

NEIGHBORS.....WORKING WITH NEIGHBORS.... FOR THE NEIGHBORHOOD

In February, the Expo Construction Authority Board of Directors certified the Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) for Phase II of the Expo Light Rail Line (running from Venice and Robertson to Colorado and 4th Street in Santa Monica). The project now begins preliminary engineering. The route follows the Expo right-of-way (ROW) crossing Overland, Westwood, Military, and Sepulveda at grade. Options to provide grade separation (a bridge) at Sepulveda and to remove transit patron parking at the Westwood Station are still being studied.

Many of us in Cheviot Hills, Rancho Park, West of Westwood, and West LA feel that the underground option is not economically feasible and that the elevated option would be more visually intrusive and create greater sound impacts. In addition, the FEIR found NO significant traffic, safety, or noise impacts from at-grade crossings at Westwood and Overland after mitigation. We feel it is time to accept that the line will come through at grade, put our energies in a more positive place, and move forward to make it as neighborhood-friendly as possible! More importantly, however you feel about the alternatives, working on neighborhood integration will not be time wasted. First, though, we would like to correct some assertions that we feel are just not true:

- *Assertion 1: The FEIR did not study grade-separation at Overland and Westwood.* The FEIR did exactly that (Volume 2, Master Response 11) and found that the additional cost of going underground was \$224 million and the additional cost of going elevated was \$66 million. This additional cost, added to the complications caused by underground storm drains, floodplain and drainage issues, and increased construction impacts, makes it unlikely that the at-grade decision will be changed. In addition, the at-grade crossings meet Metro's grade-crossing criteria, and residents along Phase I requested but did not receive underground at crossings that met the criteria at grade. At the most, if grade separation were achieved, it would undoubtedly be an elevated line similar to what is currently being built at La Cienega and La Brea. You might want to drive by those streets and see what you think.
- *Assertion 2: The children at Overland School won't be safe.* Parents will continue to be involved in getting their children to school, and there are opportunities for neighborhood input to make crosswalks as safe as possible. The Expo Line follows the safety standard of quad and pedestrian gates that have given the Pasadena Gold Line an excellent safety record. In fact, parents at Arroyo Vista Elementary School next to the Gold Line did not find that the Line adversely influenced the safety of their children and were actually glad that their children's classes could use the Gold Line for field trips. Our kids will have access to Science Museum and Santa Monica Pier Aquarium field trips without buses or parents driving!
- *Assertion 3: The fire trucks and paramedic vehicles won't be able to reach locations once the line goes in at grade.* Emergency services are dispatched from a variety of stations and deal with congestion now. Those agencies have said that future response times will be within acceptable limits. We must insist that the City maximize integration of dispatch methods with the line.
- *Assertion 4: The Subway to the Sea will be a good substitute to the Expo Line.* Current timelines have the subway extension completed to Westwood in the year 2036 and even then it doesn't serve Santa Monica or the I-10 corridor, so both east-west transit routes are needed.
- *Assertion 5: The trains will cause a traffic nightmare.* Traffic in our neighborhood is a product of overdevelopment in Century City, Westwood, West Los Angeles, and Santa Monica. The Expo Line will not affect this one way or the other. Gates will be synchronized with the existing traffic signals, at most adding about 30 seconds to an end-to-end commute on Overland between Pico and the freeway (based on traffic projections in 30 years).

We are working to identify refinements that will better integrate the line into the neighborhood and are seeking constructive neighborhood discussion of these improvements. For example, how can traffic lanes, parking, and bike routes on Westwood Blvd. be configured and how can we minimize the taking of trees? Should there be parkland or parking near the station between Overland and Westwood? How can we optimize the walking and bike paths next to the line along with parkland? How best can everyone reach the station with the least impact? Please let us know if you would like to join in the discussion or just register your support by emailing us at ROWneighbors@gmail.com.

As our city continues to grow and density continues to increase, we will be strangled by traffic if we do not provide this wonderful alternative rail system on the Westside from downtown to the ocean. **We need Expo! And we can make it better! Work with us for the neighborhood!**

From neighbors working together to integrate Expo Phase II into our neighborhoods:

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