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# Subway Stations Proposed for Arts District

Metro CEO Sees Potential for Stops at First, Sixth Streets

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Photo by Gary Leonard

Posted: Friday, January 17, 2014 5:00 am | Updated: 1:41 pm, Fri Jan 17, 2014.

By Jon Regardie | 2 comments

DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES — The Arts District has been the site of furious investment over the past few years, with everything from housing complexes to a [clutch of coffee roasters](#) to a [replacement for the Sixth Street Viaduct](#). Now, the community on the eastern edge of Downtown could get another project: one, or even two, subway stations.

[Metropolitan Transportation Authority CEO Art Leahy](#) this week said that he has instructed agency staff to evaluate building stations at First and Sixth streets alongside existing track.

“The east side of Downtown L.A. is changing,” Leahy said on Tuesday, Jan. 14, at a luncheon at the Downtown Palm [hosted by the Los Angeles Current Affairs Forum](#). “Having a subway connection over there would be really exciting.... We want to take advantage of it.”

In an interview after the address, Leahy said he thinks the stop or stops could be an extension of the Red or Purple lines. Rail tracks coming out of Union Station already pass through the area west of Santa Fe Avenue and alongside the Los Angeles River.

A rush of investment is quickly changing the Arts District. The \$160 million [One Santa Fe is rising](#) just west of the SCI-Arc campus. The complex with 438 apartments is scheduled to open in the fall.

Also in the pipeline is Legendary Development’s 472-unit apartment complex at 950 E. Third St., also near SCI-Arc. That is slated to break ground this year.

The southern portion of the district has also seen ample investment, including a trio of coffee roasters. A residential hub has arisen near Seventh and Santa Fe streets, where developer Linear City created the Toy Factory and Biscuit Company lofts, as well as the 7+Bridge housing complex (it includes [the restaurant Bestia](#)).

Linear City principal Leonard Hill said he hopes a station will be at Sixth Street, where it would complement the housing complexes and restaurants, as well as the coming \$400 million replacement of the Sixth Street Viaduct. The deteriorating bridge over the Los Angeles River is slated to be shuttered next year as a new structure is built.

“With its connectivity to Boyle Heights and the Eastside, it would be a shame not to capture all that and find a way to create a web of transit linkages to make Downtown as vital as it should be,” Hill said.

Leahy said he asked Metro staff to look at the possibility of a new Arts District station about two months ago. The evaluation will examine costs, location and initial designs. Leahy said he hopes to bring a proposal to the Metro board of directors within a year.

Leahy is not the first person to broach the concept of an Arts District stop. Fourth District [City Councilman Tom LaBonge](#), whose territory is west of Downtown and includes portions of Hollywood, has floated the idea of a rail “spur” coming from Union Station several times, and proposed it to Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa and, before that, to Mayor Jim Hahn. In 2010, while serving as an alternate on the Metro board,

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LaBonge directed agency staff to [prepare a feasibility study for extending train service](#) to either Third or Sixth streets, where a platform could be built alongside existing track.

"I beat the drum but it never got out of the infield," LaBonge said last week.

LaBonge, who strongly supports Leahy's proposal, said he now sees First Street as a natural location for a station because of the proximity to the Gold Line, though he also thinks there is potential at Fourth Street and down at Sixth or Seventh streets. Like Leahy, he noted the cost and construction advantages provided by the existing rail infrastructure.

"Basically you pour a form that is the height of the railcar door," he said, describing a potential station platform. "It's not like you're building in a box under the ground. It's above grade and will make a lot of sense."

Leahy noted that the staff analysis will include looking at track capacity and what land Metro might have to buy. He said a similar project happened in Chicago, with travelers riding trains that pass through rail yards to reach their destination.

"We ought to be innovative and be willing to experiment," he said. "If we could get a station on the east side of Downtown at First and Sixth streets that would be dynamite for the east side of L.A."

No timeline for the project has been revealed.

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