

CITY OF LOS ANGELES

CALIFORNIA

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ARLETA NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL

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ARLETA NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL

Community Impact Statement

October 20, 2020

RE: Council File 20-0190 : ***In Support of the safety of Park Rangers***

Dear Councilmembers:

We write to you to inform that the Arleta Neighborhood Council supports Councilmember Joe Buscaino's motion so that park rangers can "have the full ability to utilize all law enforcement tools and equipment to ensure the safety and security of the public under all circumstances" including their own safety. Park rangers are law enforcement first responders at parks and need to have the use of a firearm, *along with bodycameras*, for the following reasons:

- Nighttime patrol is particularly more dangerous as park rangers can encounter armed transients at any given time. Combative homeless people/people with substance abuse addictions present a threat to the public and all municipal personnel—particularly in remote areas of a park as some homeless can be in possession of firearms or even explosives.
- Given California laws that have reduced some felonies to misdemeanors and released formerly imprisoned people without a safety net for themselves or protections for law-abiding members of the public, (The Safe Neighborhoods and Schools Act (Proposition 47 (2014))¹, and the early prison release program (Assembly Bill 109 (2011))², respectively, have allowed for community parks to be under siege as they are frequently lonely throughout the day/night where some of them have become stations of criminal activity.
- The Park Ranger Division is composed of 22 park rangers and the division has been experiencing tremendous attrition besides facing unsafe conditions in remote and desolate areas of a park.
- Twenty-two park rangers for the 440 parks within Recreation and Parks' purview is completely insufficient and unacceptable.
- Homeless have been seen camping at Branford Recreation Center and are currently a stationary entity at Tobias Park in Panorama City.
- Law enforcement personnel that encounter members of the public in the field—aside from code enforcement agents inspecting structures for adherence to building codes and where the possibility of an altercation with a property owner or representative is highly unlikely—are at a disadvantage

¹ http://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/codes_displayText.xhtml?lawCode=GOV&division=7.&title=1.&part=&chapter=33.&article=

² http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/pub/11-12/bill/asm/ab_0101-0150/ab_0109_bill_20110404_chaptered.pdf

when they have no firearms and are presented with people who do not want to be cited for their disregard of municipal ordinances and/or have to be detained for other transgressions of the law. Park rangers are law enforcement personnel and have to be prepared for the escalation of situations as they confront all members of the public.

- Given that park rangers have already completed the California Peace Officer Standards and Training program they are ready and must be equipped with a firearm to protect themselves and park patrons.

Given the aforementioned, and in solidarity with Foothill-Trails District NC, Tarzana NC, and the Lake Hollywood Homeowners Association, the Arleta Neighborhood Council supports Council File 20-0190.

Respectfully,

The Arleta Neighborhood Council

ARLETA NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL

Community Impact Statement

Regarding the Metro East San Fernando Valley Transit Project

Introduction

The LA County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) Board of Directors is scheduled to approve a Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) for the East San Fernando Valley Transit Project (ESFV Project) after the conclusion of the public comment period. Stakeholders along the route who are becoming aware of the ESFV Project's impacts call on Metro to re-study the ESFV Project with the proposed changes outlined below and in light of updated studies of the Sepulveda Pass Transit Project (SP Project). Stakeholders are submitting their concerns and request to Metro, LA Mayor Eric Garcetti, LA City Councilmembers Monica Rodríguez and Nury Martinez, and LA County Supervisor Sheila Kuehl.

Background

The northeast Valley, and Pacoima and Arleta in particular, have below-average incomes, above-average unemployment rates, and above-average pollution levels. There are many vibrant businesses, operating on thin profit margins, that are at high risk of displacement or closure if any negative impacts occur. Thus, it is vital for the community that any transit projects be designed to benefit the existing community, rather than to displace it.

As traffic between the Valley and the Westside worsened, people called for better transit connections between areas with higher unemployment, such as the northeast Valley, and job-rich areas, such as the Westside and LAX.

Approximately 300,000 vehicles use the 405 Freeway every day in the Sepulveda Pass, which is one of the top freeway segments nationwide in terms of Average Annual Daily Traffic, according to the U.S. Department of Transportation.

In 2008, LA County voters approved Measure R, which identified and funded a set of transit projects. Among these was funding for north-south bus lanes in the Valley and for an undefined transit project connecting the Valley and the Westside, along with the Wilshire subway and the Expo Line to Santa Monica. Metro began to depict the undefined project as toll lanes with buses.

Valley stakeholders raised concerns that Metro was shortchanging the Valley with inadequate proposals, because buses traveling on the freeway through the Sepulveda Pass would have poor acceleration on grades as steep as 5% and limited capacity.

As the Great Recession caused a sharp rise in unemployment, in 2010 a group of transit riders in the Valley, known as the Transit Coalition, proposed as an alternative a Valley-Westside rail tunnel that would provide direct access to UCLA and Westwood office buildings, which would make it faster than driving for people along the line and make commutes from areas with high unemployment shorter and less burdensome.

The Transit Coalition proposed a route that would connect the densest north-south corridor in the Valley, Van Nuys Blvd., with top commuter destinations due south of it, UCLA and the Wilshire/Westwood office buildings. This would connect with the Wilshire subway to Century City and Beverly Hills, with the Expo Line to Santa Monica and USC, and continue to LAX. In the Valley, it would connect with the major east-west bus lines and the Metrolink rail lines to the Antelope Valley and Ventura County. Because there was no Metrolink station on the Antelope Valley Line at Van Nuys Blvd., the line would turn north to connect to the Sylmar/San Fernando Metrolink Station.

Initially, Metro resisted the idea by citing that funding from Measure R was insufficient to build it. Because Metro staff presented buses as adequate for connections to the Westside, supporters for building a rail tunnel told Metro that the

Valley wanted the projects that Metro was studying for buses to be studied as a single rail corridor instead.

After several neighborhood councils passed resolutions calling for a Valley-Westside rail tunnel, then-City Councilmember Eric Garcetti adopted it as part of his campaign platform for the 2013 mayoral election. From there, the San Fernando Valley Council of Governments (SFVCOG) identified it on its list of priority projects, and Metro added it to its Long Range Transportation Plan.

However, when Metro wrote Measure M, which voters approved in 2016, it listed the ESFV Project and the I-405 Transit Corridor Project as separate line items, instead of as one integrated project. More problematically, Metro placed the ESFV Project **ahead** of what became the SP Project in its study and implementation timeline, which created a risk that *the ESFV would be stuck with an inadequate project that failed to fully take into account the benefits and projected ridership caused by the SP Project*; in effect, shortchanging the Northeast San Fernando Valley again. Almost as if the intent was to truly suppress the public transit needs of the Northeast Valley and only allow for a cheap option there so as to make available funding for more expensive options for the southern valley and the Westside. Instead, Metro decides to pursue two separate rail projects with a burdensome service interruption via required transfers between the two projects.

Because Metro studied the ESFV Project **first**, the project it designed had to be justified based on only the ridership within the ESFV, *without including the additional ridership that the SP Project would generate*. That meant that the ridership would not be high enough to justify the extra expense of a subway. Metro adopted light-rail as its preferred alternative in June 2018, before the SP Project presentation in January 2019 showed that ridership, when combined with commuters to the Westside, could support extending a subway north from the Orange Line to the Van Nuys Metrolink Station. The January 2019 presentation also showed that combining the ESFV and SP projects into one rail line would yield the highest ridership: peak-hour ridership at Victory Blvd. would be around 7,500 vs. less than 3,000 for the ESFV Project as a stand-alone line. Furthermore, combined ridership from Roscoe Blvd. south would have exceeded the capacity of light rail. The current state of Metro's ESFV project in the Northeast San Fernando Valley and the way the Sepulveda Pass project transpired, after the fact, seems intentional, ill-conceived, misleading, and is completely unacceptable.

In 2019, Metro eliminated light-rail as an alternative for the SP Project in favor of a subway or monorail, thus not only forcing riders from the northeast Valley to switch from one train to another, but leaving the northeast Valley with *a light-rail line that makes congestion and circulation worse*, while the south Valley gets the option of either a grade-separated line/monorail, or subway that would not restrict traffic circulation. The Northeast Valley has worse impacts and fewer benefits. We must also bear in mind that some of the most densely populated communities along Metro's Expo line in Los Angeles—between the University of Southern California (USC) and up until just west of Crenshaw Blvd—have high percentages of stakeholders with below-average incomes, above-average unemployment rates, and above-average pollution levels yet those low resource areas received grade crossings while the Westside (with lower density and mostly opposite socioeconomic demographics) received flyover crossings.

Advocates for a rail line from the Westside to the Northeast San Fernando Valley anticipated that the turn at Van Nuys Blvd. and San Fernando Rd. would resemble the A Line (Blue) at Flower St. and Washington Blvd. Flower St. is narrower than Van Nuys Blvd. and Washington Blvd. is narrower than the San Fernando/Metrolink right of way, so advocates believed there would be sufficient space for the tracks to curve within the existing right of way. Metro's plan to seize businesses at the southwest corner of Van Nuys Blvd and San Fernando Rd, in order to build a wider curve, was not part of the advocates' proposal and makes Metro's plan materially different in its impacts on Pacoima. Businesses at that location have only been there for a couple of years.

The FEIS/FEIR also studied an Initial Operating Segment (IOS) that would be built on Van Nuys Blvd. from the Orange Line to San Fernando Rd., leaving the San Fernando Rd. segment to be built in a second phase. The FEIS/FEIR clearly states, "It remains Metro's intent, however, to build the remaining northern 2.5 miles of the LPA within the existing railroad

right-of-way from the Van Nuys/San Fernando station to the Sylmar/San Fernando Metrolink station." Thus, the Van Nuys/San Fernando Station on the IOS will still likely require construction of the above-mentioned curve and the destruction of businesses on the west corner of Van Nuys Blvd. and San Fernando Rd.

Impacts

1. Loss of traffic lanes
2. No on-street parking
3. No left turns
4. Eminent domain of buildings and parking lots at San Fernando Rd./Van Nuys Blvd.
5. Eminent domain of buildings along San Fernando Rd. in the City of San Fernando AND/OR obstruction of double-tracking of the Metrolink Antelope Valley Line on that segment
6. Displacement of businesses
7. Densification within a half-mile of each transit station where state legislation overrides local control at the expense of low-density neighborhoods and all zoning and land use parameters are subject to change by the State of California
8. Construction detours
9. Construction noise
10. Loss of revenue during construction
11. Longer delays at intersections along the route
12. Greater risk of pedestrians getting hit while crossing 3-4 tracks next to San Fernando Rd.
13. Loss of low-density neighborhoods
14. State proposals that hyper support housing *without parking spaces* while prohibiting the establishment of parking permit districts in nearby affected low density neighborhoods under the assumptions that all multi-family housing occupants will only take public transit over transportation via private car ownership or ridesharing

Proposed Changes

Stakeholders propose that Metro restructure the ESFV Transit Corridor as a set of segments with distinct solutions, rather than a single light rail line. Metro should eliminate the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) and instead:

- A. Study extending the grade-separated SP Project from the Van Nuys Metrolink Station to the Panorama City Mall (Roscoe Blvd./Van Nuys Blvd.) or Nordhoff St. and create queue jumpers and/or peak-hour bus lane segments (if needed) for buses on Van Nuys Blvd. from the north end of the SP Project to San Fernando Rd, instead of light-rail.

AND

- B. Eliminate the intention to build a San Fernando Rd. light-rail segment of the ESFV Project from the IOS.

This community alternative would also:

1. Allow for the double-trackage of the Antelope Valley Line from Sylmar/Metrolink Station to Burbank.
2. Establish a new Metrolink station at San Fernando Rd./Van Nuys Blvd.
3. Use any remaining funds for transit along the ESFV Transit Corridor.

Metro spends about \$300 million/mile for tunnels and \$300 million/station for subways, so the \$1 billion ESFV Project budget could fund more than the 1 mile of extra tunnels and 1 extra station required to extend the SP Project from the Van Nuys Metrolink Station to the Panorama City Mall (or Roscoe Blvd./Van Nuys Blvd.) or Nordhoff St at Van Nuys Blvd.

Benefits

The community alternative would reduce negative impacts on the northeast Valley, while generating significant benefits over Metro's preferred alternative.

The community alternative would stop the eminent domain of businesses at San Fernando Rd./Van Nuys Blvd. and allow more frequent Metrolink trips from the northeast Valley to downtown LA and better connections to the rest of southern California.

In addition, the community alternative would provide these six benefits as well:

1. Stop the loss (due to construction) of revenue to businesses on Van Nuys Blvd. in Pacoima and Arleta.
2. Eliminate the impacts on traffic circulation, such as the loss of left turns, and reduce congestion due to semi-trucks or other surface road freight transport vehicles.
3. Save on-street parking in front of businesses on Van Nuys Blvd.
4. Give faster travel times from the northeast Valley to the Westside because the subway extension would avoid stopping for cross-traffic.
5. Improve travel times for local bus riders, who would otherwise be stuck in congestion due to the loss of traffic lanes to the light rail.
6. Eliminate the need for a light-rail yard, allowing the site identified in the ESFV Project Draft EIS to be used by the SP Project instead, saving hundreds of millions of dollars and reducing the amount of eminent domain seized from property owners.

Conclusion

Given the aforementioned and recent State of California housing legislation proposals during legislative year 2019-2020 at the expense of single-family neighborhoods (e.g. Assembly Bills: 68, 725, 2345 and Senate Bills: 330, 902, 1120) by pro-densification state representatives Scott Weiner (D-San Francisco), Toni Atkins (D-San Diego), and Nancy Skinner (D-Berkeley), among others, and support for the same by the majority of Southern California's State Senators and State Assemblymembers—including those of Assembly District 39 and State Senate District 18—the Arleta Neighborhood Council can no longer support Metro's East San Fernando Valley Light Rail Transit project.

ARLETA NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL: COMMUNITY IMPACT STATEMENT

Office of the Mayor
200 N Spring St
Los Angeles, CA 90012

October 20, 2020

RE: Degradation of our neighborhoods

Dear Mayor Eric Garcetti:

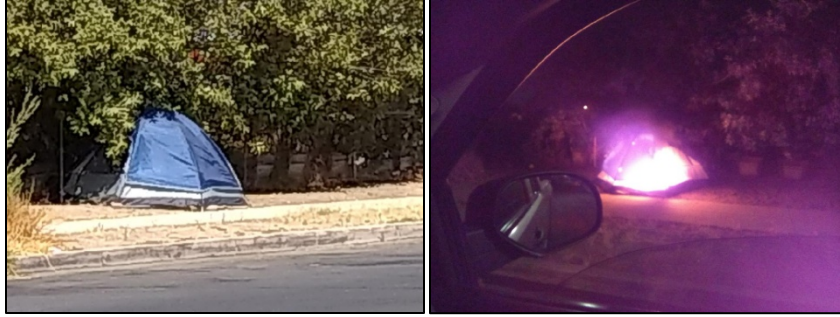
We write to you to inform that the State of the City was already in a state of disarray prior to the pandemic. Yourself and the City Council have dismissed who runs the City of Los Angeles—*it is the taxpayers of the City of Los Angeles*. Many Angelenos elected you to put the City back in order as you campaigned with a 'Back to Basics' slogan but clearly that has taken a detour for the worst. The following is a list of items that continue to plague our neighborhoods:

Homelessness and Encampments

Instead of the City of Los Angeles and Los Angeles County wasting millions of dollars on property acquisition/construction to house homeless both agencies should coordinate with the State of California and the federal government to house homeless in climate controlled *hangar-like structures outside LA County* as the homeless phenomenon is not a City of Los Angeles/Los Angeles County issue alone—it is both a State of California issue and a national disaster. All homeless individuals need to be categorized in terms of: place of last residence—Los Angeles County versus out of state or out of county residential status, mental state, physical condition, elderly state, employable capacity, minors, women and children, victimized women, health/medical care needs, substance addictions, rehabilitative capacity, and on their ability to contribute as functional members of society while those with a permanent criminal disposition should be re-institutionalized and kept far away from law-abiding citizens. Out of state homeless should be returned to their states of origin as City of Los Angeles taxpayers cannot be used as ATMs to solve the entire nation's homeless disorder. Remote *and* unpopulated areas within LA County should have virtually no opposition to hangar-like structures where hundreds of homeless individuals can be housed (in said structures for the same or lesser price than one Measure HHH constructed unit that currently costs \$600,000+ *for one* homeless individual), assessed, and provided with rehabilitative programs and/or multiple resources to assist in their recovery.

Homeless encampments in City of Los Angeles neighborhoods cannot be tolerated. Homeowners, renters, local businesses, and tourists should not have to confront humans in complete disarray as they lay bare without attire (particularly during the summer) within their tents or makeshift compounds while exposing themselves to children and all members of society. Furthermore, on the 18th of September, 2020, a homeless individual's tent caught on fire in proximity to DWP owned property along Canterbury Avenue at Gruen Street or the 14100 block of Gruen Street in Arleta (see Figures 1 and 2).

ARLETA NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL: COMMUNITY IMPACT STATEMENT



Figures 1 and 2: Before and After pictures of tent at 14100 block of Gruen St at Canterbury Avenue. September 18, 2020.

This is completely unacceptable and had the fire spread to the DWP power lines and residences we would be having a different reaction/discussion here. In Arleta, law-abiding taxpaying citizens are in a constant state of surveillance as homeless individuals engage in (but not limited to):

- Chronic petty theft from private residences and commercial establishments
- Sales of narcotics
- Prostitution
- Theft from vehicles and theft of motor vehicles
- Threat of fires caused by homeless' cooking and/or use of incendiary devices to consume narcotics
- Physical assaults on private persons
- Harassment of: youth (particularly of female teenagers and younger minors), citizens with disabilities (particularly the blind), and the elderly
- Environmental degradation and public safety hazards as homeless urinate and defecate in our sidewalks, alleys, streets, and provoke infernos in surrounding hills/mountains and particularly inside the Sepulveda Basin
- Unsafe parks due to homeless encampments being there, thus making both children and adults feel unsafe and unwelcomed at their own community parks
- Homeless blocking use of sidewalks with their own persons and belongings (see Figure 3)



Figure 3: El Super - 9710 Van Nuys Blvd. August 28, 2020.

Moreover, we don't understand why the City just rolls over to judges' decisions (federal or not) as they relate to homelessness. What happened to collective municipal appeals or judge recalls and basic fighting back? Such legal judgments hurt the City of Los Angeles and we are astonished that the combined brainpower of city attorneys and elected officials cannot defend our neighborhoods nor the City's treasury. Your invitation to the nation to send their homeless to the City of Los Angeles, as you entertained a presidential run, was taken literally and it was and remains both an irresponsible and reprehensible proclamation as Angelenos will now have to face the homeless disaster for years to come long after the conclusion of your administration. Angelenos deserved better when you were elected but what they got seems to have become a protracted extension of 2006's Mayoral election results.

Unpermitted street vending continues to operate with impunity

The current penalties do nothing to protect the public and there is no true punitive enforcement, much less sufficient joint operations with LA County Health Department, nor confiscation of dangerous equipment being operated in our streets. Furthermore, the ordinances that protect food street vendors not only *do not allow for the collection of sales taxes, as is the case with other regulated businesses in the City*, but they contribute to unemployment as neighborhood brick and mortar restaurants that sell the same products street food vendors are selling are at a disadvantage as street food vendors do not incur large capital investments for equipment acquisition and site location, do not have to take out loans to both employ personnel and pay for operations, do not pay payroll taxes, and do not adhere to an array of rules and regulations—which both the City of Los Angeles and Los Angeles County Health Department require—while trying to earn a profit. Food street vendors contribute to job displacement and several businesses have closed down in the community plan area as a result (e.g. Papas & Tacos in Pacoima). Street vendors that sell cooked food are frequently sites where people are congregating without face masks and/or in close proximity of each other, thus, further endangering their own health and that of the community and the City and County altogether—this in itself is a violation of LA County COVID-19 health orders.

Lack of Parking Enforcement

People who live in Recreational Vehicles (RVs) or out of their vehicles throughout the City have decided to park in our neighborhoods and litter our sidewalks with their bulky belongings besides dumping their sewage into the streets (see Figure 4). Neighbors are uncomfortable using the sidewalks on their way to commerce, for exercise, or for a stroll when in proximity to vehicle dwellings as their nomadic owners verbally harass passersby and/or are in use of narcotics in front of children, women, elderly, and all law-abiding citizens. Even though vehicles have expired vehicle registration tags LAPD cannot cite vehicles nor have them towed at this time during the pandemic and even when the suspension of parking enforcement period duly expires (October 15, 2020) some

ARLETA NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL: COMMUNITY IMPACT STATEMENT

council members are already postponing the set expiration date to a much later date, thus prolonging the neighborhood degradation. Dilapidated vehicles are therefore given a pass to park in our neighborhoods without fear of vehicular code consequences or concern for homeowners and renters.



Figure 4: Recreational Vehicle and overflow of belongings at 9855 Lemona Avenue, North Hills.

We are dismayed at the state of our City and if there is some physical legacy on your part that can change the aforementioned conditions it would be cleaning up—and keeping—our neighborhoods clean, properly enforcing the street vending situation, repaving damaged roads, fighting judgments that restrict the Los Angeles Police Department from enforcing laws/city ordinances, standing up to California state legislators' proposed bills and existing laws that hurt taxpayers and override local control, and by both protecting and thanking the middle-class of the City of Los Angeles that pays your salary, that of the rest of the elected officials, and that of the workforce that is charged with operating the city. There is still time to just "make it happen" and honor the heroes that protect this great City such as police, fire, Sanitation, among some of the City's workforce, and concerned citizens that take the time to represent their communities. Please be mindful that Angeleno taxpayers run this town.

Respectfully,

The Arleta Neighborhood Council

cc:

City Councilmember President Nury Martinez, CD6
Councilmember Gil Cedillo, CD 1
Councilmember Paul Krekorian, CD2
Councilmember Bob Bloomenfield, CD 3
Councilmember David Ryu, CD 4
Councilmember Paul Koretz, CD 5
Councilmember Monica Rodriguez, CD 7

Councilmember Marqueece Harris-Dawson, CD 8
Councilmember Curren D. Price, CD 9
Councilmember Herb J. Wesson, CD 10
Councilmember Mike Bonin, CD 11
Councilmember John Lee, CD 12
Councilmember Mitch O'Farrell, CD 13
Councilmember Joe Buscaino, CD 15