



**Metro**

Los Angeles County  
Metropolitan Transportation Authority

One Gateway Plaza  
Los Angeles, CA 90012-2952

213-922-2000 Tt  
metro.net

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**EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT AND AUDIT COMMITTEE  
JULY 20, 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, and
- B. Adopt the color purple to designate the Union Station – Wilshire/Western subway line, and refer to the project as the Metro Purple Line, and
- C. Adopt the color silver to designate the El Monte express busway, and
- D. Adopt the color bronze to designate the Harbor express busway.

**ISSUE**

Each of the Metro Rail lines and the Metro Orange Line are identified by a color for operational and customer communications purposes (Attachment A: Current Map). While the Mid-City/Exposition Line has been represented on various maps over the years in different colors (primarily in aqua, but also at times in purple, gray, or black), 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. There are two Metro Rail lines currently designated by the color red. Differentiating them by color will reduce customer confusion and bring the map in line with industry standards. Recognizing that the El Monte and Harbor fixed guideway projects provide express bus service, identifying them 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 (Attachment B: Proposed Color Designations).

**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 and thereby build ridership.

## OPTIONS

The Board may choose to 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 for the Mid-City/Exposition Line, aqua for the Union Station – Wilshire/Western line, lime for the El Monte express busway, and yellow for the Harbor express busway (Attachment C: Alternative Color Designations).

## 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, the Union Station – Wilshire/Western line, and the El Monte and Harbor express busways to ensure seamless integration into system maps, signage and other communications materials.

The primary factor considered in suggesting colors for these lines is maximizing the benefit and convenience of our customers. Criteria used in recommending colors is as follows:

- Should be bright and legible
- Must address broad range of operational requirements (visual and audible)
- Must be short, preferably less than two syllables
- Must be easy to print and produce
- Consider connotations/associations

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: 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.

During the EIR phase over 60,000 notices showing the proposed alignment in aqua were distributed to homes and businesses within a ¼ mile radius of the project; no comments or objections to aqua were voiced.

Three public workshops were held at which posters showing the map in aqua were displayed; no comments or objections to aqua were voiced.

Three open houses were held at which posters showing the map in aqua were displayed; no comments or objections to aqua were voiced.

Over 2,100 comments were received during the EIR phase (which included various documents showing the line in aqua); no comments or objections to aqua were submitted nor were any alternative colors suggested.

At the December 15, 2005 Board meeting over 20 members of the public spoke about the project; no comments on color designations were voiced.

At the March Board meeting staff was asked to gather community input on the Metro Rail Mid-City/Exposition Line color designation; a summary of that input is attached (Attachment D: Mid-City/Exposition Line Community Input on Color Designation).

#### 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 subway line was named 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 use the color purple for the Union Station – Wilshire/Western subway line. Purple meets important customer-oriented operational factors and is commonly used in transit system maps. It is bright, pleasant, easy to produce and will work well on maps and other printed materials. It also provides sufficient contrast to other colors already in use.

#### El Monte and Harbor Express Busways

Staff recommends using the color silver to designate the El Monte express busway and bronze to designate the Harbor express busway. The El Monte express busway carries thousands of transit riders each day on various express bus lines operated by Metro and Foothill Transit and the Harbor express busway includes express bus lines operated by Metro, City of LA, City of Gardena, City of Torrance, and the Orange County Transportation

Authority. These facilities are major links to the county's transit system and should be treated as an integral part of the county's transit network. Staff believes that providing color designations will help increase awareness of these facilities roles in the overall network by giving them an identity that is consistent with the other fixed guideway projects in the county, thereby promoting connectivity and increasing ridership. Silver and bronze are often used in transit system maps and provide sufficient contrast to other colors already in use.

### **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.

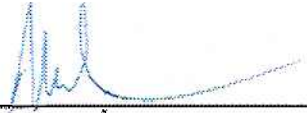
### **NEXT STEPS**

Staff will ensure any operational issues pertaining to the new color designations are resolved before implementation. Staff will then begin implementation, and 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.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

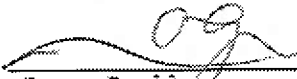
- A. Current Map (in use)
- B. Proposed Color Designations
- C. Alternative Color Designations
- D. Mid-City/Exposition Line Community Input on Color Designation

Prepared by: Maya Emsden, Deputy Executive Officer, Creative Services



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Matthew Raymond  
Chief Communications Officer

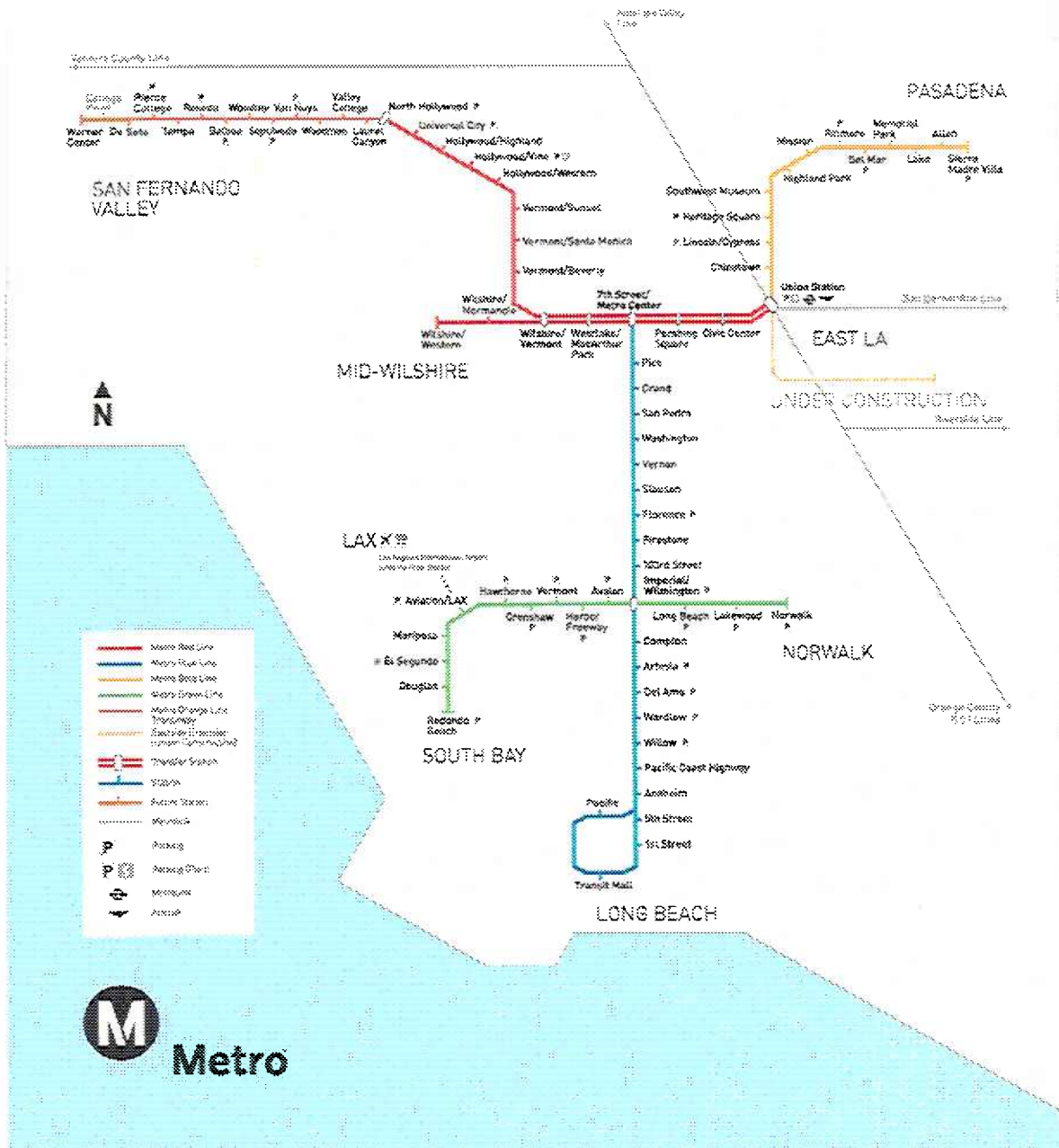


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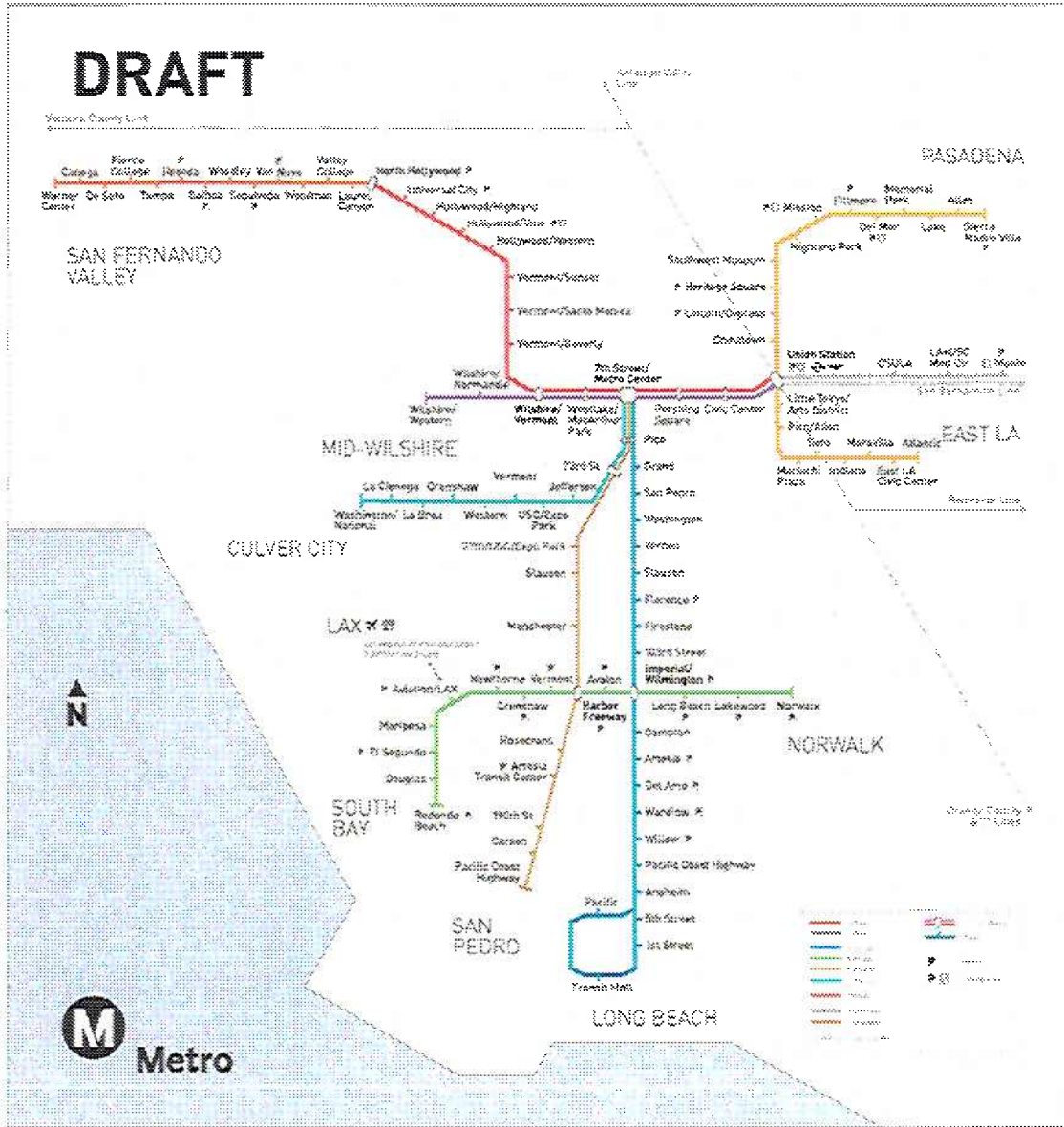
Roger Snoble  
Chief Executive Officer

# Go Metro

Attachment A:  
Current Map



Note: Colors will vary depending on computer monitor and printer.



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### **Mid-City/Exposition Line Community Input on Color Designation**

At the March 2006 Board meeting staff was asked to gather community input on the proposed Mid-City/Exposition Line color designation. Following is a summary of the comments received:

At the March 16, 2006 EMC there were three public comments in support of the aqua color designation; no objections to aqua were voiced.

At the March 23, 2006 Board meeting there were four public comments in support of the aqua color designation; no objections to aqua were voiced.

In April 2006 the Friends for Expo steering committee submitted a letter indicating that they "supported the aqua color designation...as a distinctive color on the map, relating Expo as a branch of the Blue Line extending to the ocean in Santa Monica, as well as to many aqua-colored landmarks in the corridor."

In April 2006 the Mar Vista Community Council Board of Directors informed the Board that it unanimously "favors the color/naming of the Exposition Light Rail Project...the (Metro) Aqua Line".

At the April 19, 2006 Planning & Programming Meeting there was one public comment in support of the proposed aqua color designation; no objections to aqua were voiced.

At the May 4, 2006 community meeting held at Dorsey High School there were approximately fourteen people who either commented upon or responded to questions about the Metro Rail Mid-City/Exposition Line color designation; the majority of comments were in support of the aqua color proposal and there were no objections. When asked for alternatives attendees offered the following: amber, cardinal, copper, gray, lemon, lime, olive, pink, plum, purple, rose, salmon, sand, sienna, sky, tan, teal, and violet.

On May 10, 2006 the following email message was received: "After much discussion and a process, CM's Parks, Wesson & Perry have agreed that GREY should be the color of the Metro/Expo line. The grey (light or dark) should be distinguishable from silver for purposes of a map."

In June 2006 staff was informed that grey was no longer the preferred color and that a motion proposing rose as the color for the Mid-City/Exposition Line would be submitted.

Several media outlets covered the color designation issue and NBC hosted an online poll (nbc4.tv). The (unscientific) results as of 6/27/06 were 66% voting "Yes, the Metro Exposition Light Rail Line should be called the Aqua Line" and 34% voting "I prefer a different name".

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Note: At the May 4, 2006 meeting there was also one suggestion voiced to name the line the "Expo Line"; staff explained the importance of naming all Metro Lines consistently to clarify that they are all part of the Metro Rail system and not a separate system (e.g. Metrolink) and that no transit system in the world uses multiple conventions to name rail lines as doing so could have a negative impact to ridership; this was echoed by two other meeting attendees and after hearing this the individual retracted his suggestion and agreed that the line name should be consistent with other Metro Rail lines (i.e. use color as the official name).