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### Commentary- CSUN Tiger Team Investigates Northeast Valley Bus / Rail Service Issues

Written by Christopher Hicks

Thursday, 03 May 2012 02:19

The CSUN Transportation Tiger Team presented their findings of Bus / Rail Connectivity and related transportation issues found in Sylmar and San Fernando to the Sylmar Neighborhood Council. The team produced these findings by conducting a survey of bus and rail users at the Metrolink Station and aboard local buses.

Utilizing community surveys, data collection integration, geographical information systems technological skills, and extensive survey hours, the team is currently undertaking an ambitious study of Sylmar Metrolink service and Metro Bus Lines 230 and 236 to address connectivity problems to surrounding regional centers that face transit commuters in Sylmar.

Field study interviews were conducted at the Sylmar Metrolink Station and aboard Metro Bus Line 230 to Mission College and Metro Bus Line 236 to the intersection of Balboa and Foothill Boulevards. The team recorded observations of the bus stop environment and conducted interviews of bus patrons to test out questionnaires. Respondents were receptive in answering the survey as they believed the survey would help improve their bus experience.

The survey revealed observations that Metro and the City of Los Angeles must address. The common theme was that riders sought improvements such as increased frequency and on time performance. The team noticed that buses were off schedule and sidewalks were either of poor quality or nonexistent. Those that existed did not meet Americans with Disabilities Act requirements. Also, the bus stop signage was small and hard to see from a distance. Most of the stops did not have benches or shade.

The final report to be published in May detailing results and recommendations will serve all future students, community leaders, advocacy groups, and the online community. This report is intended to spark an active, ongoing discussion, ultimately leading to meaningful action. The findings will include a questionnaire directed at a larger sample of riders to adequately reflect population. The questionnaires will be adjusted to collect public opinion on the condition of sidewalks at their bus stops, ADA concerns, and bus stop comfort and safety.

The Tiger Team is composed of graduating seniors from California State University Northridge, Urban Planning Department, who investigate mass transit and mobility issues in the San Fernando Valley. The group partners with The Transit Coalition of Sylmar on a project to study bus service in the Northeast Valley.

There are 10 Tiger Team members: Project Manager, Sonja Tristan; Assistant Project Manager, Christopher Hicks; GIS Team Leader, Jose Galdamez, Jr.; GIS Team and Grant Writer Isacc Flores, GIS Team and Information Technology Director Larry Shoemaker, Photographer and Graphics Designer Fipe Leilua, Research Team Leader Colin Linebaugh, Professional and Public Outreach Directors Wesley Vasquez and Gail Pitters, Data Collection Director Joshua Schroder and Transit Coalition Executive Director Bart Reed.

Christopher Hicks is a student member of the CSUN Transportation Tiger Team, a group of volunteer student interns dedicated to finding solutions to public transportation problems in the San Fernando Valley. He can be contacted at www.csuntigerteam.org.

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