



Agenda Item #: _____

Staff Report

City of Manhattan Beach

TO: Honorable Mayor Ward and Members of the City Council

THROUGH: Geoff Dolan, City Manager

FROM: Sherilyn Lombos, Deputy City Manager

DATE: March 21, 2006

SUBJECT: Request by Councilmember Montgomery to Consider Opposing the Wilshire Extension of the Red Line Subway

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the City Council consider a request by Councilmember Montgomery to oppose the Wilshire extension of the Red Line subway.

FISCAL IMPLICATION:

There is no fiscal implication to the recommendation.

DISCUSSION:

Attached is information from Los Angeles County Mayor Michael Antonovich regarding Los Angeles City Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa's proposal to create an extension of the Red Line to Santa Monica via a subway along Wilshire. Mayor Antonovich is requesting that cities oppose Mayor Villaraigosa's proposal.

Attachments: A. February 23, 2006 Letter from Michael D. Antonovich
B. February 17, 2006 Letter to Governor Schwarzenegger
C. February 16, 2006 Daily News Opinion
D. February 15, 2006 Daily News Article



Board of Supervisors County of Los Angeles

MICHAEL D. ANTONOVICH
MAYOR

FEB 27 2006

February 23, 2006

Dear Councilmember:

As you know, Los Angeles City Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa wants to raid the County's local, state and federal resources to add a \$5 billion dollar Wilshire extension to the MTA Red Line subway -- money that was to be used for our regional transportation system.

This drain to the sea will cost more than the Gold Line, the Blue Line, the Green Line and the Orange Line combined.

If the cities of Los Angeles and Beverly Hills desire a subway, they should use their own communities' resources - - rather than draining vital transit dollars from a regional transportation program which will alleviate regional traffic congestion.

Your future transit dollars are at stake if the subway is extended. Please show your opposition to further subway construction by passing a City Resolution and sending a City letter to Governor Schwarzenegger and MTA Chairman Villaraigosa expressing your opposition to using your City's money to build more subways in Los Angeles County.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike Antonovich".

MICHAEL D. ANTONOVICH
Mayor, Los Angeles County
Director, MTA



Board of Supervisors County of Los Angeles

MICHAEL D. ANTONOVICH
MAYOR

February 17, 2006

Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger
State Capitol Building
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Schwarzenegger:

I urge you to reject Los Angeles City Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa's request for funding for any extension of the Red Line subway in any infrastructure bond proposal that comes before the voters of California.

To address our regional traffic congestion crisis, a regional solution is required. Spending \$5 billion dollars for just 13 miles is reckless, irresponsible, and not a prudent use of tax dollars. The 17 miles of Red Line subway took decades to complete, cost over \$5 billion dollars, suffered massive fraud, delays, and cost overruns, and drained the County's local, state and federal resources that were supposed to be used for a truly regional transportation system.

If the cities of Los Angeles and Beverly Hills desire a subway, they should use their own communities' resources -- rather than draining vital transit dollars away from a regional transportation program which will alleviate regional traffic congestion.

Sincerely,


MICHAEL D. ANTONOVICH
Mayor, Los Angeles County

DAILY NEWS

Subway to sea viable?

Mayor still behind idea despite \$4.8 billion cost

By Lisa Mascaro, Staff Writer
LA Daily News

February 15, 2006

Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa's dream of a "subway to the sea" would cost roughly \$4.8 billion - more than it took to build the Blue, Gold, Green and Orange lines combined - according to a report being released today to the MTA.

Even if funds were available, it would take 10 years to open just the first three-mile leg of a 13-mile Metro Red Line extension under Wilshire Boulevard. Building the rest would take another decade.

Critics say the subway's high price would take an enormous chunk of Los Angeles County's resources for the benefit of one area when entire swaths of the county - including the San Fernando Valley - are starved for mass-transit alternatives.

At \$300 million per mile, one mile of subway could pay for nearly the entire 14-mile Metro Orange Line busway that opened last fall in the Valley. And the \$900 million needed for a three-mile leg between Koreatown and Fairfax is almost equal to the cost of the entire 14-mile Gold Line train to Pasadena.

Still, Villaraigosa stands "100 percent" behind the subway, his spokesman says.

"Clearly the project is not inexpensive, but any major public-works project will have a substantial cost. The benefits in the long term far outweigh the costs," Deputy Mayor Jamie de la Vega said. "The mayor's optimistic that funding can be put together to get this project started."

Metropolitan Transportation Authority board committees will begin discussing the report today, with the full board slated to take it up next week.

The report outlines the costs of construction - about \$300 million per mile - totaling \$3.9 billion in today's dollars. Adjusted for inflation, the cost would soar to \$4.8 billion in 2015.

The report is the latest step in Villaraigosa's efforts to revive Los Angeles' faded hope for a subway system to move people along the city's busiest corridor. Slowly but surely,

the mayor has been pushing the subway to center stage.

He started by assembling a panel of experts, who determined last year that technological developments would allow workers to tunnel safely through the area, where an explosion of methane gas 20 years ago derailed subway construction.

That report persuaded Rep. Henry Waxman, D-Los Angeles, to reverse his long-standing opposition to tunneling in the Wilshire corridor. He's now trying to persuade Congress to reverse the law he spearheaded that bans the use of federal funds to build a subway in that area.

Experts say federal money would be needed to help fund a project of this magnitude.

Villaraigosa also is trying to jump-start work by including the subway in the state's massive \$222 billion infrastructure program Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger wants to put before voters this year.

Even residents of the Westside communities that 20 years ago fought the idea of public transit through their tony neighborhoods now hope for an alternative to traffic-choked streets.

Beverly Hills Mayor Linda J. Briskman said her city is in the process of hiring a transportation lobbyist to work on the issue.

"It's essential. We've got to get this traffic to move through our region," she said. "I don't think it's very much money. Every great city does have to spend billions in order to get their transit needs met. For anyone to think less is naive."

But some members of the MTA board are skeptical of supporting another subway project after the construction problems and cost overruns that plagued the \$4.5 billion, 17-mile Red Line.

And voters were so fed up that in 1998, they banned the MTA from spending any of the countywide one-percent sales-tax revenue on subway construction - a prohibition still in effect today.

Critics also point out that the high cost of tunneling makes subways one of the most expensive mass-transit systems possible, and they tout light rail and busways that could be constructed at a fraction of the time and cost.

Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich said Los Angeles County taxpayers should not have to bear the cost of a system that would benefit only one of its 88 cities.

"If they're so committed to that, let them put it on the ballot. Let people vote for it," said Antonovich, who with the four other supervisors sits on the MTA board.

"We should be learning from the mistakes of the past and not repeat it for the future."

But county Supervisors Yvonne Braithwaite Burke and Zev Yaroslavsky, whose districts are divided by Wilshire Boulevard, agree that the area is one place where a subway would make sense.

"We should pursue the (subway) simply because you're talking about the street that has the highest density across Los Angeles, across the county," Burke said. "No one wants to pay for it, but everyone's upset at being caught on the freeway and not being able to move, and it's going to get worse."

The MTA's acting chief planner, Carol Inge, said it's difficult to fit an above-ground train or busway in an already developed corridor like Wilshire.

The city already has shelved its plans to convert regular lanes to a bus-only lane on Wilshire, which studies show would quickly move people between downtown and Santa Monica at a fraction of the cost of other proposals.

"You can't even get an Orange Line in there, so why even compare it?" Inge said. "You really have to start looking underground."

MTA officials refuse to estimate how many people would ride the subway. Original plans said 300,000 people would ride a 23-mile Red Line when it included Wilshire Boulevard.

Today, the Red Line carries about 115,000 weekday riders, while the Rapid bus that runs along Wilshire carries 57,000 between downtown and Santa Monica.

That compares with 135,000 weekday passengers on the Blue, Gold, Green and Orange lines.

Yaroslavsky said pursuing a subway is fine, but not at the expense of the other mass-transit projects - such as extending the Orange Line north through Van Nuys and Canoga Park and the Exposition light rail.

"Those kinds of projects can't be suspended or halted to fund the extension of the subway," he said. "I think we need to be able to walk and chew gum at the same time."

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OUR OPINIONS

Pricey pipe dream

JUST months ago, the idea of building a subway from downtown to the beach fell into the category of cockamamie ideas from the past that were discarded once they were exposed to the harsh light of reality.

Besides the pockets of explosive methane gas under the land, residents of the adjacent neighborhoods just didn't want Wilshire Boulevard tied up for so long. And after all the waste building the subway to nowhere, the taxpayers of Los Angeles County drove a stake into the heart of this fantasy by banning any more underground tunnels.

Astonishingly, the subway Dracula has found a new life, ready to suck the blood of our public treasury once again. Thanks to the political friendships and commitments Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa has developed along the way to his fame and position, the specter of wasting billions on a subway for the few rather than public transit that serves the many looms again.

One such friend, longtime Rep. Henry Waxman, who once cared so much for the public safety he got a federal law passed banning subway construction through the Fairfax District, is ready to flip-flop on the basis of a flimsy report.

The political power structure of Los Angeles that does such a good job of looking after itself and not the city is ready to derail Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's massive infrastructure bond issue intended for economic development by grabbing a huge chunk for this boondoggle.

That's unfortunate, because supporting the subway plan essentially

Subway isn't best use of transportation funds

means supporting no public transportation projects in any other part of the city for a very long time.

Best estimates for the extension of the Metro Red Line put the price

tag at nearly \$5 billion by the time it's finished, a figure equal to what it cost for all the light rail lines and the Valley busway put together. Prior experience with Los Angeles' public works project finances, however, would suggest that the actual cost once the subway is completed would be much, much higher.

Nor would the horrendous congestion of the Westside be immediately relieved. The Metropolitan Transportation Authority estimates that the earliest the first three-mile leg to Fairfax would open would be in a decade.

There's a better way. It's called a busway, as those commuters riding the Orange Line every day can attest. Problem is busways aren't sexy. They are workhorses. But the success of the Orange Line shows that they get the job done — quickly and cheaply.

There are 10 million people in Los Angeles County and they are all desperate for public transportation improvements. Dedicating so much to one project that panders to the wealthy Westside interest is unfair, and plain bad budgeting.

Sure, a "subway to the sea" sounds nice, something the Chamber of Commerce could sell to tourists and to justify the public subsidy of a downtown convention hotel.

The time, energy and money being devoted to this pricey pipe dream ought to be put to better use.