



Kevin de León
Councilmember, Fourteenth District

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Dear Metro Board Members,

After an extensive review of Metro’s staff proposals and expanded community engagement, I am writing to provide my position on the proposed North Hollywood to Pasadena Bus Rapid Transit project. As the author of Senate Bill 767 during my tenure as California’s Senate President Pro Tempore which became Measure B, providing Angelenos the best transportation options has always been a priority for me. When the voters approved Measure M in 2016, the BRT project was *specifically* listed on the ballot measure, with the intent to provide a dedicated bus route between the Red Line in North Hollywood and the Gold Line in Pasadena.

During my city council campaign in 2019, the BRT project emerged as a key issue for Eagle Rock residents. Despite much pressure, I refrained from taking a position on the project until the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) was released. After its release in 2020, I submitted a letter to Metro to express my deep dissatisfaction with the proposed routes because none adequately addressed the variety of concerns raised by the Eagle Rock community. Many members of the Eagle Rock community also voiced complaints about the proposed options. In response to Metro’s proposals, a group of engaged Eagle Rockers created and advocated for the “Beautiful Boulevard” proposal — a comprehensive overhaul of the street with a single lane for vehicles from Eagle Rock Blvd. to the 134 East entrance ramp. These community members conducted extensive outreach to PTAs, businesses, bus riders, and community groups to develop a project plan that thoughtfully integrated community feedback and a progressive reimagining of the heart of Eagle Rock.

Based upon staff analysis and feedback Metro received, in May of 2021, Metro adopted the center-running dedicated lane as the preferred alternative, with further analysis of a two-lane vs one-lane alternative to be determined. This past summer, my office worked with Metro to develop thorough and detailed plans for both the one-lane and two-lane options. Those options were then presented to the community both virtually and at COVID-safe in-person events hosted by my office. When I attended these meetings, it was very clear there was much more support for a one-lane option than a two-lane option. Others supported a so-called “mixed-flow” option that excluded a dedicated bus lane, effectively calling for no project in Eagle Rock.

Surveys from those meetings laid out public positions, finding 56% of nearly 200 Eagle Rockers who attended supported the single-lane alternative; 19% supported the two-lane option; 25% wanted a “mixed-flow” alternative (no project at all). Additionally, my staff has tracked the numerous petitions, community letters, emails, and phone calls received regarding the project. The 640 verified Eagle Rocker stakeholders support the one-lane Beautiful Boulevard option while 374 have expressed support for the mixed-flow/134 freeway alternative.

Measure M passed with 71.15% of the vote because the public realizes California has a significant problem with clean transit alternatives. As we build out our transit infrastructure, we must ensure we implement plans to combat our dangerous dependence on fossil fuels as we decisively reduce and eliminate Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions. Transit plans which confine a bus to sit in traffic with other vehicles won't achieve our target GHG reductions.

The two-lane option would remove 66% percent of *existing* street parking along the entire project route compared to the one-lane plan which would remove 39% percent. Parking has always been a deep concern for our small Eagle Rock businesses and we cannot ignore its importance. If we have learned anything from local business owners who worked to survive throughout the global pandemic, we know removing their adjacent parking or Al Fresco dining would decimate local businesses and ruin Eagle Rock’s small-town feel.

One concern shared among all of my constituents stood out from the others — they didn't want Metro bulldozing through Eagle Rock to further the agency’s own goals at the expense of community residents and businesses. The BRT needs to be implemented thoughtfully and without destroying the unique history and culture of Eagle Rock. While Metro did address some of my concerns in its response to comments in the Final EIR, there were other important mitigations excluded.

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, the reduced commute times brought by the BRT will give bus riders, particularly working parents and caretakers, the irreplaceable benefit of more time with their loved ones. Hard-working people rely on our public transit system to get to and from work, to doctor appointments, errands, and more. I know because, growing up, my mother and family depended on the bus for all our transportation needs. I also

know the time she spent in transit to and from work was more time away from her children. Now, as a father myself, I can only begin to imagine how painful this was for her as a single mother. Thousands of Angelenos spend large amounts of their time each day traveling across town to clean someone else's home, provide childcare for someone else's children, cook in our local restaurants, stock the shelves at our grocery stores, and more. Providing reduced commute times means ensuring hard-working Angelenos, people just like my mother, get more time with their own families at the end of a hard day's work.

For all of the reasons I list above, and on the condition that Metro effectively implements the mitigations I detail below, I support the single-lane BRT F1 alignment along Colorado Boulevard. Eagle Rock residents deserve to have the small-town character of their community maintained and have access to improved public transit options along with the improved air quality this project will bring. Our local businesses deserve to be protected and supported with mitigations that promote increased commerce. Finally, bus riders deserve a shorter commute so they can spend more time with their families, particularly as faster transit options increase the use of public transportation, further advancing our fight to reduce GHG emissions.

The mitigations I set forward are based upon the extensive community feedback my office has received during the 17 months I have been serving in office. These mitigations incorporate the broad concerns raised about proceeding with a dedicated bus lane along Colorado Boulevard as it specifically relates to the F1 alignment and resulting impacts.

Throughout the environmental analysis process, I have been asked by all sides to weigh in on the proposals or endorse one option over another. I refused to do this because it would not promote a transparent public process. Community voices should be listened to and not muffled by political influence. I fought to allow those voices to be heard and for Eagle Rockers to receive detailed analyses and thorough explanations of proposed BRT alignments through Eagle Rock. Equally important, this latest plan provides a better Colorado Boulevard for everyone who uses the corridor, whether you work or shop at Eagle Rock Plaza, drop your children off at Dahlia Heights Elementary, frequent Malbec or work at Four Cafe.

I also wanted to see Metro develop comprehensive alternatives to allow the community to fully assess the benefits and disadvantages of various transit features. I believe over last summer Metro fulfilled my expectations for the community. Both options they developed brought inherent challenges which required substantial mitigations - mitigations I detail below.

In the end, the one-lane option is the more environmentally beneficial alignment and is also the option that will best preserve the small-town atmosphere universally valued by Eagle Rock residents and businesses **IF** the mitigations called for are included in the project. Maintaining the intrinsic character of Eagle Rock offers my constituents a path into the future which sustains our rich history. If we are to succeed with our environmental

objectives in this 21st Century city, our public spaces must promote walking, biking, and transit use, while protecting and strengthening a healthy small business culture.

Eagle Rock residents and businesses have engaged on the BRT project more than any other project in recent memory. They have held robust and passionate discussions about how this project will shape the future of our community – but more importantly, they have taken it into their own hands to shape the project so that it protects the community they live and work in. The BRT proposal, with the mitigations that I detail below, now reflects what the community wants. As Councilmember for LA's 14th District, I want to communicate my support for this project on the condition that these mitigations are implemented.

I want to thank Metro and its staff for its responsiveness to my request for expanded engagement with the community and a more comprehensive analysis. Through this work, and by incorporating the mitigations below, Metro can produce a plan that better reflects the concerns of residents, businesses, and transit users.

Now is the time to move this project forward.

Sincerely,

KEVIN DE LEÓN
Councilmember, 14th District

RECOMMENDED MITIGATIONS

NEIGHBORHOOD AESTHETICS

Station Design & Wayfinding

Eagle Rock maintains strong historic roots as a neighborhood in Los Angeles and has long focused on sustaining the beauty of Colorado Boulevard. The Colorado Boulevard specific plan was adopted in 1992 to guide development along the corridor and ensure any project conformed to the aesthetic vision for the corridor. This objective remains a driving force for planning and should guide the proposed BRT stations so they do not become generic Metro stations, rather they should complement the neighborhood's architecture and design. All architectural elements shall be informed by a robust community process.

Trees

A healthy tree canopy must be a component of a successful BRT, especially with the goal of reducing GHG emissions. Should any trees be removed, Metro shall replace them at a 4:1 ratio, with a minimum box size of 36" for trees in the parkway and 48" for trees in medians. The box sizes shall apply to any tree planted by Metro. Metro shall relocate the median's existing trees -- magnolias and crape myrtles -- to the extent feasible to a location in Eagle Rock deemed suitable by arborists and the Eagle Rock community. Trees shall be watered and maintained by Metro for at least 5 years from the time of planting.

Landscaping

For more than a century, Eagle Rock has maintained an independent spirit while sustaining its natural beauty. Landscaping is a fundamental feature to maintaining its unique character. Therefore, landscaping should be California native and drought tolerant to the maximum extent feasible. Landscaping should be replaced at the existing square footage or greater and shall be maintained by Metro for a minimum of 5 years after project completion in Eagle Rock. Metro should work with the City of Los Angeles' Bureau of Engineering to ensure a top-of-the-line stormwater capture system to maximize retention along the BRT corridor.

BUSINESS MITIGATIONS

Business Interruption Fund

Construction can be extremely disruptive to local neighborhoods, as evidenced by the Regional Connector project and its impact on Little Tokyo. Metro already has formulas for assisting local businesses and must provide those resources to the businesses along Colorado Boulevard or any area impacted by construction. Metro must establish a

Business Interruption Fund (BIF), Eat Shop Play, and Vendor Preference for the project. In addition, I am requesting Metro establish a dedicated staff liaison to consult and communicate with businesses impacted by construction.

Off-site Replacement Parking

Off-site parking should be provided for any and all businesses which lose street parking due to construction and construction-related activities.

TRAFFIC & PARKING MITIGATIONS

Reduce Cut-Through Traffic

One of the major concerns about the one lane option has been cut-through traffic impacting residential neighborhoods. Metro should work closely with the Los Angeles Department of Transportation to install speed humps and stop signs on adjacent streets to prevent cut-through traffic on streets such as, but not limited to: Hill Drive; Las Flores Avenue; Yosemite Drive; Townsend Avenue; Eagle Rock Boulevard; Maywood Avenue; Shearin Avenue; Highland View Avenue; Hermosa Avenue; Argus Drive; La Roda Avenue; Mt. Royal Drive; Vincent Avenue; Dahlia Drive; Floristan Avenue; Loleto Avenue; Hartwick Street; Los Robles Street; Holbrook Street; Linda Rosa Avenue; and Ms. Helena Avenue.

Traffic Calming Measures

Traffic calming measures should be implemented with particular consideration for the several schools on or just off Colorado Blvd including: Eagle Rock Elementary, St Dominic School, Dahlia Elementary, and Eagle Rock Montessori School. School leadership and parents will be consulted regarding ensuring safe pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular travel to and from these schools as well as safe pick up and drop off.

Minimize Construction Closures

Metro should not have any full street closures for the project or any directional closures of Colorado Boulevard for more than 24 hours.

Minimize Permanent Parking Impacts

Metro should design all stations and other major design elements in a manner that will remove as little street parking as possible.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community Advisory Committee

Metro shall establish a Community Advisory Committee (CAC). The CAC shall provide design feedback and direction for the project. CAC input will be mandatory for the project for topics including, but not limited to, landscaping and tree design, station design aesthetics, and construction closures.

Project Liaison

Metro shall hire at least one staff member who is dedicated full-time to addressing issues related to the project in Eagle Rock. Duties shall include, but not be limited to, assisting businesses with BIF applications, facilitating meetings with the CAC, stakeholder engagement, and addressing construction concerns.

REIMBURSEMENT OF CITY EXPENSES

Take Back the Boulevard ATP and Metro CFP Project

Metro shall reimburse the city for any delays caused due to the timeline of the BRT. Furthermore, Metro shall cover all design, administration, and construction costs for any redesign due to the BRT.

ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE

Vehicle Fleet

Metro must ensure ALL BRT buses throughout the project alignment are electric and not CNG when the BRT begins operations..

Additionally, Metro must provide electric vehicle charging stations (both rapid and standard) along the project corridor.