

Eco-Rapid Transit, formerly known as the Orangeline Development Authority, is a joint powers authority (JPA) created to pursue development of a transit system that moves as rapidly as possible, uses grade separation as appropriate, and is environmentally friendly and energy efficient. The system is designed to enhance and increase transportation options for riders of this region utilizing safe, advanced transit technology to expand economic growth that maximizes ridership in Southern California. The Authority is composed of the following public agencies:

City of Artesia

City of Bell

City of Bell Gardens

City of Cudahy

City of Downey

City of Glendale

City of Huntington Park

City of Maywood

City of Paramount

City of South Gate

Burbank-Glendale-Pasadena  
Airport Authority

Chair

Karina Macias  
Mayor  
City of Huntington Park

Vice-Chair

Ali Sajjad Taj  
Council Member  
City of Artesia

Secretary

Sean Ashton  
Councilmember  
City of Downey

Treasurer

Vrej Agajanian  
Council Member  
City of Glendale

Internal Auditor

Jose R. Gonzalez  
Mayor  
City of Cudahy

Executive Director

Michael R. Kodama

General Counsel

Teresa L. Highsmith

Ex-Officio

William Rawlings  
City Manager Representative

## AGENDA REPORT

TO: Members of Eco-Rapid Transit

FROM: Michael Kodama, Executive Director

DATE: August 14, 2019

SUBJECT: **UPDATE AND/OR ACTION REGARDING NORTHERN CORRIDOR AND CALIFORNIA HIGH SPEED RAIL**

Public comments on items on the agenda will be taken at the time the item is called and are limited to 3 minutes per speaker

### ISSUE

Eco-Rapid Transit Staff is tracking actions related to northern corridor (Glendale and Hollywood Burbank Airport) planning activities and will provide an update.

### RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Board:

1. Discuss information presented and offer action items; and/or
2. Receive and file the item

LOS ANGELES TIMES

[CALIFORNIA](#)

## In a blow to the bullet train, California might shift billions to L.A. and Bay Area projects



Traffic on California 99 passes construction on the high-speed rail line at Fresno's Cedar Viaduct. (Tomas Ovalle / For The Times)

By [RALPH VARTABEDIAN](#) STAFF WRITER - JULY 30, 2019 - 5 AM

Key California lawmakers have devised a plan to shift billions of dollars from the Central Valley bullet train to rail projects in Southern California and the Bay Area, a strategy that could crush the dreams of high-speed rail purists.

The move is a response to [Gov. Gavin Newsom's plan](#) earlier this year to direct all of the remaining bullet train funds into the San Joaquin Valley and build a partial high-speed system from Bakersfield to Merced at a cost of \$20.5 billion.

Assembly Democrats see greater public value in improving passenger rail from Burbank to Anaheim, relieving congestion on the busy Interstate 5 corridor before the 2028 Summer Olympics in Los Angeles and putting additional money into San Francisco commuter rail. The proposal has been taken more seriously in recent weeks, and supporters think it will meet the tricky legal requirements of the high-speed rail project.

"I like the concept," said Assembly Speaker Anthony Rendon (D-Lakewood). "Any project that doesn't have a significant amount of service to the largest areas in the state doesn't make much sense."

Over the last six years, state officials have promoted and then discarded different master plans to solve the bullet train's financial, legal and political problems, though they have remained committed to keeping the Central Valley construction as the top priority. Even under the new plan, the construction of viaducts, bridges and rail bed would continue.

In interviews with more than a dozen elected officials, legislative staffers, rail industry executives, bullet train insiders and others, The Times heard strong support for returning to a strategy that the state abandoned a decade ago: building the bullet train toward the Central Valley from Los Angeles and San Francisco.

The big urban areas have the largest population and worst highway congestion — meaning ridership, revenue, greenhouse gas reduction and political payoff are strongest at the ends, not the center. A change of course could help build long-term support for the train, some argue.

“It is not the end of high-speed rail, but a way to save it,” Rendon said, citing a growing lack of confidence with the current approach.

The reformulation grew out of discussions among key Southern California Assembly members and their staffs, who have grown [weary of the project's cost increases](#), schedule delays, technical problems, litigation and political missteps the last six years, all in the Central Valley, where the state rail authority has spent \$5 billion so far.

“I can’t stand by and watch billions of dollars being spent in the hopes of future ridership in the Central Valley, while there is thirst for faster and better train service in Orange and Los Angeles counties,” said Assemblyman Tom Daly (D-Anaheim). “It is time.”

Assemblywoman Laura Friedman (D-Glendale) is also on board with the plan: “We need to make sure we put investment into areas of the state where we get the biggest bang for the buck. I would like to see Los Angeles get its fair share and more than we have gotten so far.”

Newsom declined a request for an interview and his staff had no comment on the discussions.

Brian Kelly, chief executive of the California High-Speed Rail Authority, said other state agencies with some limited rail authority contributions are already investing \$4.4 billion in rail over the coming years in Southern California.

“It is a mistake to simply take money from one region and spend it in another,” Kelly said.

But in a nod toward politics, Kelly added: “I look forward to working with the Legislature.”

The Democrats’ plan would curtail some of the planned construction in the Central Valley, completing only the 119 miles of rail line now underway and eliminating extensions to Bakersfield and Merced that would cost more than a combined \$4 billion.

Construction of a conventional rail link to Madera, which would connect to Bay Area rail lines, could be turned over to the San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority, which operates the Amtrak service and has a better record of managing construction, legislative staff said.

The plan would also save money by delaying the installation of a high-voltage electric power system, meaning new 135-mph diesel trains would operate on the Central Valley bullet train network.

All of those changes could theoretically raise \$5 billion to \$6 billion that would be reallocated to Metrolink in Southern California and Caltrain in the Bay Area.

The Metrolink and Caltrain systems are part of the original high-speed network, meaning that upgrading them toward ultimate high-speed service would satisfy the requirements of federal grants and the \$9-billion bond act of 2008, supporters of the plan say.

Indeed, the Assembly members wield considerable political leverage because the Legislature must make a supplemental appropriation from the bond money for the project, either late this year or next year. When the vote is taken, legislators from Southern California will cast the majority of the votes, analysts say.

There is somewhere between \$4 billion and \$5 billion in remaining bond funds, along with roughly \$750 million a year that comes out of the rail project's share of cap-and-trade fees from the state's greenhouse gas reduction program.

Purists of high-speed rail will probably rebel against the proposal, particularly because it would put diesel locomotives on tracks that were painstakingly designed to handle the world's most modern electric trains streaking through the countryside at 220 mph. The risk is that the original vision for an electrified 220-mph train, running on dedicated track, will never be completed.

But some of the original players in the project recognize the need for a radical change.

"It is the end of high-speed rail as we know it, but the beginning of a much better program," said Art Bauer, a former Senate transportation staffer who was an architect of the high-speed rail effort a decade ago. "It is the start of a new chapter of a more realistic and viable service."

Europe and Asia developed high-speed rail that improved on successful slower systems that grew out of the devastation of World War II, while the U.S. invested more in highway systems. But the California bullet train project bypassed the step of creating a successful statewide rail transportation system before attempting to build a luxury edition.

The investments in Metrolink would potentially include additional tracks, straighter curves and even electrification, according to legislative staffers who have worked on the proposal.

Supporters note that Europe now operates battery-powered trains, eliminating the need for overhead wires that freight railroads don't want installed on their tracks. And the potential for hydrogen-powered fuel cells is also advancing, they say. Metrolink carries about 1.8 million passengers annually between Anaheim and Burbank, but faster trains, more departures and improved reliability could significantly increase that number.

In the Bay Area, there is the possibility of further investments in Caltrain, which is already in a transition, funded by the rail authority, from diesel to electric power. The line includes dozens of grade crossings in Silicon Valley that could be eliminated with more money. Another option is to help San Francisco dig a tunnel connecting Caltrain to the new Transbay station downtown.

Newsom unveiled his plan in his first State of the State address, saying Gov. Jerry Brown's previous proposal for building the entire 500-mile system was unviable and lacked the funding to succeed. Newsom's plan backed off from connecting the Central Valley to Silicon Valley with electric train service through Gilroy, which would have [required a 13.5-mile tunnel under the Pacheco Pass](#) in the Diablo Range.

Instead, the governor said the state would have just enough money to build a system from Bakersfield to Merced, where it could connect with diesel trains to the Bay Area operated by the San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority and marketed by Amtrak or by the Altamont Corridor Express (ACE).

The high-speed rail authority quickly backed the idea and unveiled a report on May 1 that asserted it would create a network ridership that would top 9 million passengers annually in the Central Valley — up from 2.6 million today, according to an analysis by Bay Area watchdog Elizabeth Alexis. But some outside experts have questioned those estimates, and even the high-speed rail board wasn't convinced.

The board demanded an outside evaluation by the consulting firm KPMG that would compare the current state plan to the benefits of bullet train investments in other parts of the state. Board members insisted that KPMG be isolated from staff influence, and asked for the evaluation in September.

The effort was led by Ernest Camacho, a board member from Southern California who also played a key role in a Metro resolution last week that directs its staff to evaluate the local benefits of high-speed rail investments.

"I call it the Ernie Camacho resolution," said Ara Najarian, a member of the Metro board and vice chair of the Metrolink board. Najarian said a major investment in Metrolink would transform the service from Burbank to Anaheim.

"Metrolink stands ready to receive that money," he said. "We are ready to go."

The high-speed rail project steadily tilted over the recent years to offering more to Northern California than Los Angeles. Under Newsom's plan, it was touted for its potential to give Silicon Valley workers transportation to low-cost housing in the Central Valley.

The rail authority pledged more than \$700 million to electrify Caltrain's 50 miles of service from San Jose to San Francisco. And in a deal engineered by Rep. Nancy Pelosi (D-San Francisco), the Obama administration diverted \$400 million of a \$2.5-billion grant for the high-speed rail to help build a downtown San Francisco railroad station.

By contrast, Southern California obtained a pledge for \$500 million to improve the tracks at Union Station, money that has not yet been delivered. And it received funding for improving a rail crossing south of downtown.

Sen. Jim Beall (D-San Jose), chairman of the state Senate Transportation Committee, said he could see some benefits if the state were to invest more in the Bay Area and Southern California. "They have some financial wiggle room," Beall said. "They could put more into the bookends and add money for Burbank to Anaheim and electrify Caltrain all the way to Gilroy."

Beall said he would like to see more than the current 25% of greenhouse gas fees in the state invested in passenger rail, which could help secure those investments. But he added that dropping electrification from the Central Valley is a bad idea.

: If any major region of the state has less to show for the bullet train project, it would be San Diego. Although the Central Valley is often described as "isolated," the state's second-largest city is boxed in from Camp Pendleton to Mexico and from the Pacific to the rugged coastal mountains.

State Senate leader Toni Atkins (D-San Diego) declined to respond to a request for comment.

But Hasan Ikhata, executive director of the San Diego Assn. of Governments, said he is convinced the bullet train needs an overhaul and Sacramento has to invest more in the heavily used rail link between Los Angeles and San Diego.

"We would really be helped with better links to the rest of the state," he said, noting that the high-technology economies of Orange and San Diego counties are disconnected.

Louis Thompson, chairman of a state-appointed peer review panel for high-speed rail, noted that he had advocated for bigger investments in the project's so-called bookends years ago. Instead, the state did things backward, creating the project before it had developed a larger passenger rail plan. It isn't too late, he said, adding that the new ideas have some credibility.

"It is a valid option to look at," Thompson said. "It would feed into preparations for the Olympics and give a boost to the largest city in California. It is not the end of high-speed rail in California, but a postponement."

#### [Ralph Vartabedian](#)

Ralph Vartabedian, a national correspondent at the Los Angeles Times, joined the newspaper in 1981.

# Proposed Glendale streetcar rolls into focus

Feasibility study looks at the line's potential route, ridership, cost and traffic impacts.



AN ARTIST'S rendering shows a Glendale streetcar configuration at Central Avenue and Laurel Street. ( )

By Lila Seidman

A proposed regional electric streetcar that would initially connect a transportation center in south Glendale to the city's downtown area is chugging along to its next phase of study, as details of its potential route, ridership, cost and traffic impacts take shape.

Last week, Glendale city staff unveiled a more detailed look at two potential streetcar routes that were first proposed in March.

Both options would span 2.88 miles, have 16 stations and carry a price tag of \$250 million to \$300 million to construct, with an additional \$4 million to \$5 million in annual operating costs, according to an update on the streetcar's feasibility study presented at a City Council meeting last week.

"It's always best to have a project in the planning stages, or past the planning stages, on the shelf, ready to go, because you never know when funding is going to appear," Mayor Ara Najarian said before the City Council voted to complete the study. Najarian also sits on the Metro board.

With the loop option, the streetcar would run north on Central Avenue from the Larry Zarian Transportation Center in south Glendale before turning on Stocker Street and heading south on Brand Boulevard, said Bradley Calvert, the city's assistant director of community development, who gave the presentation. South of Maple Street, the north and southbound tracks would both operate on Central before connecting back at the transportation center.

The bidirectional option would run north and south from the transportation center on Central before cutting across Maple to Brand. It would then run north and south on Brand, Calvert said.

"It's capturing the largest potential audience," including pedestrians and existing transit users, Calvert said of the bidirectional option. "But it does obviously cause some disruption, especially during construction periods, because it's all focused on one street instead of split between two."

City staff predicted the bidirectional route on Brand would attract 1,500 to 4,000 riders a day — slightly more than the 1,400 to 3,800 daily riders predicted for the loop option.

Both routes would result in a loss of parking along their respective corridors.

With each route planned to run curbside, city staff said angled parking along some areas on Brand and Central would need to be converted to parallel parking to preserve the number of existing traffic lanes.

Parallel parking takes up more horizontal space than angling cars outward toward the street, leading to a roughly 30% loss of parking in the conversion, Calvert said.

Planned stations would also displace some parking spaces.

According to the study update, the loop option would lead to a loss of 70 to 80 parking spaces, with an additional 30% loss of angled spaces. The bidirectional option would lead to the loss of 60 to 70 parking spaces, with an additional 30% loss of angled spaces.

Council members Frank Quintero and Paula Devine expressed relief that the streetcars would not run in the center of the street, potentially displacing trees and other landscaping in the medians.

Further study needs to be completed before city staff can seek certain state and federal grants to potentially help finance the project, said Phillip Lanzafame, Glendale's director of community development.

"It's a step-by-step," Lanzafame said.

Down the line, the streetcar could be expanded to Burbank and beyond, Calvert said.

Residents can submit comments and complete a survey about the project at [glendalestreetcar.com](http://glendalestreetcar.com).

By fall or winter of this year, the study should be complete.

At that point, the findings will be presented to the City Council for further consideration.

The streetcar could be complemented by a Metro-directed, \$287-million bus-rapid transit system, or BRT, planned to [connect Pasadena and North Hollywood via Burbank and Glendale](#).

With Metro officials [wrapping up a public-comment period](#) for the 18-mile bus line this week, it will then undergo further environmental analysis. It's expected to open to the public in 2024.

Seidman writes for Times Community News.