

# Metro Transit Corridor Concepts Penalize Sherman Oaks and Van Nuys

By Bob Anderson

The Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transit Authority selected four concepts for the Sepulveda Transit Corridor project between the Valley and Westside. Two concepts are underground through Sherman Oaks and Van Nuys and two are aerial. Three are heavy rail like the Red Line and the fourth is rubber-tired monorail train or tram.

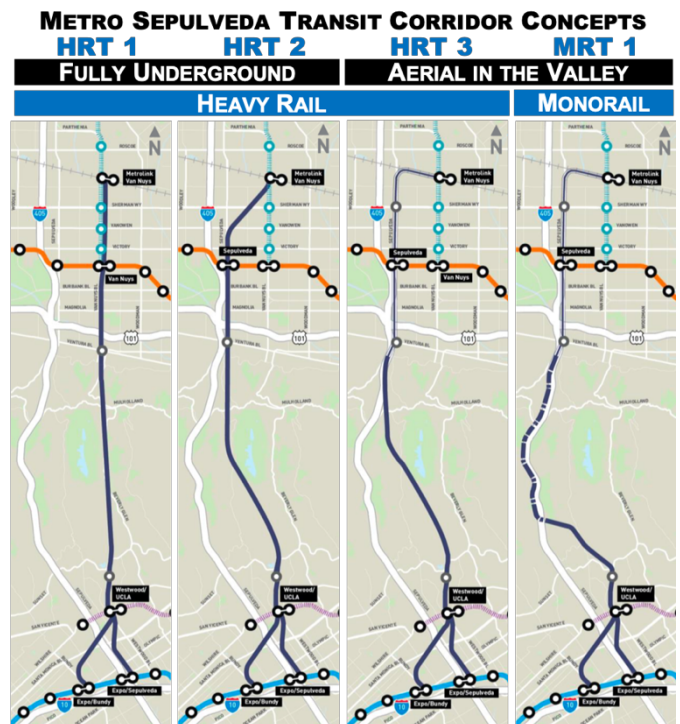
All operate between the Van Nuys Metrolink station at Van Nuys Boulevard near Raymer Street and a Metro Expo Line station near the I-10/I-405 freeway interchange. They provide 105,000 to 123,000 daily passenger trips with a 15-minute end-to-end travel time for HRT 1 and 26 minutes for MRT 1.

**Concept HRT 1 is preferred** because it runs under Van Nuys Boulevard, provides excess capacity, has the shortest route, and offers the fastest travel time. Its three underground stations are at Ventura Boulevard, Oxnard Street, and the Van Nuys Metrolink station. Construction will cause serious disruptions on Van Nuys Boulevard and could begin as early as 2022. HRT 1 is a high-cost concept and will probably require additional funding beyond Measure M.

**Concept HRT 2 is second most preferred** because it runs under Sepulveda Boulevard, provides excess capacity, has the second shortest route, and offers a 16-minute travel time. Its three underground stations are at Ventura Boulevard, Oxnard Street, and the Van Nuys Metrolink station. Construction will cause horrendous traffic disruptions on Sepulveda Boulevard. HRT 2 is also high cost and will probably require additional funding beyond Measure M.

**Concept HRT 3 is a non-starter** because it operates on aerial tracks in Sherman Oaks and Van Nuys. It provides excess capacity and a reasonable 18-minute travel time. Its four above-ground stations are at Ventura Boulevard, Oxnard Street, Sherman Way, and the Van Nuys Metrolink station. The concept's 35-foot-high overpass crosses above the I-101 freeway. The overpass, elevated tracks, and stations will be intrusive, interfere with traffic, and eliminate parking. The trains will be noisy. Construction impacts may be somewhat less but still significant. HRT 3 is the second least costly because it uses aerial tracks – but only in the Valley. The Westside route is still fully underground. Why is the Valley being cheated?

**Concept MRT 1 is non-starter** because it operates on aerial tracks in the Sepulveda Pass, Sherman Oaks, and Van Nuys. It uses quiet rubber-tired monorail trains or trams with the longest 26-minute travel time. The concept has the same four above-ground stations as concept HRT 3 and the same intrusive overpass and elevated tracks. Monorail introduces yet another new transit technology for Metro. Construction impacts may be somewhat less but still significant. MRT 1 is the least costly because it uses aerial tracks both over the Sepulveda Pass and 100 percent in the Valley. The Westside route is only 30 percent aerial. The Valley gets the short end of the stick again.



The Sherman Oaks Homeowners Association has demanded that Metro correct the Valley's inequitable share of aerial routing by equally splitting aerial routes between the Valley and Westside. Please tell Metro that this is the right thing to do.

Metro is working on a regional solution for dispersed station parking but is concerned about high costs. If Metro wants to remove drivers from freeways and attract them from the north Valley and North County, then their plan should include a 10,000-space parking structure near the I-405 freeway.

Metro's next steps are finalizing the concepts' exact routes, costs, schedules, construction mitigations, and parking – leading to a final selection decision in Fall 2019. **Metro must select the best Sepulveda Transit Corridor concept – no matter what – and this means a fully underground one.** Metro must then find the funding to build this best concept. It would be worse than foolish to let funding drive the decision for a critical transit infrastructure project that will still be operating in 100+ years. Similarly, it would be nice to have the Sepulveda Transit Corridor operational for the 2028 Olympics. But the Olympics is an insignificant one-time event compared to building the best Sepulveda Transit Corridor project.

*[Bob Anderson is a board member of the Sherman Oaks Homeowners Association and chair of SOHA's Transportation Committee. He can be reached at [BobHillsideOrdinance@roadrunner.com](mailto:BobHillsideOrdinance@roadrunner.com).]*

# Sherman Oaks Homeowners to Metro: Sepulveda Corridor in the Valley Must Stay Underground

By Ariella Plactha

In response to Metro's rollout of refined options for an ambitious public transit project along the Sepulveda Corridor, the Sherman Oaks Homeowners Association (SOHA) indicated its disapproval of any options that include above-ground transit in the Valley.

The project aims to serve as an alternative to the notoriously congested 405 freeway route between the San Fernando Valley and L.A.'s Westside, and the Valley portion of the project is centered predominately in the Sherman Oaks neighborhood.

A detailed letter penned on Tuesday to Metro's manager of the program Cory Zelmer cited negative property impacts, loss of space for parking and perceived inequity between Westside and Valley communities as reasoning for the association's position. The homeowners association, with 2,500 member families, is an active player in local politics. Some of its members received attention in recent months for mobilizing against homeless housing development projects.

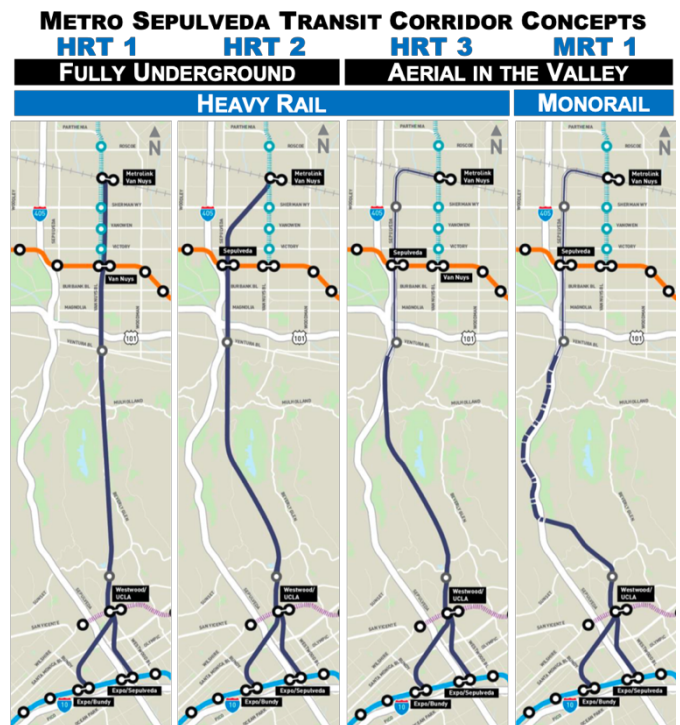
In January, Metro released four different transit concepts under consideration – two underground heavy railways to run from the Van Nuys Orange Line station to the Expo Line in West L.A. and two hybrid options including ground-level or aerial transportation in the Valley. The project is slated for hopeful completion before the 2028 Olympics.

While fully underground heavy rails have greater capacity for passengers and boast the shortest travel time (between 15 and 16 minutes), they are more expensive and pose greater engineering challenges in the corridor's hilly terrain. The options are updated versions of six earlier concepts, on which Metro received community feedback in a Feb. 2 public participation meeting attended by SOHA members.

Metro has said it aims to wrap up the initial study of the project and release updated cost estimates by the end of 2019, though a 2016 Metro report estimated the cost of two 8.8-mile rail tunnels along the Sepulveda Pass at between \$7.4 billion and \$9.2 billion. The Valley-Westside project is slated to receive \$5.7 billion from Measure M, according to Metro figures.

"As we have stated many times, SOHA will strongly oppose any concept that is not fully underground in Sherman Oaks," wrote the letter. "We are home to one of the nation's most congested intersections – Sepulveda Boulevard at Ventura Boulevard – and want nothing at grade or aerial that worsens our congestion."

The letter also expressed concern about what it perceived to be unequal treatment between the Valley and communities "over the hill," pointing to the absence of aerial or monorail options under consideration on the Westside though both ends of the project were slated to receive the same amount of funding under Measure M, the sales tax increase for L.A. mass transit passed in 2016.



Construction schedules, impact mitigation, sufficient parking and seismic safety were addressed in the homeowners' appeal as well.

"The partnership falters when considering how the Valley and Westside share the aerial portions of either the HRT 3 or MRT 1 routes. Why? Because for both aerial concepts the Valley is saddled with all or most of the aerial routes. This is not equitable and certainly not a fair share!" wrote the letter, noting a similar situation in regards to suggested monorail sections.

"The Valley is again getting the short end of the stick," wrote SOHA's transportation committee chair Bob Anderson. He and other members also wrote a tongue-in-cheek essay titled "A Virtual Metro Ride Through the Sepulveda Pass" imagining the joys of a 15-minute subway commute and inconveniences of a longer ride through the air absent plentiful parking.

Spokesperson for LA Metro Dave Sotero said the letter "presents some well-articulated issues on all the concepts in our current feasibility study.

"That's exactly what we had hoped for in this round of community meetings. No decisions about any of these concepts have been made," he added. "We will incorporate the association's inputs as we progress toward completing our study by the end of this year."

(For further information, contact Bob Anderson, board member of the Sherman Oaks Homeowners Association and chair of SOHA's Transportation Committee. He can be reached at [BobHillsideOrdinance@roadrunner.com](mailto:BobHillsideOrdinance@roadrunner.com).)



# A Virtual Metro Ride Through the Sepulveda Pass

By Bob Anderson

**CHEAP AND THIRD RATE IS NOT OKAY** – This is a tale of two transit concepts and what it could be like if the Valley gets its *unfair* share again.

The Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transit Authority has selected four concepts for their Sepulveda Transit Corridor project between the Valley and the Westside. Two of the concepts are first class, fully underground, and expensive. Two are third rate, on aerial tracks in the Valley, and cheap.

Let's take virtual rides on routes from the Valley's Van Nuys Metrolink station to the Expo Line station on the Westside. We'll start on either of Metro's two best concepts – HRT 1 or HRT 2.

As we arrive at the Valley Metrolink station, we find plenty of parking at the multi-story structure. Even better, there's a shopping mall with restrooms in the underground station and we can stop for our favorite coffee before catching the train. Trains leave every four to eight minutes, so there's no waiting and the entire route is underground.

We board the heavy rail train and soon, we're barreling toward the next station at the Valley's Orange Line busway, then on to the last Valley station at Ventura Boulevard. It's a fast ride which becomes even faster as we shoot under the Sepulveda Pass at 70 miles an hour. We listen to some music on our iPhones, send a text, and bam – we've arrived at the Sunset Boulevard station on the UCLA campus. Unbelievable!

Next stop is the Wilshire Boulevard station with its underground mall and connection to the Metro Purple Line. And before we know it, we arrive at our destination: The Expo Line station near the I-10 freeway. You gotta be kidding. **Fifteen minutes** from mid-Valley to the Westside!

It's an easy transfer to the Expo and only twenty minutes more to the California Science Center to see the Space Shuttle. A first-class experience. LA should be proud.

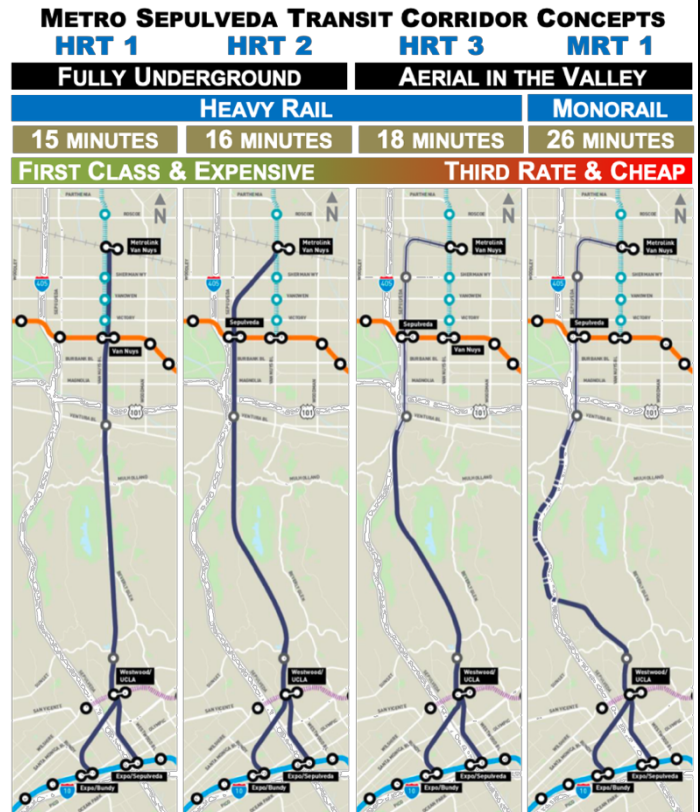
Rewind ...

Now let's take the same ride on Metro's *cheapest* concept – the MRT 1 monorail. Ready?

We arrive at the elevated Valley Metrolink station to find almost no parking in the miniscule lot. We rush to the monorail train and start our journey along the Valley's elevated tracks, twelve feet in the air. We travel adjacent to the Metrorail tracks, taking a left turn to start our journey above Sepulveda Boulevard. We're on the west side of the street and it's kind of weird looking into peoples' apartments. Wait, what did we just see?

Our first station at Sherman Way has a large multi-story parking structure (should have parked there, but who knew?). Suddenly, we start to go up. Oh, we're crossing the elevated part of the Orange Line busway and its station. Now we're going down again but stay at twelve feet above Sepulveda. Next stop is the Ventura Boulevard station. But we're going up again – a lot higher this time – up and over the 101 freeway. We must be 35 or 40 feet in the air! This is kind of scary. Hope there isn't an earthquake because the train might shake right off its tracks.

Ah, we've finally reached the Ventura Boulevard station and soon we're up and over the Sepulveda Pass. *What the heck?* We're heading up again, over something ... yes, it's the 405 freeway and now we've crossed over and are heading up the hill. We're still twelve feet in the air above the west shoulder. It's sort of fun to watch the cars crawl up the Sepulveda grade.



We're moving along pretty well ... just went through the Pass and are starting down toward the Westside. We're almost at the Getty Center, but, wait a minute, we're heading up to cross over to the other side of the 405 – again. This is like the Mad Hatter Tea Cup ride at Disneyland. Okay, now we're now almost to the Getty Center and we're heading underground.

What's going on? We thought this monorail was *all above ground* like it is in the Valley. Hey, this is nice. We're cruising along underground and quickly arrive at the Sunset Boulevard/UCLA station. The next station is Wilshire Boulevard. Wow – fully underground with its own mall. And we just reached our destination at the Expo Line station.

This time the trip took just under **half an hour**. Not too bad.

By the way, the fourth concept, HRT 3, is heavy rail and faster than monorail, but still runs entirely aerial above Sepulveda Boulevard in the Valley but fully underground on the Westside.

The big question is – **why isn't all of it underground?** Subway only for the Westside? Why does the Valley always get cheated out of the best? Who knows? Must be politics.

Hey, Metro, please don't make this mistake. Let's build the **best transit** we can through the Sepulveda Pass – the HRT 1 or the HRT 2 concept. *Not* the cheap ones. Years in the future, you want to look back and say you made the right decision to build the best for everyone's sake.

*(Bob Anderson is a retired aerospace engineer, board member of the Sherman Oaks Homeowners Association, chair of their Transportation Committee, and board member of the California Science & Engineering Fair. He can be reached at BobHillsideOrdinance@roadrunner.com.)*