



**Metro**

Los Angeles County  
Metropolitan Transportation Authority

One Gateway Plaza  
Los Angeles, CA 90012-2952

213.922.2000 Tel  
metro.net

**26**

**PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE  
JANUARY 14, 2015**

**SUBJECT: VERMONT AND NORTH HOLLYWOOD TO PASADENA BUS RAPID  
TRANSIT CORRIDORS**

**ACTION: RECEIVE AND FILE**

**RECOMMENDATION**

Receive and file this update on the status of the advanced technical studies for the Vermont and North Hollywood to Pasadena corridors in response to the July 24, 2014 and October 23, 2014 Board directives, as well as the process for applying for Federal Small Starts grants.

**ISSUE**

At the July 24, 2014 meeting, the Board approved a motion (Attachment A) directing staff to begin advanced technical work on the Vermont and North Hollywood to Pasadena corridors as a result of recommendations from the Los Angeles County Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) and Street Design Improvement Study. This was further supported through a subsequent motion approved by the Board at the October 23, 2014 meeting (Attachment B). Through Board memos in both September and October 2014, as well as an oral report at the November 6, 2014 Board meeting, staff provided updates on the advanced technical work for these two corridors. This report further updates the Board on the advanced technical work for the two corridors as well as the process for applying for Federal Small Starts grants.

**DISCUSSION**

**Background**

In December 2013, staff completed the Los Angeles County BRT and Street Design Improvement Study. The purpose of the study was to develop recommendations for an effective countywide BRT system that includes dedicated peak period bus lanes and/or other general bus speed improvements. At the February 2014 Planning and Programming Committee, staff presented the study findings and identified a final list of nine potential BRT candidate corridors. At that same time, staff recommended moving

forward with more detailed corridor level technical analysis of the nine corridors beginning with the Vermont and North Hollywood to Pasadena corridors.

### **Vermont Corridor**

The Vermont corridor is the second busiest transit corridor in the county with approximately 48,500 weekday boardings. Initial field reviews indicate that this corridor may be able to accommodate bus lanes for a majority of its route. As directed by the Board, staff has begun the procurement process for conducting a more detailed corridor level technical analysis of the Vermont corridor for potential BRT implementation. It is anticipated that the Request for Proposal (RFP) will be released to the Planning Bench by the end of January 2015 with contract award by late June 2015. The technical analysis is anticipated to take approximately 18 months to complete.

### **North Hollywood to Pasadena Corridor**

The North Hollywood to Pasadena alignment has been identified in several studies as a key regional connection that is currently underserved by the existing transit system. This corridor has strong support from the Cities of Burbank, Glendale, Pasadena, and the Burbank Bob Hope Airport. The City of Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT) currently operates Commuter Express Line 549 along the SR-134 Freeway from Encino to Pasadena with stops at the North Hollywood Metro Red/Orange Line Station, Burbank Media District, Glendale, and the Pasadena Gold Line.

Through Board memos in September and October 2014, staff informed the Board about discussions with LADOT regarding modifying Commuter Express Line 549. LADOT is amenable to route and schedule modifications, including to Burbank Bob Hope Airport, if adequate funding is identified for the additional cost, including buses. Metro Operations developed several alternative routes and conducted a test trip on one of the more feasible options. They will report to the Board in February 2015 with an update. Existing and new service in the corridor could provide input into the Scope of Work for the BRT technical work.

Similar to the Vermont corridor, it is anticipated that the RFP will be released to the Planning Bench by the end of January 2015 with contract award by late June 2015. This study is also anticipated to take approximately 18 months to complete. Both the Vermont and North Hollywood to Pasadena technical studies will be conducted concurrently.

### **Federal Small Starts Process**

Under the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Act (MAP-21), the Federal Small Starts program has specific criteria for eligibility, including a total project cost of less than \$250 million. Small Starts can only fund up to \$75 million. Projects are required to meet certain performance criteria to be eligible for funding. Prior to Small Starts funding considerations, Metro would need to initiate both the National

Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) environmental analysis, which requires that projects be in the constrained element of the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). At this time, the Vermont and North Hollywood to Pasadena corridors are not included in the constrained element of the current LRTP.

The development of the environmental documents could take a minimum of 18 to 24 months. At the end of the Draft environmental phase, the Board could select a Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) upon which the final environmental document would be prepared. It is towards the end of this stage of the project development process that Metro could submit a request to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to enter into Project Development.

Entry into Project Development does not guarantee federal funding. The FTA will only consider grant award based on the project's readiness with the following conditions met: the project's scope, cost, schedule, benefits and impacts are considered firm and final; all local matching funds are committed; all third party agreements are completed; the project obtains at least a Medium overall rating under the FTA's statutory evaluation criteria; and, the Project Management Plan and sub-plans have been updated to include a management approach at a sufficient level of development to construct and implement the project.

## **NEXT STEPS**

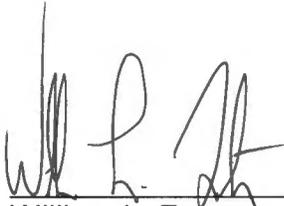
Staff will continue with the procurement of consultant services for the advanced technical work on both the Vermont and North Hollywood to Pasadena corridors and will continue to coordinate with Operations staff on both of these studies as well as on the express bus service in the North Hollywood to Pasadena corridor. As directed by the Board in November 2014, staff will also be conducting a BRT Symposium in early 2015.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

- A. July 24, 2014 Board Motion
- B. October 23, 2014 Board Motion

Prepared by:

Renee Berlin, Managing Executive Officer, (213) 922-3035  
Jon Hillmer, Executive Director, Operations, (213) 922-6972  
Martha Butler, Director, (213) 922-7651  
Michael Richmai, Transportation Planning Manager (213) 922-2558



---

William L. Foster  
Interim Chief Operations Officer



---

Martha Welborne, FAIA  
Chief Planning Officer



---

Arthur T. Leahy  
Chief Executive Officer

**MOTION BY DIRECTORS MICHAEL ANTONOVICH,  
ARA NAJARIAN, MARK RIDLEY-THOMAS AND ERIC GARCETTI**

**July 24, 2014**

After several years of evaluation, MTA staff developed a list of eligible corridors for additional bus rapid transit (BRT) projects based on, among other things, ridership potential and net savings of operations funding. Two of the corridors hit upon unmet transit needs, which would greatly relieve congestion and link major transit centers.

The first corridor, Vermont Avenue, has long been recognized as one of the most congested streets in Los Angeles. According to MTA statistics, the Vermont Avenue corridor has among the most daily bus boardings in all of LA County. The bus system is unable to accommodate commuter demands without service improvements.

The second corridor between the North Hollywood Red/Orange Lines and the Pasadena Gold Line, by all accounts, has huge ridership potential and would connect the San Fernando and San Gabriel Valleys. Metro, in collaboration with Bob Hope Airport, is providing an important plane-to-train connection through improvements to the Metrolink Antelope Valley and Ventura County Lines. The Airport recently opened its Regional Intermodal Transit Center that provides seamless connectivity from trains to buses to planes. An additional connection through enhanced BRT is warranted to increase mobility.

I THEREFORE MOVE that the CEO direct staff to advance these projects and provide the Board with a report back in September on an implementation plan to include:

- A. Operations requirements
- B. Funding requirements
- C. Implementation timelines

I FURTHER MOVE that the CEO:

- A. Immediately initiate the hiring process for the Bus Rapid Transit planning position included in the Board-approved MTA Fiscal Year 2014-15 budget
- B. Dedicate additional staff to the aforementioned projects and the Countywide BRT Study as needed

**MOTION BY DIRECTORS ARA NAJARIAN, GARCETTI AND ANTONOVICH**

Construction Committee

October 16, 2014

At the July 24, 2014 board meeting, the MTA board approved moving both the Vermont Avenue BRT and the North Hollywood to Pasadena BRT to the environmental phase in preparation and anticipation of future funding. Board Chair, Mayor Garcetti, amended the motion to direct that both BRT's should be MTA's top priority for federal small starts funds.

At the board staff briefing this week, MTA staff stated that a consultant was being procured only for the Vermont Avenue BRT, in direct contrast to the board's direction that both BRT projects move forward in tandem to be positioned for small starts funding. To support this motion,

**WE THEREFORE MOVE** that the consultant procurement for BRT advancement be amended to include the North Hollywood to Pasadena BRT.