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Mass Rapid Transit Plan Concept Maps

Past visions of Transportation's Future in Los Angeles

Visitors to the library often ask about past mass rail rapid transit plans and speculate about what Los Angeles might have looked like if one or more of these plans been constructed. This online gallery examines those major plan maps from 1925 to 2003.

We also hear interesting urban mythology related to the 1,100 Pacific Electric "Red Car" interurban rail system, and very little about Los Angeles Railway's nearly forgotten 600 mile "Yellow Car" urban rail system. If you are not familiar with L.A.'s original rail transit systems, we've included links to their system maps as background to compare later plans against. In 1911 the "great merger" occurred which divided up rail lines among the two main operators, Pacific Electric for interurban service and Los Angeles Railway for urban service.

To relate those transit systems to today's system, think of Pacific Electric as the Metrolink of its day (only much more extensive and electrically powered) and Los Angeles Railway (also electrically powered) as the grandfather of the current urban bus system. Track miles peaked around 1925, and ridership peaked during WWII, in large part due to gas and rubber rationing, and war industry employment.

After WWII, the privately owned and operated rail transit system, which first began in 1873, was in a state of disrepair and there was little capital available to invest in improvements or rehabilitation. Motorbuses became the affordable alternative and the public raised weak objections to rail line conversions. The last train ran in 1961, from Los Angeles to Long Beach. Contrary to popular belief, the Pacific Electric system ran a deficit in all but three years of its operation.

- [Pacific Electric and Los Angeles Railway](#) (1906) Large version
- [Pacific Electric and Los Angeles Railway](#) (1906) Small version
- [Pacific Electric](#) (1925)
- [Los Angeles Railway](#) (1938)

The motivation for proposing new mass rapid transit plans as far back as 1925 appears to have been a keen sense of L.A.'s future population growth which would necessitate imaginative plans for grade separation, both above and below ground, and exclusive rights-of-way to reduce congestion in business districts, maintain system speed and system attractiveness to riders.

- [Comprehensive Rapid Transit Plan for the City and County of Los Angeles \(1925\)](#)
- [City of Los Angeles Recommended Program \(1945\)](#)
- [Los Angeles Metropolitan Transit Authority \(1951-1963\)](#)
- [Southern California Rapid Transit District \(1964-1993\)](#)
- [City of Los Angeles General Plan - Rail Element \(1974\)](#)
- [Los Angeles County Transportation Commission \(1977-1993\)](#)
- [Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority \(1993-Present\)](#)

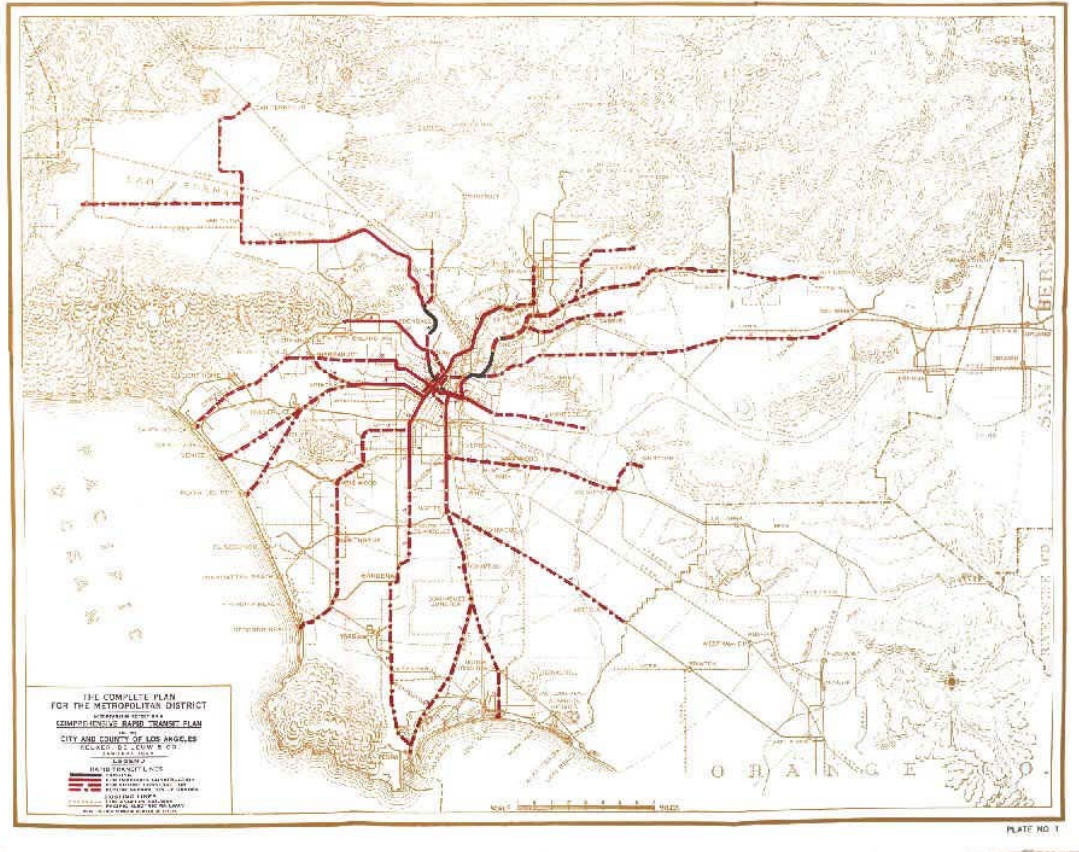
Each image below is linked to the full size original scanned image that can be right-clicked and saved locally.

Comprehensive Rapid Transit Plan for the City and County of Los Angeles (1925) Kelker, De Leuw and Co.

This is one of the earliest plans commissioned by the City and County of Los Angeles. The consultants were asked to create a plan to accommodate a future city population of 3,000,000. The plan shows a number of proposed immediate and future subways, one across Hollywood to La Brea, another from downtown out 7th street, up Vermont, across Third St. initially to Larchmont as subway with a future extension on elevated rail out Third St. to

Beverly Hills then down Wilshire to the ocean in Santa Monica. Also shows a subway from downtown across Pico, initially to Pico/Rimpau with a future extension to Venice Beach.

Solid lines represent mass rapid transit routes recommended for immediate construction to relieve downtown congestion, dotted lines predict future extensions that will be necessary to serve population increases. The plan recommended for immediate construction included 153 miles of subway, elevated rail, and street railways at a projected cost of \$133,385,000. Strong opposition by the business community to planned sections of elevated rail, and voter reluctance to tax themselves for the benefit the privately held Pacific Electric Railway and Los Angeles Railway effectively shelved the plan.



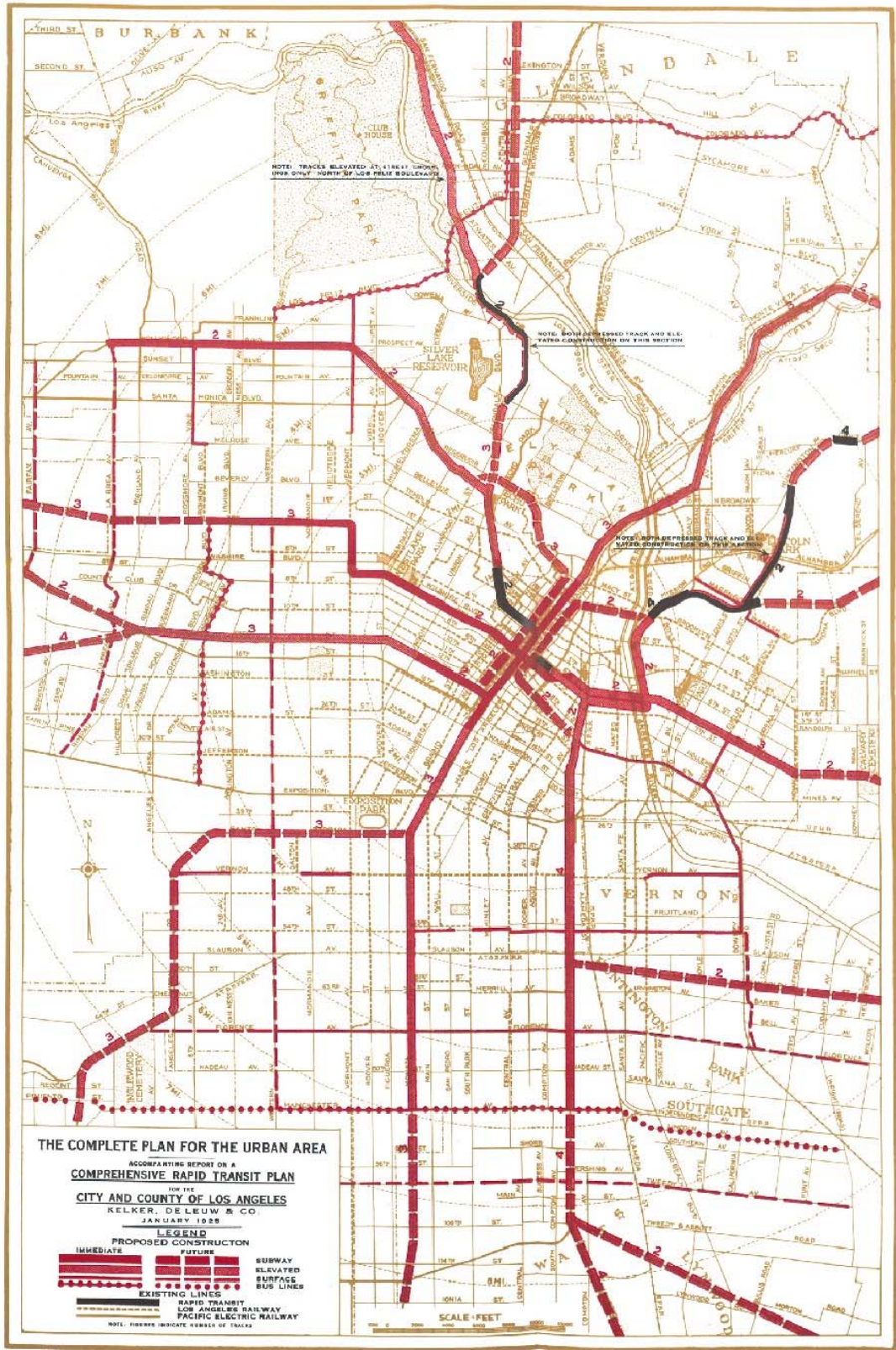
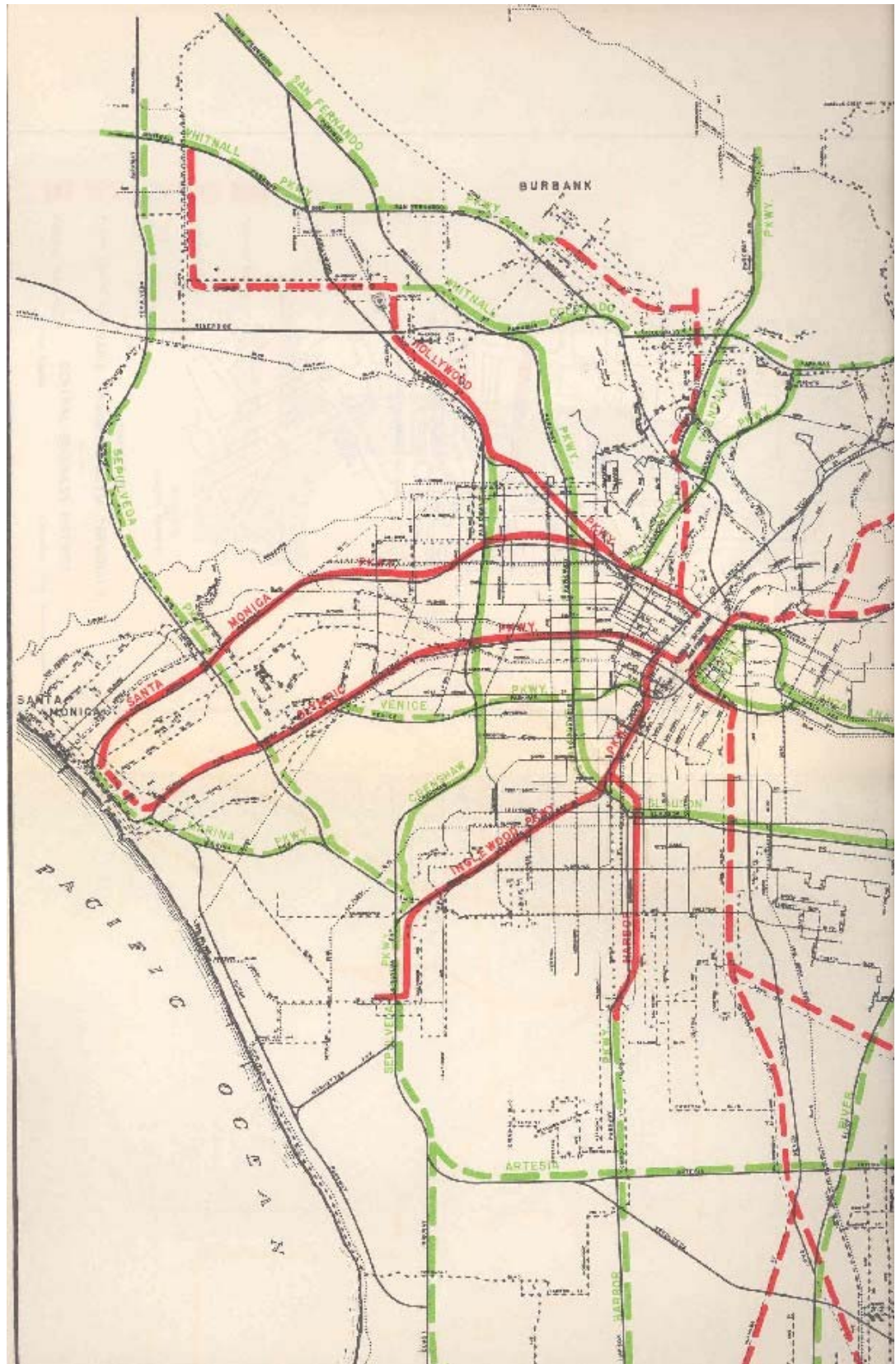


PLATE NO. 2

City of Los Angeles Recommended Program for Improvement of Transportation and Traffic Facilities in the Metropolitan Area (1945) De Leuw, Cather and Co.

1945 Plan commissioned by the City of Los Angeles. Contemplated subway tunnels in downtown, rail in widened future freeways (red lines on map) and bus rapid transit lines (green lines on map). Estimated cost \$68,000,000. Rapid expansion of freeway construction. strong patron dissatisfaction with overcrowding, slow speeds and old equipment

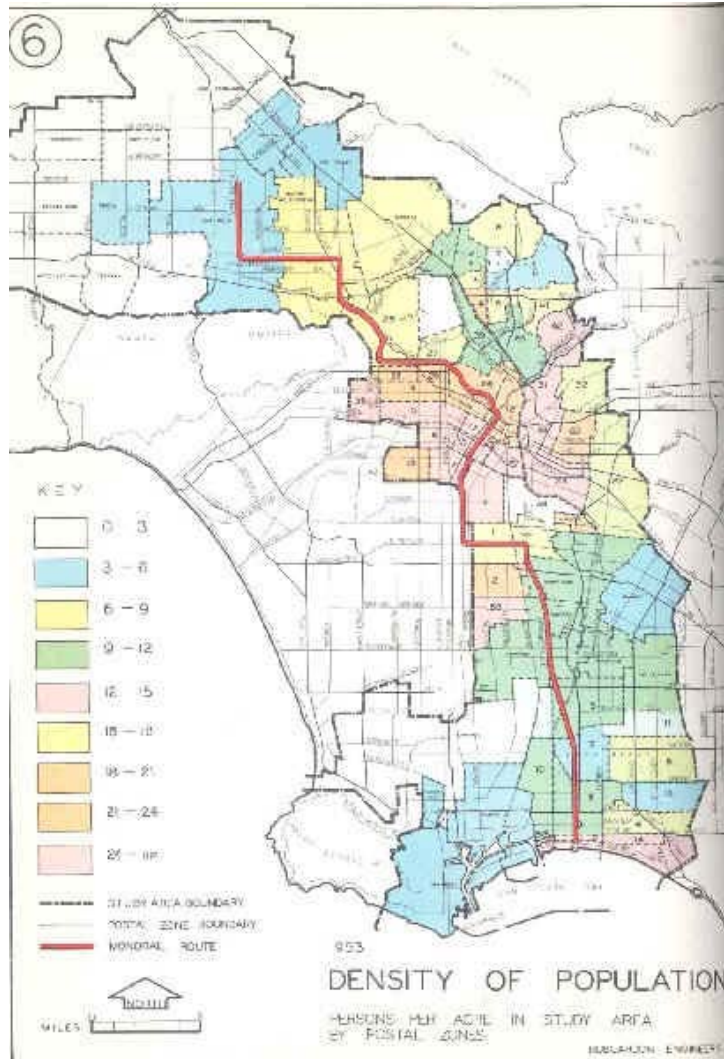
consistency, being particularly concerned with overcrowding, slow speeds and old equipment on Pacific Electric Railway and Los Angeles Railway, and voter apathy again shelved plans for a new mass transit system.



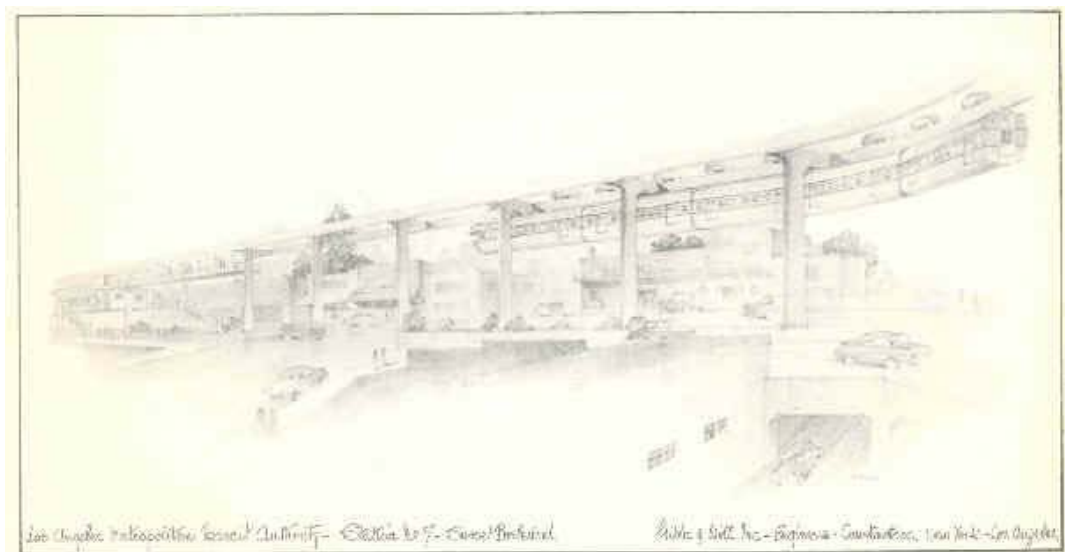
Los Angeles Metropolitan Transit Authority (1951-1964)

The State formed the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transit Authority in 1951 for the purpose of transit planning. LAMTA's first charge was the planning of a Proposed Monorail

Route from Long Beach to Panorama City per LAMTA's original legislative boundary along the L.A. River: 45.7 miles, projected construction cost of \$165 million. LAMTA was later authorized to become the main transit operator in Southern California and it purchased the successors to Pacific Electric Railway and Los Angeles Railway, Metropolitan Coach Lines and Los Angeles Transit Lines, on March 3, 1958. The public finally gained operating control over what had always been in the hands of private companies, mass transit's future in Los Angeles.



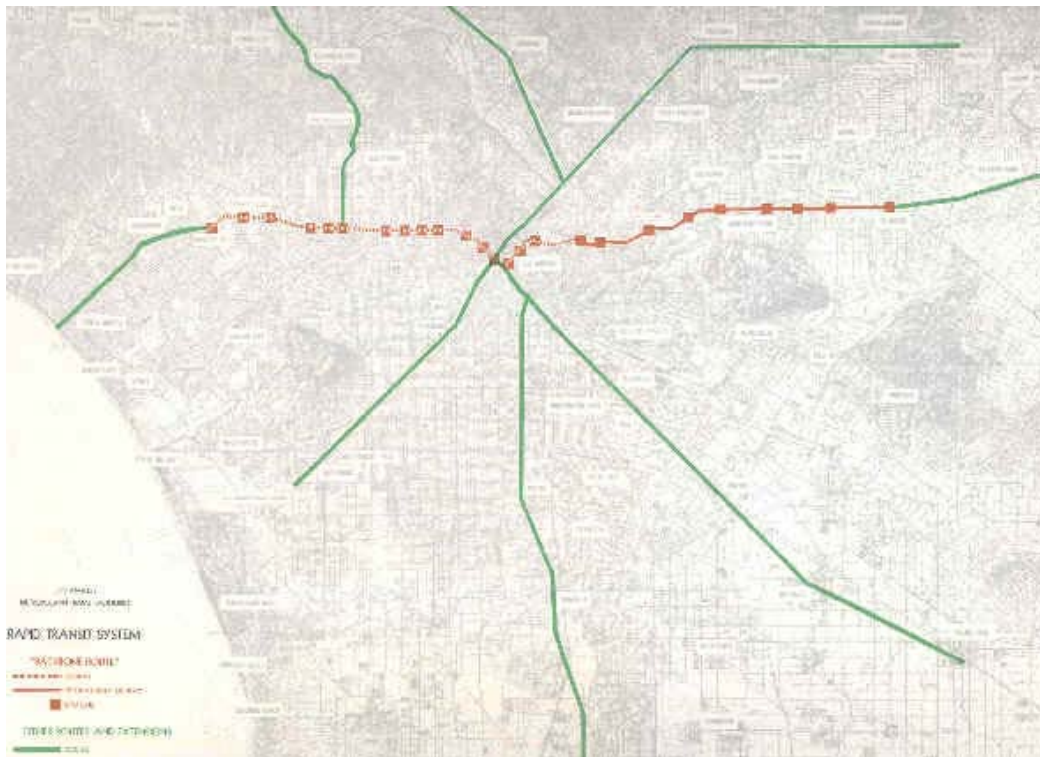
1954 Artist's concept drawing of a suspended car monorail station at Sunset & Glendale, Station #7:



1960 Proposed monorail-based mass transit routes: 51 miles overhead, 21.6 miles at grade, 2.3 miles in tunnel, 74.9 miles total at a cost of \$529,700,000, that could eventually expand to 150 mile eight corridor system. Plan for elevated monorail on Wilshire upsets corridor stakeholders.



1961 New Proposed Backbone Route Plan, scaled down and revised for elevated rail from El Monte to downtown and subway from downtown to Century City: 22.7 miles total, 12 miles in subway along Wilshire, with stations that could also be used as fallout shelters, projected construction cost of \$192 million. Public groundbreaking ceremonies were held in Downtown LA and in the City of Beverly Hills in 1962, although no capital funding was available to begin construction.



1961 Backbone Route, Wilshire corridor underground Fallout Shelter Area detail:



The monorail lobby was not about to give up without a fight. Alweg presented a 43 mile supported beam monorail system plan at an estimated cost of \$187.5 million, and Godell presented a 75 mile suspended car monorail system at an estimated cost of \$182.3 million. Both companies offered to build their systems for "free" in exchange for the next 40 years of passenger revenues to bond against, a difficult commitment for an agency that earned 95% of its revenues from the farebox. The LAMTA sent letters to both companies stating that any proposal submitted must include subway along the Wilshire corridor. The new public agency was unprepared for the public confusion and political chaos that ensued over competing plans, technologies, and arguments over whether or not the construction of public transit facilities should be subsidized.

Southern California Rapid Transit District (1964-1993)

The SCRTD was created by the State in 1964 as the successor to the underpowered LAMTA. SCRTD was given an expanded Board of Directors, the ability to issue bonds, to raise funds for mass transit via taxation (with voter consent), and the power of eminent domain. The Federal government created the Urban Mass Transit Administration, now called the Federal Transit Administration, that same year to assist local agencies with capital projects. SCRTD brought three major mass rapid transit plans before the voters, unfortunately, all three were rejected. It continued to plan mass transit systems and was successful in building the El Monte Busway, and in getting Federal funding to break ground on the Metro Red Line in 1986. It also planned a Downtown People Mover system and a twelve-line Electric Trolley Bus network.

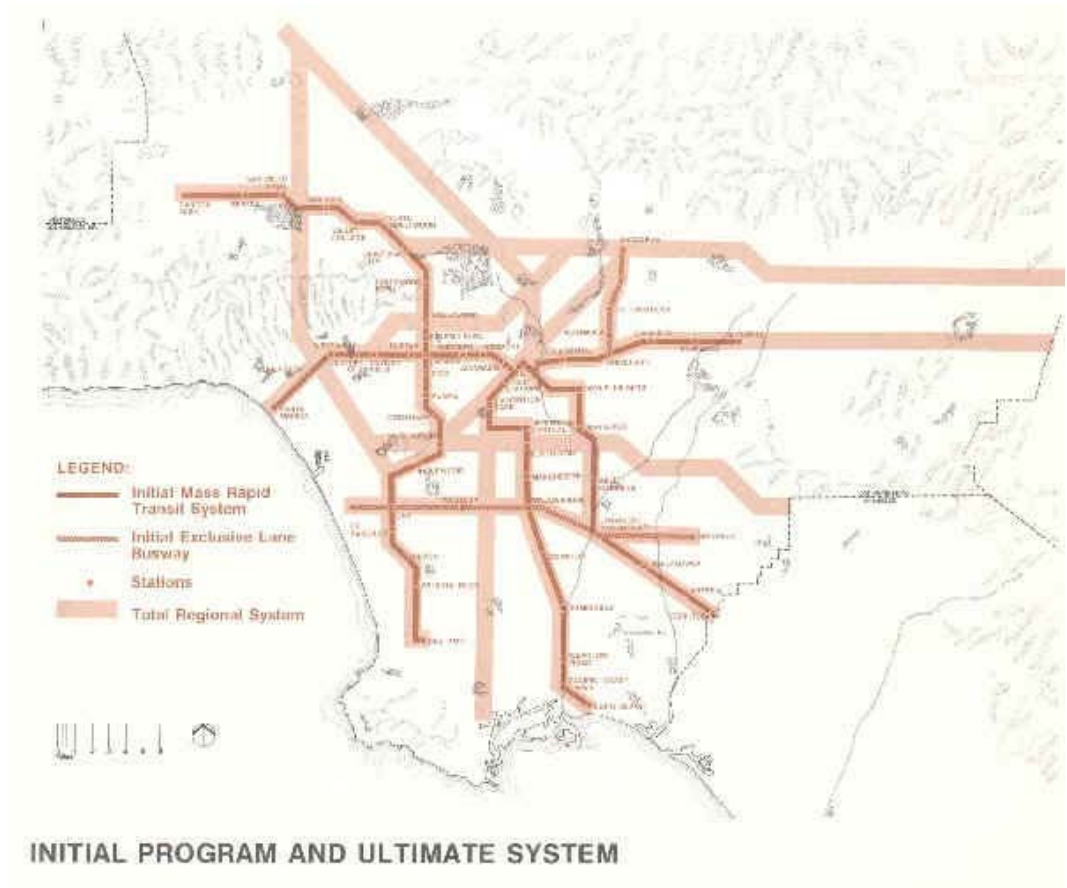
1967 Draft Rapid Transit Master Plan Concept:



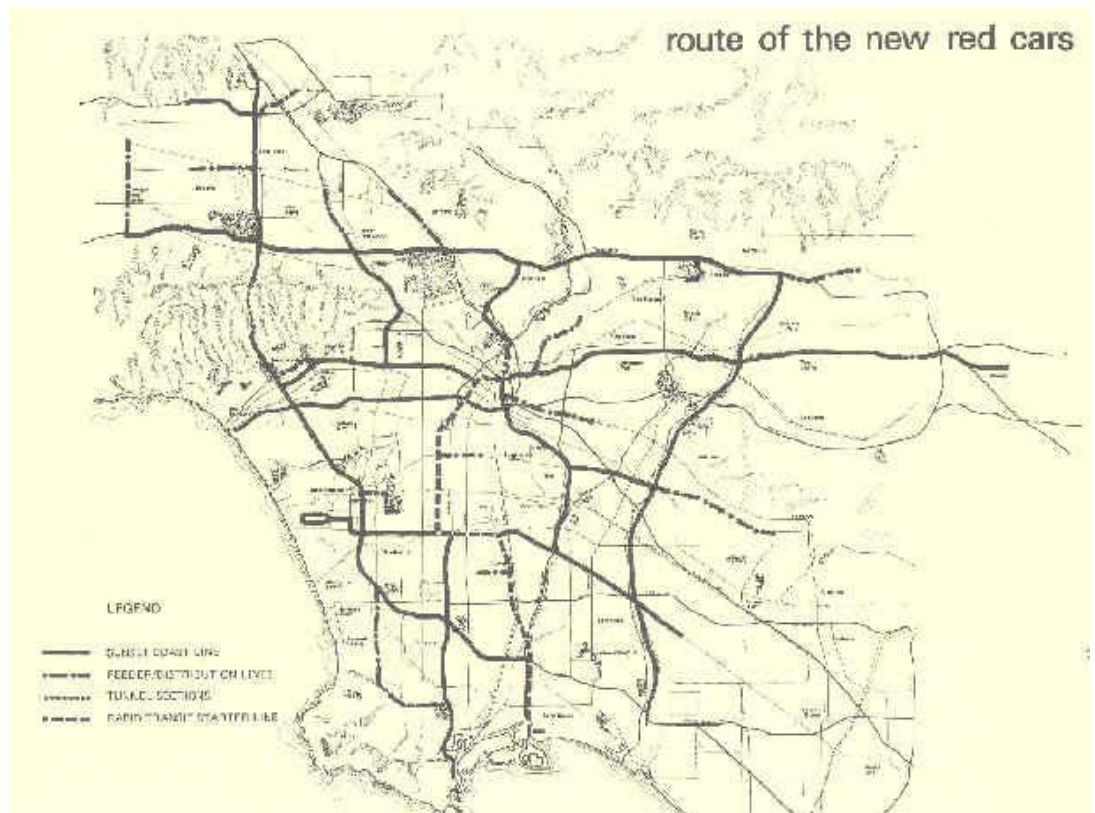
1968 Final Proposed Transit Master Plan Concept for a ballot initiative: Initial 62 mile four corridor system that could expand to 300 miles, projected cost of \$2.5 billion, 8.5 year construction period:



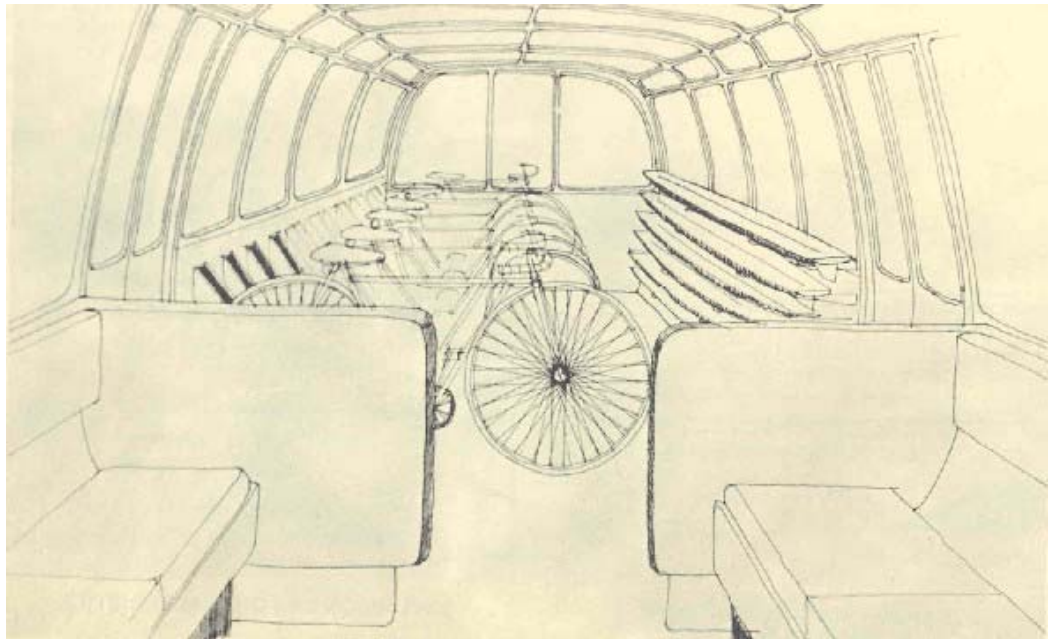
1974 Proposed Transit Master Plan Concept for a ballot initiative: Initial 116 miles of mass rapid transit that would eventually expand to a 250 mile system with 24 miles of exclusive lane busways. Projected cost of \$6.6 billion, 12 year construction period. The first operating subsidies for mass transit became available from the State after 1970 when voters approved diverting a portion of state gasoline taxes to mass transit. Until that time, SCRTD supported transit service from farebox revenues alone. Construction of a new new mass transit system would only be possible via referendum for additional taxation and bonding.



1976 Proposed Sunset Coast Rapid Transit Master Plan for a ballot initiative: 281 mile system, 230 miles of heavy rail and 51 miles of light rail, projected cost of \$7.5 billion.

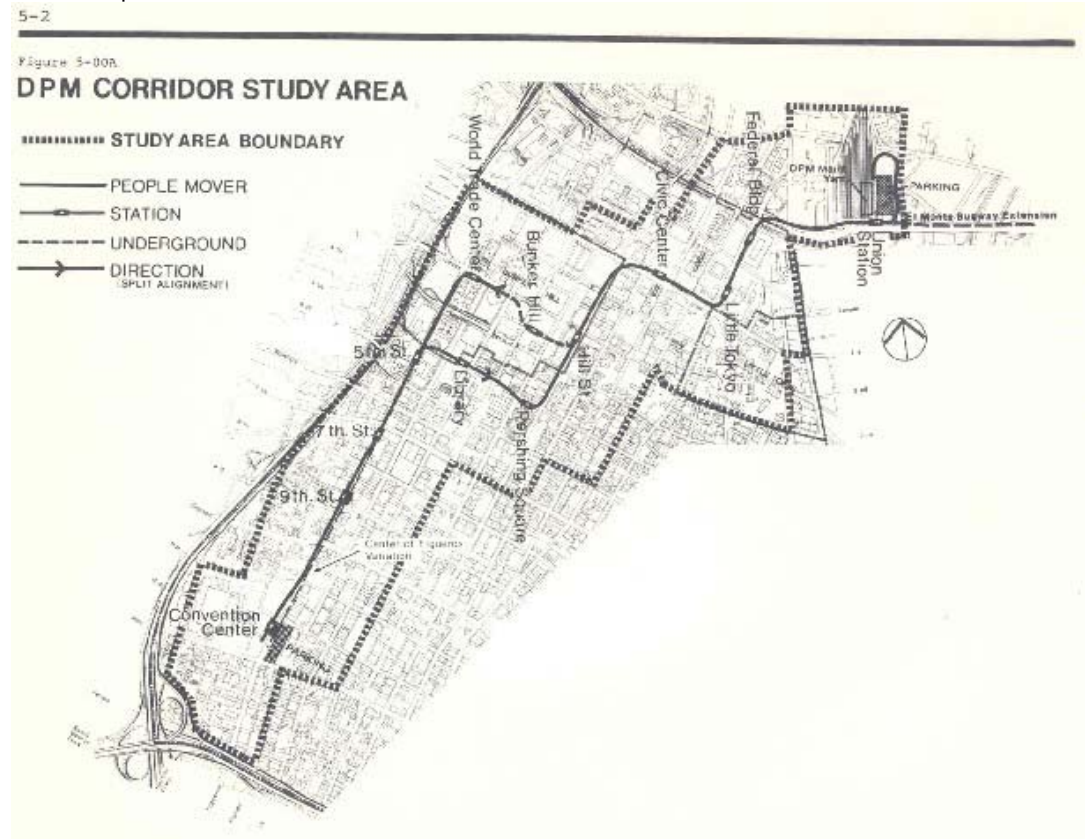


Among the more unusual features of the proposed Sunset Coast Lines Plan, a limited number of rail excursion cars that would include bicycle and surfboard storage at one end:



The 1980 Downtown People Mover would have created a 2.9 mile automated above ground distribution system covering 13 station/activity centers between Union Station and the Convention Center, with 3,750 new parking spaces. The concept was that downtown workers would ride rail, express buses or vanpools to the edge of downtown, transfer at intercept stations and ride to the People Mover to their final destinations. Total estimated capital cost (1980) \$175 million.

Route Map:



Artist's Concept Drawings:

mid-1980's. Design and construction of this development and the People Mover are being coordinated so that the public and private facilities are effectively integrated.

In addition, the El Monte Busway is being extended to the People Mover facilities at Union Station. This extension will be under construction soon and become operational in conjunction with the People Mover. The interrelation between the People Mover and other active public and private development give significance to the early completion of the project. With the commitment of local, State and Federal funds in hand, the City of Los Angeles will begin construction of the People Mover in 1980 and begin operation in late 1983.



Looking North on Figueroa St. to 5th St. Station



Aerial View Looking Northeast to Federal Bldg. Station



Looking North on 5th St. to Library Station

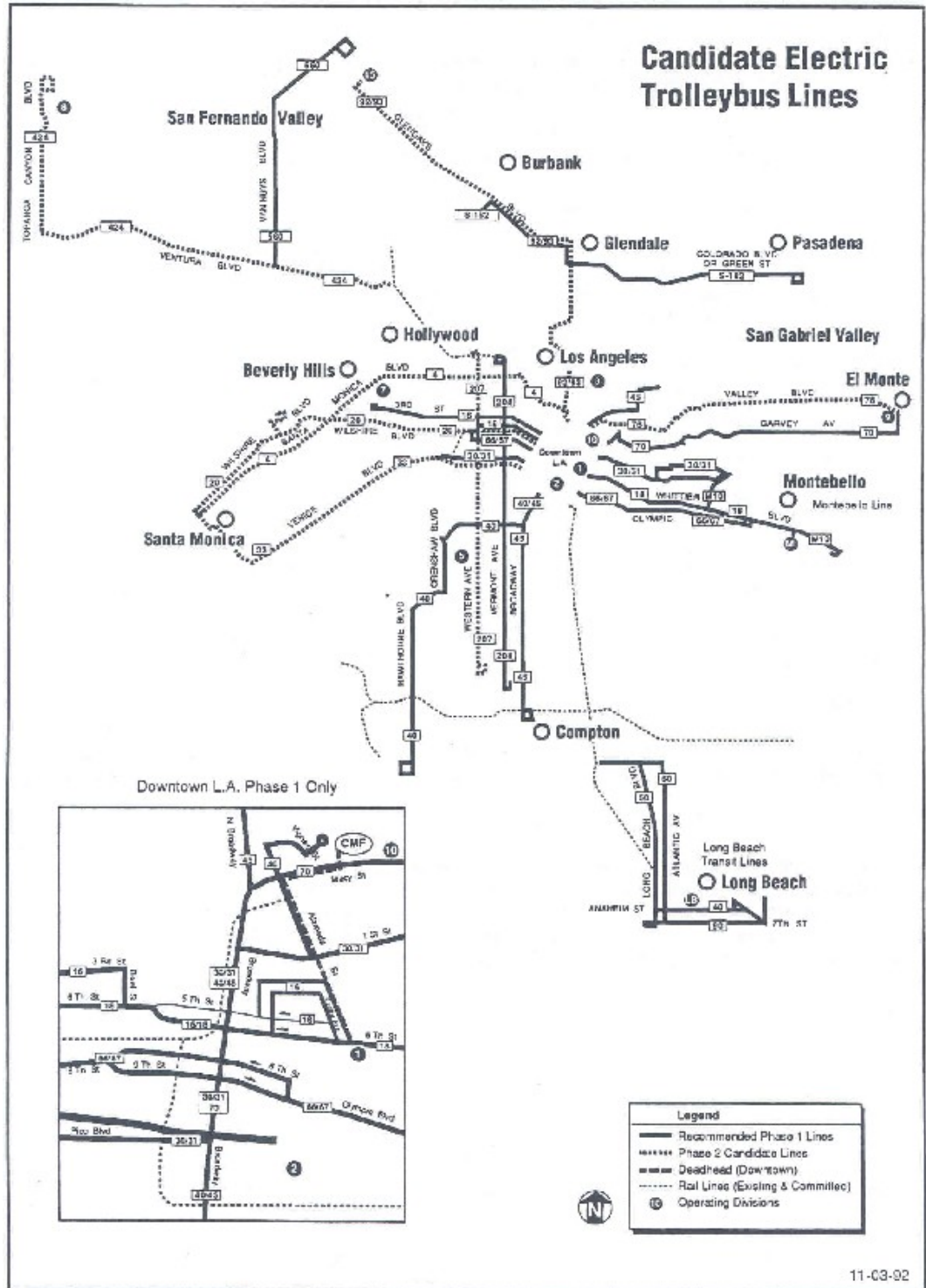


Aerial View of 5th and Figueroa St. Station Showing Split Alignment



Civic Center Station Looking Northeast to City Hall

An Electric Trolley Bus project was approved in June 1992. The SCRTD and the LACTC, in cooperation with Long Beach Transit and Montebello Bus Lines, proposed to convert up to 19 bus lines, (18 existing and 1 new) to zero-emission electric trolley buses. The EIR addressed 12 bus lines as Phase I of the project. It was intended to reduce noise, pollution, comply with the AQMD's Air Quality Management Plan and improve ride quality for passengers uncomfortable with diesel noise, heat, and pollutants. Total estimated capital cost \$1.1 billion. Funding issues ended the project in December 1993.



City of Los Angeles General Plan - Rail Element (1974)

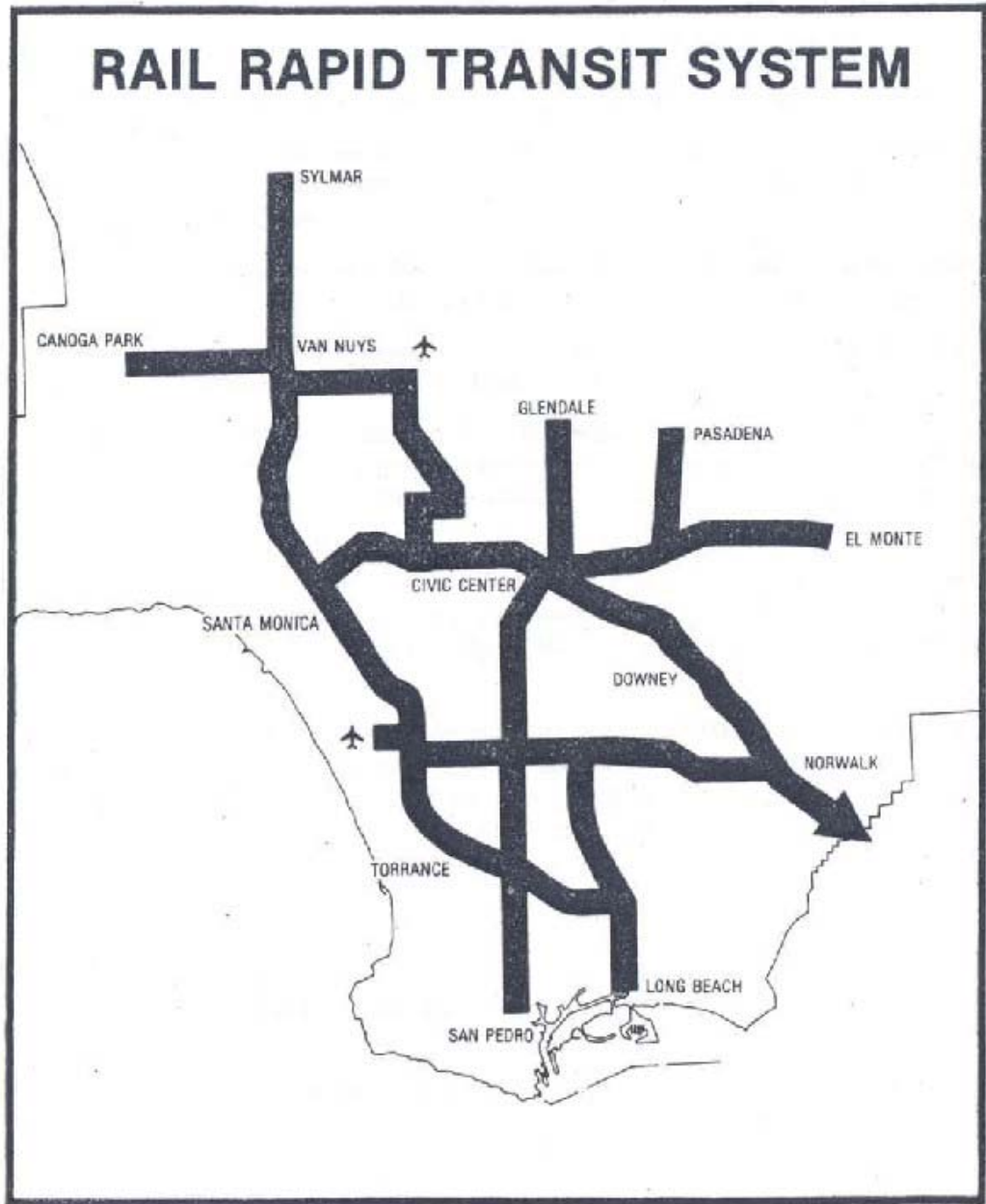
Adopted in 1974, the City of Los Angeles envisioned a low density city with high density housing and commercial development around specific interconnected rail rapid transit hubs identified throughout the city. The Circulation Element of the plan states that "a rapid transit system is essential to the achievement of the General Plan. Such system is to interconnect Centers throughout the city". It goes on to state that the system's features will include operation within its own grade separated right of way, either above or below ground depending on local conditions, and that existing rights of way, including railroads and freeways will be used where ever possible to minimize property acquisitions.

The City's General Plan element was a key blueprint document for SCRTD's 1974 and 1976 rail rapid transit plans, as well as LACTC's Proposition A and C rail rapid transit plans.

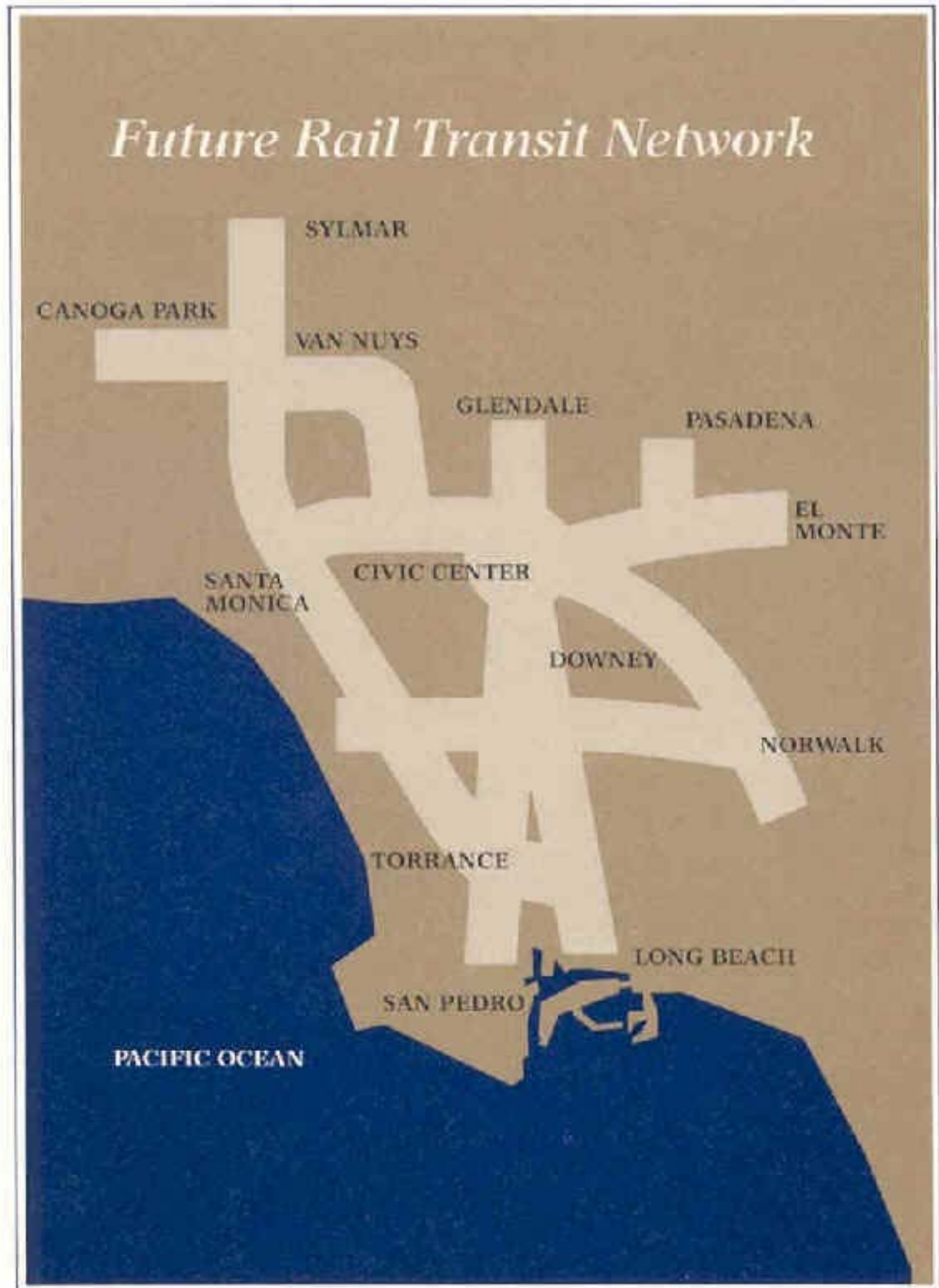


Los Angeles County Transportation Commission (1976-1993)

Created by the State in 1976, the LACTC was given responsibilities for planning, coordination, funding oversight and construction of transit and transportation improvements in Los Angeles County. In 1980, voters finally agreed to invest in mass transit. Map from 1980's Proposition A, Voter Information Materials, Rail Rapid Transit System. The half cent sales tax for transportation was approved by a majority of Los Angeles County voters.



1983 Future Rail Transit Network, from LACTC Annual Report:



This map shows the rail transit corridors which were approved by the voters. It is the new rapid transit plan for Los Angeles.

1990 Los Angeles Metro Rail Plan: A second half cent sales tax initiative for transportation improvements, Proposition C, was approved by Los Angeles County voters in 1990. In contrast with 1980, no map was provided as part of voter information materials. Future rail system maps did appear in Long Range Plans and in other agency reports.

Los Angeles County Rail Transit Plan



STATION LOCATIONS

Red Line-Union Station to Hollywood/Vine

1. Union Station
2. 1st St./Hill St. (Civic Center)
3. 5th St./Hill St.
4. 7th St./Flower St.
5. Wilshire Blvd./Alvarado St.
6. Wilshire Blvd./Vermont Ave.
7. Wilshire Blvd./Normandie Ave.
8. Wilshire Blvd./Western Ave.
9. Vermont Ave./Beverly Blvd.
10. Vermont Ave./Santa Monica Blvd.
11. Vermont Ave./Sunset Blvd.
12. Hollywood Blvd./Western Ave.

Blue Line-Long Beach to Los Angeles

13. Hollywood Blvd./Vine St.
14. 7th St./Flower St.
15. Pico Blvd./Flower St.
16. Grand Ave./Washington Blvd.
17. San Pedro St./Washington Blvd.
18. Washington Blvd./Long Beach Ave.
19. Vernon Ave./Long Beach Ave.
20. Stauson Ave./Long Beach Ave.
21. Florence Ave./Graham Ave.
22. Firestone Blvd./Graham Ave.
23. 103rd St./Graham Ave.
24. Imperial Hwy./Wilmington Ave.
25. Compton Blvd./Willowbrook Ave.

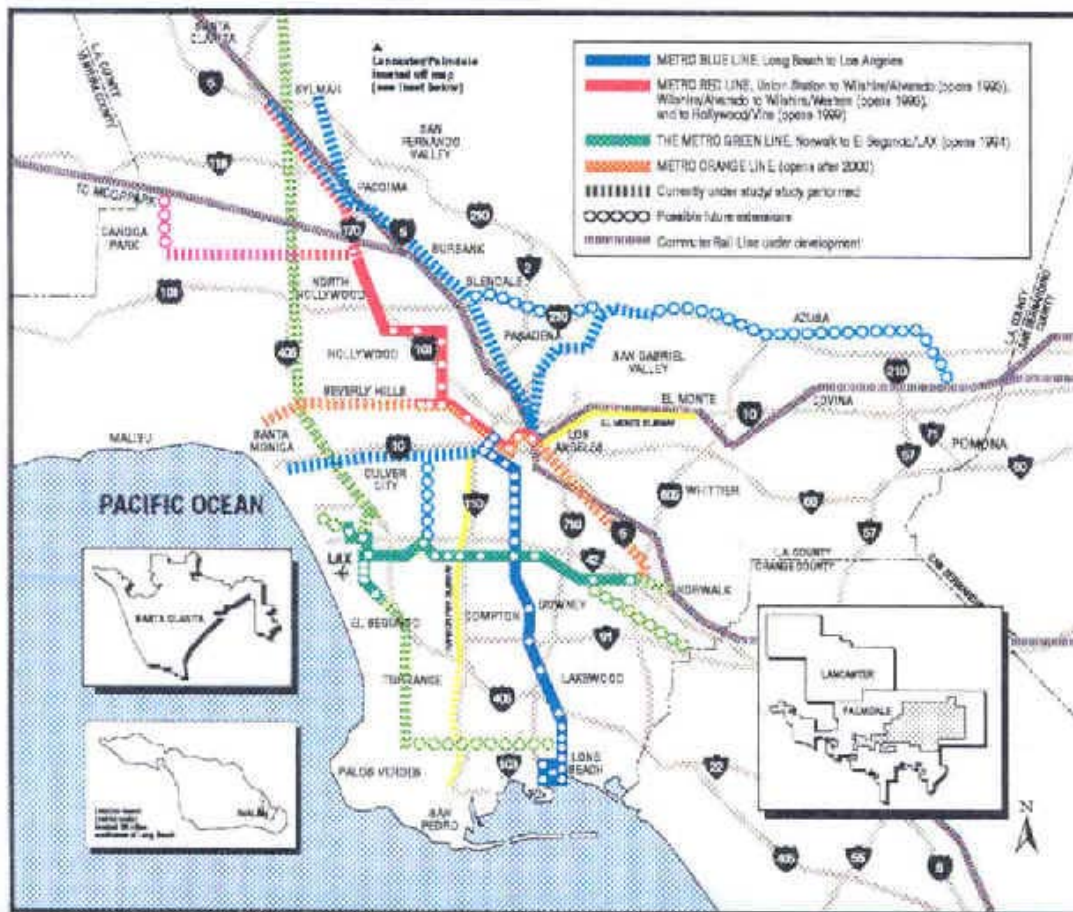
26. Artesia Blvd./Acacia St.
27. Del Amo Blvd./Santa Fe Ave.
28. Wardlow Rd./Pacific Ave.
29. Willow St./Long Beach Blvd.
30. Pacific Coast Hwy./Long Beach Blvd.
31. Anaheim St./Long Beach Blvd.
32. 5th St./Long Beach Blvd.
33. 1st St./Long Beach Blvd.
34. 1st St./Pine Ave.
35. 5th St./Pacific Ave.

Green Line-Norwalk to El Segundo

36. Studebaker Rd./605 Fwy.
37. Lakewood Blvd./Imperial Hwy.
38. Long Beach Blvd./Imperial Hwy.

39. Imperial Hwy./Wilmington Ave.
40. Avalon Blvd./117th St.
41. 110 Fwy.(Harbor Fwy.)/117th St.
42. Vermont Blvd./117th St.
43. Crenshaw Blvd./119th St.
44. Hawthorne Blvd./111th St.
45. Aviation Blvd./Imperial Hwy.
46. Mariposa Ave./Nash St.
47. El Segundo Blvd./Nash St.
48. Douglas St.
49. Freeman Ave.

1992 400-Mile Metro Rail Plan (Heavy Rail Subway, Light Rail lines and Commuter Rail): 30 year plan, projected cost of \$55.6 billion. Note that the westward extension of the Metro Red Line was called the Metro Orange Line from 1990-1992.



Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (1993-Present)

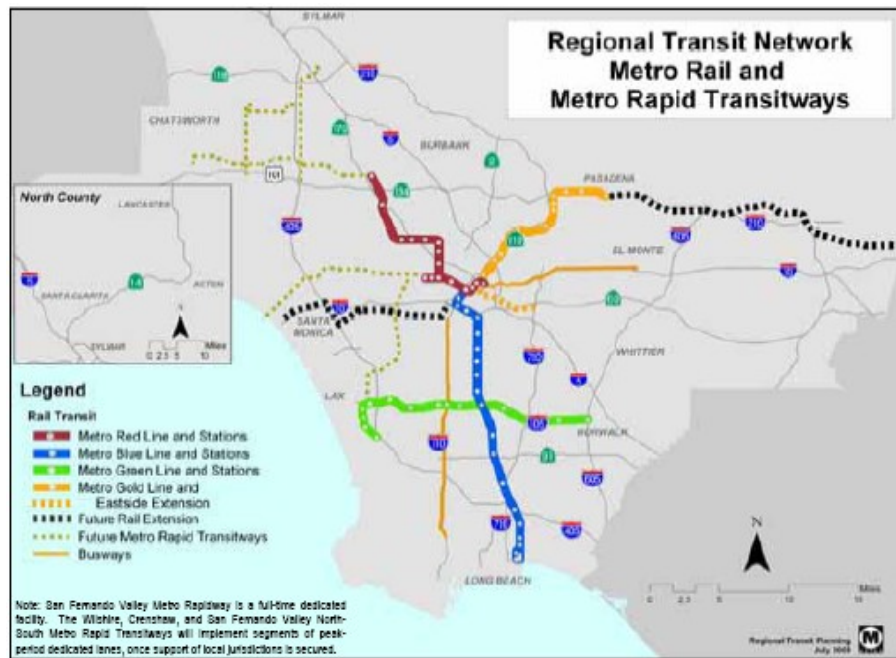
In 1993 the State implemented a merger of the SCRTD and LACTC to form the current organization, the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority.

After many years of planning, urban rail finally returned to Los Angeles. The first rail line that opened happened to be along the same route as the last one that was closed in 1961. The Long Beach-Los Angeles Metro Blue Line opened in 1990, followed by the Metro Red Line Segment 1 in 1993, Metro Green Line in 1995, Metro Red Line Segment 2a in 1996, Metro Red Line Segment 2b in 1999 and Metro Red Line Segment 3 in 2000. The Metro Gold Line opened in 2003, followed by the Metro Orange Line in 2005. The Eastside extension of the Pasadena Gold Line is under construction and scheduled to open in 2009, followed by the Metro Exposition Line scheduled to open in 2010.

Map from the 2003 Short Range Transportation Plan, Regional Transit Network:



2003 Short Range Transportation Plan, Metro Rail and Metro Rapid:



2003 Short Range Transportation Plan, Local Bus Service:



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