

Summer 2019 Outreach Summary – North SFV BRT Project

Introduction

The North San Fernando Valley (SFV) Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Improvements Project (Project) is a proposed new 18-mile BRT line that would enhance existing bus service and increase transit system connectivity. The project has been identified in the Measure M Expenditure Plan, with a projected opening date between FY 2023-25 and \$180 million of funding.

In May 2018, the Board authorized initiating the North SFV BRT Corridor Planning and Environmental Study. The first step in the study was the completion of the Alternatives Analysis (AA) Study. The purpose of the AA Study is to identify, evaluate, and screen or narrow down the number of transit alternatives that are to be studied as part of the subsequent environmental review phase.

Staff initiated work on the AA Study in July 2018 to evaluate a range of possible BRT routes in the San Fernando Valley between Chatsworth, Sylmar/San Fernando and North Hollywood.

Metro initiated an outreach and public engagement strategy to engage and inform stakeholders and encourage them to provide input on the project during the Alternatives Analysis (AA) phase of the project. Metro sought broad-based public input from local leaders, community members, potential transit riders and representatives of land uses that would be served by transit as to the preferred alignment, station locations and service parameters. The Metro team sought feedback about the proposed alternatives and station options, along with general comments regarding BRT benefits, project funding, ridership, and the preferred alternative selection process.

Below is the AA timeline:

- > July 2018 Alternatives Analysis began
- > Fall 2018 Community meetings, outreach events, and agency meetings were conducted to introduce the project and solicit input on the proposed routes
- > June 2019 Alternatives Analysis completed

During the AA phase, Metro built a stakeholder database of approximately 2,100 contacts and collected over 200 comments. Common topics which were mentioned in comments received included, but were not limited to: safety, connectivity, parking, traffic congestion, property impacts, future development, interface with the East San Fernando Valley light rail transit line, additional alternatives, and station options. The AA Study was completed in June 2019. Key takeaways from the public engagement were included in the June 2019 Alternatives Analysis Report. This information was also summarized in the AA Outreach Report. Both reports can be found on the Metro website at <https://www.metro.net/nsfvbvt>

In June 2019, the Planning and Programming Committee received staff's presentation and public comment on the AA Study. The committee meeting video including staff's presentation, public comment, and committee discussion can be found on the Metro website at http://metro.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view_id=2&clip_id=1123

The Planning and Programming Committee forwarded the item to the full Board without

recommendation. The item was subsequently continued to a future Board meeting for consideration. During the postponement, staff conducted additional public outreach in the Summer of 2019 to ensure stakeholders had an opportunity to better understand the Project and offer feedback.

The next sections list those outreach efforts, describe the collected comments and summarize the feedback received during this period.

Recap of Summer 2019 Outreach Activities

Staff conducted additional public outreach to ensure stakeholders had an opportunity to better understand the Project and offer feedback. This recap of outreach activities provides an overview of the variety of outreach and noticing strategies Metro utilized to build Project awareness, direct community members to the project website, and to promote the meetings.

Metro also used social media advertising to promote awareness of the project and promote attendance at community meetings. These ads ran on Facebook and Instagram platforms, meeting community members where they are. With more than six million active users in LA County spanning a range of age, race and income demographics, these platforms allowed Metro to reach significant numbers of people in the study area with paid ads to complement outreach tactics in the field.

Project Overview Video

During the Summer of 2019, Metro released a video providing an overview of the Project to describe the purpose and need. Metro produced two versions of this video, in English and Spanish.

The English video can be viewed at:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=3&v=um9UrEAHwqk

The Spanish video was tailored to a Spanish-speaking audience and can be viewed at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hMLOTrPSp84>

Both videos were available for viewing at the community meetings and are posted on the project website.

Using geographic targeting technology, the English video was promoted to the project area between July 30 and August 12, 2019, with the following results:

- > Ad with video link was seen by 106,976 unique people
- > Video was viewed 29,052 times
- > Generated 48 user comments, 68 instances of people sharing with their own networks and 302 'reactions' in which a user clicked an emoji to show how they feel about it (283 of these were 'likes' and 'loves', or the thumbs-up or heart emoji, respectively)

Community Meetings Overview

Community Meeting Noticing

A total of four email notices (e-blasts) were sent out prior to the meetings utilizing the project database with email addresses of over 2,700 stakeholders. Metro used its Nextdoor account to share information with neighborhoods located along the project corridor, which include 70,115

people who are registered on Nextdoor.

A total of 59,000 flyers were distributed to residences and businesses. An additional 1,000 flyers were delivered to key community centers and organizations.

Ads for the community meetings ran on Facebook and Instagram, geographically targeting communities surrounding the meeting locations, between July 27 and August 11. The meetings were added to Facebook as 'event pages,' where users could note their plans to attend, integrate with their Facebook calendars and discuss the event with other users. For each meeting, one set of ads targeted "likely riders"; the second set targeted everyone else in the area surrounding the meeting location. Overall, the "likely rider" audience engaged with the ads more, meaning that they clicked the ad, commented on the ad or 'event page' or noted plans to attend the community meeting.

Overall, these ads generated the following results*:

- > 943 'yes' or 'maybe' RSVPs to attend a community meeting
- > 114,586 people saw the ads for the community meetings

*Overlap in audience between ad sets makes these combined overall numbers imprecise.

In addition to social media, neighborhood, and community center noticing, Metro relied on existing relationships with community partners, elected officials, neighborhood councils, and the San Fernando Valley Council of Governments to share the meeting information through their trusted notification measures, including California State University, Northridge (CSUN), State Senator Robert Hertzberg, Los Angeles Council District 12, and North Hills West Neighborhood Council, among others.

Community Meetings Summary

Metro held three community meetings in August 2019 in North Hollywood, Panorama City and Northridge. All of the meetings were conducted in an open-house format where participants could engage in one-on-one dialogue with project staff at different information stations, provide input by participating in an interactive map exercise and submit comment cards. This format supports Metro's goal of providing a safe and equitable environment for all participants and all viewpoints at our community meetings. Refreshments and a kids activity table were provided at all meetings to provide a welcoming, family-friendly environment.

Upon arriving at the meeting, participants received a guided comment card and a "passport" guide to each information station. As participants moved through the presentation materials, they received a sticker on their passport, and upon filling up the passport with stickers for every station, they received a bag of Metro promotional items to thank them for their participation. The guided comment card included three different prompts: "What I like," "I want Metro to study," and "What I suggest" which attendees were encouraged to complete after visiting the information stations.

North Hollywood Meeting

The North Hollywood meeting was held on Thursday, August 8, 2019 from 5:30 pm to 7:30 pm at Laurel Hall School, a private school affiliated with a Lutheran church, located near one of the proposed design variations for the Project on Laurel Canyon.



North Hollywood Meeting

Panorama City Meeting

The Panorama City meeting was held on Saturday, August 10th from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm in a community room at Plaza del Valle, a family-oriented community plaza with approximately 100 small retail shops and restaurants. The community room is located adjacent to a playground, and Metro's meeting featured children's activities like pop-up buses and coloring sheets as well as empanadas and sandwiches to draw families over. The meeting was also timed to coincide with a back-to-school event at the venue. Presentation boards were displayed in English and Spanish, and bilingual team members guided Spanish-speaking attendees through the boards to explain the project in detail. Following the meeting, outreach staff hosted an information table next to the playground through the late afternoon to maximize opportunities to interact with families attending the back-to-school fair.



Panorama City Meeting

Northridge Meeting

The Northridge meeting was held on Monday, August 12th from 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm at the CSUN campus at the Orange Grove Bistro. More than 350 people attended this meeting. The number of meeting attendees exceeded the capacity of the room, so many attendees had to wait outside in line for 30 minutes – 1 hour. Metro staff regularly walked the length of the line to ensure that anyone with mobility challenges or who indicated they could not wait in line was

accommodated either to enter the meeting room sooner or to sit outside the Bistro with Metro staff who used a paper handout to walk them through the presentation materials. Metro staff extended the meeting duration to ensure that everyone who waited in line was able to review the information stations and submit their comments.



Northridge Meeting

The following table provides a summary of the number of participants by location.

MEETING DATE	LOCATION	PARTICIPANTS
Thursday, August 8, 2019	North Hollywood	35
Saturday, August 10, 2019	Panorama City	35
Monday, August 12, 2019	Northridge	357
Total		427

Summer Community Meeting Participants

Earned Media

A press release announcing the meetings was sent to 681 publications, individuals and blogs on the Metro media list. The project and meetings earned featured media coverage in 14 different stories, including Metro's The Source, Los Angeles Times, LA Daily News, Southern California Public Radio's KPCC, Curbed LA, among others.

Other Community Outreach Efforts

In addition to the community meetings, the Metro team conducted thirteen presentations and outreach efforts at events. Outreach efforts resulted in over 600 stakeholders being added to the email database since June 2019, bringing the stakeholder email database up to over 2,700 stakeholders.

Metro recognizes that there can be a variety of barriers which prevent community members from attending Metro's meetings, including work and caregiving responsibilities, infrequent public transit service in the SFV, and concern about attending formal government-hosted meetings, to name a few. By hosting tables at community fairs, Metro was able to reach new audiences during the summer to build project awareness and expand the stakeholder database.

To respond to community requests for more information about the Project, Metro scheduled the community meetings as soon as possible following the June Planning and Programming

Committee, so the community meeting at the CSUN campus took place during the summer session when fewer students were on campus. Metro staff employed a variety of different strategies to reach CSUN students in August and September. Metro Commute Services staff assisted with promoting the August community meeting during their outreach at student orientation the week of August 5th to promote the Universal College Student Transit Pass (U-Pass) and through an email to the approximately 1,500 CSUN U-Pass holders. The outreach team participated in three events hosted on campus by CSUN Associated Students once the fall session began in late August.



CSUN Associated Students Fair Event



CSUN Commuter Week Event

Lastly, Metro made presentations at several different organizations to provide the latest information on the North SFV BRT project and answer questions from attendees, including the San Fernando Valley Council of Governments Transportation Committee and the Granada Hills South Neighborhood Council.

A complete list of all presentations and outreach events conducted in Summer 2019 is listed below.

MEETING DATE	EVENT DESCRIPTION	PARTICIPANTS
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MEETING DATE	EVENT DESCRIPTION	PARTICIPANTS
June 20, 2019	SFV Council of Governments Transportation Committee	20
June 22, 2019	LA Valley Pride Event	150-200
July 11, 2019	Granada Hills South Neighborhood Council	60
July 11, 2019	Valley Alliance of Neighborhood Councils	30
July 27, 2019	NoHo Summer Nights Event	10
Week of August 5, 2019	U-Pass outreach at CSUN	n/a
August 10, 2019	Plaza Del Valle Back to School Event	10
August 27, 2019	BizFed Presentation	12
August 27, 2019	CSUN Associated Students Fair	150-175
August 28, 2019	Kaiser Permanente Panorama City Farmers Market	30-45
August 29, 2019	Veterans Job & Resource Fair – Sepulveda VA Ambulatory Care Center	20
September 10, 2019	CSUN Associated Students Commuter Week	150-200
September 18, 2019	CSUN Associated Students Civic Engagement Fair	80-100

Summer Presentations and Outreach Events

Summary of Comments Received

Approximately 4,400 comments have been received from June 2019 through September 23, 2019. The broad stakeholder participation reflects the high level of interest in this project. People provided input in a variety of ways including website comments, emails, phone calls, Facebook/social media, the Source blog, at meetings/events, petitions, and letters.

Letters from Community Organizations and Elected Officials

As of September 23, 2019, Metro received 15 letters as described below.

- > Ten support letters were received from community-based organizations, noting the importance of the BRT project for their employees and the individuals they represent and serve. Letters have been received from providers of health care, education, and social and community services, chamber and small business organizations, and veterans, including the following organizations:
 - Assurance Learning Academy
 - California Small Business Association
 - Greater San Fernando Valley Chamber of Commerce
 - Hope of the Valley
 - LA Service Provider Coalition

(Representing 18 community-based organizations which provide direct services to more than 21,000 people with disabilities)

- Mission Community Hospital
 - Mid-Valley YMCA
 - The Adult Skills Center
 - Valley Community Healthcare
 - Veterans of Foreign Wars
- > Three support letters were received from elected officials representing the study area including:
- United States Congressman Tony Cardenas
 - California State Senator Robert Hertzberg
 - Los Angeles Unified School Board Member Scott Schmerelson
- > A letter from Interim Los Angeles Councilmember Greig Smith, 12th District was received, requesting Metro consider postponing the item from the September 2019 Board Agenda and holding a Board Meeting in the San Fernando Valley.
- > A letter from the Sherwood Forest Homeowners Association was received requesting the opportunity to meet with Metro to discuss how better public transportation can be accomplished to serve the people of the San Fernando Valley.

Frequently Repeated Statements

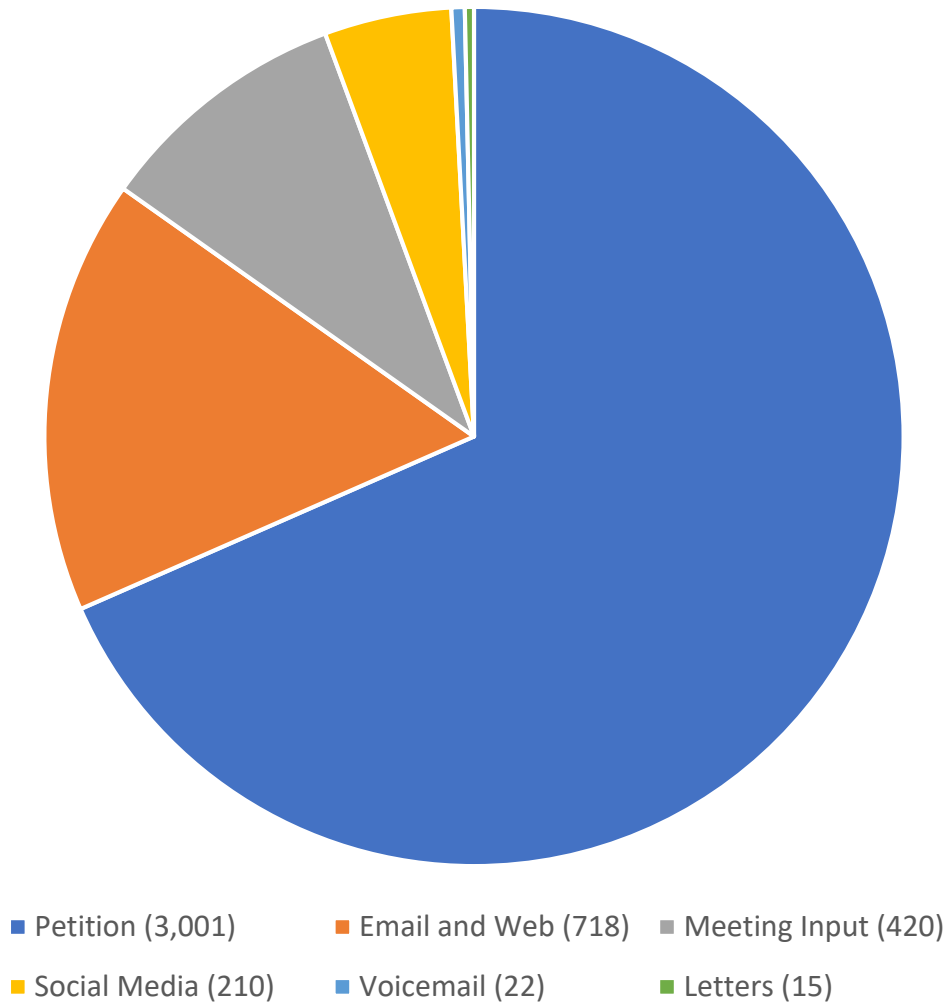
Many individuals took advantage of easy ways to communicate with Metro by signing onto statements of support and opposition to the project.

- > Approximately 3,000 names were gathered on the CSUN campus in support of Metro providing much faster transit service and providing “the best possible solution to meet CSUN’s transportation needs.”
- > Over 500 emails and phone calls were received in opposition to the project, expressing potential impact concerns regarding: loss of travel lanes, loss of parking, “up-zoning” neighborhoods, and the adequacy of outreach to affected stakeholders.

Summary of Comments

Comments received through September 23, 2019 were received from the following sources:

Comment Sources



In order to summarize the range of comments received, a summary of the key topic areas is presented below. It is the goal of the environmental assessment phase to fully disclose refinements to the Project and to disclose the benefits and impacts of the Project to help dispel misconceptions and clarify any ambiguities.



Routes and Stations

Routes and Stations - Comments were received on potential routes and stations. Some comments advocated for further consideration of a route along Roscoe Blvd west of the I-405 freeway. Some emphasized the importance of dedicated bus lanes on a particular route while others expressed that dedicated bus lanes are unnecessary on a particular route and advocated for careful study and consideration of additional transit improvement options. Comments were received on the placement of station locations. Some comments suggested alternate routes that were not previously considered by the project, such as Plummer Street or the Metrolink right-of-way. A few comments received referenced connection to other transit and First/Last Mile options. Comments included mentions of other transit lines that individuals use

and suggestions for transit hubs or shuttle buses. Some comments asked how the project would impact bicycle lanes or what the project would do to improve sidewalks and ADA accessibility. A few comments expressed concern regarding station locations. Comments ranged from a request for a station location adjacent to a facility that serves individuals with developmental disabilities who regularly use transit, to opposition to station placement in front of homes.



Service Quality and Frequency

Service Quality and Frequency - Comments were received regarding service quality and the frequency of service. These comments included questions about how existing service would be adjusted in relation to the project. Some comments expressed a desire for increased service frequency and faster transit travel speeds. Other comments expressed skepticism that people would ride the bus in an auto-oriented area. Some comments highlighted concerns over high temperatures and a lack of shade and passenger amenities at existing bus stops. Some remarks expressed support for BRT because of the increased bus speeds and reduced travel times expected from the service. Other remarks felt that the project should operate in mixed-flow travel lanes. Other comments in this category include questions about lighting, TAP card vending machines, real-time arrival information screens, and parking at stations.



Traffic and Parking

Traffic and Parking - Comments expressed concern that dedicated bus lanes for the project would result in traffic impacts on major arterial streets, in particular around I-405, near CSUN, and in the Panorama City area. Comments were received regarding on-street parking. Some comments expressed support for reallocating space from car parking to transit use. Other comments expressed concern about a loss of on-street parking in front of single-family residences, or concern about parking by students in the neighborhoods surrounding CSUN. A number of comments expressed concern that that project would cause increased congestion and that drivers would utilize neighborhood streets as alternate travel routes.



Land Use and Property Impacts

Land Use and Property Impacts - Comments were received mentioning property impacts and land use change. Some commenters expressed concern that the transit project would negatively impact the value of single-family homes while others suggested that the project would increase property values. There were also comments that expressed uncertainty over how the project would impact zoning of single-family residential neighborhoods or requested clarification on impacts to zoning in the project study area. Some of the comments were related to the City of Los Angeles Transit Oriented Communities Affordable Housing Incentive Program and or legislation at the State level. Some comments expressed a desire for more compact and dense development

near transit that would help with housing affordability. Other comments expressed a concern about the possibility of high-rise apartments abutting single-family homes.



Public Safety

Public Safety – Comments were received expressing concern about perceived safety issues related to the project. Some comments expressed a need to address and enhance safety with this project. Some were concerned that the project would increase travel speeds on major arterials. There were also comments that expressed a belief that dedicated bus lanes could not be used by emergency response vehicles, or a concern that the project would impede emergency response times. Other comments expressed a need for traffic calming measures to protect pedestrian safety. Some comments expressed concern about safety on board the Metro system, and or concern about individuals experiencing homelessness.



Outreach

Outreach – Comments were received on outreach issues. Some comments were complimentary of the information made available. Other comments expressed concern that the timing and adequacy of outreach to affected stakeholders was insufficient. Some requested more information about the project development process and schedule. There were also comments requesting additional outreach to students and transit riders. Others needed help finding materials about the project online.



Other

Other – Most of the comments in the other category were left on social media platforms and included requests for general Metro information, input on other Metro projects or unrelated policies, or comments where a user tagged another person on the platform but did not leave a comment. A few comments received suggested either fully supporting the project financially or requested reallocating the project funding to other transportation projects.

Next Steps

This section describes Metro's approach to incorporating the feedback and concerns received into its planning process. All summer outreach comments will be carried forward to inform project development.

Metro acknowledges that there are issues to consider during the environmental review phase. One such issue involved strong community support behind Metro continuing to study a route option along Roscoe Blvd between the I-405 freeway and Reseda Blvd. Considering the community feedback and the NextGen Bus Study, staff will include further evaluation of the Roscoe Blvd alternative identified in the AA Report as part of the environmental review phase. Additional route options along Roscoe Blvd may also be considered so long as a connection to CSUN is provided.

The project will be using Metro's working definition of Equity Focused Communities (EFC), or those communities that are most heavily impacted by gaps in equity in Los Angeles County, as well as supplemental metrics as appropriate and directed, to actively lead and partner in addressing and overcoming disparities in access to opportunity.

Generally, the remaining issue areas will be addressed following the completion of the additional study and the refinement of the Project as the environmental review phase advances. The initial issue areas will also continue to be addressed following the additional study.

Conclusion

The purpose of this summary is to acknowledge and summarize the valuable input received from community members and stakeholders.

Metro will continue to stay flexible as we refine the project in consultation with the community to achieve equal or greater performance outcomes and positive impacts for the people with the most need for transit. Metro will keep the community informed on the progress of the planning and environmental study and upcoming decision points and will provide meaningful ways for the public to participate in the development of refinements to the Project. Expanding community consensus is a key goal for Metro during the environmental review phase.