



NEWS

March 28, 1995

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MTA BOARD OF DIRECTORS ADOPTS 20-YEAR TRANSPORTATION PLAN FOR LOS ANGELES COUNTY

A long-range transportation plan for Los Angeles County that presents a balanced mix of rail construction and additional buses and service, while acknowledging the reality of the fiscal constraints facing the agency, was adopted by the MTA Board of Directors March 22.

The cost of the transportation programs outlined in the plan is estimated to be \$72.4 billion. This includes approximately \$67 billion in MTA-planned projects and services, and \$5.4 billion in local return funds. Local return funds are provided through the MTA to Los Angeles County and its 89 cities for local transportation-related projects.

"This plan will be a working document that will be constantly modified and refined," said L.A. County Supervisor Michael Antonovich, MTA's chairman. "Now that we have a vision for the next 20 years in place, the next phase of the plan will be to see how we can identify additional cost savings and more efficient ways of serving the public."

"The plan is not intended to be a perfect plan, nor is it possible to produce a perfect plan," said Glendale City Councilman Larry Zarian, who chaired six public workshops over an eight-month period on the 20-year plan. "Tough choices were required that will not make everyone happy. It does, however, provide a realistic, strategic vision and a balanced approach to the many interests involved in developing an effective transportation system.

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Zarian, the MTA Board's first vice chair and chairman of the Budget, Finance and Efficiency Committee, noted that the plan has been in development since August, 1994, in an open public process. In addition to the public workshops, numerous joint meetings were held of the BF&E Committee and the Planning and Programming Committee, chaired by L.A. County Supervisor Yvonne Brathwaite Burke. In all, MTA held more than 120 briefings conducted by staff to provide ample opportunity for Board member and community comment and direction.

Rail lines, more regional bus service and numerous other traffic mitigation and air quality improvement measures play a major role in the plan, said Franklin White, MTA's chief executive officer.

"The plan is based on the basic premise that county residents will use public transportation if it is safe, convenient, clean, on time, and affordable," White said. "The MTA intends to make sure that the Los Angeles County transportation system is all of these."

Specifically, the plan calls for:

- Maintaining existing revenue sources and aggressively pursuing new ones. The MTA seeks to maintain at least a 50 percent federal contribution to the cost of building its future rail projects.
- Adding 300 buses to the total countywide peak bus fleet; eliminating duplicative bus routes; reallocating transit service in low-ridership areas to high-ridership areas to alleviate overcrowding; and a Mobility Allowance to fund alternative transit services such as SMART shuttles, subscription services, shared-ride taxis, and jitneys.
- Building 279 more miles of high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes and freeway gap closures on freeways and major streets; adding 130 miles of arterial bus lanes on surface streets to improve service; and improving traffic signal synchronization on major thoroughfares.

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- Better identifying customer needs, and implementing programs and services that directly meet those needs. This will be done with market research of transit and non-transit users and improved passenger information systems.
- Using existing rights-of-way to provide lower-cost alternatives, such as railbus technology, in corridors such as Glendale/Burbank and the Pasadena Line extension.
- Promoting changes in commuting behavior by advancing policies such as ridesharing, telecommuting and greater reliance on transit to reduce single-occupancy vehicle use.
- Implementing cost savings measures within the MTA to increase cost-efficient delivery of service and capital projects.
- Continuing to develop Los Angeles County's rail network by opening the Metro Green Line system later this year; completing the Pasadena Line; building a rail line in the San Fernando Valley; and completing the eastern and western extensions of the Red Line.

A list of six additional rail lines has been identified as possible candidates for construction; one or more of these lines could be built in the second decade if necessary funding becomes available. Five of the lines were identified in staff's recommendation. An extension of the east-west San Fernando Valley rail line westward from the I-405 freeway to Warner Center was added to the list.

The Board also adopted the following additions to the 20-year plan:

- No MTA funds will be allocated to the Alameda Corridor Project until MTA is given representation on the Alameda Corridor Transportation Authority (ACTA) Finance Committee. A value engineering review will be conducted to find ways to cut costs.

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- MTA will develop a rail cost containment plan that reports on design and construction savings, potential new revenues, and provides a 20-year operational cost forecast. In addition, MTA staff was directed to prepare a five-year implementation plan for how MTA would apply the savings identified in the cost savings plan. MTA will develop an implementation strategy for the Mobility Allowance program, and coordinate its efforts with SCAG to ensure that the 20-year plan conforms with the Regional Mobility Element.
- MTA will work with the Los Angeles Department of Airports to provide for a rail connection between the Metro Green Line and the LAX central terminal area.
- Caltrans will present its future soundwall programs to the MTA Planning and Programming Committee, to include funding scenarios to accelerate the program in Los Angeles County.
- MTA funds programmed for the I-710 Gap Closure Project will not be released until environmental issues raised by the city of El Sereno and other cities are fully addressed.
- The Canoga right-of-way, which extends from the Chatsworth Metrolink station to Warner Center, will be included in the plan as a study corridor for diesel multiple unit (DMU) rail-bus use.

"Our projections show an estimated 3 million more people will reside in Los Angeles County by the year 2015," said Judith Wilson, MTA Executive Officer for Planning and Programming. "This plan will result in an improved mode split, in terms of transit versus auto use, in the county."

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