan, which addresses community concerns regarding impacts during construction and operation of the busway project.

Construction of the busway could begin in Spring 2003 and the busway could begin operations in Spring 2005.

The eastern terminus of the busway will be the Metro Red Line subway's North Hollywood Station, which will create a convenient transfer point for both bus and rail passengers.

The western terminus of the busway will be the Warner Center Transit Hub, a project of the Los Angeles Department of Transportation, which is expected to be completed in late 2003.

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Operating as an exclusive roadway for buses, the busway would provide a constant travel time across the San Fernando Valley, regardless of traffic congestion on parallel east-west routes.

A trip from the Warner Center Transit Hub to North Hollywood will take approximately 35 to 40 minutes, including stops, compared to on-street bus service which today takes 55 minutes for the same trip, and which will lengthen over time as congestion increases.

"Taking the busway will save commuters time and money," said John Fasana, MTA Board Chair. "The busway will be an attractive alternative for commuters now taking local service buses, as well as for many people who have been making the cross-Valley commute by car."

"They'll be able to park their car at one of the many park-n-ride lots along the busway and take the bus to the Metro Red Line North Hollywood Station, where they can make a near seamless transfer to the subway for the trip to Hollywood, downtown Los Angeles or many other destinations served by the Metro Rail system," he added.

The busway would pass through communities including North Hollywood, Valley Glen, Van Nuys, Sherman Oaks, Encino, Tarzana and Woodland Hills. In addition to Warner Center, the busway would link activity centers such as Pierce College, the Sepulveda Basin Recreation Area, the Van Nuys Government Center, Valley College and North Hollywood.

Located on Owensmouth Avenue between Oxnard and Erwin streets, the Warner Center Transit Hub will be the first on-street transit hub in the City of Los Angeles and will serve as a major focal point for bus service in the west San Fernando Valley.

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In addition to the busway, the transit hub also will be served by Metro Rapid Bus Line 750 which operates on Ventura Blvd., as well as additional Metro Bus lines and transit services operated by other providers.

The 26-foot wide busway would be built in the median of the Burbank/Chandler right-of-way. Typically 100 feet in width, the right-of-way was purchased by the MTA from Southern Pacific in 1991.

Thirteen busway stations would be located at major cross streets and trip destinations, spaced approximately one mile apart along the route. While service frequencies would be adjusted as demand for service grows, initially during peak travel periods, the time between bus arrivals would vary between seven minutes to 10 minutes in each direction. A passenger information system at each station would inform travelers when the next bus is due to arrive.

Stations would have amenities typically associated with light rail transit, such as covered waiting platforms, art elements, security lighting, and an appealing design. Park-n-ride lots located at various locations along the route would provide parking for approximately 3,000 vehicles, augmenting existing parking spaces at the Metro Red Line North Hollywood Station and at the Balboa Blvd. Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT) park-n-ride lot.

The LADOT will employ technology to briefly extend the duration of green signal lights to allow the smooth flow of buses operating on the busway, while not adversely impacting north-south traffic.

The busway will be fully landscaped with groundcover, trees and other plantings, including over 4,000 new trees.

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Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) buses and other clean fuel technologies are under consideration for deployment along the busway. The MTA currently operates the largest fleet of CNG-fueled buses in North America.

The project will include a cross-valley bikeway. The MTA will initiate the bikeway design as part of the busway design and is seeking funding so the two projects could be built concurrently.

The cost of the full BRT, including the busway, stations, landscaping, environmental mitigation, park-n-ride lots, new buses, and traffic signals is estimated at approximately \$329.5 million (escalated to year of expenditure dollars).

Persons seeking information about the project should contact Kathleen Sanchez at MTA at (213)922-2421, or visit the MTA web site at www.mta.net under the heading of Transportation Programs/Transit Corridor Studies/San Fernando Valley East-West Transit Corridor.

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