



Metro[®]

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Metropolitan Transportation Authority

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March 26, 2025

Michael Schneider
Founder & CEO
Streets For All

Re: The Vermont Transit Corridor Environmental and Planning Study File 2025-0044

Dear Mr. Schneider:

Thank you for your letter, dated March 25, 2025, and your focus on the Vermont Transit Corridor. Tomorrow is an important step, but not the last, for the communities along Vermont Avenue to realize a community vision for continued mobility and safety enhancements along the corridor over many years. This includes near-term improvements now under construction, a mid-term investment in a Vermont Bus Rapid Transit (Vermont BRT) system which is the subject of your letter, and a longer-term vision of a rail investment in the future.

Metro has woven community engagement into the fabric of the project's development. Since 2021, Metro has implemented an extensive outreach program to inform and involve local communities. This commitment is not merely a box to be checked but a fundamental principle guiding every step of the journey. This vision was developed over many years, working with over 38 community-based organizations, and resulted in a community-supported layered approach to transit improvements.

We share the same priorities in ensuring the Vermont BRT project is built expediently, reducing transit rider delays, and delivering significant safety improvements. The recommended action includes approving the side-running project configuration, project alignment, 13 proposed station locations, and safety improvements such as enhanced crosswalks and bus bulb-outs to shorten pedestrian crossings. Preliminary engineering and design work continues in coordination with the City of Los Angeles. The Vermont BRT project supports the partial build-out of the Transit Enhanced Network (TEN) outlined in the City's Mobility Plan 2035. The project will maintain existing bike lanes and does not preclude the City of Los Angeles from pursuing additional bike infrastructure in the future.

Your request to delay the Board's actions on the proposed recommendation puts the project at risk. The Vermont BRT is a model for SB 922, allowing for moving expediently through an environmental process in order to get these safety and mobility improvements constructed as soon as possible. Earlier this week, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) concurred with Metro's request to enter into the Project Development phase of the Capital

Improvement Grant Small Starts program. This requires us to meet the FTA's expectation of having a locally preferred alternative, completing the environmental review of the proposed project, and submitting sufficient information for evaluation. Part of this action is to continue working with the City of Los Angeles as we advance the design.

Significant changes to the proposed Vermont BRT scope would have a severe impact on the project, adding up to five years in delivery, due but not limited to, the following:

1. Delay to delivery due to a reassessment of the environmental documentation potentially resulting in a need to complete an environmental impact report under the California Environmental Quality Act and environmental impact statement under the National Environmental Policy Act;
2. Delay to delivery due to moving out of the Small Starts Program and into the New Starts (if allowed by FTA) that entails extensive approvals and review;
3. Delay to delivery due to additional cost impacts in the hundreds of millions which would make it ineligible for the Capital Improvement Grant Small Starts program, and;
4. Delay to delivery created by an additional extended environmental process and potential new impacts not previously required such as property acquisitions (up to approximately 250-300 parcels) and parking loss of an estimated up to 1,000 spots, as an example. NOTE: Under SB 922 the project cannot require acquisition of private right of way.

In sum, this would threaten the viability of the proposed Vermont BRT project to be implemented and delay the ability to introduce the travel benefits and significant safety improvements this project currently envisioned would provide to this underserved corridor.

Finally, in addition to the meeting my staff had with you last Fall on this topic, your correspondence to the City of Los Angeles on September 30, 2024 (Attached), seeking Measure HLA be applied to the Vermont BRT project was responded to by the Los Angeles City Attorney on November 18, 2024 (Attached), wherein their position was steadfast stating that HLA does not apply to Metro since the Vermont BRT project does not trigger any City obligations under Measure HLA. Metro's position mirrors the Los Angeles City Attorney's position as well, Measure HLA does not apply to Metro projects.

Our commitment is to work with the City of Los Angeles to implement the Vermont BRT project in an expeditious manner to provide much needed transit and safety improvements. As stated in the Vermont BRT Board Report, approval to advance the project tomorrow does not preclude continued discussions with the City to partner and work on any needed agreements in support of a timely construction schedule to meet the 2028 timeline.

We are the only agency within LA County to have successfully planned, designed and implemented a bus rapid transit project. We know what it takes to effectively deliver on this

Michael Schneider

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type of project. We support the advancement of additional projects along the corridor as long as they do not jeopardize our ability to implement the Vermont BRT project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Step Wiggins", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Stephanie Wiggins

Chief Executive Officer

cc:

Metro Board Members