



*Southern California's Leading Transit Advocacy Group*

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The Transit Coalition (a project of LACBC) is a nonprofit public charity exempt from federal income tax under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code

**UPDATED: 23 January 2012**

**The JEM Line--** Access to Jobs, Education and Medical Services: Jobs in Westwood, Brentwood, Century City, Beverly Hills, Santa Monica; Educational Institutions: UCLA, USC, SMCC, LAVC, Pierce; Medical Services: Veterans Hospital, UCLA Med Center

*The Transit Coalition's Rationale for a Valley-Westside Rail Line:*

1. Metro needs to study the ridership potential of the Van Nuys and Sepulveda Pass Corridors together to maximize benefits, ridership, funding sources, and connectivity. The result of Measure R should be a contiguous transit line from Sylmar to the Expo Line in West LA.

2. For a Van Nuys/Sepulveda Pass transit line, rail is preferable to bus due to travel time, speed, acceleration, capacity, operating cost, pollution, reliability and ride comfort, with a tunnel under the mountains directly to UCLA and Westwood.

Thus far, neighborhood councils in Arleta, Granada Hills North, Northridge South, Northridge West, Palms, Panorama City, Reseda, Studio City, Sylmar, Tarzana, Toluca Lake and Winnetka have already taken positions in support of The Transit Coalition's concept, along with the Council District 11 Neighborhood Empowerment Congress Transportation Advisory Committee and Valley VOTE.

Here is a detailed outline of the reasoning.

*Why coordinate the Van Nuys and Sepulveda Pass project studies together?*

1. The Van Nuys Boulevard commercial corridor needs economic revitalization, as well as better, faster access to major job centers on the Westside.
2. The 405 Freeway has approximately 300,000 vehicle trips over the Sepulveda Pass every day, with essentially no comparable alternative way to get from the San Fernando Valley to the Westside; Sepulveda Boulevard is constrained to a fraction of that capacity due to topography and neighbors.
3. Measure R has set aside funding for specific transit projects across LA County, including the Van Nuys and Sepulveda Pass Corridors.
4. On a stand-alone basis, the ridership potential of Van Nuys Boulevard is limited, with only 20,000-30,000 riders currently.

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5. This level of ridership would likely justify only a minimal project with no additional funding, such as a bus-only lane and intersection improvements.
6. While areas such as West and South Los Angeles are getting multiple rail lines--a good result--the Valley would wind up with very little.
7. However, if Metro plans to connect the Van Nuys and Sepulveda Pass Corridors together as one contiguous transit line, the ridership potential is based on the number of commuters on the 405 Freeway, not just Van Nuys Boulevard alone.
8. Although Metro has scheduled to complete the Sepulveda Pass project after the Van Nuys project, Metro can incorporate the scoping for the Sepulveda Pass into the Van Nuys study and then build them in phases, or on an accelerated basis with the 30/10 Plan--America Fast Forward.
9. If the Van Nuys project is designed as a "Minimum Operable Segment" of a larger line that could attract high ridership, like the Metro Red Line or Blue Line, it could qualify for federal New Starts Funding, which is covering 60% of the Downtown Regional Connector's project cost.
10. The Transit Coalition's concept is similar to the Regional Connector, which brings surface rail lines at-grade (Expo, Blue Line) into the downtown job center via a rail tunnel.
11. Our Valley-Westside Rail Tunnel would utilize the existing right-of-way where the Pacific Electric Railway streetcars (the old "Red Cars") used to run on Van Nuys Boulevard, then go underground in Sherman Oaks to reach UCLA and Westwood directly, bypassing the 405 Freeway.
12. The Valley-Westside Rail Tunnel would also allow commuters to connect to the Wilshire Subway and the Exposition Light Rail Line, providing quick access to other major job centers, such as Century City, Santa Monica, Beverly Hills, USC and Culver City.
13. By connecting the northern portion of the project to Mission College and the Metrolink regional rail lines, the project further enhances its ridership potential by drawing riders in both directions simultaneously and providing Santa Clarita, Antelope Valley, and Ventura County riders an easy, rapid way to get to the Westside, providing greater regional benefits.
14. These new suburban riders, who normally bypass our communities while driving on the 405 Freeway, would see Van Nuys businesses along their commute every day, giving these shops the ability to reach new customers.

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15. The suburban ridership potential also provides an opportunity for bipartisan support in Congress for funding the project.
16. Houston and Salt Lake City have new light rail lines running in major commercial corridors that have benefited businesses along the routes.
17. A counter-example in Long Beach is due to the City of Long Beach being unwilling to coordinate its signal timing with the Blue Line, causing travel times in that section to be as slow as a bus.
18. The City of Los Angeles has experience optimizing traffic signals with the Gold and Blue Lines, so this would not be an issue for Van Nuys.
19. Signals could be timed for preemption in the primary commuting direction to achieve time savings similar to that of grade separation. In other words, not just speeding up the signal cycle by a few seconds, but resetting the signals as trains leave stations to allow them to generally avoid stopping at intersections.
20. Eventually the line could be extended to LAX to connect with the Green Line and the Crenshaw Line as well.

### *What is the benefit and viability of a Valley-Westside Rail Tunnel versus other options?*

1. The most important reason for the tunnel is travel time: by shortening the route and arriving directly at major destinations, the rail tunnel would provide a faster commute than driving, let alone a bus.
2. The current "Rapid" bus takes 102 minutes from Pacoima to Westwood at peak (if there are no accidents) and carries about 3,000 riders/day in the Sepulveda Pass. With improvements, a bus trip could be reduced to perhaps 80 minutes.
3. By contrast, from Ventura Boulevard to UCLA would be just 5 minutes by rail tunnel, while Pacoima to Westwood would be about 35 minutes, 1/3 of the current bus time.
4. With travel time savings and a huge base of commuters (existing bus riders: 25k+ on Van Nuys; drivers: 300k on 405 + extra on Van Nuys), the ridership potential of the rail tunnel would be comparable to the Metro Red Line subway and the Downtown Regional Connector.
5. Surface rail is not an option because the grades of the Sepulveda Pass are too steep.
6. Elevated rail would require structures of up to 180' in height to provide an adequate grade. The cost of building such a tall structure in an earthquake zone would actually be higher than drilling a tunnel. Please see conception illustrations on pages 5 and 6.

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- 7. While subways are expensive, the cost of a tunnel itself is not as high. The single greatest cost of a subway are its stations, which are essentially multi-story buildings dug underground. Costs should be viewed as a 150 year investment.**
- 8. If the Valley segment is built on the surface, that would create massive savings in station (as well as tunnel) costs, allowing the entire line to be built using a combination of Measure R, federal, and state funds.**
- 9. Van Nuys Boulevard and Westwood Boulevard are approximately due north-south of each other, allowing for the shortest distance across while connecting the two main commercial corridors and destinations.**
- 10. Directly south of Van Nuys Boulevard is the Stone Canyon Reservoir complex, allowing the tunnel to bypass residential areas in the canyons.**
- 11. Using light rail vehicles, the line could have the flexibility of going underground like a subway and running at street level where possible like the Metro Gold Line.**
- 12. One tactic some NIMBYs have taken to oppose projects in other areas is to demand all-or-nothing: put 100% underground as a subway or we will oppose, knowing that increasing the project cost by an order of magnitude would kill it.**
- 13. Having rail underground is not inherently preferable: the travel time savings versus flat terrain are not large and are partially offset by the increased amount of time walking up and down to the platform.**
- 14. In addition, passengers would not see the businesses along the route and would have to spend more time entering and exiting the station to access them, even if they had an interest to go there.**
- 15. The operating cost of surface rail is lower than both bus (operations, maintenance, vehicle replacement, labor) and subway (station operation and security); with a rail tunnel, we get the best of a subway with an operating cost structure that is most similar to surface rail.**
- 16. In terms of capacity, a 6-car train using overhead wires (“light rail”) can be comparable to the number of passengers in a 6-car train using a third rail (“heavy rail”).**
- 17. With several existing underutilized parking facilities along Van Nuys Boulevard, Metro may be able to partner to avoid building new lots.**

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To keep rail at a constant grade, a route over the pass would be 180' up in the air.



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**Imaging traveling 180' up in the air aboard a rush hour train with 900 passengers.**

