



Los Angeles County  
Metropolitan Transportation Authority

One Gateway Plaza  
Los Angeles, CA 90012-2952

213.922.2000 Tel  
metro.net

**PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE  
OCTOBER 16, 2013**

**SUBJECT: EAST SAN FERNANDO VALLEY TRANSIT CORRIDOR**

**ACTION: RECEIVE AND FILE**

**RECOMMENDATION**

Receive and file this status report on the environmental clearance of the East San Fernando Valley (East SFV) Transit Corridor.

**ISSUE**

The East SFV Transit Corridor is one of 12 Measure R Transit projects. It is designated as a first decade project in the 2009 Constrained element of the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) with \$170.1 million reserved and a 2018 delivery date. This report updates the Board on the initial phase of work for the Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Report (DEIS/R) including the public scoping comments and the further development of the transit alternatives.

**DISCUSSION**

In January 2013, the Planning and Programming Committee received the East SFV Transit Corridor's Alternatives Analysis (AA) Study, which identified two build alternatives to be carried forward for further study in the DEIS/R. These include: Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) and Light Rail Transit (LRT).

The Corridor extends for approximately 11 miles from Ventura Boulevard in Sherman Oaks, through the communities of Van Nuys, Panorama City, Arleta and Pacoima to a terminus at the Sylmar/San Fernando Metrolink Station in the northeast SFV. Attachment A provides a map of the study corridor and a summary of existing transit conditions. Van Nuys Boulevard is the seventh heaviest bus corridor in the Metro system with approximately 24,000 daily boardings and is the second heaviest transit corridor in the SFV following the Metro Orange Line (MOL).

The Corridor has more transit-dependency, more zero-vehicle households and greater poverty than Los Angeles County averages. Of the transit trips, 50% stay within the Corridor and more than half of the boardings within this 11-mile study corridor occur within the three mile segment between the MOL in the south and the Panorama City Mall in the north. In this highly congested portion of the route, bus speeds average between 10-14 mph during peak periods.

### Summary of DEIS/R Public Scoping Comments

The DEIS/R work was initiated in March 2013, with four scoping meetings that were held during the public scoping period that concluded on May 6<sup>th</sup>. A total of 139 persons attended these meetings and a total of 258 comments were received. During the summer and early fall, we reviewed the comments, initiated work on the environmental analysis, and made refinements to the project alternatives under consideration.

Some of the more prevalent comments received were:

- Strong preference for LRT
- Should connect to:
  - future Sepulveda Pass Transit Project
  - Amtrak, Metrolink, and future High Speed Rail
- Should not operate LRT on Van Nuys Boulevard south of the MOL
- BRT lacks the ability to handle future ridership demand
- Impacts from loss of Van Nuys Boulevard parking should be fully evaluated
- Bike lanes should be included

### Refinement of Transit Alternatives

The AA Study recommended both BRT and LRT for continued evaluation in the DEIS/R. Both alternatives were defined to be median-running, which would require removal of at least one traffic lane in each direction as well as many left-turn pockets. Additionally, most of the on-street parking would be displaced. The LRT alternative would require grade-separations or property acquisitions in some segments of the Boulevard in order to satisfy operating requirements and be in compliance with the Board adopted Grade Crossing Safety Policy.

In order to evaluate a wider range of options that could potentially reduce some of the above impacts, we have included two additional transit alternatives for further study in the DEIS/R. These include Alternative #1: Curb Running Bus Lanes and Alternative #3: Median Running Tram. Attachments B through E provide maps of the four alternatives.

- Alternative #1 - Curb Running Bus Lanes (Attachment B)  
This alternative would be similar to the Wilshire BRT Project with dedicated bus lanes operating in the AM and PM peak periods in the curbside lanes of Van Nuys Boulevard. On-street parking could remain in the curbside lanes during non-peak periods or the lane could be used by bicyclists. Buses would be able to bypass queues at traffic lights. This alternative was dismissed during the AA process as

it failed to achieve all of the operational efficiencies that were called for in the Project's Purpose and Need. The alternative is being reconsidered because it would have the least impact on existing traffic and parking, could incorporate a bike lane, and is the only alternative that could be constructed within the budget reserved for this project in the 2009 LRTP. Peak Period dedicated lanes would operate between the MOL and San Fernando Road over a distance of 6.7 miles, while mixed-flow bus service would be provided south of the MOL and north of Van Nuys/San Fernando Road.

- Alternative #2 - Median Running Bus Lanes (Attachment C)  
This alternative would be similar to the MOL Busway, except that buses would operate in the center of Van Nuys Boulevard instead of along a former railroad right-of-way. Station platforms would be constructed in the median at approximate half-mile intervals to provide service to both Metro Rapid and Local buses. Dedicated 24/7 bus lanes would operate between the MOL and San Fernando Road over a distance of 6.7 miles, while mixed-flow bus service would be provided south of the MOL and north of Van Nuys/San Fernando Road.
- Alternative #3 – Median Running Tram (Attachment D)  
This alternative would be similar to surface-running rail systems in other cities such as the San Diego Trolley, San Francisco Muni and Portland MAX. It could also utilize modern streetcar/tram systems that are being implemented in European cities and other parts of the world. Street-running rail could operate in the median of Van Nuys Boulevard with low-floor vehicles operating at prevailing traffic speeds controlled by traffic lights. Station platforms would be constructed in the median at approximate half-mile intervals.

This technology was not specifically included in the AA Study as the LRT Alternative was presumed to be modeled on the standard Los Angeles LRT lines already in operation. Los Angeles LRT vehicles are designed for relatively high-speed operation in comparison to other LRT systems and often require grade-separations or subway segments to fit into the urban environment. We are introducing this street running rail option for further study in the DEIS/R as it would have much higher carrying capacity than a BRT system, while avoiding some of the grade separation and right-of-way impacts that would be required with the full LRT alternative. Street running, semi-dedicated rail would operate between the MOL and San Fernando Road over a distance of 6.7 miles, while mixed-flow tram service would operate south of the MOL and north of Van Nuys/San Fernando Road. A new rail maintenance facility would be required and several alternative locations will be evaluated.

- Alternatives 4 – Median Running LRT (Attachment E)  
This alternative would be similar to other LRT lines that we currently operate. Los Angeles "Standard" LRT vehicles would operate in the center median of Van Nuys Boulevard with stations at approximately one mile intervals. To enable the LRT alternative to comply with the adopted LRT Grade Crossing Safety Policy,

grade-separations and/or street widenings could be required along segments of the route. A new rail maintenance facility would be required and several alternative locations will be evaluated. Rail service would operate between the MOL and San Fernando Road over a distance of 6.7 miles, while mixed-flow BRT service would operate south of the MOL and north of Van Nuys/San Fernando Road.

### New and Revisited Alignments

Based on Scoping comments and further review of transit options, we are now considering a phased approach for the development of the East SFV Corridor in coordination with other planned transit projects in the northern and southern end of the Corridor. Under this scenario, exclusive bus and/or rail guideways would be constructed between the MOL and San Fernando Road over a distance of 6.7 miles. Service would be provided south to Ventura Boulevard and north to Sylmar/San Fernando Station in mixed-flow operation as a part of the current project. In the future, and in coordination with other planned projects, exclusive guideway bus or rail service could be extended to those areas:

- Southern Terminus Connection with the Sepulveda Pass Transit Corridor  
Transit improvements along Van Nuys Boulevard will need to consider a future connection to a transit line in the Sepulveda Pass. Options in that corridor range from BRT in HOV/Express Lanes in the I-405 Freeway to a full transit/highway tunnel extending under the Pass from the MOL to the future Metro Purple Line and/or Metro Expo Line Stations in West Los Angeles. Per Board direction, the East SFV Corridor is being analyzed for Public Private Partnership delivery method in conjunction with the Sepulveda Pass project.

Analysis of travel boardings on buses along the Van Nuys Boulevard shows very heavy transfer activity between the buses on Van Nuys Boulevard and the MOL. Ridership south of the MOL is approximately half of the ridership north of the MOL and it is therefore not warranted to extend exclusive guideways south of the MOL until sometime in the future when there is a connection through the Sepulveda Pass to the Westside.

In order to provide for this future connection, we are now identifying the MOL Van Nuys Station as the initial southern terminus of the East SFV Corridor for exclusive bus and rail guideways. Mixed flow transit operations would be provided south of the MOL to Ventura Boulevard for all alternatives until the preferred mode and alignment are identified for the Sepulveda Pass Transit Corridor.

- Northern Terminus Connection with Sylmar/San Fernando Metrolink Station  
Transit improvements along San Fernando Road in the northern portion of the East SFV Corridor will need to consider the future development of the railroad right-of-way that extends from Van Nuys Boulevard to the Sylmar/San Fernando Metrolink Station. This route is planned for future High Speed Rail service as

well as enhanced Metrolink service. San Fernando Road is too narrow to accommodate a dedicated transit lane in this area and therefore future improvements will need to rely upon reaching consensus with these two other rail authorities and/or selective right-of-way acquisition from properties on the south side of San Fernando Road. The DEIS/R will assume no exclusive bus or rail guideways along San Fernando Road until a preferred solution is identified which combines rail service (High Speed Rail and Metrolink) in this section of the route.

### **NEXT STEPS**

We will conduct a second round of community outreach meetings in Winter 2014 and prepare the DEIS/R for review by the Federal Transit Administration.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

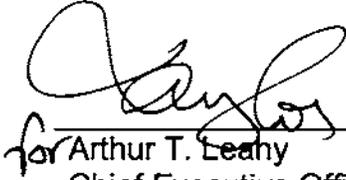
- A. East SFV Corridor Map and Existing Conditions
- B. Alternative 1- Curb Running Bus Lanes
- C. Alternative 2- Median Running Bus Lanes
- D. Alternative 3- Median Running Tram
- E. Alternative 4- Median Running LRT

Prepared by: David Mieger, Deputy Executive Officer (213) 922-3040  
Al Patashnick, Director (213) 922-3080  
Walter Davis, Project Manager (213) 922-3079  
Renee Berlin, Executive Officer, Transit Corridors/Systemwide  
Planning (213) 922-3035



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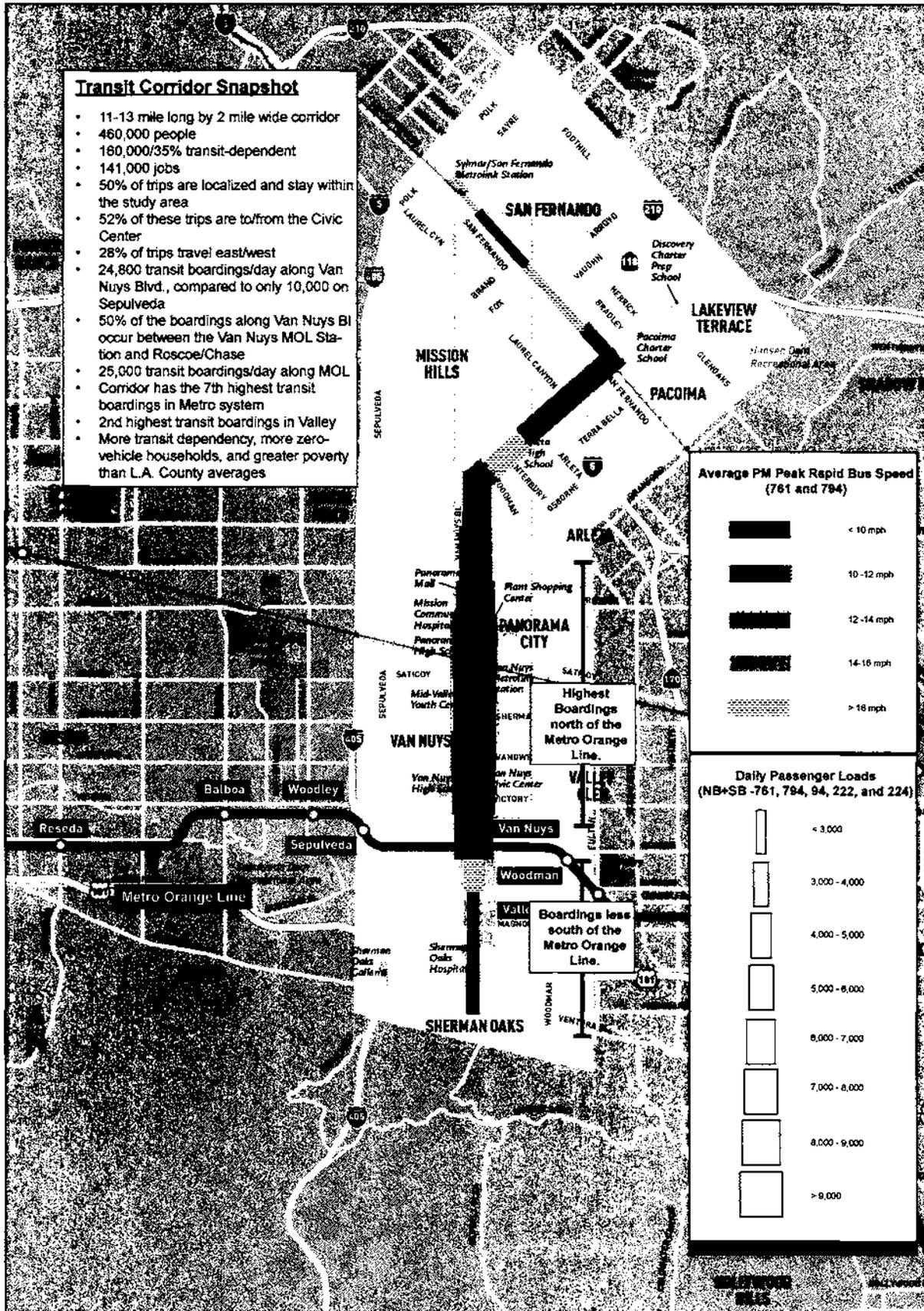
Martha Welborne, FAIA  
Executive Director, Countywide Planning



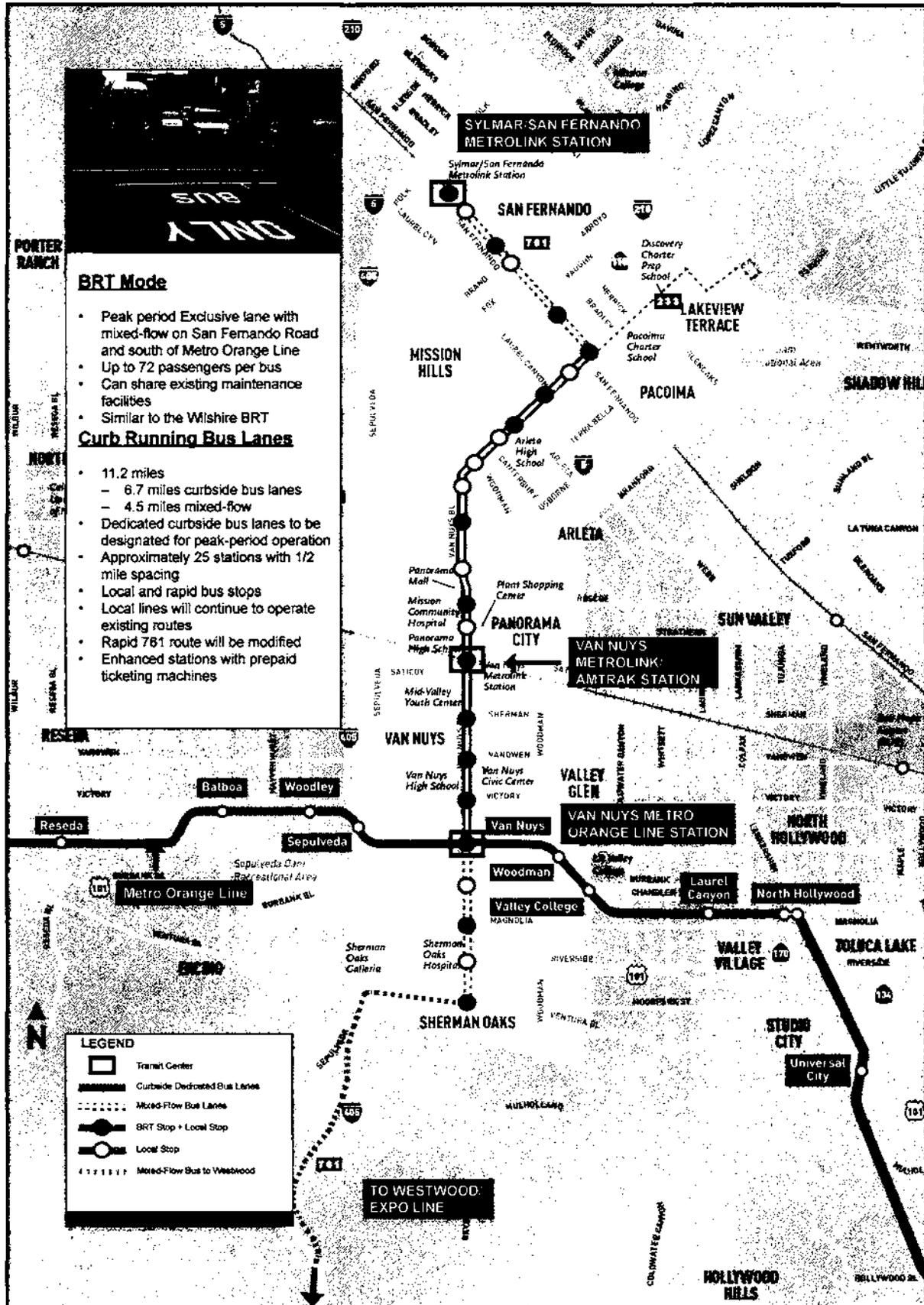
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for Arthur T. Leahy  
Chief Executive Officer

# East San Fernando Valley Corridor Map Existing Conditions



# Alternative #1 - Curb Running Bus Lanes



# Alternative #2 - Median Running Bus Lanes

