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February 7, 2023

By Email

Mr. Cory Zelmer
Deputy Executive Officer
One Gateway Plaza, Mail
Stop MS: 99-22-6
Los Angeles, CA 90012
Email: LAART@metro.net

Re: Written materials submitted in support of public testimony on the Draft Environmental Impact Report for the Los Angeles Aerial Rapid Transit Project, SCH No. 2020100007; Information Regarding Zero Emission Electric Buses for Use with Transportation System Management Alternative And Alternative Design of Towers on Alameda Street; Request for DEIR Recirculation

Dear Mr. Zelmer:

On behalf of The California Endowment (“TCE”) and pursuant to the continuation of public comment through the February 8, 2023 public hearing scheduled by Metro, on the Draft Environmental Impact Report (“DEIR”) prepared for the Gondola project (“Project”) proposed by Los Angeles Aerial Rapid Transit (“ARTT”), we respectfully submit the attached material and supplemental comments as our written testimony for this public hearing.

This material underscores the feasibility and reasonableness of choosing the environmentally superior, no-emission alternative, with electric buses operated by Metro. The DEIR claims the Transportation System Management (“TSM”) alternative “would generate new emissions as there would be additional Union Station DSE (Dodger Stadium Express) bus service on the existing route.” (DEIR, p. 4-65.) However, if the DSE buses were all electric, there would be no emissions at all- zero emissions.

The DEIR fails to mention that Metro has received a \$104 million grant for zero emission electric buses as was reported on August 19, 2022

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(Enclosure 1) and has committed to having an all-electric bus fleet by 2030 (Enclosure 4). Therefore, claiming the TSM alternative would increase emissions is misleading and fails to present Metro's own plan for zero-emission buses.

This is a substantial and fatal flaw in the current DEIR analysis. It falsely portrays Mr. McCourt's Gondola Project as superior to a low- or no-emission option. Such conclusion in the DEIR is not supported by substantial evidence and creates an erroneous comparison to zero-emission buses. The DEIR should be re-written and recirculated as required by law to provide an accurate and thorough analysis based on substantial evidence of the TSM Alternative.

Additionally, construction of towers on Alameda Street on public land for Mr. McCourt's private project will be problematic when those parcels are better used for public-serving purposes such as affordable housing with supportive tenant services. Prior to the publication of the DEIR, the City, which is a responsible agency, designated these parcels for desperately needed housing and entered into negotiations to allow for the construction of affordable residential units to house vulnerable populations.¹ The DEIR fails to inform the public of this conflict with City of Los Angeles policies and plans and fails analyze how this impact is to be mitigated.

While the DEIR discusses Option B- a design option (not an alternative) which would eliminate the Alpine Tower but require the Alameda Tower to be taller, it states Option B has "potential technical constraints due to the taller tower that approaches the limits of technical feasibility due to increase angle of bend at the Alameda Tower." (DEIR, p. 6-20.) In other words- a fair inference from this is that a taller version of the Alameda tower approaches the limits of safety- and so would be even less safe than the current design. The DEIR does not explain what "the limits of technical feasibility" are or what it means that a taller tower "approaches" those limits. What are these limits, and what does it mean for the taller tower to approach them? What impact may this likely riskier option have on the communities below the tower?

¹ The City of Los Angeles' Chief Administrative Officer's Comment letter dated January 17, 2023 stated "The plan for these sites includes [] transitional housing and affordable housing with supportive services, and a community center. Because of these facts, the City does not intend to divest itself of these parcels for any use besides providing affordable housing."

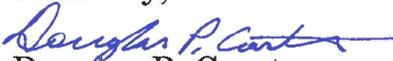
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CEQA mandates disclosure of this technical evidence and is necessary to allow for informed public participation regarding the merits of the project and its alternatives. As the attached correspondence from the City indicates, the construction of the Alpine Tower is infeasible and should never have been considered given the timing of negotiations that precede the publication of the DEIR. (See Enclosure 5.) Option A was never a viable approach to construction and other options should have been analyzed instead.

Furthermore, a single tower design is both a visual blight and a structural danger given the weight involved and the fact that it crosses two points of a Metro railway line. In the event of an earthquake, as Southern California is prone to and as the recent very large one in the Turkey-Syria border region demonstrates, there is a risk that the entire structure could collapse leading to mass casualty and destruction. (See <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2023-02-06/earthquake-like-turkeys-would-devastate-southern-california>.) Who will be responsible for addressing and mitigating this risk?

The many failures presented above render the DEIR inadequate and indefensible. It cannot be presented for consideration by the Metro Board. At minimum, the entire process should be corrected, the appropriate lead agency identified, a thorough and not misleading analysis of the Project and its impacts provided, and the entire process started over with a sufficiently informative DEIR. Thank you for your consideration of these materials in support of our public testimony.

Sincerely,


Douglas P. Carstens

Enclosures:

1. USDOT awards \$104 Million to Metro for 160 zero emission electric buses.
2. LA Metro Now [2021] Running all Zero-Emission Electric Buses on the G (Orange) Line in the San Fernando Valley.
3. Metro Motion approving acquisition of Zero Emission (ZE) transit buses.
4. Why Won't Metro Promote Its New Electric Buses?
5. Letter of City of Los Angeles Chief Administrative Officer dated January 17, 2023.

ENCLOSURE 1

USDOT awards \$104 million to Metro for 160 zero emission electric buses

BY LA METRO , AUGUST 19, 2022

Metro has received a \$104-million federal grant for the purchase and deployment of 160 battery-electric buses as well as for the procurement and installation of en-route and depot charging stations. Above is a video from the city of L.A.'s Channel 35 on the news.

Electric buses are cleaner and quieter than buses that run on compressed natural gas. They help Metro fulfill its goal of improving air quality in our region and producing fewer greenhouse gases that are responsible for climate change.

The grant will enable Metro to support the transition to zero emission bus service on routes operating out of Metro's Divisions 9 (El Monte) and 18 (Carson) including the J Line (Silver). The grant also funds related workforce development and training activities.

The grant, announced earlier this week by the U.S. Department of Transportation, is via a national competitive process from the Federal Transit Administration's Low or No Emission Grant Program.

The Metro Board of Directors has approved a goal of converting Metro's bus fleet to zero emission by 2030 — well ahead of the state deadline of 2040 for transit agencies. The G Line (Orange) already has an entire fleet of electric buses.

QUOTES

“Metro is thankful to U.S. Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg and his talented team at the Federal Transit Administration for issuing a \$104 million Low or No Emission Grant for our agency,” said Glendale City Councilmember and Metro Board Chair Ara J. Najarian. “This grant for Metro's Zero Emission Bus and Infrastructure Deployment Project will help bring our agency closer to having a fully electric bus fleet in the coming decade. On behalf of our Board of Directors, I want to personally thank the Biden Administration, the U.S. Department of Transportation – and of course – our Los Angeles County Congressional Delegation for supporting Metro's successful effort to secure these valuable federal funds.”

“The J Line, aka the Silver Line, is a vital link for our regional economy, but residents of Wilmington and San Pedro should never have to pay a price for it with their health,” said Los Angeles County Supervisor and Metro Board 2nd Vice Chair Janice Hahn. “We need to fight air pollution in our communities with all the tools and technologies available, and with this switch to a fully electrified J Line, we’re accomplishing that.”

“As we navigate rising temperatures, longer and more severe droughts, and a myriad of other consequences of human-made climate change, let’s not forget our commitment to future generations,” said Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti. “Through electrifying our transportation system we have so much ground to gain in the fight against climate change — cleaner air, lower emissions, and healthier communities. This historic investment brings us another step closer to meeting our goals and furthers our fight against climate change.”

“We are appreciative of the strong support from the federal government in Metro’s commitment to convert its entire fleet of buses to zero-emission electric buses,” said Metro Board Member and Los Angeles County Supervisor Hilda L. Solis. “These federal grant funds will also be used for workforce training for the operation and maintenance of our growing zero-emission bus fleet – which is vitally important in providing good jobs for those that need them the most.”

“Metro’s partnership with the U.S. Department of Transportation has never been stronger,” said Metro CEO Stephanie N. Wiggins. “This grant will strengthen our agency’s efforts to provide clean, dependable zero emission bus service to millions of transit riders. Thank you to Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg, FTA Administrator Nuria Fernandez, members of the Los Angeles County Congressional Delegation, and the Metro Board of Directors for supporting this grant request. I cant wait to get these new buses on the road!”

SHARE THE SOURCE:

ENCLOSURE 2

L.A. Metro Now Running all Zero-Emission Electric Buses on the G (Orange) Line in the San Fernando Valley

- Dave Sotero
- October 13, 2021

In a major clean air milestone for the Los Angeles region, the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) announces the successful completion of its transition to an all-electric bus fleet on the popular Metro G (Orange) Line in the San Fernando Valley, offering Metro customers a non-polluting, quiet and ultra-smooth riding experience.

Metro has phased out its legacy 60-foot articulated compressed natural gas (CNG) buses on the G Line — the type that has run on the dedicated Bus Rapid Transit line since it opened in October 2005 — and replaced them with 40 brand new, 60-foot articulated zero-emissions buses manufactured by New Flyer. Called Excelsior Charge NG, the buses feature zero-tailpipe emissions, employ advanced electric technologies such as high-energy batteries and traction propulsion system. Rapid en-route chargers installed at North Hollywood, Canoga and Chatsworth Stations give the buses an all-day operating capability along the 18-mile corridor. Buses have about a 150-mile range on a single charge even without rapid charging.

The new electric buses contribute to Metro’s equity goals to help reduce disparities in access to opportunity, including health outcomes, in key communities along the bus corridor. Of the G Line’s 36 stops, for example, 20 (or 55 percent) are directly located in or adjacent to Equity Focus Communities across North Hollywood, Valley Village, Van Nuys, Lake Balboa, Reseda, and Canoga Park.

Metro first began converting its bus fleet to electric buses in July 2020. Since completing its transition from CNG to electricity earlier this year, Metro has officially logged an impressive 900,000 miles on the electric buses.

“Metro is officially on the road to a zero-emissions future with its first official use of electric buses on a major Bus Rapid Transit Line,” said Metro Board Chair and Chair of the L.A. County Supervisors Hilda L. Solis. “This marks the beginning of Metro’s commitment and long-term investment in a healthier, more equitable and sustainable bus fleet for Los Angeles County,

one that helps our region reduce its greenhouse gas emissions at the tailpipe while greatly improving the customer experience.”

“The 2020s will be defined as the decade for climate action,” said L.A. City Mayor and Metro Board member Eric Garcetti. “Now, more than ever, bold and ambitious policies are needed to tackle climate change. Metro’s transition to electric buses on the G Line is a perfect example of a bold policy made real. We have proven that these next-generation buses are fully capable of meeting this popular bus line’s daily service needs.”

Valley bus customers as well as residents living next to the G Line will enjoy the buses’ quiet operation. The buses are whisper-quiet because they do not need fans CNG buses require to keep their engines cool. Buses contain active suspension that ensures a smooth ride for passengers. Buses also employ dual electrically driven air conditioning units, a particularly good cooling feature for customers during hot summer days in the Valley. Customers can charge their portable devices using USB ports imbedded in the bus seats. The buses boast public Wi-Fi access to better connect Metro bus customers on the go. Lastly, the buses also feature two drive axles for better acceleration and employ regenerative braking to recapture energy.

“Five years ago, the Metro Board supported my motion for a plan to use electric buses on the Orange Line,” said Los Angeles City Councilmember and Metro Board Member Paul Krekorian. “At that time, there were still many questions about the feasibility of electrification of the fleet. The success of the transformation of the Orange Line has answered those questions. This important moment in the history of Metro brings us that much closer to achieving our goal of a 100 percent zero emissions fleet by 2030.”

Metro’s electric buses cost \$1.15 million each. The project includes the deployment of the electric buses and associated charging equipment and infrastructure improvements. The total cost of buses, equipment and improvements is \$80 million.

Metro is now planning to utilize electric buses on the J line (Silver) that operates between San Pedro and El Monte via the Harbor Gateway Transit Center. The agency is now working closely with Caltrans, Los Angeles Department of Water and Power and Southern California Edison on charging designs along the J Line corridor. The ultimate conversion of the J Line to electric buses is anticipated to be completed in approximately two years.

“Today we are working tirelessly to create a more environmentally sustainable, equitable and resilient public transportation system for all our customers,” said Metro CEO

Stephanie N. Wiggins. “Our zero-emission bus goals are an important part of our overall strategy to reduce our agency’s carbon footprint and become carbon neutral. We continue as a transit leader in our march towards a more sustainable and resilient transportation system that will benefit our customers, our industry and our planet.”

Metro has ambitious plans to transition from a CNG to zero-emissions bus fleet in the years ahead. In 2017, the Metro Board unanimously adopted a motion endorsing a comprehensive plan to transition the agency to a 100 percent zero emission bus fleet by 2030. The agency currently operates approximately 2,300 CNG buses. Metro is the largest American transportation agency to pursue such a goal. The plan is contingent on continuous advancements in electric bus technology – which includes an increase in range, reduction of charging times and extension of battery life cycles – and a drop in price as the technology develops.

Overall, Metro also has strong environmental sustainability commitments. The agency plans to displace over 780,000 metric tons of Carbon Dioxide Equivalent in L.A. County by 2050 through an ambitious suite of sustainability initiatives envisioned in its 10-year Sustainability Strategic Plan, [Moving Beyond Sustainability](#).

For more information on Metro’s environmental initiatives, please visit www.metro.net/sustainability.

Editor’s Note: Metro Operators are crucial to keeping LA moving. Metro is currently hiring more than 500 bus operators and is offering a \$1,000 bonus for coming aboard. This is a great career opportunity. Metro offers competitive hourly rates starting at \$17.75 for part-time bus operators and benefits include health insurance, tuition reimbursements, paid training, retirement plan options and part-time flexible hours. Please encourage friends, family and community members to become a part of the Metro team that provides excellence in service and support and keeps our region moving. Apply at metro.net/driveLA.

ENCLOSURE 3



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Details Reports

File #: 2017-0304
Type: Contract **Status:** Passed
File created: 5/1/2017 **In control:** [System Safety, Security and Operations Committee](#)
On agenda: 7/20/2017 **Final action:** 7/27/2017

Title: CONSIDER: A. AUTHORIZING the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to award a firm fixed-price contract, Contract No. OP28367-002, Group C, to BYD Coach & Bus, LLC (BYD) for the manufacture and delivery of sixty 40' zero emission (ZE) transit buses, in the amount of \$44,967,874 for the base contract, including spare parts, charging equipment, taxes and delivery; exclusive of any contract option buses, subject to resolution of any properly submitted protest. B. AUTHORIZING the CEO to award an additional not-to-exceed amount of \$2,806,849 for Optional Vehicle Features, and Training Aids for a total combined contract amount not-to-exceed \$47,774,723. C. ESTABLISHING a life-of-project budget of \$65,900,000 for the purchase of sixty 40' zero emission buses, charging equipment, installation costs, infrastructure upgrades, and contingency under Capital Project no. 201077.

Sponsors: [Board of Directors - Regular Board Meeting](#)

Indexes: Bids, Budgeting, Bus 40'Ze W/ Byd (Project), Bus Acquisitions, Carson, Contracts, Disadvantaged business enterprises, Division 09, El Monte, Electrification, Federal Transit Administration, Jobs, Location 75, Metro Divisions, Metro Silver Line, Mitigation, Procurement, Purchasing, Request For Proposal, Rolling stock, Safety, Safety and security, Transit buses, Zero Emission Bus (ZEB) Master Plan, Zero Emissions

Attachments: 1. [Attachment A - Procurement Summary](#), 2. [Attachment B - DEOD Summary](#), 3. [Attachment C - Funding and Expenditure Plan](#)

Related files: [2017-0810](#)

History (1) Text

1 record Group Export

Date	Action By	Action	Result	Action Details	Meeting Details	Audio
7/27/2017	Board of Directors - Regular Board Meeting			Not available	Meeting details	Not available

ENCLOSURE 4

STREETSBLOG

Why Won't Metro Promote Its New Electric Buses?

Read to the bottom for an exciting contest!

By Joe Linton | Sep 9, 2020 | 5 COMMENTS



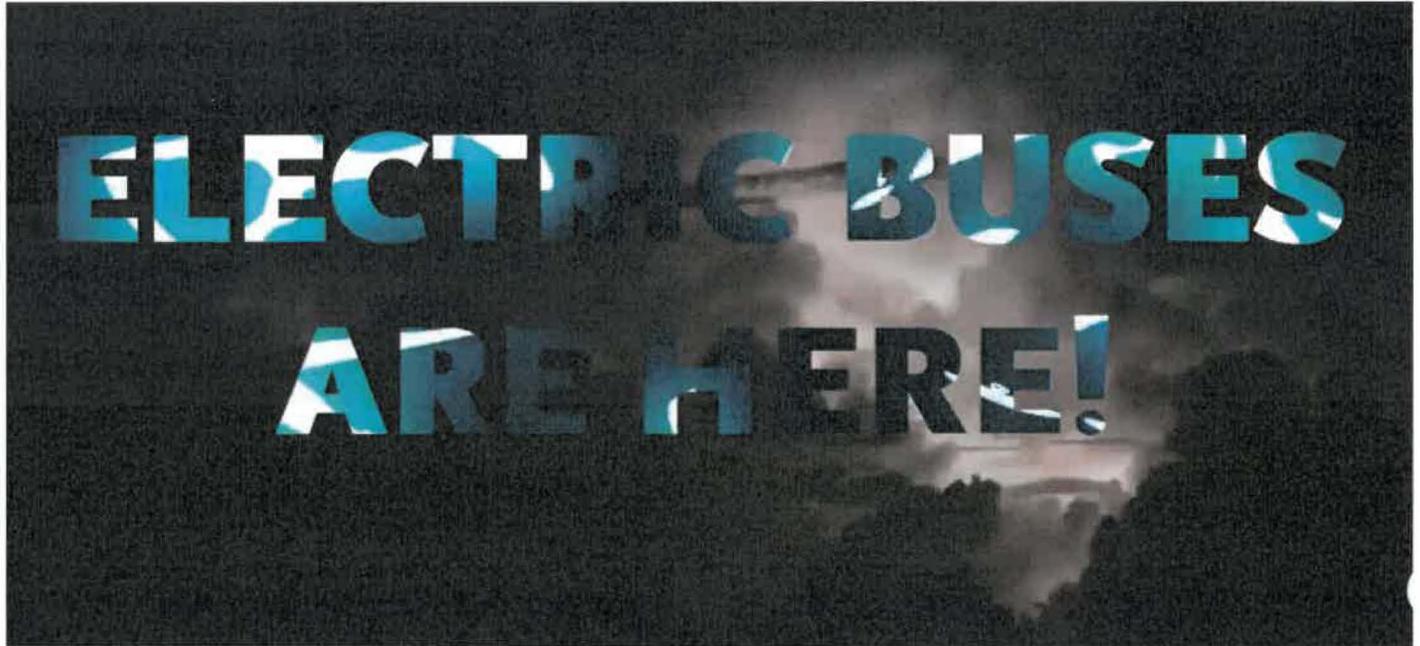
Metro New Flyer Electric bus charging in North Hollywood. All photos by Joe Linton/Streetsblog L.A.

In 2017, Metro approved plans for a [fully electric bus fleet by 2030](#). That upgrade was planned to be well underway with the full Metro G Line (Orange) Bus Rapid Transit fleet all battery-electric by June 2020, but [the date slipped](#). The [first electric bus debuted on the G Line in late July](#). Full G Line electrification is now scheduled for December 2020.

Electric vehicles are pretty nice. They have no tailpipe pollution. Compared with fossil fuel (compressed natural gas CNG or diesel) buses, electric buses are so much nicer to ride and to be around. They are powerful, efficient, very quiet, much less polluting including greatly reduced greenhouse gas emissions, and cheaper to operate and maintain.

One would think Metro would be pretty excited about those new electric buses, right?

Metro did produce [one video](#) proclaiming “ELECTRIC BUSES ARE HERE.”



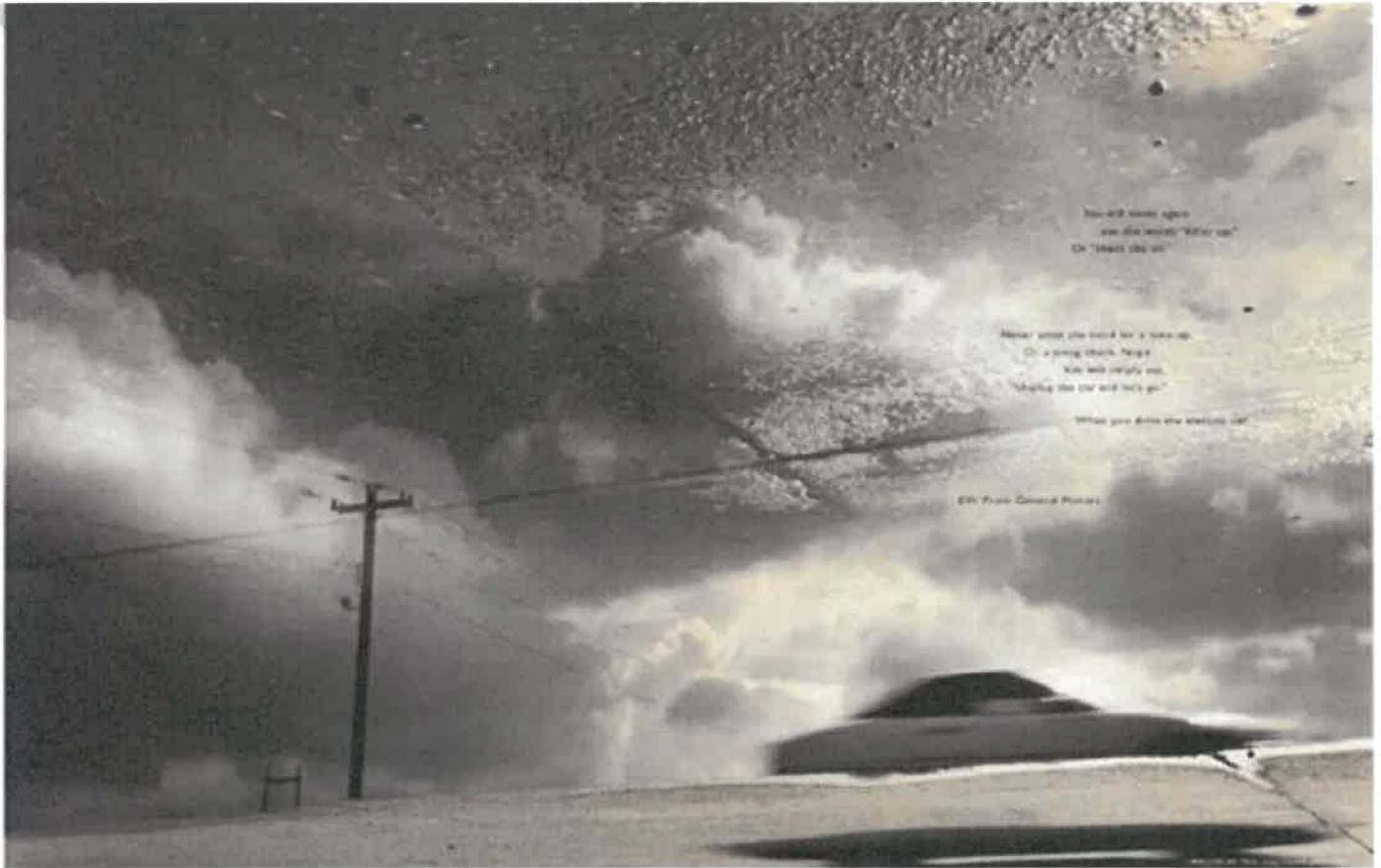
Nothing saves clean electric power like... foreboding black clouds. From Metro electric bus video



The cleaner greener dark foreboding future Angelenos are excited about. From Metro electric bus video

The Metro electric bus video is full of dark clouds – because that’s something everyone associates with clean electric power, right?

✓ (The dark clouds are kind of reminiscent of those awful bleak 1990s EV-1 electric car ads. Paradisiacal green imagery seems to be reserved for [astroturf ads](#) for [fossil fuel cars](#).)



Those dark clouds didn't work too well for EV-1 electric car ads back in the 1990s either.

Maybe somebody, probably an intern, didn't quite get the messaging right in that Metro video.

What about the buses themselves?

Metro – with its award-winning marketing department – can improve on what L.A. City Transportation Department electric DASH buses and Foothill Transit electric buses have done.



A 2017 LADOT DASH electric shuttle bus design – pretty hard to miss that this is an electric vehicle



A 2013 Foothill Transit electric bus with its telltale green-blue splash. From [YouTube](#)

Metro loves big banners.

Whenever Metro sneezes there are big banners years or months in advance proclaiming “MORE SNEEZES ON THE WAY.”

Metro buses have promotions about “the nation’s largest clean-air fleet,” APTA awards, all-door boarding, etc. Surely, the electric buses themselves are slathered with feel-good messages about electricity and clean air and apple pie and general Metro wonderfulness.

No?



A sexy new Metro electric bus at North Hollywood station – with all kinds of electric vehicle promotions, no?

It's actually hard to spot the electric buses. Like all the all the other CNG-powered buses on the F Line, they're gray silver. There are a couple of markings that tell the casual observer that it is indeed electric. Can you spot one?



On the driver side near the back, Metro subtly proclaims "Electric" in all-white on gray – with overlapping vesica piscis shapes



Near the front door, white-on-gray lettering quietly states “Electric” plus there are small green USB and Wi-Fi stickers (because USB and Wi-Fi are green – and Electric is... gray?)

Can you tell the difference between Metro’s clean green electric bus – and its more common fossil fuel buses?



A Metro CNG bus (with ads placed where those missable “Electric” decals are on the electric version)



Spotters can identify CNG buses by this decal near the rear of the bus

The differences are somewhat hard to tell from photos. The electric buses are a little less colorful, because they haven't been covered with ads yet. Generally the quickest way to know up close is that the CNG buses are much louder – inside and outside – compared to the electric buses.

Why doesn't Metro have highly identifiable branding for their electric buses?

Part of the problem appears to be resistance from Metro operations leadership. As they did in the 1990s when Metro transitioned from diesel to compressed natural gas, operations are pushing to stick with what they are used to. When Metro faces funding questions, whether [for project acceleration](#) or [from](#)

COVID recession revenue losses, operations leadership are quick to encourage the Metro board to jettison the approved 2030 electrification schedule. That schedule hinges on a 2019-2020 technology assessment that culminates in a now-postponed [Spring 2020 Zero Emission Bus Master Plan update that includes procuring new electric buses](#). If operations leadership can wait out the clock on that, then maybe Metro will just buy more fossil fuel buses.

Operations' concerns are not entirely unfounded. Though the benefits outweigh the costs, battery-electric buses are a fairly new technology, not widely adopted.

One electric bus manufacturer – [BYD](#) – has often over-promised and under-performed. (BYD is manufacturing buses for Metro's second BRT electric bus pilot – the J Line [Silver] which is scheduled to be fully-electric by June 2021, assuming Metro sticks to its electrification schedule. BYD also supplies the DASH electric buses, pictured above.)

Other manufacturers – New Flyer and Proterra – have not had those issues. Metro's G Line buses are New Flyer. (Proterra supplies Foothill Transit electric buses, pictured above.)

Streetsblog is excited about the nice quiet New Flyer bus already running on the G Line. So excited that SBLA is announcing a contest for our readers.

How do you think Metro should be marketing its clean green electric bus fleet? Submit your designs via the comments below. Submit a promotional image, a promotional slogan, a video, or a design that Metro could affix to the outside of its electric buses. Designs can be polished or rough sketch concepts; they can be serious, or sarcastic/humorous. Submit your entry by September 30. Streetsblog editors will review all submissions, and select a winner in early October. One lucky winner will receive a signed copy of SBLA editor Joe Linton's [Down by the Los Angeles River](#) guide book to walking, bicycling, and historic sites on the L.A. River and its tributaries.

Filed Under: BRT, buses, G (Orange) Line, Metro, The Valley, Promoted

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ENCLOSURE 5

CITY OF LOS ANGELES

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ASSISTANT
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YOLANDA CHAVEZ
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JAN 31 2023

Via Email and U.S. Mail
LAART@metro.net

January 17, 2023

Cory Zelmer
Deputy Executive Officer
Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (METRO)
One Gateway Plaza, Mail Stop 99-22-6
Los Angeles, CA 90012

RE: Aerial Rapid Transit Project DEIR Comment

Dear Mr. Zelmer:

I am writing to comment on the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) that Metro released on the Aerial Rapid Transit Project. Specially, I am informing Metro that the properties at 901 and 903 North Main Street, Los Angeles, California, 90012 (Assessor's Parcel Number [APN] 5408-008-909) are owned by the City of Los Angeles (City) and were approved for mixed use development -- affordable housing and services -- by the Mayor and City Council in August 2019 (Council File Number: 18-0930).

The Los Angeles Housing Department currently has an Exclusive Negotiation Agreement (ENA) with Friends of Homeboy, LLC, for these properties and expects to execute the Development and Disposition Agreement no later than June 2023. The plan for these sites includes, transitional housing and affordable housing with supportive services, and a community center. Because of these facts, the City does not intend to divest itself of these parcels for any use besides providing affordable housing.

Thank you for your immediate attention to this matter. If you require additional information, please contact Assistant City Administrative Officer, Yolanda Chavez, at 213-473-7522 or Yolanda.Chavez@Lacity.org.

Sincerely,

MATTHEW W. SZABO
City Administrative Officer

cc: Mayor Karen Bass
Councilmember Eunisses Hernandez, District 1
Los Angeles Housing Department