

By Eric Garcetti and Mike Bonin
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Taking the train to LAX — it's a connection we can't afford to miss: Eric Garcetti and Mike Bonin



Earlier this fall, a sleek new international terminal debuted at Los Angeles International Airport to widespread acclaim. The new building is a key first step in beautifying and modernizing LAX and making it one of the world's finest airports again.

Meanwhile, a new transit system is rising in Los Angeles County. Two new rail projects are half-complete and three should soon be underway. Our transit map will soon look like our freeway map: a vibrant tangle of lines connecting our neighborhoods, job centers and major destinations.

And that means a train must go to LAX, the sixth-busiest airport on the planet and the gateway to our region for residents, visitors and those who both do business and create jobs here.

It is embarrassing and inexplicable that the Green Line opened in 1995 within sight of the airport's runways but a long 2.5-mile bus ride to the terminals from the nearest train station.

That is one reason that the vast majority of the airport's 63.7

million passengers in 2012 arrived and departed the airport by car. Improved transit to the airport promises an alternative to traffic. Transit has also proven to be a smart way for riders to reduce greenhouse gases that contribute to global warming.

Metro is currently studying six options for connecting the Crenshaw/LAX Line and Green Line to the airport terminals via either a light rail line, an automated people mover or a combination of those. As members of the Metro Board of Directors, we agree it is essential to study all options, and analyze the costs and benefits.

A particularly strong and promising alternative is called LAX Connect. It is part of the modernization plan adopted by LAX and the City Council. Under the plan, a rail spur from the Crenshaw/LAX and Green lines would deliver passengers to a new transportation hub built on airport land with airport money near Parking Lot C.

Think of the hub as a state-of-the-art front porch to greet those who arrive at LAX by train or bus. The hub would be a place where people could conveniently check in for flights, grab a coffee or a meal and then easily connect directly to their terminals via a free, automated people mover.

Getting this done won't be easy. Four major agencies — including two from the federal government — must get on the same page for anything to happen. Additional funding is needed to supplement the existing seed money from

Measure R.

The good news is that the wheels are in motion and that we believe the project is both viable and attainable in the near term.

On the local front, Metro and LAX have been working together. In October, we met with U.S. Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx in Washington, D.C. He and other key transportation officials understand and agree that connecting LAX to our rail system must happen.

They are watching us. They are eager to help. And that's the reason we can't squander the opportunity to act now.

One of the myths that we both despise about Los Angeles is that we are beholden to traffic and that we can't build big things. Or that we can't do them right, symbolized by the Green Line veering south of the airport.

This project is a chance to shatter that myth, move Los Angeles into the future, and to build a transit system that connects our region to the rest of the world.

Eric Garcetti is mayor of Los Angeles. Mike Bonin is an L.A. city councilman whose 11th district includes LAX.