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PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE
NOVEMBER 20, 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 11.2 miles from Ventura Boulevard in Sherman Oaks, through the communities of Van Nuys, Panorama City, Arleta and Pacoima, to the City of San Fernando terminating 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 24,800 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 11.2-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 6th. 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. For the LRT alternative, in the northern part of the corridor along narrow segments of San Fernando Road, grade-separations or a significant number of property acquisitions would be required 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 curb lanes of Van Nuys Boulevard. On-street parking could remain in the curb 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 as it could meet most of the Project's Purpose and Need and because it could have the least impact on existing traffic and parking, incorporate a bike lane, and has the potential to be constructed within the budget reserved for this project in the 2009 LRTP. BRT service could extend for the full corridor length of 11.2 miles. Initially, peak period dedicated lanes would operate in the mid corridor segment between the MOL and San Fernando Road a distance of approximately 6.7 miles. Peak period dedicated lanes could be extended to the full corridor length in the future to connect to the Sepulveda Pass Transit Corridor and the San Fernando Road railroad right-of-way, when these projects are further defined.

- 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 could be constructed in the median at approximate half-mile intervals. BRT service could extend for the full corridor length of 11.2 miles with dedicated lanes initially operating in the mid corridor segment between the MOL and San Fernando Road, a distance of approximately 6.7 miles. Mixed-flow bus service could be provided south of the MOL and north of Van Nuys Boulevard/San Fernando Road. Peak period dedicated lanes could be extended to the full corridor length in the future to connect to the Sepulveda Pass Transit Corridor and the San Fernando Road railroad right-of-way, when these projects are further defined.

- 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 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 could 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 could have much higher carrying capacity than a BRT system, while avoiding some of the grade separation and right-of-way impacts that could be required with the full LRT alternative. Street running rail could operate between the MOL and the Sylmar/San Fernando Metrolink Station, a distance of 9.2 miles. Service could be extended to the full corridor length of 11.2 miles in the future to connect

to the Sepulveda Pass Transit Corridor once decisions are made about the alignment, budget and delivery schedule for that corridor. 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" could operate in the center median of Van Nuys Boulevard with stations at approximate 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. Alternatively, segments of the route could operate in street-running mode whereby trains would be slowed to operate at prevailing traffic speeds. Such operation could potentially mitigate the need for grade-separations and/or right-of-way acquisitions. LRT service could operate between the MOL and San Fernando Road over a distance of 6.7 miles. Options will be studied in the DEIS/R to extend the service to the Sylmar/San Fernando Metrolink Station over a combined total distance of 9.2 miles, if accommodation can be reached to use a portion of the Metro-owned railroad right-of-way that runs parallel to San Fernando Road. Alternatively, connecting bus service could be provided in this area. Ultimately, LRT service could be extended to the full corridor length of 11.2 miles in the future to connect to the Sepulveda Pass Transit Corridor once decisions are made about the alignment, budget and delivery schedule for that corridor. A new rail maintenance facility would be required and several alternative locations will be evaluated.

Transit Connections at North and South Ends of Corridor

Based on Scoping comments and further review of transit options, we are now considering a phased approach for the development of the East SFV Transit Corridor in coordination with other planned transit projects in the northern and southern end of the Corridor.

- 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 Transit Corridor is being analyzed for Public Private Partnership delivery method in conjunction with the Sepulveda Pass project.

  Analysis of bus boardings along Van Nuys Boulevard shows very heavy transfer activity between the buses on that corridor and the MOL. Ridership south of the MOL is approximately half of the ridership north of the MOL. Therefore, exclusive guideways south of the MOL are not warranted 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 Transit Corridor for exclusive bus and rail guideways. Mixed flow bus connections could be provided south of the MOL to Ventura Boulevard for the BRT, Tram and LRT 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 Transit 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 without acquiring a significant number of properties and could require modifications to the SR 118 Interchange. Given that the area may be altered as a result of High Speed Rail and Metrolink, future improvements will need to rely upon reaching consensus with these two other rail authorities and Caltrans. The DEIS/R will include one alignment within the Metro owned railroad right-of-way that presumes that accommodation can be reached with these other agencies to allow dedicated rail transit to operate within the existing railroad right-of-way. We will also include a mixed-flow bus or tram alignment along San Fernando Road in the event that no use of the railroad right-of-way is possible.

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. We also will continue our outreach with the Cities of Los Angeles and San Fernando, elected offices and stakeholders.

ATTACHMENTS

A. East SFV Transit 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

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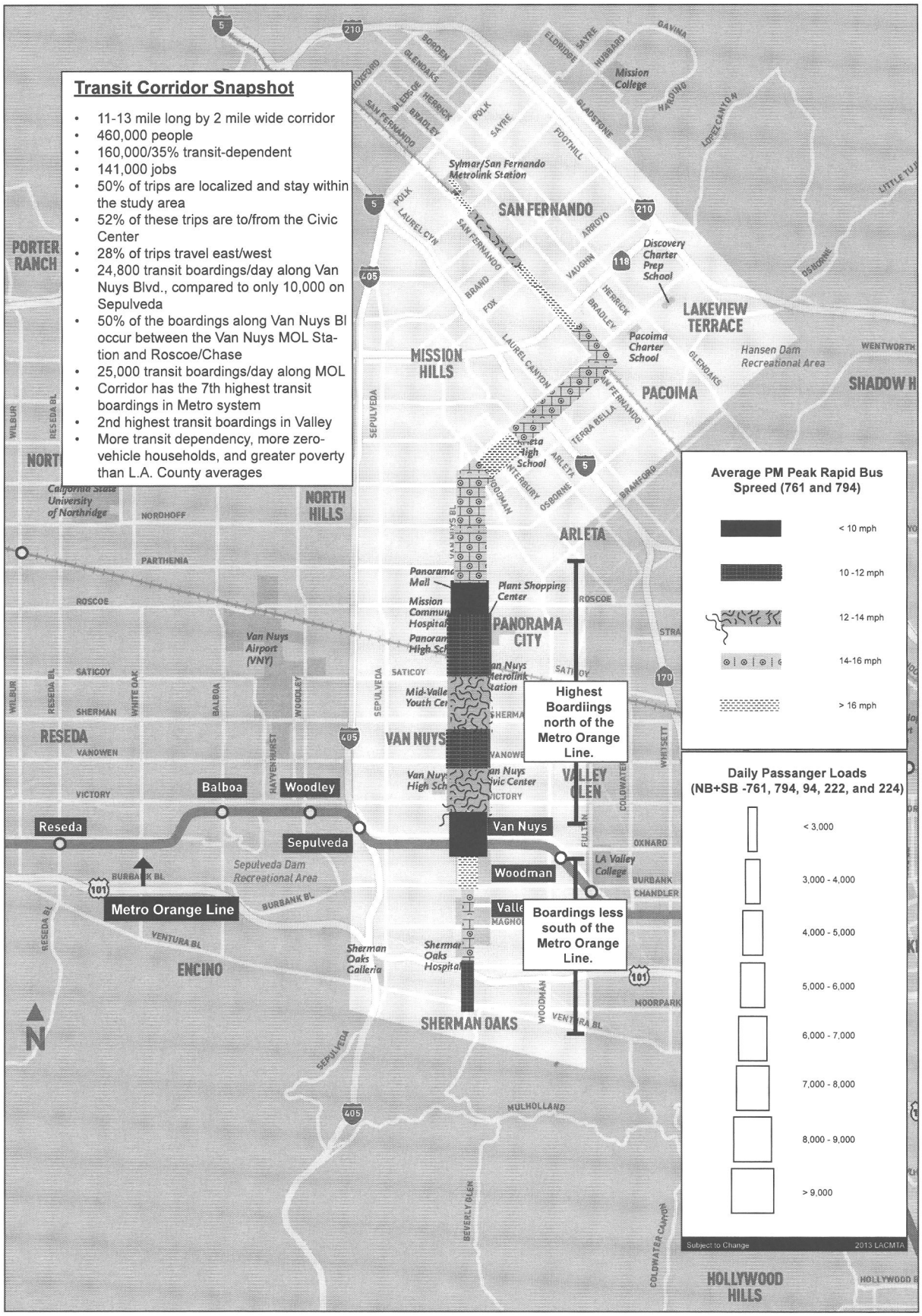
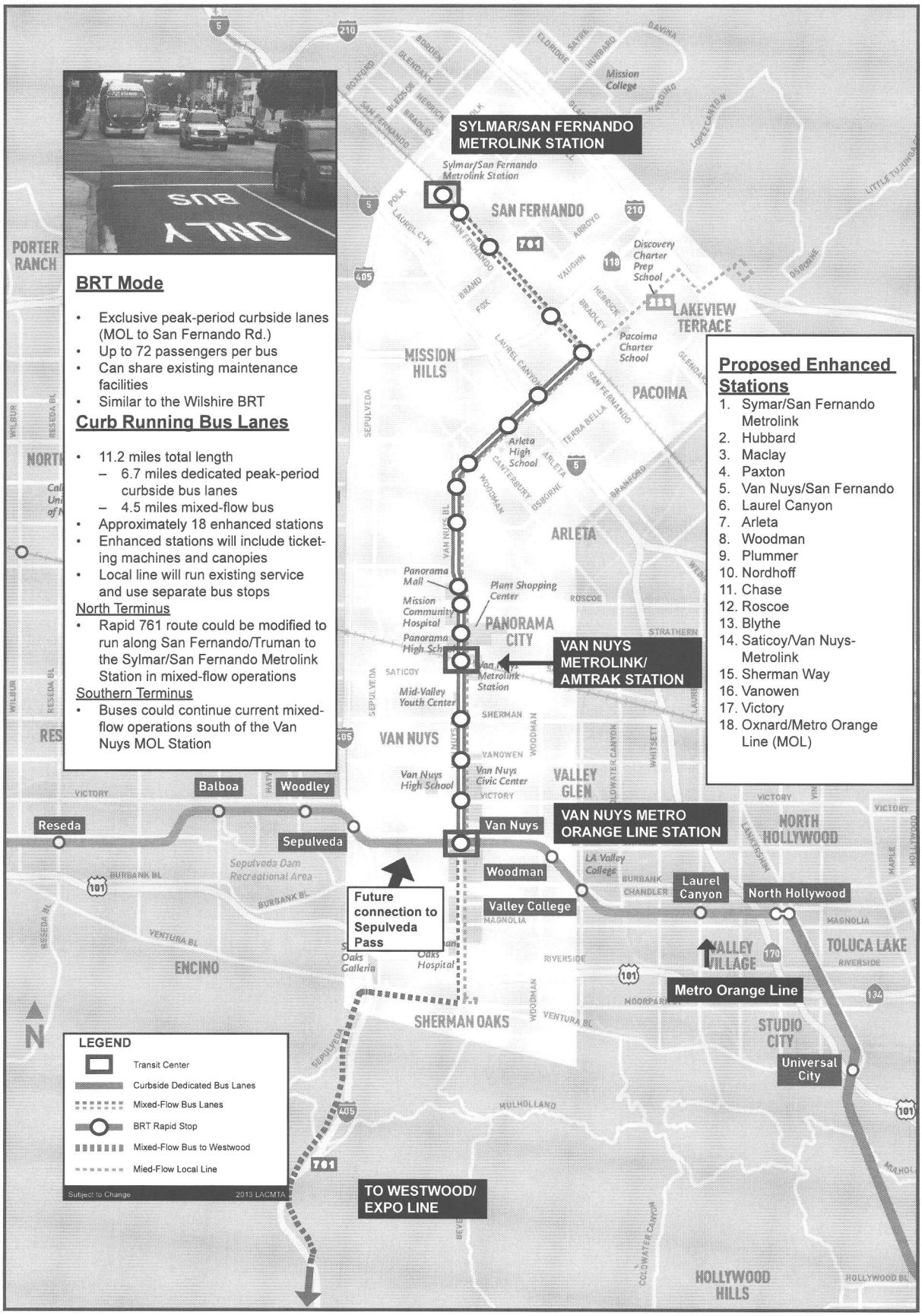
ATTACHMENT A

East San Fernando Valley Corridor Map
Existing Conditions



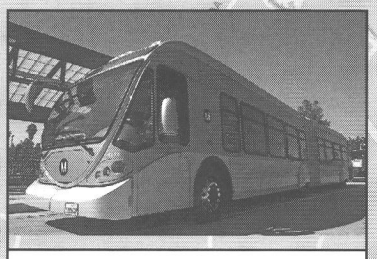
ATTACHMENT B

Alternative #1 - Curb Running Bus Lanes



ATTACHMENT C

Alternative #2 - Median Running Bus Lanes



BRT Mode

- Exclusive lanes in center median (MOL to San Fernando Rd.)
- Up to 72 passengers per bus
- Can share existing maintenance facilities

Median Running Bus Lanes

- 11.2 miles total length
  - 6.7 miles dedicated median street running bus lanes
  - 4.5 miles mixed-flow
- Dedicated bus lanes would operate 24 hours
- Approximately 17 new stations
- Enhanced stations will include ticketing machines and canopies
- Local bus line will run existing service and use separate bus stops

North Terminus

- Rapid 761 route could be modified to run along San Fernando/Truman to the Sylmar/San Fernando Metrolink Station in mixed-flow operations

Southern Terminus

- Bus could continue current mixed-flow operations south of the Van Nuys MOL Station

Proposed New Stations

1. Symar/San Fernando Metrolink
2. Hubbard
3. Maclay
4. Paxton
5. Van Nuys/San Fernando
6. Laurel Canyon
7. Arleta
8. Woodman
9. Plummer
10. Nordhoff
11. Roscoe/Chase
12. Blythe
13. Saticoy/Van Nuys-Metrolink
14. Sherman Way
15. Vanowen
16. Victory
17. Oxnard/Metro Orange Line (MOL)

SYLMAR/SAN FERNANDO METROLINK STATION

VAN NUYS METROLINK/ AMTRAK STATION

VAN NUYS METRO ORANGE LINE STATION

Future connection to Sepulveda Pass

Metro Orange Line

TO WESTWOOD/ EXPO LINE

Reseda

Sepulveda

Van Nuys

Woodman

Valley College

Laurel Canyon

North Hollywood

Universal City

LEGEND

- Transit Center
- Median Running Bus Lanes
- Mixed-Flow Bus Lanes
- BRT Rapid Stop
- Mixed-Flow Local Bus Line
- Mixed-Flow Bus to Westwood

Subject to Change

2013 LACMTA

ATTACHMENT D

Alternative #3 - Median Running Tram

Tram Mode

- Low-floor Tram technology
- Operates in a fixed guideway and mixed-flow traffic
- Overhead electrical power, but can operate without
- Up to 250 passengers per tram train
- New maintenance facilities required
- Similar to trams operating in Europe
- Operates at prevailing traffic speeds but can operate at speeds up to 65 mph in exclusive guideway

Median Running Tram

- 11.2 miles total length
  - 9.2 miles dedicated and mixed-flow median street running guideway
  - 2 miles mixed-flow bus connector with continued service over the Sepulveda Pass
- Approximately 16 new stations
- Enhanced stations with ticketing machines and canopies
- Local bus line will continue to operate in mixed-flow lanes

North Terminus

- Mixed-flow rail operations along San Fernando to the Sylmar/San Fernando Metrolink Station

Southern Terminus

- Rail terminates at the Van Nuys/ MOL Station until the preferred mode and alignment are identified for the Sepulveda Pass project. Tram could be expanded in the future to operate in the Sepulveda Pass corridor.

Proposed New Stations

1. Symar/San Fernando Metrolink
2. Maclay
3. Paxton
4. Van Nuys/San Fernando
5. Laurel Canyon
6. Arleta
7. Woodman
8. Plummer
9. Nordhoff
10. Roscoe/Chase
11. Blythe
12. Saticoy/Van Nuys-Metrolink
13. Sherman Way
14. Vanowen
15. Victory
16. Oxnard/Metro Orange Line (MOL)

SYLMAR/SAN FERNANDO METROLINK STATION

VAN NUYS METROLINK/ AMTRAK STATION

VAN NUYS METRO ORANGE LINE STATION

Future connection to Sepulveda Pass

Bus Connector

Metro Orange Line

TO WESTWOOD/ EXPO LINE

LEGEND

- Transit Center
- Median Running Dedicated Tram
- Mixed-Flow Tram
- Mixed-Flow Bus Connector
- Mixed-Flow Local Bus Line

Subject to Change

ATTACHMENT E

Alternative #4 - Median Running LRT