THE SUNSET COAST LINE

THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY

PETE SCHABARUM

APRIL 1976

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
856 HALL OF ADMINISTRATION / LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90012

(213) 974-4111

PETER F. SCHABARUM
SUPERVISOR, FIRST DISTRICT

TO THE PEOPLE OF LOS ANGELES COUNTY:

The Sunset Coast Line is no more than a concerted effort by one Supervisor, Baxter Ward, to seek voter approval of a SALES TAX INCREASE to do what the voters have already turned down twice.

The people of Los Angeles County have already turned down rail transit proposals similar to the Sunset Coast Line. Baxter Ward would have the public believe that the proposals were defeated almost single-handedly by myself. As much as I might like to take credit for the good judgment of the electorate, I cannot, because experience has proven to me that the people have wisdom and demand responsible programs. They express that wisdom by how they vote, and I am confident they will vote "No" on Propositions R and T.

In my opinion, the Board of Directors of the Rapid Transit District has blatantly abused its legislative mandate in placing this measure before the voters. This proposal, Propositions R and T, offers no alternatives, no new technology, no interim transit improvements, no flexibility in alignments, no cost benefits and no sense. For Baxter Ward to browbeat the taxpayers into approving such a proposal is unconscionable.

A close examination will reveal the Sunset Coast Line to be nothing more than an ill-conceived fraud to lead the voters into an unnecessary long-term financial commitment.

I, for one, cannot support the proposal or the sales tax increase necessary to finance it, and will work vigorously for the defeat of Propositions R and T.

Attached are my analysis of the proposal and my objections to it.

Sincerely yours,

Peter Schabarum

PETE SCHABARUM
Supervisor, First District

PS:lel
Att.

Recently, . . . a deputy to L.A. County Supervisor Baxter Ward, confided to me that neither he nor the supervisor puts much faith in ridership projections and use studies, and that their proposed $7.5 billion L.A. rapid transit system had been planned not on the basis of any such studies, but rather on their "instincts," their "hunches" and their "gut feelings."

Seven and one-half billion dollars of taxpayers' money is riding on a gut feeling.

It's a hell of a way to run a railroad.

John Pashdag
Motor Trend Magazine
March '76

INTRODUCTION

On the June 8th ballot, will be two companion tax measures. They are Propositions R and T. Each calls for a one-half cent increase in the sales tax within the transit district.

In examining the specifics in the proposal for the Sunset Coast Line several factors need be considered.

1. The only documents from which to work are the glossy proposal published by Supervisor Ward and the financial and sequencing supplements issued in March.

2. The original proposal changed a number of times as it received greater and greater public attention.

3. In spite of all public pronouncements, only those provisions which are guaranteed are those called for in the ordinances adopted by the Board of Directors.

In every sense, the specifics of the Sunset Coast Line have been reduced to 26 pages of legal language. It is in those pages that the shortcomings of the system first appear. The following includes summaries of the provisions of the ordinances, my comments on the political judgements made in piecing together the system, criticisms of the technical aspects and several observations on the problems inherent with rail systems in general.

It is intended that this document serve as a leveling influence on those who may be overcome with exuberance at the prospect of raising taxes for the Sunset Coast Line.

Section I - Sets District policy to create a Sunset Coast Line of approximately 232 miles to be constructed primarily above ground on existing rights of way, funded by a one-cent sales tax.

Section II - Makes the two measures companion measures and stipulates that voters must approve both to be effective.

Section III - Sets forth Board policy in operating the system.

1. Names it Sunset Coast Line--calls specifically for rail mass transit system.

2. Shall comply with map attached.

3. Shall provide direct service to the cities as listed.

4. States that Board will cooperate with cities to determine station stops subject to Board approval. Stations to be 2-1/2 miles apart--closer if justified. Disputes subject to binding arbitration.

5. Board to determine cost of stations. Cities to participate in architectural criteria. Differences in cost to be borne by the city.

6. System shall use freeways, flood control, and railroad rights of way. Other rights of way may be used if desirable.

7. System shall be on or above ground except for topographical for geological conditions. Subway costs in excess of aerial costs are to be borne by the city unless the Board finds that subway desirable.

8. Board to provide reasonable junction for connection with Orange County transit district. Board retains discretion in the event of disagreement.

9. Board and L. A. County to negotiate a contract to administer design and construction of the system. County to act on Board's behalf in letting contracts for construction, pre-construction materials, supplies, right of way, etc. County's cost of administration to be reimbursed. Should County elect not to participate, the Board may seek alternate services, public or private.

10. Sequencing program with equal first priorities as airporter line, Long Beach, San Fernando Valley, San Gabriel Valley-Pomona, Santa Monica-Union Station, South Bay. Phasing of construction to be fair and equitable throughout the district.

11. Board to allocate funds to support Federal grant application for starter line.

12. District shall seek maximum Federal and State funds for financing project. Should funds become available for additional transportation systems, the district may allocate sales tax funds as matching funds.

13. Permits district to proceed inedpendently in order to obtain any available matching funds.

Section IV - SETS FORTH THE PROPOSED SPECIAL TAX WHICH MAY BE USED FOR EITHER PAY-AS-YOU-GO FINANCING OR UNITED TAX BONDS OR IF PERMITTED BY LAW FOR MAINTENANCE AND OPERATION OF THE SYSTEM AND FACILITIES

Section V -

Ordinance I

1. Calls for special tax for capital financing and all costs connected therewith.

2. Special tax to be a sales tax not to exceed one-half percent.

Ordinance II

1. Calls for special tax for capital financing and maintenance and operation of the system and all costs associated therewith.

2. SPECIAL TAX TO BE A SALES TAX NOT TO EXCEED ONE HALF PERCENT SHALL BE IN EFFECT UNTIL REPEALED. MAY NOT BE REPEALED UNTIL ALL OUTSTANDING BONDS ARE PAID. REVENUE TO BE USED FOR PAY-AS-YOU-GO OR BONDS OR FOR MAINTENANCE AND OPERATIONS.

3. Tax may be used for capital facilities or may be expended for maintenance and operation of mass transit guideway system.

4. Must have majority of votes to take effect.

Sections VI, VII & VIII - Set forth the election date and specify ballot wording.

THE TECHNICAL ASPECTS

From a technical standpoint the Sunset Coast Line has been criticized by the following organizations:

1. De Leuw, Cather and Company, Gruen Associates, Mobility Systems, and Stanford Research Institute as consultants to the Rapid Transit District.

2. The City of Los Angeles by City Planner Calvin Hamilton, City Engineer Don Tillman and City Traffic Engineer S. S. (Sam) Taylor.

3. The Chief Administrative Officer and Road Commissioner for the County of Los Angeles.

4. The Legislative Analyst for the State Legislature, A. Alan Post.

5. Numerous individuals and organizations such as the Southern California Transportation Action Committee, the City of Burbank, the Coalition for Instant Transit, the Transit Research Foundation of Los Angeles, the Southern California Association of Governments, the Automobile Club, Libertarian Party and others.

It is worthwhile to point out that the consultants agree, almost unanimously, on several glaring deficiencies in the proposal.

1. The lack of patronage estimates required to determine the revenue to be expected or even the necessity for rail on the routes.

2. Underestimated capital costs and virtually no reliable operating cost estimates.

3. Complete lack of flexibility by stipulating "rail" transit and not allowing for less costly and more efficient transportation modes.

4. Segments on freeway right of way (81 percent of the proposed system) do not conveniently serve existing major centers of population and employment.

5. Freeway construction will slow freeway speeds to 35 mph on up to 40 miles of freeway at any given time.

6. No improvements are provided for in the existing bus system during and after construction of the rail system.

7. Air pollution will not be noticeably reduced.

8. The one cent sales tax differential may contribute to a tax induced sales migration with respect to large cost items in shopping goods.

9. Energy savings will be minimal or non-existent.

IN SIMPLE TERMS, THE VOTERS ARE BEING ASKED TO RAISE THE SALES TAX TO SEVEN PERCENT, THE HIGHEST IN THE STATE--SECOND ONLY TO NEW YORK NATIONALLY--FOR AN UNDETERMINED PERIOD OF TIME, TO CONSTRUCT AND OPERATE A RAIL TRANSIT SYSTEM OF UNDETERMINED COST, TO BE USED BY AN UNDETERMINED NUMBER OF PEOPLE, CREATING A MULTITUDE OF URBAN AND SUBURBAN DEVELOPMENT PROBLEMS.

The Sunset Coast Line, in today's dollars, is estimated at $5.6 billion. But the system, as proposed, isn't going to be built today. It will be built on a pay-as-you-go or limited-bonding basis over an estimated 30-year construction period. After the first 8 years, a greater and greater portion of the tax revenues will go toward operating costs, thus reducing the funds available for construction.

The cumulative total raised by the tax over 30 years is $13.8 billion.

Presumably, it will all be spent.

The real cost then is $13.8 billion, not $5.6 billion.

One caveat from the legislative analyst's office indicates that this unusually high tax rate in Los Angeles County could preclude the legislature from raising sales taxes to answer the pressing education questions raised in the Serrano vs. Priest decision. The only other broad based tax available to the legislature would be the income tax.

AN UNDETERMINED PERIOD OF TIME

The proposal calls for a 30-year construction period. Safe--presuming no lawsuits are filed, construction delays are not encountered, there are no strikes, environmental impact reports are approved on time, and materials and supplies are readily available.

But, not very likely. BART in San Francisco opened its 71-mile system ten years after the voters approved it and 40 percent over budget. WMATA in Washington, D.C. opened 4.2 miles of system three years behind schedule and $2 billion over budget.

Similar delays have been experienced nationwide. To assume Los Angeles would be any different is foolhardy. The flexibility to use technologies other than rail might alleviate some of these problems. But that flexibility is not included in the plan.

A TRANSIT SYSTEM OF UNDETERMINED COST

If no delays are encountered, the financial supplement to the Sunset Coast Line indicates that of the $13.2 billion raised, $1.2 billion will be used to subsidize the system. The remainder will be available for construction. This presumes that the first operating subsidy will not be required until 1997 when 187 miles of the system are in operation. Even then only a $12 million deficit is projected.

Toronto operates 26 miles of its system at a deficit of $37 million.

New York City operates 734 miles at a $500 million deficit.

Chicago operates 246 miles of system at a $100 million deficit and San Francisco operates 71 miles of system at a $31 million deficit.

To assume only $12 million of deficit for 187 miles of system by 1997 is unsubstantiated.

The result is: as the operating subsidy requirements chew up the tax revenue, the funds available for construction decrease and force the construction period beyond the projected 30 years; perhaps beyond lifetimes.

An analogy could be drawn between this proposal and the construction of our highway system.

Although it is a little more equitably funded, with a user tax rather than a transaction tax, the rising costs of labor and maintenance have outdistanced the funding estimates to construct and maintain the system.

In short, there are no funds to complete the highway system and unless the gasoline tax is raised at least another two cents, maintenance funds will also run out.

Extrapolating similar future funding requirements to the Sunset Coast Line is not unreasonable.

It happened at BART in 1969. The legislature had to grant a 1/2-cent sales tax increase to finance the completion of the system. Additionally, BART has available its own property tax rate to finance its system.

Both of which would be unsatisfactory to taxpayers in Los Angeles County.

The best guess on the number of trips per day is 900,000. This is the same figure estimated by the consultants in 1974.

It was also estimated that more people would ride the bus system than would ride the rail system (about one million per day).

By comparison, 500,000 of the 3.4 million people in Chicago use the 246 mile system; 709,000 of the 2.2 million people in Toronto use their 26 mile system, and 120,000 of the 4 million residents of Philadelphia use their railroads.

It is unreal to assume that significant numbers of people will leave their cars and ride rapid transit. This has certainly not been the case in San Francisco where the BART transbay tube was constructed to alleviate congestion on the Bay Bridge. The effect has been to reduce traffic on the bridge only two percent.

The Sunset Coast Line would locate most stations on freeways. It would also require passengers to drive their cars to the station. Since rail travel times are not competitive with the auto, no real incentives exist to utilize the system.

CREATING A MULTITUDE OF COMMUNITY PROBLEMS

Great care will have to be given to community goals when selecting station sites.

One overlooked impact, one which is certainly a home rule issue, is the question of zoning and the impact of the Sunset Coast Line on land use planning.

Too little public thought has been given to population shifts that might occur in areas just outside of Los Angeles County due to the one-cent tax differential or the desire to seek a less urbanized area.

Congestion and parking problems are an element to be addressed as well when selecting station sites. The Sunset Coast Line calls for the cities to provide the park and ride lots necessary to support the system and presumably the improvements necessary to handle increased traffic and congestion.

Additionally, SCAG indicates that adopted local and regional growth policies call for service to, and growth within, the identified urban centers. Since the Sunset Coast Line serves so few of these centers, growth is likely to be redirected to the stations.

Also, the extended construction time frame may induce growth around the stations.

This could create problems of heavy pressure for re-zoning around local stations which may be located in residential areas for the convenience of the commuters.

This density is seen in skyline photographs along the Toronto subway where concentrated growth and high rise can be pinpointed at each station location.

A CONTRACT WITH THE PEOPLE

The Sunset Coast Line was designed with one intent: to provide enough routes serving enough different cities and enough people to gain passage at the polls. Unfortunately, all sound planning principles were ignored and the entire proposal was colored by the author's desire for only one kind of technology -- steel wheel on steel rail--trains.

In order to market the proposal to the people, a contract with the people was devised. Certain guarantees were made to assure that the people would receive exactly what they voted for.

However, as the professional and political scrutiny began, concessions were made which eroded the guarantees in order to broaden political support.

The author's market plan calls for pay-as-you-go financing. Yet, the ordinance establishing the system permits limited tax bonding.

The ordinance calls specifically for a "rail" system. It has no flexibility built in should there be technological advances or less costly service methods discovered.

The sales pitch says cities will be permitted to select station sites themselves. The ordinance says if the District disagrees, both parties will have to go to binding arbitration. Additionally, cities will be required to pay for parking, street and traffic improvements and station embellishments.

And, there is a "boiler plate" clause in the ordinance which says if things don't go the way the Board wants, they may proceed in whatever fashion they please.

The result has been a politically and technically unsound proposal:

--It will not eliminate congestion.

--It calls for the most costly of all possible transit modes.

--It necessitates a sales tax increase.

--It has no flexibility and is being presented to the public as something for everybody. But rapid transit isn't for everyone and should not be promoted as such. In fact, serious questions must be raised about the expenditure of such massive amounts of public funds for a system offering so much to so few.

PROBLEMS INHERENT IN RAIL SYSTEMS

It is extremely difficult to make proper choices for major transportation investments in the light of present economic uncertainties. There is a grave risk in investing funds in a system that may not meet local transportation needs.

Future options will be foreclosed by a major commitment to rail transit. In fact, there is no evidence that a rail system will meet our transportation needs.

The availability of funding and incremental decision-making with thorough alternative analysis would provide the ideal atmosphere for transportation planning and implementation.

Unfortunately, Propositions R and T provide only a blank check for a "rail" system.

Rail is labor intensive and undesirable due to its operating cost requirements. "The original idea was that a work force of 1,200 would handle 200,000 riders daily. Today's work force is 2,000. The number of passengers is 125,000." (13 B-2)*

In addition to the very high operating costs incurred by fixed rail systems, the patronage counts and projections fall short of the level required, at any fare, to pay for the system.

The Los Angeles County Road Department's analysis of the 1974 transit proposal stated maximum peak hour patronage along the Wilshire Corridor was projected to be in the range of 16,000 to 22,000 persons per hour. These transit volumes can be handled on all-bus transit systems. (5, 10) *

Cal Trans concurred that the realistic estimates which were the lower range figures (25,000 passengers) per hour could be handled by a medium capacity system, not the heavy rail anticipated (1, IV - II). *

Finally, the one major factor, travel time, which would attract riders from their cars into rapid transit was not competitive in the 1974 proposal.

Gruen Associates projected . . . peak period travel times from downtown Los Angeles in 1990 to show that auto travel times were significantly better than rail transit for most locations. This was so, even though the comparison was made assuming a low level of investment in future highways and a seven-corridor, 175-mile rail transit network was operational. (14, 26)*

Cal Trans concurred with Gruen in their analysis and indicated that only the relatively small number of persons who live very close to a transit station and work very close to a transit station would receive improved travel times.

Those persons using the present bus transit system in Los Angeles County would receive only a slight improvement in travel time. (1, IV - 17)*

* See Bibliography

Unfortunately, this same problem will serve to make the Sunset Coast Line less attractive than auto travel. The result will be lower patronage and greater subsidy requirements.

Personal security of people using rail transit is another factor to be considered.

Rail transit systems throughout the nation have had a considerable problem in insuring personal security of passengers. SCAG reports, "Transit related security and safety problems will continue to increase as transit development and usage becomes a greater part of our life styles." (15, 4) *

They will also add to operating costs and tend to reduce patronage. This is readily apparent in New York where the transit systems security force is the fifth largest police force in the country.

One argument often put forth in support of rapid transit is the energy savings to be realized.

This is an attractive approach until one looks at the Washington, D.C. rail system.

The Federal Energy Administration reports that it is one of the most expensive methods for conserving fuel today: "This system costs the equivalent of $247 per barrel of oil saved. Developing solar energy will probably cost about $30 per barrel of oil saved while improving the energy efficiency of the automobile by 40 percent could cost as little as $2.50 per barrel of oil saved." (3, -) *

The Los Angeles Department of Water and Power reports that a new electric power generation plant would be required to meet the increased demands brought about by the Sunset Coast Line. (16, 6) *

The experience at BART has indicated that not only is energy not being saved but an increase in energy may be experienced. "BART's impact on the community in stimulating growth may very well add more automobile trips than it replaces, and it may very well lead to a net increase in energy use." (4, 39)*

Even Cal Trans' analysis of the 1974 RTD proposal revealed that if constructed, the SCRTD "goal" of about 250 miles of rail transit could save about 8 trillion BTU of energy per year in 1990. "This represents a reduction of about 1.4 percent in total transportation energy expended in Los Angeles County in the year 1990." (1, V -2) *

Additionally, the Federal Energy Administration concluded in its study of the energy conservation of mass transit that, "It is important . . . to ensure that arguments for further major transit expenditures be carefully evaluated before committing the required public funds in the name of energy conservation, especially when less costly measures to achieve the same results are available to national, state, and local governments." (2. 5)*

* See Bibliography

As mass transit should not be marketed on its energy saving potential nor should it be promoted for its potential improvement of air quality, Rand Corporation was commissioned by SCAG to develop a transportation control strategy for the Los Angeles Air Quality Control Region to satisfy EPA air quality standards and to formulate an Energy Conservation Action Plan as required by the U. S. Department of Transportation.

This study showed that the most promising means of improving air quality is through technological improvements reducing pollutant emissions at the source . . . Reduction in auto vehicle miles would have to be substantial to effect significant decreases in hydrocarbons, e.g., vehicle-mile reduction of 50 percent would reduce hydrocarbons only 17 percent. (1, V -2)*

A "vehicle miles traveled" reduction of this magnitude has not been experienced in any other major city in the County.

One very significant and positive argument in favor of a long-time commitment to rapid transit has always been the jobs to be created and the ensuing benefits to the local economy.

Unfortunately, employment opportunities for low income and transit dependent populations during the construction phase of rail transit would be low.

It appears probable that if past patterns prevail, those individuals who most need employment are the least likely to be employed in the construction phase.

Once the system is operational, employment opportunities are not expected to be greatly improved. It is true that some employment opportunities will become available to South Central residents within the CBD (Central Business District) as a result of MRT (mass rapid transit). But given that the majority of these individuals currently work within South Central Los Angeles and their skill levels do not match well with the skill needs of the CBD, positive employment impacts for them are likely to be minimal. (10, 1 & 13)*

Peter Gordon, professor in the Business and Economics Department at the University of California, adds that economic and cost consequences of investing funds in rail transit should be thoroughly considered to insure the wisest use of scarce transportation funds. The regional economy will suffer to the extent that congestion occurs if highway improvements are delayed resulting from funds being diverted to rail transit purposes. An equivalent investment for highways would result in creation of more jobs and greater stimulation to the general economy. (8, -)* This is borne out by Baltimore's estimate that $1 million worth of rail construction will create 77 jobs whereas FHWA estimates $1 million worth of highway construction creates 126 jobs. If the desire is to create jobs, then the answer is highways and not transit.

* See Bibliography

Frequent attempts are made to compare Los Angeles with cities throughout the nation which now have rail transit. Such comparisons should be made with caution since each city is unique. The higher density of land use and higher concentration of employment in cities having rail transit is more conducive to being served by rail transit than low density, spread-out Los Angeles.

With respect to the objective of shifting people from cars to mass transit, a rail system offers no advantage over buses when added to our currently existing regional network. (11, 3)*

Finally, if rapid transit systems could centralize urban patterns, they could only contribute perversely to the solution of traffic congestion. No solution to the problem can be effective as long as a disproportionate amount of economic activity is located in a small area.

From the point of view of public policy, governmental units should devote themselves to endeavoring to secure dispersal of economic activity so widely about the metropolitan area that the pendulum movements of persons into a central business district in the morning and out at night, which freeways serve imperfectly, is replaced by a pattern in which traffic goes off in all directions about the freeway system. (9, 392) *

In conclusion, one moral of all this is that California communities, which grew up in an automobile age, apparently cannot easily be served by a rapid transit system modeled after those of eastern communities that developed in a horse-and-buggy age of high population density. Another moral is that trying to do an impossible job tends to be impossibly expensive. (13, B-2) *

Rapid transit would be one of the most misguided public investments the citizens of Los Angeles County could undertake. Los Angeles is a decentralized area to the extreme and has, therefore, none of the conditions essential for a successful rapid transit system. (12, D-1)*

It is clear that rail transit offers Los Angeles very little over more mundane systems such as an all-bus mass transit system in people-moving ability, attractiveness to riders, smog-reduction, service to the carless, or any other absolute criterion of performance.

In considering whether we can really invest billions in rail transit for the sake of creating a new image, we must recognize that financial and fiscal responsibility can be an important part of an image too, and that the Big Apple is now mentioned much less frequently than the Big MAC (McDonald's Hamburger).

We cannot afford the luxury of a rail transit system in Los Angeles primarily because it offers no transportation service advantages over the much less costly options provided by an all-bus transit system (11, 2)*

* See Bibliography

This is not to say that short segments of mass transit may not be desirable in the future. Even Federal transportation Secretary Breneger said in June of 1974 that Los Angeles should consider only about 50 miles of rail and make better use of its extensive freeway and street systems.

Ultimately, however, the blinding glint of sleek rapid transit cars will tarnish to the point that leaders and planners alike will be able to see that rail transit is a thing of the past and should be relegated to plywood boards in dens and garages.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. California Department of Transportation, Business and Transportation Agency, Evaluation, May 31, 1974.

2. Federal Energy Administration, Mass Transit and Energy Conservation, March 1975.

3. Speech by Roger Sant, Assistant Administrator for Conservation and Environment, U.S. Federal Energy Administration, to the Southern California Association of Governments, September 18, 1975.

4. Healty, Timothy J., University of Santa Clara, Energy Requirements of the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) System, November 28, 1973.

5. County of Los Angeles Road Department, Evaluation of SCRTD Consultant Phase III Recommendations for Near-Term and Long-Range Public Transportation in the Los Angeles Basin, June, 1974.

6. U.S. Department of Transportation, Evaluation of Rail Rapid Transit and Express Bus Service in the Urban Commuter Market, October, 1973.

7. Marcuse, Peter, School of Architecture and Urban Planning, University of California, Los Angeles, Mass Transit for the Few: Lessons From Los Angeles, April 1, 1975.

8. Interview with Peter Gordon, Professor, Business and Economics Department, University of California, January 19, 1976.

9. The Eno Foundation for Highway Traffic Control, Traffic Quarterly, Hilton, George, Professor, University of California, Los Angeles, "Rail Transit and the Pattern of Modern Cities: The California Case," July, 1967.

10. Little, Arthur D., Inc., Selected Community Impact Analyses of the Proposed Rapid Transit Program, May 21, 1974.

11. Wachs, Martin, University of California, Los Angeles, The Case For Bus Rapid Transit in Los Angeles, November, 1975.

12. Scott, Perry, City Manager, City of Santa Monica, The Rapid Transit District Proposes $2,500,000,000 System to Serve Only 3.2% of Total Trips, Hilton, George, Professor, Economics Department, University of California, Los Angeles,"Forces for Diffusion," September, 1968.

13. Long Beach Independent Press Telegram, October 27, 1975.

14. Victor Gruen Associates, Transportation Plan Evaluation Process, July, 1973.

15. Southern California Association of Governments, Summary Report Transit Safety and Security.

16. City of Los Angeles, Analysis of Sunset Coart Line, February 26, 1976.

SUMMARY OF RTD CONSULTANTS

CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE SUNSET COAST LINE

From the Consultants

Technically DeLeuw, Cather & Company

1. The service characteristics of the proposed interurban trains cannot be realized on the system as described. Parallel trackage or offline stations are required to permit the interurban trains to bypass local trains and thereby gain the desired enhancement in travel time.

2. The location of stations on lines constructed within freeway right-of-way creates special passenger, automobile and bus access problems.

3. Guideway interchanges required to provide access from one line to another are complex multi-tiered structures. Colocation of guideway interchanges with freeway interchanges will result in structures of great complexity, large costs and considerable environmental and community impact.

4. During the construction period the existing freeway lanes would be relocated and narrowed thereby reducing automobile speeds to the 30 mph range. This is likely to be one of the large impacts of the proposed construction program.

5. A project timetable of sixteen years is more realistic than the proposal's twelve years. This timetable assumes no financing limitations, full availability of all required resources and no undue litigation or jurisdictional delays.

6. The use of hybrid gas turbine/electric vehicles will entail unwarranted additional costs in technological complexity.

7. The specification of fifteen different, unconnected feeder systems would lead to unnecessary replication of service facilities, operating and maintenance staffs with different skills and limitations of service reliability.

Capital Costs DeLeuw, Cather & Company

1a. The capital costs have been underestimated by some 40 percent. The underestimate is due to the assumed lower costs for guideway construction in freeway, to the assumed lower costs of the construction of the interchanges and to the assumed low contingency factor.

Operations De Leuw, Cather & Company

1b. The operating costs stated in the proposal appear to be underestimated by 30-40 percent.

Socio-Economic, Environmental and Planning Analysis Gruen

Service Coverage

1c. Certain lines will probably carry a high level of patronage, while others may capture only a very low level of patronage.

2c. Without having line-by-line patronage estimates, it is still possible to suggest an alternative which could perhaps help overcome this dilemma. Such an alternative might be to keep the same geographic coverage but vary the mode and the level of service. The same lines designated in the plan would be followed; but, rather than having all rail transit, bus transit could be utilized on an interim basis until such time as patronage levels justified the more costly investment. Initial costs are reduced, transit service is provided, and the option for upgrading to rail transit service is left open.

Existing Right-of-Way

3c. Those segments of the main lines utilizing existing freeway rights-of-way (81 percent) do not, in general, directly or conveniently serve existing major centers of population and employment.

4c. Careful consideration should be given to those aerial guideways utilizing existing arterials, since impacts could vary significantly, depending on guideway and station locations and design. It can be anticipated that major community opposition, jurisdictional disagreement and environmental controversy would be developed if past experience in other parts of the country is any indication of things to come.

5c. There is a great need to provide all stations with attendants for safety and security of passengers, as well as a security force to constantly patrol the entire SCL system.

6c. Slowdown of traffic will occur, and traffic congestion will develop on the freeways during construction. The construction phasing should be carefully worked out to minimize construction-related traffic disruptions. Up to 40 miles of existing freeways may be involved in construction at a given time.

Air Quality Impact

7c. For Los Angeles County it is estimated that daily mobile source emissions would be reduced by about five percent. The solution of our regional air quality problem can best be achieved by control at the emission source (e.g., automobiles, power plants, and other stationary sources).

Jobs

8c. The flow of money equivalent to that generated by a one-cent sales tax would normally have created jobs in other sectors of the economy in Los Angeles County, not related to the construction and transit-vehicle manufacturing industries, such as in consumer goods, housing, etc. In addition, certain new jobs to be created by the SCL construction may go outside Los Angeles County, specifically, those jobs related to manufacturing transit vehicles.

Sales Tax Differential

9c. The one cent sales tax rate differential may affect the purchasing pattern of consumers in border communities inside and outside of the Los Angeles County boundary. This would probably not affect the sales of convenience goods. However, it may contribute to a tax-induced sales migration with respect to large cost items in shopping goods (such as automobiles, heavy appliances, etc.).

Flexibility

10c. The period of 15 years does not leave time for contingencies such as environmental impact report clearance, workable construction phasing, litigations, and strikes.

Feasibility Mobility Systems and Equipment Company

Gridway Construction

1d. Interline rail junctions appear to be difficult and costly. The use of rail junctions should be weighed against the possibility of straight through lines with a dual level station for transfer.

Vehicle Costs

2d. Rough estimates of cost indicate that this is higher than the cost stated in the S.C.I. proposal.

Shops and Yards.

3d. Based on the data in the S. C. I. proposal, it appears that at least sixteen miles of track are required just for storage of the vehicles. Even with high utilization factors, this would require about forty acres just for storage.

Financial Analysis Stanford Research Institute

1e. a. The system as proposed could not be financed in a 15-year period.
b. Financial constraints would require a period of up to 35 years to complete the system, under the 1% sales tax and assumptions used in our analysis. It would involve a construction cost of $6.7 billion, expressed in 1976 dollars, and require an outstanding debt of $16 billion by the end of construction in the year 2011.

SUMMARY OF FINANCIALLY FEASIBLE ALTERNATIVES

	Full System		Modified System	
Sales Tax Rate	1%	1 1/2%	1%	1 1/4%
Miles	281	281	244	244
Years	35	19	24	18
Construction Cost in 1976 Dollars	$6.7 bn.	$6.7 bn.	$5.7 bn.	$5.7 bn.
Debt at end of Construction	$16 bn.	$4.2 bn.	$6.7 bn.	$4.2 bn.

In an effort to alleviate many of the problems encountered in this proposal, the consultants have recommended numerous construction, design, service and financing alternatives. Unfortunately, the questions that were not addressed by the consultants are probably the most important. For example, is such an extensive system necessary? Is it practical and are we being realistic in even suggesting it?

In the following section are conclusions taken from numerous transportation studies. This effort is intended to address the "perceived" need for rail transit in Los Angeles.

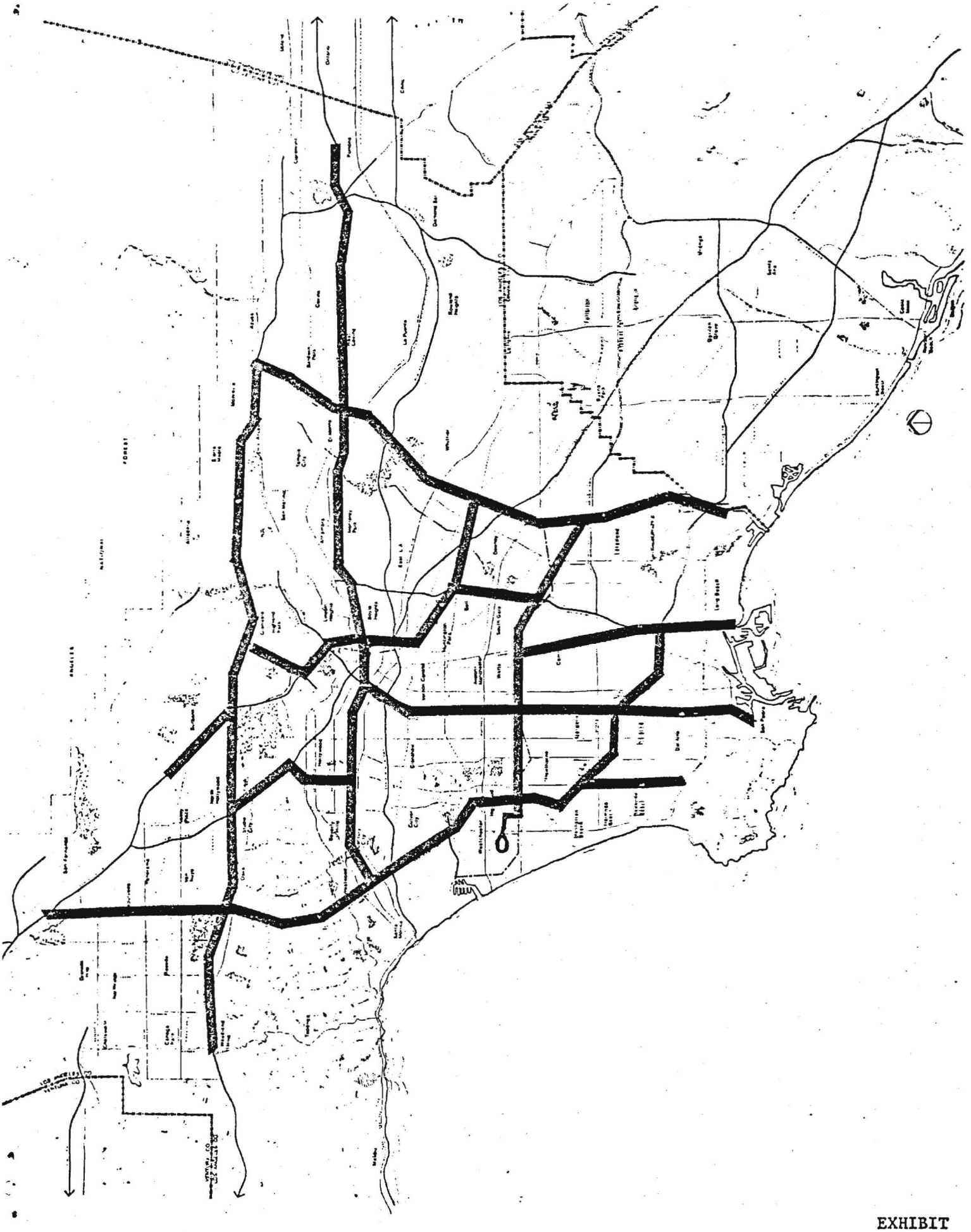

EXHIBIT A