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L.A.N.I.  
LOS ANGELES NEIGHBORHOOD INITIATIVE

October 21st, 2019

Metro Board of Directors  
One Gateway Plaza  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

**RE: Support for the North San Fernando Valley Bus Rapid Transit Project**

Dear Metro Board Members and Staff,

As community-based organizations, neighborhood groups, local businesses, and project area residents committed to improving the health and well-being of residents of Los Angeles County, regional air quality and climate goals, and the safety of local streets, the undersigned urge the Metro Board to **support the North Valley Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project that would service the North San Fernando Valley (SFV) and move forward with the environmental review.**

This east-west transit service adds a high-capacity option to enable people to spend less time traveling between key work centers including California State University Northridge (CSUN), Panorama City, North Hollywood, and the Northridge Fashion Center. In addition, it creates transfer options to other key transit lines including the Orange Line, Metrolink, and the planned Van Nuys Boulevard Light Rail line. This will result in more than 27,000 estimated daily boardings by directly serving students, faculty and staff at one of the largest universities in the state—boardings that are likely to increase as travelers see how quickly the bus can travel across the Valley.

This is why voters in Los Angeles County approved Measure M in 2016, with significant support from Valley residents, businesses, and advocacy organizations. The North San Fernando Valley BRT project represents a \$180 million investment in the San Fernando Valley and would serve many communities that lack robust public transportation. This is an important equity issue: Low-income residents, people of color and students will all benefit from faster transit service that both reduces traffic congestion and the time spent getting to destinations. More than 22% of Metro buses are slowing down because of traffic—an analysis by Aaron Mendelson of KPCC<sup>1</sup> found that more than 22% of buses now run late, whereas buses that run on a dedicated lane, like the Orange Line, are late only 5.4% of the time. On-time performance matters to bus riders, and dedicated lanes for BRT would significantly improve reliability of service.

A Transportation Research Board (TRB) study of BRT systems in the U.S. finds that bus lanes on arterial streets typically save 1-2 minutes/mile and notes “the time savings are greatest where the bus routes previously experienced major congestion. Pittsburgh, for example, has reported travel time savings up to 5 minutes/mile during peak hours.”<sup>2</sup> The time savings increases the reliability of service, which makes planning easier for both the agency and the riders who rely on the service. In addition, according to a Federal Transit Administration presentation on BRT<sup>3</sup>, “vehicle, station, ITS, and fare collection design options can greatly improve the accessibility of a BRT system to mobility-impaired and other riders.”

Clearly BRT provides a compelling alternative to single-occupancy vehicles by providing direct connections to major transit and job centers. The TRB report also found, “[The] development benefits with full-featured BRT are similar to those experienced along rail transit lines,” including the investment of hundreds of millions of dollars around major stations. For example, the report finds, “property values near Brisbane’s South East Busway grew 20%, which is largely attributed to the busway construction.”<sup>4</sup>

In addition, BRT lines cost less and take less time to construct than light rail lines and can cost the same or less to operate per passenger. For instance, Metro’s Orange Line, which runs in a dedicated lane, cost about \$23 million/mile (in 2003 dollars) versus \$337 million/mile for the Red Line subway (which is heavy rail and underground). BRT lines also allow for more capacity during peak service as it is easy to add more buses to the line to accommodate more riders.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.scpr.org/news/2016/05/12/60250/data-metro-s-buses-and-trains-having-trouble-stick/>

<sup>2</sup> TCRP Report 90, Page 6: [https://nacto.org/docs/usdg/tcrp\\_rpt\\_90\\_case\\_studies\\_volume\\_1\\_levinson.pdf](https://nacto.org/docs/usdg/tcrp_rpt_90_case_studies_volume_1_levinson.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Federal Transportation Administration BRT Brochure: <https://www.transit.dot.gov/sites/fta.dot.gov/files/BRTBrochure.pdf>

<sup>4</sup>IBID

Finally, BRT can convince people to switch from driving and greatly increase corridor ridership. Ridership gains of 20% to 96% in BRT corridors have been noted in practice. Boston's Silver Line Phase I experienced a 96% increase in weekday corridor ridership, with a quarter of new riders previously using other modes, and one third of riders on Pittsburgh's West Busway used an automobile previously.<sup>5</sup>

The California Air Resources Board has stated that Californians must reduce single-occupancy vehicle travel by 1.6 miles per person per day to reach our ambitious climate change targets. California's transportation sector is the largest generator of greenhouse gas emissions (50% including refinery emissions<sup>6</sup>), and there is strong evidence that climate change is resulting in longer, hotter, drier summers that are increasing the frequency of large wildfires and the length of fire seasons. These environmental impacts are already being felt in the San Fernando Valley.

BRT in the North San Fernando Valley can provide viable alternatives to vehicle travel along high-frequency routes to major job centers and would support our state, city, and regional efforts to reduce criteria pollutants and greenhouse gas emissions. For all the reasons cited above, we the undersigned support Metro's effort to bring the best possible service to the North San Fernando Valley and we ask that the Board of Directors move forward immediately with environmental review of the North San Fernando Valley BRT line.

Undersigned:

Denny Zane  
Executive Director  
Move LA

Diana Vicente  
President & CEO  
California State University, Northridge Associated Students

Tracy Hernandez  
CEO  
BizFed

Hilary Norton  
Executive Director  
Fixing Angelenos Stuck in Traffic (FAST)

David Bragdon  
Executive Director  
Transit Center

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<sup>5</sup> IBID

<sup>6</sup> California Air Resources Board, GHG Current California Emission Inventory Data: <https://ww2.arb.ca.gov/ghg-inventory-data>

Erika Thi Patterson  
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Jobs to Move America

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Executive Director  
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