

# Minutes

Thursday, February 13, 2020  
2:30PM

Gateway Cities Service Council  
Regular Meeting

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Clearwater Building  
16401 Paramount Bl  
Paramount, CA 90723

All Metro meetings are held in ADA accessible facilities. Meeting location served by Metro Lines 128, 258, 265, Long Beach Transit 21A, 21B

Called to Order at 2:33 p.m.

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**Council Members:**

Al Rios, Vice Chair  
Maria Davila  
JoAnn Eros-Delgado  
Danny Hom  
Samuel Peña  
Wally Shidler  
Joe Strapac  
Lori Y. Woods

**Officers:**

Dolores Ramos, Chief Administrative Analyst  
Chad Kim, Sr. Transportation Planner  
Lilian De Loza-Gutierrez, Community Relations  
Manager

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Los Angeles County  
Metropolitan Transportation Authority

**Metro**

1. PLEDGE of Allegiance
2. ROLL Called
3. APPROVED Minutes from January 8, 2020 Meeting, Councilmembers
4. RECEIVED Eastside Transit Corridor Phase 2 Project Update, Lilian De Loza Gutierrez, Community Relations Manager, Jenny Cristales, Senior Transportation Planning Manager, Eva Moir, Deputy Project Manager

Councilmember Shidler has been following the project since inception; he agrees that the Washington alignment serves more economically disadvantaged communities, has more transit oriented community and first-last mile compatibility, and that the station locations will make it easier to walk to, bike to, and ride transit.

Councilmember Strapac commented that since the project was announced, he has been concerned that there are no plans to serve Rio Hondo College or downtown Whittier, both of which are traffic generators. He hopes those areas will be served at some point. Ms. Moir replied that the current project is to environmentally clear the project from Atlantic Station to Lambert Rd, and to evaluate San Gabriel Valley (SGV) mobility needs. After the study, staff will review what the needs are and examine potential solutions. Ms. Cristales added that staff has been studying the whole area to determine what can be completed in the first funding cycle of \$3 billion. They are looking at a phased approach as there is not funding to complete everything at once. As staff continue to work through the process and study the entire alignment, Metro is coordinating with local municipalities and their services.

Councilmember Hom attended the presentation in East Los Angeles (LA); the selected option seems sound. He shares Councilmember Strapac's curiosity as to how uptown Whittier can be made a reachable destination by transit and what the end to end travel time for the alignment will be, assuming the completed route would travel from Whittier to Santa Monica. Ms. Moir replied that staff is currently evaluating travel time forecasts for the transportation impact report, which will provide more information and be released with the draft environmental document.

Councilmember Eros-Delgado asked what outreach was conducted to unincorporated areas east, west, and south which encompass more than 82,000 people. Continuing further southeast there are another 54,000 residents, not including City of La Mirada, where there are many transit dependent residents. In regard to lifeline bus services there's only one. The people of that subregion need to be connected, especially if Metro is planning for the next 10-30 years. Ms. De Loza-Gutierrez replied that since the environmental process was reinitiated, Metro's Community Relations has been working with a robust list of contacts and keeping them updated, including in the Los Nietos, East LA, and unincorporated areas. There were multiple meetings held in those areas. During the most recent outreach efforts, they tried to target more central locations to capture as many stakeholders as possible. Metro will continue to share information with affected communities as the project moves forward, and will have community meetings in Los Nietos, Santa Fe Springs, and unincorporated areas. Metro has been coordinating with municipal operators; NextGen Bus Study staff has met with

Gateway Cities municipalities and operators recently. All are looking at how to better connect Metro to municipal operators. Metro is also working with Supervisors Solis and Hahn to ensure that the unincorporated regions of their districts remain informed.

Vice Chair Rios asked what variables led to the selection of the Washington alignment for advancement; will more people benefit? Does it reduce project cost or allow the project to be completed in a timelier manner? Ms. Cristales replied that the study examined how to best serve equity-focused communities along the corridor. Washington will serve a more transit dependent population. The SR-60 alignment has more single family homes and federally protected lands, and does not service as many transit dependent residents. Staff is still working through the process to define costs; there is an underground section which is expensive. There is \$3 billion available in the project's first funding cycle, so staff is looking to complete the project in a phased approach. Once that is determined, another phase of outreach will be conducted to share findings. Ms. Moir added that the SR-60 alignment is also less compatible with transit-oriented communities and first-last mile strategies.

Councilmember Peña commented that SR-60 is a parking lot in the mornings and afternoons. He thinks the obstacles cited in excluding the SR-60 option can be overcome; there have been shopping centers built next to the superfund site, and there is not a definitive plan on when the carpool lanes might be built. The project won't be completed until 2035; he wondered when Caltrans will finish their SR-60 improvements.

Ms. Cristales replied that in doing due diligence, Metro studied the best route to serve potential riders; the Washington route was found to have fewer challenges. Ms. Cristales added that there are additional challenges to the SR-60 route; widening of the freeway will cause alignment to cross in and out of Caltrans right of way, impacting sensitive land uses and federally projected uses. If the project can't put columns in middle of the freeway, the train would have to operate at reduced operating speeds. The power lines would also have to be raised. The purpose of the feasibility study is to see what the mobility options are for that corridor. Metro is remaining mode neutral – the recommendations may be light rail, BRT, or something else. The environmental process has to be completed while doing design work. The project is on the Measure M schedule; should funding be in place and technical work completed, the project's completion may be accelerated. If Metro waits to look at resolving SR-60 issues, it could add years to the project. The study will identify which options have lesser impacts, and work through the challenges.

Councilmember Shidler commented that when the Gold Line was built, it didn't do anything to alleviate the congestion along the Santa Monica freeway. He thinks this project will serve transit dependent people and that those who don't need to ride transit aren't going to ride.

Councilmember Strapac thinks that the one-seat ride concept needs to be remembered. If the local bus lines are going to feed the rail, people who can walk to the bus or train from downtown Whittier and Rio Hondo College are left out. Making trains into downtown LA more competitive with cars should be the goal. He doesn't see that happening with truncated plan.

Ms. Cristales replied that Metro always tries to plan projects around the customer experience. Staff has taken note of the effects of the project in terms of providing a one-seat ride and trying to provide a regional connection. Metro is looking at first-last mile policies to see how the project can be made accessible through first-last mile solutions and other options such as the Mobility on Demand (Via) and MicroTransit pilots. Metro is trying to put policies in place

to ensure that the customer is considered and that communities are connected to the major investment being made through the project.

Mr. Timberlake commented that he has been attending the project meetings held in East LA for years. He thinks that the Washington alternative is the ideal option given the funding limits. The SR-60 option does not compare to the Washington option; it is evident to those who live around there that in terms of economic equity, the greatest need and most transit dependent would be best served by it. His remaining concern is why Metro caved into the NIMBYs who live along Mednick and Arizona; that was an ideal route from 3rd Street down to Washington. It would've been better than Atlantic which is narrower and has terrible traffic that will be even worse during construction. They could have done aerial, at grade, or underground to address concerns. That ship has probably sailed, but the alternatives offered do not compare.

5. RECEIVED Regional Connector Project Construction Update, Olga Arroyo, Community Relations Manager

Councilmember Hom noted that Metro's bus service in the area is currently configured, east-west travel on the Eastside Extension is served by Line 30. He asked if the closure will disrupt the pattern of Line 30 and if the NextGen proposal for Line 30 will truncate the line. Ms. Arroyo replied that some of the work that necessitated the closure is on Temple St where there is an existing Line 30 stop. The extended closure is proposed to repair the cut and cover section. During that period, there would be an interruption to Line 30. Aside from that, there would not be additional impacts to that line. Mr. Wassell added that Line 30 will continue down 1st St then turn left on Mission. There will be a new stop on the corner for 1<sup>st</sup> St/Mission where people can take the bus directly from Pico/Aliso to Union Station or take shuttle to Little Tokyo Station.

Councilmember Hom asked if at some point during the 22-month closure, the only way to get to Pico/Aliso from Alameda will be by bus bridge. Mr. Wassell replied that as the Line 30 will continue to go Patsaouras Bus Plaza. After the closure, the intent is to go back to where the shortline lays over. If there's enough demand, it may be kept permanently.

Councilmember Strapac is concerned that riders coming from Azusa will not have a one-seat ride to East LA. To him, the project seems to disregard the congestion rail congestion problems coming out of 7th/Metro Station, and a lot more rail traffic will be added on tracks through there. Everyone says it will be through station rather than a turnback, but he hasn't seen enough attention to bringing operations through there to a higher standard, and now additional traffic is going to be added to the two-track segment to Washington Blvd. He hopes something is being done to enhance rail traffic through there.

Councilmember Peña asked how lessons learned from the New Blue Project will be applied to the closure. The Blue Line was down for seven months; the Regional Connector closure will be for 22 months. Many of the riders never came back to the Blue Line. What is Metro's plan to make sure that when the project is completed, the Gold Line doesn't have the dramatic drop in ridership that the Blue Line had. Ms. Arroyo replied that Metro has multiple initiatives to maintain and improve ridership. There are also benefits to the project as it will add greater connectivity throughout the region.

Councilmember Shidler commented that some former A Line (Blue) riders have continued to take the bus due to the quality of life issues on the train. He asked how Metro will service rail equipment on the area between Pico-Aliso and East LA during the closures as that area will be isolated. Ms. Arroyo replied that as there is no maintenance facility on that side of the alignment, Rail Operations is making accommodations to be able to maintain those rail cars.

Mr. Timberlake commented that the closure is the worst news he has had in his 15 years of riding Metro. It was very hard for him to get from the Gateway Cities region to Pasadena. A lot of people go to Pasadena; there are lots of things to do there. To get to Pasadena using Lines 260 or 762 that serve Artesia Blue Line takes forever. As an alternative, he has been going to the Gold Line Atlantic Station and riding to Pasadena. It makes a big "U" but is faster, as it takes 45 minutes. The closure, combined with the NextGen Plan to discontinue Line 258, which provided an alternative, is terrible news. Metro is going to send him to the used car lot. He doesn't think Metro is thinking about its riders. He's one of the 7% of county residents who take most of the transit trips.

Mr. Quillin commented that 22 months is a really long time. He hopes they figure out way to make shorter. He wondered how the maintenance will be completed and whether the east side of the line will really be able to keep running for 22 months.

Councilmember Shidler asked what the ridership is between East LA and Pasadena; it seems that very few people ride through. Mr. Wassell replied that there is very low through ridership from the East LA side to the Pasadena-Azusa area. Most riders from Azusa and Pasadena are heading to Union Station and Little Tokyo Station; only a handful of riders continue on.

6. CARRIED Over Line Ride Report, Councilmember Maria Davila, Samuel Peña

7. DISCUSSED NextGen Bus Plan Next Steps, Councilmembers

Councilmember Shidler recommended Dollarhide Center in Compton. Ms. Ramos replied that it can be very difficult to book the facility and that while it is a great location, historically, Metro events held there have had very low turnout.

Councilmember Peña suggested the Southern California Gas offices in Downey on Firestone Bl; the Council used to hold their meetings there several years ago.

Councilmember Hom commented that Compton Library has a similar advantage as Dollarhide Center. He also suggested holding a hearing on the eastern edge of the region as some of the circulator shuttles are being cut in South Gate; it is important to make sure they know their bus may go away.

Councilmember Davila suggested the South Gate Park Auditorium and Girls Clubhouse in South Gate. Vice Chair Rios added that the East LA College satellite campus in South Gate might also be a good location.

8. RECEIVED Regional Service Performance Report, Chad Kim, Sr. Transportation Planner, Lilian De Loza-Gutierrez, Community Relations Manager

Councilmember Woods asked if there have been any incidents which contributed to the rise in complaints. Mr. Kim replied that he can look into it and report back to the Council.

Councilmember Peña asked if there is a plan to bring back ridership or if Metro will just continue to watch it fall. Mr. Kim replied that people tend to repeat behaviors; during the Blue Line closure, riders likely adopted an alternate method of making their commutes.

Councilmember Peña asked if Metro has talked to people who no longer ride rail or if Metro assuming that they have found other alternatives. Mr. Kim replied that he is not aware of any surveys of former patrons, he can look into that. NextGen does include plans to make bus service more compatible with rail. Ms. De Loza-Gutierrez added that there are multiple initiatives to improve ridership such as Mobility on Demand, MicroTransit, and NextGen, to name a few.

Councilmember Shidler commented that he rode to the meeting on the Blue Line and Line 128. At Compton Station, there were both vendors and security on platform, the bus bays were full of trash, the trash cans were full, and the drinking fountains do not work.

Councilmember Strapac noted that even international media has noticed that Metro is driving away its own customers; he read about it in the London Economist. He thinks that the need to emphasize that things are not going well, and projects need to be accelerated and advance.

9. PUBLIC Comment for items not on the Agenda

Mr. Quillin shared that today will be the third NextGen workshop he will attend, and he feels he is just starting to understand it.

10. CHAIR and Council Member Comments

Councilmember Peña recalled that the Council received a report regarding transit pass programs for community college and university students. He recently heard that Los Angeles Unified School District students is considering providing free transit to its students. He requested an update on student transit programs and how they can help to increase ridership.

**ADJOURNED at 3:58 p.m.**