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**EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT AND AUDIT COMMITTEE  
MARCH 16, 2006**

**SUBJECT: COLOR DESIGNATIONS**

**ACTION: APPROVE COLOR DESIGNATIONS FOR METRO LINES AND FIXED  
GUIDEWAYS**

**RECOMMENDATION**

Approve the following color designations for Metro Rail and other fixed guideway projects for use in printed and electronic communications materials:

- A. Adopt the color aqua to designate the Metro Rail Mid-City/Exposition Line Rail Transit Project and refer to the project as the Metro Aqua Line,
- B. Adopt the color silver to designate the El Monte expressway, and
- C. Adopt the color bronze to designate the Harbor expressway, and
- D. Adopt the color purple to designate the Union Station – Wilshire/Western subway line and potential extensions when/if such extensions are funded

**ISSUE**

Each of the Metro Rail lines and the Metro Orange Line are identified by a color for operational and customer communications purposes. While the Mid-City/Expo Line has been represented on various maps over the years in different colors, the Board has adopted no official color. Designating a color now will ensure consistency in all communications materials about the line as it is built, opened, and operated. Recognizing that the El Monte and Harbor fixed guideway projects provide express bus service, identifying them as expressway lines on the map will improve recognition of these lines as integral parts of the Metro system and build an identity that will help generate ridership in the future. Finally, there are two Metro Rail lines currently designated by the color red; this has resulted in customer confusion which will continue to increase should the line be extended.

**POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

The purpose of designating a color for rail and other fixed guideway projects is to create a stronger identity for the lines and help reinforce awareness of these transit facilities as part of the overall Metro system. This will provide consistency on how the projects are referred to in all printed and electronic Metro communications materials.

## OPTIONS

The Board may designate entirely different colors for these lines. Color options are infinite; however, staff research shows that the most common mapping colors used for transit lines are Dark Blue, Red, Orange, Dark Green, Yellow, Light Green, Purple, Light Blue, Brown, Gray, Gold, Aqua, Black, and Pink. Staff recommends the following as alternative color options: purple (Mid-City/Exposition Line), lime (El Monte expressway), yellow (Harbor expressway), and aqua (Union Station – Wilshire/Western line and alignment extension). The Board may also choose to designate a color for the Union Station – Wilshire/Western extension now rather than wait for potential funded extensions in order to help orient current customers and eliminate current duplicative use of color red.

## FINANCIAL IMPACT

Costs associated with adopting these recommendations are minimal and will be covered by the FY07 Communications budget. They are largely confined to maps and printed materials, all of which are routinely updated and reprinted on a regular basis. With a few exceptions, current signage at rail stations does not refer to the rail lines by color names, and therefore will require no change.

## DISCUSSION

### **Current Proposal**

Staff recommends that map colors be identified for the Mid-City/Exposition Line and the El Monte and Harbor expressways to ensure seamless integration into system maps, signage, and other communications materials.

Key factors considered in suggesting colors for these projects were 1) maximum benefit and convenience of our customers, 2) ability to address a broad range of operational requirements, 3) visual contrast from existing colors and 4) connotation or associations of the color.

Color designations already in use by Metro include red, blue, green, gold and orange. Staff research shows that the most common colors used for transit lines are Dark Blue, Red, Orange, Dark Green, Yellow, Light Green, Purple, Light Blue, Brown, Gray, Gold, Aqua, Black and Pink.

### Mid-City/Exposition Line

Staff recommends using aqua as the color for the Mid-City/Exposition Line as it meets important customer-oriented operational factors while also evoking the image of several beloved Southern California attributes and landmarks along the project alignment from downtown (LA Convention Center, Eastern Columbia Building), mid-city (Ballona Creek, Al Khattab Mosque) as well as the ultimate planned destination of the line, the Pacific Ocean. The dictionary definition of aqua is “water” which references both Ballona Creek and the ocean. Aqua is bright, pleasant and easy to produce; aqua will work well on maps and other printed materials because the color provides sufficient contrast to other designated line

colors already in use; is short and easily pronounced; works in both English and Spanish; and has no cultural sensitivities.

In addition to aqua, other colors that have been suggested by the community for the Mid-City/Exposition Line include the cardinal, tan, purple, silver, gold (suggestion was to use gold for all light rail lines and red for all subway lines), bronze, and maroon. Aqua was first used in 2000 by a group of artists, architects and designers in a project about transit needs to/from the Westside and Mid-City areas. The Friends4Expo and West L.A. online websites show the line in aqua.

#### El Monte Expressway

The El Monte expressway carries thousands of transit riders each day on various express bus lines operated by Metro and Foothill Transit. This facility is a major link to the county's transit system and should be treated as an integral part of the county's transit network. Staff believes that providing a color designation will help increase awareness of this facility's role in the overall network by giving it an identity that is consistent with the other fixed guideway projects in the county, thereby promoting connectivity and increasing ridership. Staff recommends designating the color silver for the El Monte expressway because this was the color once assigned to the project when it was first constructed.

#### Harbor Expressway

Similar to the El Monte expressway, staff recommends designating a color for the Harbor expressway. Staff recommends designating the color bronze because the facility connects passengers to the various South Bay beach cities.

#### Union Station – Wilshire/Western Line

Currently, there are two Metro Rail lines designated by the color red (Union Station – Wilshire/Western and Union Station – North Hollywood). At one point one line was named the Metro Red Line and the other the Metro Orange Line. However this latter name was “turned over” to Orange County in 1992 and the line renamed Metro Red Line. As the subway running from Union Station to North Hollywood was also called the Metro Red Line the system ended up with two lines with the same name and color. This creates confusion and has never been rectified. Differentiating them by color will improve both current and future customers' understanding of the system and be in line with standard transit industry practices.

Staff would like the Board to consider designating separate colors for the two subway lines. In particular, staff would like to reserve the color purple for the Union Station – Wilshire/Western subway line and any potential future extensions and to begin implementation of this when/if such extensions are funded. Purple meets important customer-oriented operational factors and is commonly used in transit system maps. It is an extremely popular color, especially with young people; it is bright, pleasant and easy to produce; purple will work well on maps and other printed materials because the color provides sufficient contrast to other colors already in use.

In order to help orient current customers, eliminate current duplicative use of name/color, and build long-term identity of the line and any potential future subway extension the Board

may elect to designate a color for the Union Station – Wilshire/Western extension now rather than wait for the line to be extended.

### **Proposal for Future Consideration**

#### **Letter Designations**

While all transit systems use colors to distinguish lines on their maps, the majority do not name their lines by color but use either an alphabetical or numerical designation (e.g. Barcelona, Buenos Aires, Madrid, Mexico City, Moscow, New York, Paris, Seoul, Tokyo, etc.) or, in some cases end points or place/event names (e.g. London).

As the Metro Rail system grows, the Board may choose to consider following the practice used by most large transit agencies and add an alphabetical designation for each of the Metro Rail lines and fixed guideway projects, and to gradually effect a transition to letters as the primary means of identification for each line.

Among the advantages of alphabetical line designations are simpler and clearer verbal directions (i.e., “Take the C to Wilshire/Vermont and transfer to the D” rather than “Take the Red Line toward Wilshire/Western, exit at Wilshire/Vermont and then take the other Red Line toward North Hollywood”) more accurate signage elements with less dependence on the English language, and less dependence on color recognition which is difficult for customers with visual impairments.

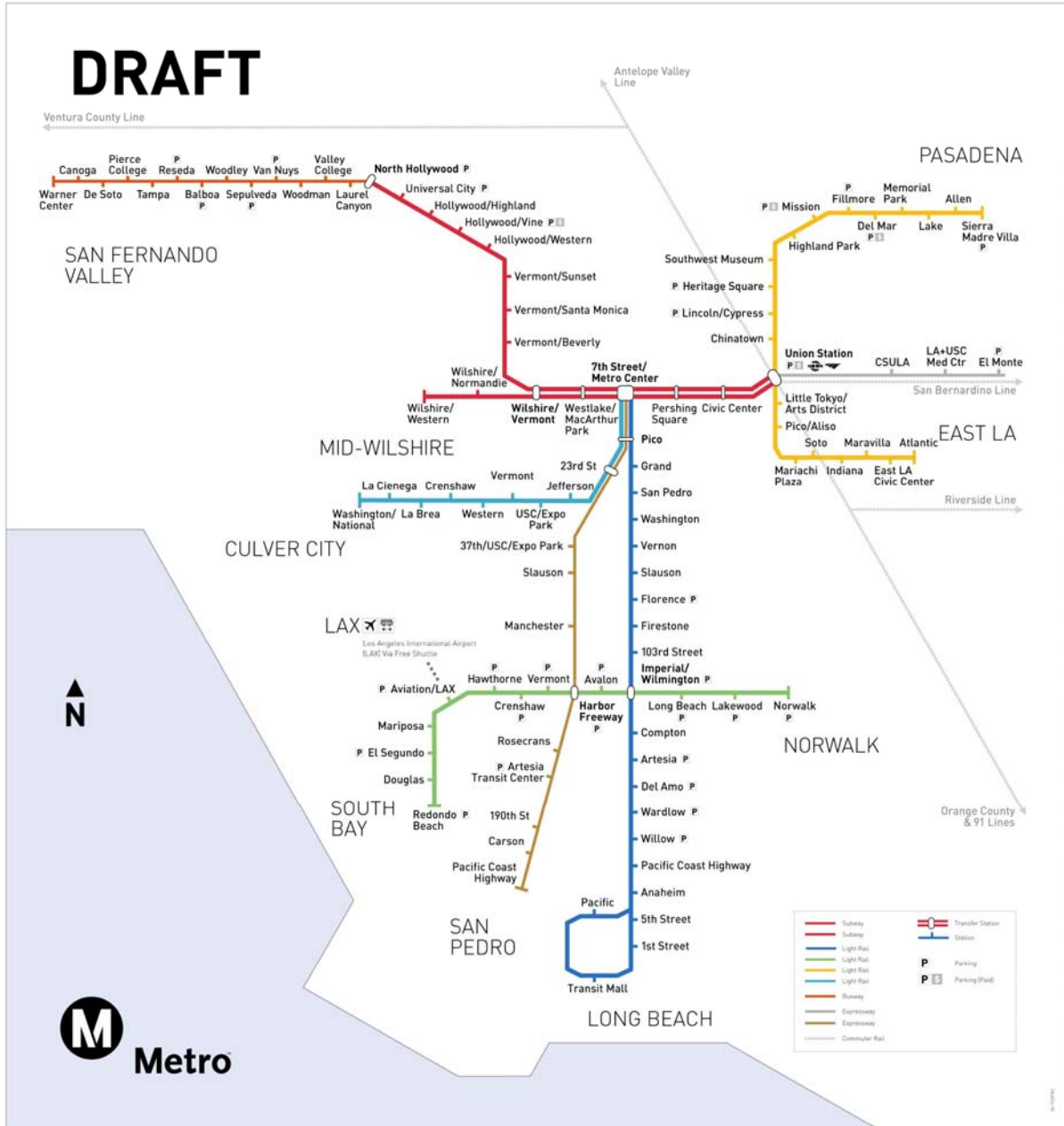
#### **NEXT STEPS**

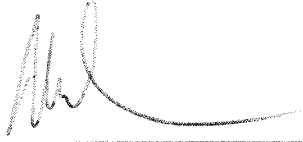
Staff will update metro.net and printed communications materials during their regular production schedules to reflect the adopted colors. Staff will work with the other municipal operators and the Exposition Metro Line Construction Authority to ensure that communications materials produced by these agencies use the designated references.

#### **ATTACHMENT**

A. DRAFT Go Metro Map

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