



Board Report

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**PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE
APRIL 17, 2019**

Motion by:

GARCETTI, DUPONT-WALKER, HAHN, SOLIS AND BUTTS

Related to Item 16: Vermont Transit Corridor - Rail Conversion/Feasibility Study

MTA should always strive to deliver the best transit project possible and not prematurely eliminate warranted project alternatives.

The Vermont Transit Corridor is a significant Measure M project intended to improve mobility along Vermont Avenue. Vermont Avenue is MTA's highest-ridership bus corridor. Vermont connects some of the most economically and socially diverse communities and several major destinations in the Los Angeles region.

Historically, Vermont Avenue was the second priority for rail transit investment after Wilshire Boulevard, as seen by the current Red Line route north of Wilshire Boulevard. Current and future Vermont Transit Corridor users deserve a world-class, reliable, and convenient transportation option. While the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) concepts recommended by MTA will improve bus operations and travel times, the Vermont Transit Corridor rail concepts would deliver superior customer experience, connectivity, reliability, and capacity.

Exposition Park in particular is one of the significant destinations served by the Vermont Transit Corridor. Exposition Park currently draws about four million visitors per year and is developing a new master plan in anticipation of additional growth.

Exposition Park is experiencing nearly \$2 billion in new and recent investments, including the Lucas Museum of Narrative Art, the Oschin Air and Space Center, the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum renovation, and an addition to the Natural History Museum. The Lucas Museum alone is a \$1 billion investment forecasted to draw an additional one million visitors per year to the regional park. Additionally, the Los Angeles Football Club's Banc of California Stadium is a \$350 million investment with a significant transit-patron attendance. Lastly, Exposition Park will be a major venue for the future 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

The Vermont Transit Corridor also connects to the University of Southern California (USC). USC is LA County's second-largest private employer and eighth-largest employer in LA County overall. USC

serves about 47,500 students, over 20,100 faculty and staff, and many more visitors, whom share a highly constrained parking capacity.

With ongoing development along the corridor, MTA could draw significant public-private partnership interest and private infrastructure investment. The Vermont Transit Corridor Project is a historic opportunity for LA County to close a transit service connectivity gap and to provide a world-class, reliable transportation option for people to access education, employment, and entertainment. This critical corridor connects multiple MTA rail lines, serves various regional employment centers, and connects populous, lower-income communities who rely on transit as well as emerging transit-oriented communities.

Bus service quality and reliability improvements on Vermont Avenue are much needed. MTA should continue to develop world-class Bus Rapid Transit alternatives for Vermont Avenue to ensure transit riders experience a high-quality, seamless ride.

However, given high transit ridership and constrained, congested conditions on Vermont Avenue, MTA must also study all technically feasible rail alternatives during environmental review and explore innovative funding mechanisms to accelerate their effectuation. Additionally, should MTA recommend congestion pricing in the Downtown LA area, a Vermont rail alternative will ensure a high-quality transit option. Lastly, given that MTA seeks to advance BRT concepts that would not preclude future rail conversion, evaluating all technically feasible rail alternatives should not significantly affect the environmental analysis budget and schedule.

MTA should preserve the ability to deliver the Vermont Transit Corridor as a rail project should additional funding materialize. Historically, there is precedent for this. The Expo Phase 1 and Crenshaw/LAX projects included both BRT and rail alternatives in their respective environmental documents.

SUBJECT: VERMONT TRANSIT CORRIDOR - RAIL CONVERSION/FEASIBILITY STUDY

RECOMMENDATION

APPROVE Motion by Garcetti, Dupont-Walker, Hahn, Solis and Butts that the Board direct the CEO to:

- A. Advance technically feasible rail concepts previously identified through the 2017 Vermont Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Technical Study into environmental review to preserve the ability to deliver rail transit if additional funding materializes;
- B. Include a feasibility study of extending the Vermont Transit Corridor to the South Bay Silver Line Pacific Coast Highway transitway station to ensure regional connectivity via Minimum Operable Segments, including identification of potential maintenance facility sites; and
- C. Report back to the MTA Board in July 2019 with a Public Private Partnership business case approach for each Minimum Operable Segment.

