

MTA considering expanding Gold Line service

By Steve Scauzillo, *SGVN San Gabriel Valley Tribune*

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The Metropolitan Transportation Authority is considering extending night service on the Gold Line as part of a systemwide bus and rail upgrade.

Art Leahy, general manager of MTA, told the San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments last month that the agency will be increasing nighttime service on the 19.7-mile rail service, which runs in a horseshoe shape from east Pasadena to Union Station, through Little Tokyo, East Los Angeles and up to Montebello on Atlantic Avenue.

"They are working on the plan. But the details have not yet been finalized," MTA spokesman Rick Jager said Tuesday.

The MTA, known as Metro, recently adopted a 2013 budget in which rail service across at least three lines was scheduled to be increased by 131,000 service hours, a 16 percent increase, reported The Transit Coalition, a rail rider's advocacy group based in San Fernando.

"Some of it will go to Gold and Blue lines," Jager said.

For example, if train service were extended on the Gold Line until 1 a.m. or 2 a.m., then the Purple Line and Red Line subway lines at Union Station also may have to be extended, Jager said.

At present, the last Gold Line trolley pulls out of Union Station at 11:54 p.m. and reaches the end of the line at Sierra Madre Villa Station at 12:23 a.m. The last train leaves Sierra Madre Villa Station at 12:40 a.m. and arrives at Union Station at 1:09 a.m.

In East Los Angeles, the last Gold Line train leaves Union Station at 12:14 a.m. and arrives at Atlantic at 12:38 a.m. The last train leaves Atlantic at 12:45 and arrives at Union Station at 1:09.

Some have called for later trains for patrons leaving the bars of Old Pasadena after 1 a.m. or 2 a.m. Others say the late night service will help bartenders and waiters whose shifts often end after the last train has already departed.

"The popularity of these trains are clear," said Sam Pedroza, a member of the Metro Gold Line Foothill Extension Construction Authority and a Claremont councilman. The Authority is working to extend the line to Claremont.

"Historically, ridership has continued to go up (on the Gold Line) over the last 10 years," said Lisa Levy Buch, spokesperson for the Construction Authority.

A majority of the increase in rail service will go toward extension of the Expo Line service, an 8.6 mile line from downtown L.A. to Culver City, Jager said. Two new stations are set to open in two weeks.

Bus service hours will also be increased, Jager said, but the lines affected are not yet known.

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