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August 21, 2019

Mr. Cory Zelmer

Program Manager, Sepulveda Transit Corridor Project

Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority

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Los Angeles, CA 90012

[zelmerc@metro.net](mailto:zelmerc@metro.net)

### **Subject: SOHA Recommendations and Comments on the Sepulveda Transit Corridor Project**

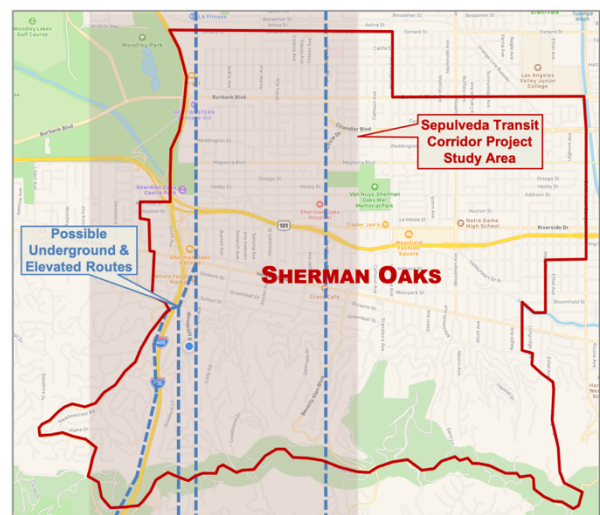
Reference 1: Letter, Sherman Oaks Homeowners Association to Cory Zelmer (Metro),  
*SOHA Comments and Questions on the Sepulveda Transit Corridor Project – Revision 1*,  
July 23, 2018

Reference 2: Letter, Sherman Oaks Homeowners Association to Cory Zelmer (Metro),  
*SOHA Comments and Questions on the Sepulveda Transit Corridor Refined Concepts –*  
*Revision 1*, March 7, 2019

Dear Mr. Zelmer,

The Sherman Oaks Homeowners Association (SOHA) represents thousands of politically active families in a 70,000-person southeastern San Fernando Valley community that is home to about one-fourth of all potential routes for the Sepulveda Transit Corridor Project (see blue dashed lines on map at right). SOHA strongly supports effective and equitable high-capacity rapid transit in Sherman Oaks and the San Fernando Valley. We have been very involved in the project and submitted 41 comments on the project to Metro in Reference 1 and 39 comments in Reference 2.

On July 29th, SOHA conducted its own public meeting on the project. More than 225 residents attended to gain additional information and understanding on the project and its implications. We have additionally given 26 presentations to elected officials and community organizations. SOHA is very involved and wants to work with Metro to achieve the best possible project. We request that Metro participate with us soon in a joint meeting to discuss our recommendations, comments, and concerns.



## Summary Recommendations

Based on reviews of the Sepulveda Transit Corridor Project and on comments received from community members, the SOHA submits three summary recommendations. Each is supported by multiple comments detailed later in this letter.

**Recommendation 1** – At its December 2019 meeting, the **Metro Board should select both of the great heavy rail HRT 1 and HRT 2 subway concepts** for environmental analyses.

- Metro should select both HRT 1 and HRT 2 because they are fair and equitable to the Valley, and because they represent two diverse underground routes deserving of further environmental analysis. SOHA prefers the HRT 1 subway concept running under Van Nuys Boulevard because we feel it better aligns with the Sherman Oaks business community and future vision. *[see Comment 1]*
- Metro must explain to the public their plan to fully fund the HRT 1 and HRT 2 concepts – well before the December concept selection Board meeting. Metro has estimated HRT 1 costs at \$13.5 billion (\$2019) and HRT 2 at \$13.8 billion. Yet Measure M sales tax receipts plus federal, state, county, local, and other funds provide only \$6.5 billion (\$2019). This huge funding shortfall deserves an explanation. *[see Comment 2]*
- Metro should add a large parking structure to Concept HRT 1 near the Van Nuys MetroLink Station. *[see Comment 3]*
- Metro should add a fourth station to HRT 2 near Sepulveda Boulevard and Sherman Way. HRT 2 currently has only three Valley stations and deserves a fourth. This station should include a large-capacity parking structure with easy 405 freeway access. *[see Comment 4]*
- Metro should conduct a comprehensive parking study for all potential HRT 1 and HRT 2 stations. Metro states that only two percent of its riders park at stations. This low percentage is probably due to a lack of parking at stations rather than riders not desiring to park at stations. *[see Comment 5]*

**Recommendation 2** – At its December 2019 meeting, the **Metro Board must not select either of the unacceptable HRT 3 or MRT 1 elevated concepts** for environmental analyses.

- Metro must terminate work on concepts HRT 3 and MRT 1 because they are unfair and inequitable to Sherman Oaks, Van Nuys, and the entire San Fernando Valley. The elevated tracks impact more than 12,000 residents with excessive noise and loss of privacy. *[see Comment 6]*
- Metro has zero above-ground heavy rail in its entire transit system. Metro must consider elevated heavy rail or monorail tracks only on dedicated rights-of-way. The elevated track structures increase traffic congestion on Sepulveda Boulevard and much of the surrounding community. We cannot set a precedent for operating along or above our streets. *[see Comment 7]*
- Metro must not build elevated heavy rail or monorail track structures above the 96-inch high-pressure water main located under Sepulveda Boulevard. They will damage the water main and/or eliminate maintenance accessibility to it. The risks for delays and cost overruns are too great. *[see Comment 8]*
- Metro must stop considering an elevated heavy rail or monorail above Sepulveda Boulevard. The cost savings for the HRT 3 or MRT 1 elevated concepts compared to the HRT 1 subway concept is minimal – only 10 to 14 percent – and does not justify the Valley getting the short end of the stick again. *[see Comment 9]*

**Recommendation 3** – Through its Predevelopment Agreement (PDA) process, the **Metro Board should select one or more viable, affordable alternative concepts** for environmental analyses.

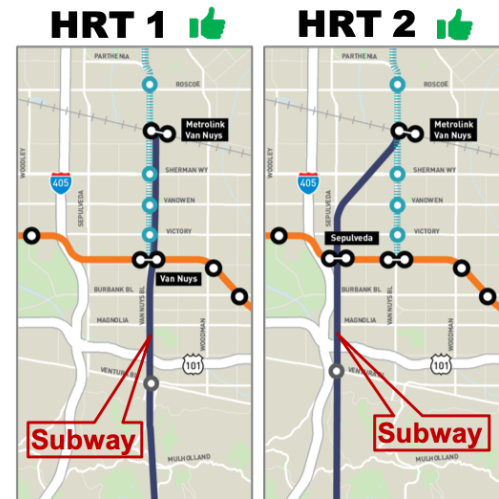
- Metro must ensure a thorough, fair, and impartial evaluation of all alternative concepts proposed under the PDA process and select the most viable and affordable. *[see Comment 10]*
- SOHA supports a monorail operating above the 405 median and expects BYD SkyRail to propose this concept for a PDA, including the possible option of an underground section and station at the UCLA campus. This is a viable, affordable concept with strong community support. *[see Comment 11]*

## Detailed Comments

In support of our three summary recommendations, we submit the following detailed comments.

**Comment 1: Select Both HRT 1 and HRT 2** – SOHA strongly supports both the HRT 1 and HRT 2 subway concepts and recommends that the Metro Board select both to proceed into environmental analyses (see figure at right). Both are viable and equitable options for Sherman Oaks, Van Nuys, and the San Fernando Valley. Both are fully underground heavy rail with high passenger capacity, fast travel times, and fully underground stations. Both options give the Valley the fair share it deserves.

Of the two concepts, SOHA prefers HRT 1 under Van Nuys Boulevard. It has the straightest, shortest route from the Valley to the Westside, offers the fastest end-to-end travel time at 16 minutes, has two connections with the East SFV Transit Corridor Project, and potentially brings less disruption during construction.



HRT 1 and HRT 2 also offer sufficient diversity to the environmental analyses. HRT 1 travels under Van Nuys Boulevard, which is more commercially oriented. The concept can be a boon to Sherman Oaks business district and it also aligns well with our future vision for the community. HRT 2 travels under Sepulveda Boulevard with its mixed residential and commercial orientation. Its positive impacts may be slightly less because of its close proximity to the 405 freeway, which limits western access, although this proximity does provide potential better access for 405 commuters. All in all, the two concepts offer excellent environmental and operational diversity worthy of further clarification during environmental impact analyses. Metro can't go wrong by selecting these two concepts for further study.

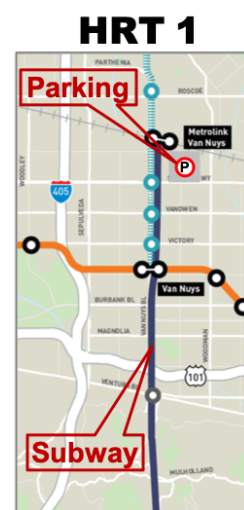
**Comment 2: Explain Funding Plan** – SOHA understands that projects are often somewhat initially underfunded but is concerned about the huge funding shortfall between committed Measure M funds and Metro's estimated costs for the HRT 1 and HRT 2 concepts (and even the unacceptable and only somewhat less costly HRT 3 and MRT 1 concepts).

Measure M provides only \$5.674 billion (in 2015 dollars) for Phase 2 of the Sepulveda Transit Corridor Project – from the Valley to the Westside. This is approximately \$6.5 billion escalated to 2019 dollars. Of this \$6.5 billion, \$2.9 billion comes from Measure M sales tax revenue and \$3.6 billion from federal, state, county, city, and other sources (probably including \$1 billion from Measure R). Metro's cost estimate for the HRT 1 heavy rail subway under Van Nuys Boulevard is \$13.5 billion (in 2019 dollars) and \$13.8 billion for the HRT 2 subway under Sepulveda Boulevard (see figure at right). The funding shortfall is at least \$7 billion. This shortfall presents a scary situation to the public as it might indicate rapid transit may never be built or the transit concept may be downgraded. We have received many questions from our community members about this but have no answers to give them. We have even heard people say that the project will never be built, but we know that something will be built.

Metro Concept	Metro Estimated Cost
HRT 1 Subway Under Van Nuys Boulevard	\$13.5 billion
HRT 2 Subway Under Sepulveda Boulevard	\$13.8 billion
<b>\$6.5 billion Total Funding Available</b>	

We recommend that Metro share their funding plans with the public in the next month or two. Any information will be better than the zero information now available, such as funding transfers possible within Measure M, additional funds outside of Measure M, or other sources that Metro is looking into. We will be glad to communicate the information widely.

**Comment 3: Add HRT 1 Parking Structure at MetroLink Station –** SOHA recommends that Metro look into the possibility of locating a major parking structure near the northern terminus of the HRT 1 subway route at Van Nuys Boulevard between Raymer Street and Sherman Way (see figure at right). We understand that the structure cannot have direct access to the 405 freeway, but its close proximity can help accommodate riders from the north and east Valley and other northern areas.



**Comment 4: Add Fourth Valley HRT 2 Station with Parking Structure –** SOHA strongly recommends that Metro add a fourth Valley station to the HRT 2 subway route. There is a considerable distance between the HRT 2 station at the Sepulveda Boulevard Orange Line station and the terminus at the Van Nuys Boulevard MetroLink station. The HRT 2 route is perfectly suited for an additional station and a major parking structure somewhere near Sepulveda Boulevard and Sherman Way (see figure at right). Metro recently added a fourth station at Santa Monica Boulevard to all Westside concepts. There are ample reasons to add an additional Valley station.



The station parking structure should accommodate at least 10,000 cars. We understand Metro’s concerns with the effectiveness and high cost of parking; but if Metro’s goal is removing drivers from the 405 and attracting drivers from the Valley and north county, then massive parking is simply mandatory. An easily accessible, multi-story parking structure, with rapid connections to both the freeway and station, can make that happen.

**Comment 5: Conduct Comprehensive Parking Study –** At Metro’s public meeting in early 2019, we were told that a comprehensive parking study was underway and would be reported at the next set of public meetings. As was apparent from multiple questions at Metro’s August 3<sup>rd</sup> Valley public meeting, parking at stations is a critical public concern and its presence or absence could make or break early ridership for the Sepulveda Transit Corridor. We have heard continuing comments from our community members about how they would love to ride Metro but are unable to find parking at stations. Yet, Metro provided little new information in its August 3<sup>rd</sup> presentation and nothing about a parking study. We did learn that only two percent of riders use “Park & Ride” and another two percent use “Kiss & Ride”. But we wonder if this is a chicken and egg problem. Could people not try to park at Metro stations because sufficient parking is not available? This question deserves an answer.

We recommend that Metro share further information on parking with the public in the next month or two – or better yet, conduct a comprehensive parking study and convey at least preliminary results to the public. For example, a broader distribution of parking sites across the Orange Line might provide for less station crowding and complement a large Valley parking structure on the Sepulveda Transit Corridor Project. A carefully planned distributed parking solution might also help reduce congestion near Ventura Boulevard that squeezes southbound drivers into the dreaded “traffic funnel” in the area.

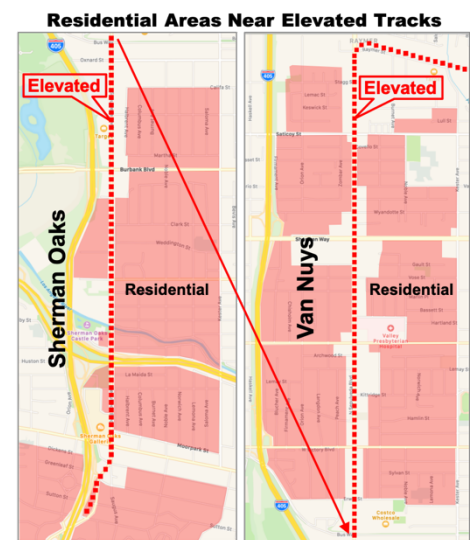


**Comment 6: Terminate HRT 3 and MRT 1 Concepts** – The HRT 3 and MRT 1 concepts are inequitable and unacceptable by being elevated in the Valley and should be immediately terminated from further consideration. The Valley and Westside were supposed to be equal partners in the project, sharing equal financial participation and equitable operational results. This will happen with the HRT 1 or HRT 2 concepts but cannot happen with HRT 3 or MRT 1.

The HRT 3 concept has heavy rail trains operating on elevated track structures 20 feet above street level for five miles from Valley Vista Boulevard in Sherman Oaks to Raymer Street in Van Nuys. The trains operate 45 feet in the air to cross over the 101 freeway and the Orange Line Busway overpass. This is not light rail like the Expo Line in Santa Monica or the Gold Line in Pasadena. This is large, noisy heavy rail trains that invade residents' privacy and diminish their quality of life.

The MRT 1 concept has monorail trains operating on elevated track structures 20 feet above street level for five miles from Valley Vista Boulevard in Sherman Oaks to Raymer Street in Van Nuys. The trains operate 45 feet in the air to cross over the 101 freeway and the Orange Line Busway overpass. MRT 1 is also elevated through the Sepulveda Pass, operating on the west shoulder of the 405 from Valley Vista in Sherman Oaks to the Getty Museum (where it goes underground). Monorail is typically quieter than heavy rail, but still invades residents' privacy.

There are 5,000 residential units and at least 12,000 Sherman Oaks and Van Nuys residents living within one-half mile of the elevated tracks (see light-red-shaded area on map at right). These residents and businesses will be subjected to noisy trains passing every four minutes. Multi-story apartment dwellers will experience loss of privacy as trains pass their second story windows. The HRT 3 and MRT 1 elevated concepts are unacceptable and Metro should stop considering them.



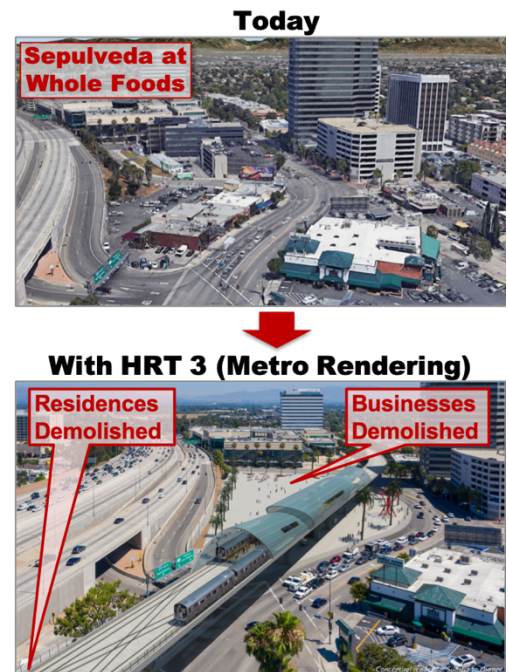
**Comment 7: Build Elevated Tracks Only Above Dedicated Rights-of-Way** – With elevated trains above our streets, Metro is trying to cram in something that does not belong here. The Expo Line in Culver City and Santa Monica is mostly street-level light rail, not elevated heavy rail. The Expo Line operates on a dedicated right-of-way, as does the Orange Line busway in the Valley. Metro currently has zero heavy rail anywhere in its system that is not subterranean. HRT 3 and MRT 1 set an unacceptable precedent of locating elevated track structures above already congested streets. These structures belong on dedicated rights-of-way, not above our streets where they further exacerbate traffic. Metro cannot set a precedent that could promulgate countywide.

Elevated track structures increase congestion in many ways. Large columns eliminate traffic lanes on Sepulveda – one of the most congested streets in the nation (see Metro HRT 3 rendering at right). The columns are spaced 100 to 120 feet apart. Since Ventura Boulevard is 120 feet crosswalk-to-crosswalk at Sepulveda, the columns are located in crosswalks and this eliminates left-turn lanes and impairs pedestrian access.



Locating elevated track structures on streets instead of dedicated rights-of-way also requires demolition of residences and businesses through eminent domain. Metro continues to claim that they have not yet studied the eminent domain impacts of their concepts. However, Metro’s own HRT 3 rendering at Sepulveda near Valley Vista Boulevards shows that more than 100 apartments and condominiums, a high-rise office building, a multi-story parking structure, a street, several small businesses, and another parking lot would be demolished to make way for the station (see figure at right). This is monstrous and unnecessary.

HRT 3 and MRT 1 with their elevated track structures are simply unacceptable for Sherman Oaks and Van Nuys – and other parts of the county as well. We cannot allow Metro to establish a precedent for using elevated heavy rail tracks above our streets, which will spread countywide. Metro must build elevated tracks only on dedicated rights-of-way such as freeways or prior rail routes.



**Comment 8: Don’t Build Above Risky Water Main** – There is a 2-½-mile long old Metropolitan Water District 96-inch high-pressure water main under Sepulveda Boulevard in Sherman Oaks from Valley Vista Boulevard to Oxnard Street (see figure at right). This huge water main delivers water to the Westside and is seven times the size of the pipe that failed on Sunset Boulevard and flooded parts of the UCLA campus. The HRT 3 and MRT 1 elevated track structures can easily stress or damage the water main, even if they are not located directly above it. The track structures also cannot interfere with repair, maintenance or replacement of the water main after earthquakes or other emergencies.

Metro acknowledged the existence of this pipe in their first public meeting on the project but has not provided further information. We do not know if they have thoroughly studied the engineering and cost impacts of the water main on construction of the HRT 3 and MRT 1 elevated concept, and included these in their concept cost estimates. If not, the costs could substantially grow. We do know that it will be extremely difficult, costly, and risky to build elevated track structures anywhere above or near the water main. The risk is not worth the unacceptable result.



**Comment 9: Don’t Make Unacceptable Selection for Minimal Cost Savings** – Metro estimates that their HRT 1 and HRT 2 fully underground subway concepts cost \$13.5 and \$13.8 billion, respectively. They estimate that their HRT 3 and MRT 1 concepts elevated above Sepulveda Boulevard cost \$12.2 and \$11.6 billion, respectively. This means that the elevated concepts cost only 10 to 14 percent less than the fully underground HRT 1 subway concept (see figure at right). The cost savings might be even less if Metro has not yet taken the cost of building above the water main into account. A 10 to 14 percent savings is minimal, essentially not worth talking about, and is probably well below the uncertainty of Metro’s cost estimates. It would be worse than foolish to let a minimal cost savings drive the concept selection decision for Metro’s most important transit infrastructure project that will still be operating in 100+ years. The HRT 3 and MRT 1 concepts are not worth considering and are simply unacceptable. They should be terminated immediately.

Metro Concept	Metro Estimated Cost	Savings vs HRT 1
HRT 3 Elevated Train Above Sepulveda Blvd	\$12.2 billion	10 percent Less
MRT 1 Elevated Monorail Above Sepulveda Blvd	\$11.6 billion	14 percent Less
<b>Minimal Cost Savings for Elevated vs Subway</b>		



**Comment 10: Ensure Fair Evaluation of Alternative Concepts** – We are pleased that the Metro Board authorized their Predevelopment Agreement (PDA) process at the July 2019 board meeting. This can lead to Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) for viable and more affordable alternative concepts. SOHA is concerned that the evaluation of alternative concepts be conducted in a fair, equitable, and unbiased manner. Our concern arises because we have heard conflicting Metro opinions about one possible alternative concept – a monorail running above the 405 median.

On President's Day 2019, Bob Anderson of the Sherman Oaks Homeowners Association and Jeff Kalban of the Sherman Oaks Neighborhood Council decided that Metro's MRT 1 monorail concept might be more viable operating above the 405 freeway median than above Sepulveda Boulevard. They put together a potential concept that followed the 405 freeway from the Valley to Westside to LAX and began presenting this concept to elected officials and community organizations.

On March 18<sup>th</sup>, they presented the concept to Metro's Dave Mieger, Cory Zelmer, Peter Carter, and Karen Swift from the Sepulveda Transit Corridor Project. At this presentation, they were clearly told that the concept was impossible because it could not fit into the 405 median after Metro added additional toll lanes promised as part of Measure M. They then presented the concept to Metro's Chief Innovation Officer, Joshua Schank on March 29, 2019. At this presentation, they were clearly told that locating a monorail above the 405 median was certainly possible. At the recent Metro Valley public meeting on August 3<sup>rd</sup>, Sepulveda Transit Corridor Project Deputy Program Manager, Peter Carter stated that locating a monorail above the 405 median was definitely possible from the 10 to 101 freeways, but not possible north of the 101 freeway based on reasons that are not altogether convincing. There appears to be some differences of opinion and possible preconceived biases within the Metro staff.

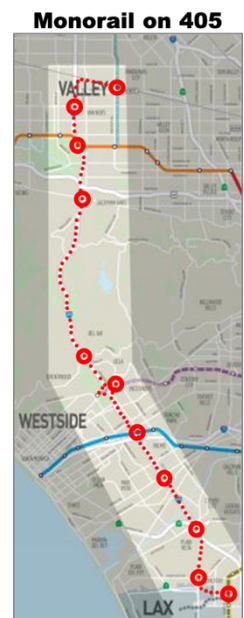
We strongly recommend that Metro establish a panel of experts from inside and outside Metro to evaluate proposed PDAs. This ensures the public that there are no preconceived biases in the evaluation process and results in the most viable alternatives being selected for environmental analyses.

### **Comment 11: Strongly Consider Community-Supported 405 Monorail**

**Alternative** –In March 2019, we learned that BYD SkyRail has been working on a 405 monorail concept for almost two years and plans to bid this concept to Metro as an alternative under the PDA process. SOHA is convinced that the 405 monorail concept offers a potential viable alternative concept for the Sepulveda Transit Corridor Project (see figures at right and below). A 405 monorail appears to have equal capacity and similar travel times to heavy rail subways while being more affordable and quicker to build. For example, monorail construction technology uses pre-cast beams and columns, which may provide a shorter schedule with fewer construction impacts. And it would run on a dedicated right-of-way – the 405 freeway median.

SOHA presented the 405 monorail concept to more than 380 elected officials and community members. We can say without a doubt that public response to this concept is overwhelmingly supportive. At Metro's August 3<sup>rd</sup> Valley public meeting, the concept was mentioned in a Q&A question and received a spontaneous roar of approval from the audience.

**Monorail on 405 Traveling Under Mulholland Bridge**



We are not advocating that Metro select this 405 monorail concept, but only that they fairly evaluate it and, if determined viable, select the concept to proceed into environmental analyses with the selected Metro concepts – hopefully HRT 1 and HRT 2.

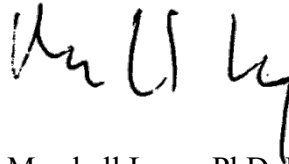
Thank you. We reiterate our request that Metro participate with us soon in a joint meeting to discuss our recommendations, comments, and concerns. We all need to work together to make this the best project in the county.

If you have questions or would like to discuss our comments, please contact Bob Anderson at [BobHillsideOrdinance@roadrunner.com](mailto:BobHillsideOrdinance@roadrunner.com) or (213) 364-7470.

Sincerely,



Bob Anderson, MS, PE (NU 474)  
Chair, Transportation Committee  
Board Member  
Sherman Oaks Homeowners Association



Marshall Long, PhD, PE (M 18759)  
Chair, Planning and Land Use Committee  
Board Member  
Sherman Oaks Homeowners Association

cc: Phil Washington (CEO, Metro), Nadine Lee (COS, Metro), Joshua Schank (CIO, Metro), Peter Carter (Metro), Dave Mieger (Metro), Karen Swift (Metro), Frank Ching (Metro), Sepulveda Transit Corridor Project Emailbox (Metro), Mayor Eric Garcetti (Mayor, City of Los Angeles and Vice Chair, Metro Board), Julia Salinas (Mayor's office), Tanaz Golshan (Mayor's office), Councilmember David Ryu (CD4), Nick Greif (CD4 office), Renee Weitzer (CD4 office), Adeena Bleich (CD4 office), Justin Orenstein (CD4 office), Milene Minassians (CD4 office), Councilmember Paul Krekorian (CD2 and Metro Board member), Karo Torossian (CD2 office), Doug Mensman (CD2 office), Councilmember Bob Blumenfield (CD3), Lisa Hansen (CD3 office), John Popoch (CD3 office), Jeff Jacobberger (CD3 office), Councilmember Paul Koretz (CD5), Joan Pelico (CD5 office), Jay Greenstein (CD5 office), Jeffrey Ebenstein (CD5 office), Councilmember Nury Martinez (CD6), Ackley Padilla (CD6 office), Arcelia Arce (CD6 office), Yvonne Perez (CD6 office), Councilmember Monica Rodriguez (CD7), Doug Tripp (CD7 office), Council President Herb Wesson Jr (CD10), Andrew Westall (CD10 office), Councilmember Mike Bonin (CD11 and Metro Board member), Paul Backstrom (CD11 office), Senator Bob Hertzberg (18<sup>th</sup> District), Raj Dhillon (18<sup>th</sup> District office), Barri Worth Girvan (18<sup>th</sup> District office), Hannah Kelley (18<sup>th</sup> District office), Assemblyman Adrin Nazarian (46<sup>th</sup> District), Emma Taylor (46<sup>th</sup> District office), Brian Stedge (46<sup>th</sup> District office), Congressman Brad Sherman (30<sup>th</sup> District), John Alford (30<sup>th</sup> District office), Supervisor Hilda Solis (1<sup>st</sup> District and 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice Chair, Metro Board), Mark Ridley-Thomas (2<sup>nd</sup> District and Metro Board), Supervisor Sheila Kuehl (3<sup>rd</sup> District and Metro Board member), Nicole Englund (3<sup>rd</sup> District office), Benita Trujillo (3<sup>rd</sup> District office), Supervisor Janice Hahn (4<sup>th</sup> District and Metro Board member), Supervisor Kathryn Barger (5<sup>th</sup> District and metro Board member), Dave Perry (5<sup>th</sup> District office), Mayor James Butts (Mayor, City of Inglewood and Chair, Metro Board), Mayor Ara Najarian (Mayor, City of Glendale and Metro Board Member), Jeffrey Hartsough (SONC), Avo Babian (SONC), Jeff Kalban (SONC), Leslie Elkan (Village at Sherman Oaks BID), Tammy Scher (Sherman Oaks Chamber), David Phelps (Sherman Oaks Chamber), Glenn Epstein (VNNC), Steve Friedmann (VNNC), Alex Garay (ENC), Robin Greenberg (BABCNC), Irene Sandler (BABCNC), Larry Leisten (BABCNC), Gerald Silver (HOE), Eliot Cohen (HOE), John Bwarie (SFVCOG), Coby King (VICA), Stuart Waldman (VICA), Marian Dodge (Hillside Federation), John Khamneipur (Sherman Oaks Galleria), Robert Silverstein Esq., Ariella Plachta (LA Daily News), Laura Nelson (LA Times)