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March 31, 2016

Board of Directors  
LA Metro  
One Gateway Plaza  
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**Subject: SOHA Recommendations on Metro LRTP Draft Expenditure Plan [Measure M]**

- Reference 1: Los Angeles Metro Board Report, dated March 24, 2016, *Long-Range Transportation Plan – Draft Potential Ballot Measure Expenditure Plan*
- Reference 2: Email from Phillip Washington, dated March 25, 2016, *Long Range Transportation Plan Progress Update March 2016*

The Sherman Oaks Homeowners Association (SOHA) represents 2,300 politically active families in a large, southern San Fernando Valley community that is home to the Sepulveda Pass, the infamously crowded 101 freeway, and one of the most congested street intersections in the country (Ventura and Sepulveda). SOHA is very concerned about the future of transportation in our community and the San Fernando Valley. We strongly support effective rapid transit across Los Angeles County and support Metro's efforts to ensure an equitable system countywide. We have carefully studied the referenced documents and other applicable reports, participated in a broad range of community meetings, and submitted multiple comments and recommendations to Metro and elected officials.

SOHA offers ten recommendations on the draft plan – six overarching and four specific to our community and the San Fernando Valley. We hope that Metro will consider our recommendations seriously. We have concerns that the schedules proposed for Valley projects will discourage Valley voters. Our recommendations should help encourage Valley voters and ensure passage of the new ballot measure.

*Overarching Recommendations*

1. Propose 50-year tax measure;
2. Ensure fairness across the County;
3. Incorporate legally binding specific commitments into the ballot measure;
4. Accelerate countywide starts and completions;
5. Construct projects from both ends;
6. Publish all plan comments on Metro's website;

*Valley-Specific Recommendations*

7. Combine phases and accelerate high-capacity transit through Sepulveda Pass Corridor;
8. Begin Orange Line conversion to light rail immediately;
9. Break ground for East Valley Transit Corridor before 2021; and
10. Incorporate additional Valley rapid transit projects.

We address the details for each of our ten recommendations in the following paragraphs.

**1. Propose 50-Year Tax Measure** – The draft Expenditure Plan includes consideration of 45-year and 50-year options that would extend the combined one-cent sales tax to 2062 or 2067. As noted on page 9, “The 50-year option generates \$11 billion in current dollars (\$28 billion YOY) and permits additional projects such as, the proposed Eastside Gold Line Extension (2<sup>nd</sup> alignment) and the Purple Line Extension to Bundy.” SOHA recommends and will support the 50-year option if and only if (1) public-opinion surveys, focus groups, and other means indicate that the public would support the longer option, and (2) the additionally available funds include at least one Valley project from those suggested in our Recommendation 10.

**2. Ensure Fairness Across the County** – The draft Expenditure Plan (Reference 1) and March 2016 Progress Update (Reference 2) explain how the expenditure planning process works, including use of the following five Metro themes, plus their associated goals and objectives (from draft Plan Attachment C):

Mobility – To relieve congestion;

Accessibility – To provide better access;

Safety – To provide better personal and public safety;

Economy – To grow economic benefits; and

Sustainability/Quality of Life – To enhance quality of life.

In his Progress Update, Metro CEO Phillip Washington noted, “Through our partnership with you, we have been able to develop a plan that most fairly and effectively addresses mobility in all parts of our region.” SOHA notes that “fairness” across all nine subregions of the County was not a Metro theme, and we feel it should have been. For a plan to be fair and equitable, it must be applied fairly and equitably from inception. This did not happen in the San Fernando Valley. Of 88 Metro stations now in operation, only 2 stations are located in the Valley subregion, or about 2 percent. Yet, Attachment C of the draft plan lists the Valley subregion optimal share as 14.66 percent. In fairness, the Valley’s new share should be in excess of 20 percent. However, SOHA understands political reality and Metro’s strategy to provide a plan that will garner the highest possible voter support across all nine subregions. Yet, we are disappointed in the unfairness of the draft plan to the Valley, especially the proposed schedules for Valley projects, and are concerned that Valley voters may express their disappointment at the polls.

SOHA recommends that Metro do all possible to convince Valley voters that they are getting their fair share this time around – both adequate funding and early completion schedules. Our voters understand the importance of accelerating Valley projects, as we note in our Recommendations 7, 8, and 9, and incorporating additional Valley projects, as we note in our Recommendation 10.

**3. Incorporate Legally Binding Specific Commitments into the Ballot Measure** – Draft plan Attachment M provides a “Ballot Measure Augmentation and Extension Ordinance Outline”. We had hoped to see a more complete draft of the actual ballot measure, but have reviewed the 16 section titles of the outline. We note that none of the titles include the word “commitment”. Based on discussions with many of our constituents, SOHA feels that incorporating legally binding, subregion-specific commitments in the ballot measure will help encourage public support and increase the measure’s probability of success. SOHA recommends that Metro include specific commitments in the ballot measure, and also that Metro include at least a final draft of the ballot measure in the approved Expenditure Plan that is released to the public in June 2016.

**4. Accelerate Countywide Starts and Completions** – SOHA notes that the draft plan spreads project schedules across the entire 40-year taxation period of the ballot measure, and tends to have one project in each subregion completed during the first 15-year period (2018 to 2032). We are having trouble understanding why schedules are spread across the taxation period rather than accelerated forward to the maximum extent possible. It would appear that funds availability should not be a major cause of delaying schedules, because funds from additional taxation can be borrowed against and brought forward. One possible cause is Metro having insufficient engineering and construction management capacity; however,

this could be corrected through judicious subcontracting from engineering and construction management firms. SOHA recommends that the final LRTP Expenditure Plan include a detailed section explaining Metro’s scheduling process, including how Metro will effectively accelerate project schedules.

**5. Construct Projects from Both Ends** – Most large and complex transit construction projects experience cost and schedule overruns. These can delay projects or sometimes even curtail full realization of an originally planned project. To ensure that all areas of a subregion benefit equally and all subregions from a multi-regional project also benefit equally, SOHA recommends that all projects, both those in a single subregion or those spanning multiple subregions, be scheduled with construction occurring in parallel from at least both ends of the project.

**6. Publish All Plan Comments on Metro’s Website** – Draft plan Attachment N provides Metro’s Expenditure Plan Public Input and Outreach Process. The purpose of the process is “to guide Metro’s public input and outreach process about the draft Expenditure Plan as part of the overall LRTP Education Program.” The public input and outreach process is thorough, but missing a critical element for full transparency – publishing all comments on Metro’s website where they can be accessed by the public. SOHA has seen the beneficial impacts of such transparency on the excellent Los Angeles City Council File Management System (<https://cityclerk.lacity.org/lacityclerkconnect/>) where comments, submitted documents, public speaker cards, and other relevant information on every LA City Council action are easily accessible to the public in 24 business hours or less. This system allows individuals and organizations to ensure that their submitted documents have been received and recognized, and take corrective action if they have not. The system also facilitates (1) cross-pollination of ideas and recommendations, and (2) identification of other individuals and organizations involved in specific issues. Not having such a system discourages the public, and voters in particular, and can hint that Metro does not truly value public opinion. SOHA recommends that Metro immediately set up a website location where all public comments on the LRTP draft Expenditure Plan are quickly posted for public access.

Our Valley-specific recommendations are built around project information in the following table. We derived this information from the various sections and attachments of the draft LRTP Expenditure Plan.

<b>Project Description</b> [MAP #] is project number from 40-year Buildout Plan map in draft Expenditure Plan Attachment H	<b>Groundbreaking Year</b>	<b>Completion Year</b>	<b>Valley Funding (2015 dollars)</b>
<b>Completed in First 15-Year Period (2018 to 2032)</b>			
Bus Rapid Transit Connector – Orange/Red Lines to Gold Line (North Hollywood to Pasadena) [MAP 10]	2020	2022	\$134 million
East SF Valley Transit Corridor (north-south high-capacity transit from Sylmar MetroLink to Orange Line in Van Nuys) [MAP 9]	2021	2027	\$1,331 million
LA River Bike Path	2023	2025	\$60 million
Sepulveda Pass Transit Corridor – Phase 1 (not yet well defined; 40-year Buildout Plan indicates this is a busway on the I-405) [MAP 6]	2024	2026	\$130 million
Orange Line Bus Rapid Transit Improvements (shovel-ready project including grade separations and other improvements) [MAP 14]	2024	2028	\$286 million
<b>Completed in Second 15-Year Period (2033 to 2047)</b>			
Sepulveda Pass Transit Corridor – Phase 2 (not yet well defined; possibly high-capacity transit from Orange Line Van Nuys station tunneled under the Sepulveda Pass, with station at UCLA, terminating at Wilshire/Westwood Purple Line station; approximately 10 miles; also possibility for public-private partnership) [MAP 24]	2024	2033	\$2,837 million (matching funds from Westside Cities subregion)
<b>Completed in Final 10-Year Period (2048 to 2057)</b>			
Orange Line Conversion to Light Rail (light rail from North Hollywood to Warner Center; 14 stations and 14.5 miles) [MAP 28]	2051	2057	\$1,429 million
City of San Fernando Bike Master Plan (along Pacoima Wash)	2052	2054	\$5 million
<b>Possible Future Systemwide Connectivity Projects (Attachment I)</b>			
Red Line Subway Extension (North Hollywood to Bob Hope Airport in Burbank)	No schedule in draft Plan		No cost

**7. Combine Phases and Accelerate High-Capacity Transit through Sepulveda Pass Corridor** – The Sepulveda Pass Transit Corridor is the most critical regional project in the County. A light-rail tunnel under the pass will be a countywide game-changer and has the potential to accelerate all rapid transit ridership and significantly reduce I-405 traffic. Yet, the tunnel project does not break ground until 2024 and is not completed until 2033. Everyone understands that it will take time to fully define this project, attract additional funding, and line up potential private partners. So, we appreciate Metro’s inclusion of an interim “Phase 1” short-term busway, before proceeding to the “Phase 2” light-rail tunnel solution. However, we are extremely concerned that most voters will view the Phase 1 busway project as a wasteful \$130 million diversionary tactic to attract votes, while distracting Valley voters from the distant 2033 completion of the tunnel. SOHA recommends combining Phases 1 and 2, beginning the light-rail tunnel project immediately, and providing a minimum-cost interim busway in parallel with tunnel construction.

Right now, the Phase 1 interim project is fairly undefined. Draft plan Attachment H [MAP 6/24] mentions “restriping the HOV lanes within the existing Right of Way to add 2 ExpressLanes in each direction” and the 40-year Buildout MAP 6 legend shows it as a busway. The \$130 million allocated for this undefined interim busway seems excessive, and much better used to begin design of the light-rail tunnel. SOHA recommends considering a minimum-cost interim fix, such as a dedicated, possibly reversible bus lane along Sepulveda Boulevard until the tunnel project [MAP 24] is complete. The tunnel project would then begin immediately in 2018 and could be complete as early as 2027 – a much more attractive solution for Valley voters.

**8. Begin Orange Line Conversion to Light Rail Immediately** – Metro has also proposed splitting the Orange Line conversion to light rail into two projects, with final completion delayed until 2057. Combined into a single project and started immediately in 2018, the conversion to light rail could be completed as early as 2028 – 29 years sooner than now shown in the draft plan! And this should certainly be possible, since Metro lists the initial portion of the project as “Shovel-Ready”. SOHA is very concerned that the lengthy delay will further discourage Valley voters. SOHA recommends combining the two projects and beginning the Orange Line conversion to light rail immediately.

Draft plan Attachment H lists two Orange Line projects – the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Improvements project [MAP 14] starting in 2024 and the Orange Line Conversion to Light Rail project [MAP 28] starting in 2051. The first project adds grade separations “which would allow buses to operate over or under the cross-streets without having to stop for signals, and greatly improve travel times through key intersections, in addition to other improvements”. The second project converts the “existing Orange Line BRT to LRT, from Warner Center to North Hollywood.” At multiple meetings, Metro has stated that the Orange Line was originally designed for ease of conversion to light rail, and the Orange Line Improvements project should further simplify the conversion. So, why schedule this shovel-ready, easily converted project for completion in 2057? The only word that will come to Valley voters’ minds is “absurd”. The combined Orange Line Conversion project needs to begin immediately.

**9. Break Ground for East Valley Transit Corridor Before 2021** – The East San Fernando Valley Transit Corridor project [MAP 9] is the only significant Valley-only rapid transit project completed in the first 15-year period. Draft plan Attachment H describes it as a “high-capacity transit project, mode to be determined, that connects the Orange Line Van Nuys station to the Sylmar/San Fernando Metrolink Station.” Metro has conducted several major studies and is still investigating several modes, including (1) curb- or median-running bus rapid transit, (2) median-running, low-floor rail (tram), and (3) median-running light rail. We further understand that Van Nuys Boulevard is the preferred route, even though Sepulveda Boulevard offers potential advantages in street width and easier connection to the Sepulveda Pass Transit Corridor. The draft plan schedule has this project breaking ground in 2021. SOHA recommends that Metro (1) focus on the median-running light rail mode because of its effectiveness and compatibility with other Metro systems, (2) give serious consideration to choosing the truly most-effective route; and (3) accelerate the schedule to break ground before 2021 – preferably in 2019.

**10. Incorporate Additional Valley Rapid Transit Projects** – Draft plan Attachment I lists several systemwide connectivity projects that “are representative of those types of projects eligible for funding over the life of the potential ballot measure through future competitive processes.” The only San Fernando Valley rapid transit project in this list is the Red Line Subway Extension to Bob Hope Airport in Burbank. This is an excellent and needed project. But, at a minimum, the list should be amended to also include east-west and north-south busway connectors to California State University Northridge. If the 45-year or 50-year taxation option is selected, SOHA recommends that at least one of these projects should be funded as part of the baseline Long-Range Transportation Plan.

SOHA also notes that the subregion abbreviations list at the bottom of the fourth page of draft plan Attachment A does not include the “sf” abbreviation for the San Fernando Valley. This time around, the Valley really deserves its fair share – even in lists and tables.

SOHA hopes that Metro will consider our recommendations seriously and understand that we want to help ensure passage of the new ballot measure and move forward on rapid transit for the San Fernando Valley. We were founded in the Valley in 1969 and have been working for 47 years to improve the quality of life for Sherman Oaks residents. We know that better transportation options, including significant Valley rapid transit, will provide needed options to our community and the Valley as a whole. But, Valley voters won’t be fooled again, and we all know it. The best way to secure San Fernando Valley votes is a realistic Expenditure Plan that gives the Valley its fair share – in funding and scheduling.

Thank you. If you have any questions, please contact me at [BobHillsideOrdinance@roadrunner.com](mailto:BobHillsideOrdinance@roadrunner.com) or 213-364-7470.

Sincerely,



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Board Member and Chair, Transportation Committee  
Sherman Oaks Homeowners Association

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