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MTA agrees to the name 'Expo Line'

Color on map still debated

BY RACHEL URANGA, Staff Writer

After months of wrangling, the MTA board finally agreed Thursday to name the new light-rail route between USC and Culver City the Expo Line, but couldn't resolve whether it should be designated rose or aqua.

The Expo Line is now the only commuter route named for a region and not a color, like the MTA's Orange, Blue, Green and Red lines.

City Councilman Bernard Parks has been fighting for months to get his colleagues on the Metropolitan Transportation Authority board to designate the route as the Expo Line, in recognition of the Exposition Park he represents. And he also insists that the route should be designated as rose color on MTA maps in recognition of the park's landmark rose gardens.

"The issue that comes to pass is that color has never been brought to the community for discussion," Parks said.

The color aqua - which is backed by MTA staffers, Friends 4 Expo Transit, the city of Santa Monica and a handful of Westside groups - would not reflect the Southside communities, Parks said.

Moreover, he said, the poorer communities it runs through could gain economic benefits by having a rail line that brands their area.

But the drawn-out debate over colors got some board members peeved.

"At some point this board has gotten to listen to the people and not politicians ... but the hundreds and hundreds of people that have advocated for this and want this. And I think it's a slap in their face and a slap in the staff's face," said MTA board member and Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky, calling the debate "unseemly."

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"I have resented the minimal amount of time I have had to spend on this, roped in to spend on this. But it is serious in one sense, it telegraphs to the community what our worldview is about how we make decisions."

MTA officials say even after laying down 73 miles of rail and subway, they have never faced such a drawn-out debate over a color designation.

In fact, moments after the board spent nearly an hour

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debating colors, it quietly and unanimously voted in favor of naming the leg of the Red Line that runs from Union Station to Wilshire and Western the Purple Line. It also adopted silver as the color to designate the El Monte express busway and the bronze for the Harbor express busway.

Maya Emsden, deputy executive officer of creative services, said if she could, she would keep the line invisible. But for now, as the MTA prepares to break ground on the \$640 million light-rail line, she will use black on maps to indicate the Expo Line.

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