

# REPORT OF THE CHIEF LEGISLATIVE ANALYST

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DATE: October 16, 2013

TO: Honorable Members of the Rules, Elections, and Intergovernmental Relations Committee

FROM: Gerry F. Miller *Max Fob for* Council File No.:13-0002-S100  
Chief Legislative Analyst Assignment No.: 13-06-0557

SUBJECT: Resolution (LaBonge-Koretz) to support or sponsor legislation that would repeal Public Utilities Code section 130265 relative to prohibiting a light rail line from North Hollywood to Hazeltine Avenue.

CLA RECOMMENDATION: Adopt Resolution (LaBonge-Koretz) to include in the City's 2013-14 State Legislative Program SUPPORT and SPONSORSHIP of any legislation which would repeal Public Utilities Code section 130265, enacted in 1991 as SB 211 (Robbins), which prohibits a light rail from North Hollywood to Hazeltine Avenue; and support of any legislative and/or administrative action by the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) which would prioritize the development of rail-based transit corridors with the highest ridership in the San Fernando Valley in its Long Range Transportation Plan.

## SUMMARY

On June 19, 2013, a Resolution (LaBonge-Koretz) was introduced to support any legislation which would repeal Public Utilities Code section 130265, enacted in 1991 as SB 211 (Robbins) which prohibits a light rail from North Hollywood to Hazeltine Avenue, as well as support for the development of rail-based transit corridors with the highest ridership in the San Fernando Valley in its Long Range Transportation Plan.

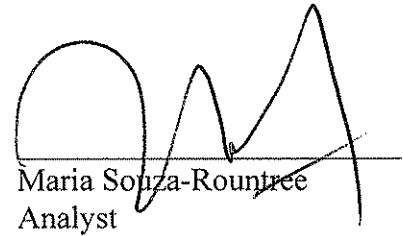
The Valley Industry and Commerce Association (VICA), as well as many residents in the San Fernando Valley, support upgrading the Metro Orange Line to a light rail transit system. As noted in Resolution (LaBonge-Koretz), the underlying considerations that resulted in the transit option restrictions have changed and residents are increasingly requesting efficient transit options, including light rail. Metro continues to implement new subway and light rail transit projects throughout Los Angeles County, however, no such projects are currently planned in the San Fernando Valley.

## BACKGROUND

In order to bring mass transit options to the San Fernando Valley, Metro purchased the Southern Pacific Burbank Branch, an abandoned commercial rail line, as the preferred right-of-way for the development of a light rail system. Transit planners had seen an extension of the Metro Red Line subway as the most natural option as the line ends at the North Hollywood station. To address opposition to the project regarding concerns about a light rail line disrupting a community in North Hollywood, then-State Senator Robbins sponsored Senate Bill 211, which limits any rail transit project along the 3.5 mile segment of Southern Pacific Burbank Branch along Chandler Avenue between the western edge of the 101 Freeway and Hazeltine Avenue to underground. SB 221 passed in June 1991, was signed by Governor Pete Wilson and implemented through Public Utilities Code section 130265.

Additionally, Los Angeles County passed Proposition A in 1998, which prohibited Metro from using its previously approved county sales tax funding to build subways anywhere in the county. Revenue from subsequent tax increase propositions, however, could be used for subway construction.

Because of the growing pressure to make use of the transit corridor, Metro constructed the Orange Line busway. The Line opened on October 29, 2005 and has exceeded ridership estimates since that date.



Maria Souza-Rountree  
Analyst

GFM:MF:msr

RESOLUTION RULES, ELECTIONS & INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

WHEREAS, any official position of the City of Los Angeles with respect to legislation, rules, regulations or policies proposed to or pending before a local, state or federal governmental body or agency must have first been adopted in the form of a Resolution by the City Council with the concurrence of the Mayor; and

WHEREAS, the City of Los Angeles, in partnership with the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro), is in the midst of a dramatic expansion of the rail-based mass transit system in the City and the County of Los Angeles; and

WHEREAS, the San Fernando Valley has largely been excluded from this rail expansion and one of the obstacles to converting the Metro Orange Line to light rail in the future is state law, Public Utilities Code section 130265, enacted in 1991 as SB 211 (Robbins), which prohibited a light rail from North Hollywood all the way to Hazletine Avenue; and

WHEREAS, this provision limits any rail transit project along the 3.5 mile segment of Southern Pacific Burbank Branch along Chandler Avenue between the western edge of the 101 Freeway and Hazeltine Avenue to an underground Heavy Rail Transit (HRT) system; and

WHEREAS, the underlying considerations that resulted in SB 211's passage twenty-two years ago have changed; the development of transit options has been embraced in every corner of the City, and Angelenos are increasingly calling for fast ways to commute for work and play besides using their cars; and

WHEREAS, rail expansion in the Valley should be part of future transit planning efforts, especially as the Orange line is heavily used and often running at capacity;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, with the concurrence of the Mayor, that by the adoption of this Resolution, the City of Los Angeles hereby includes in its 2013-2014 State Legislative Program support and sponsorship of any legislation which would repeal Public Utilities Code section 130265, enacted in 1991 as SB 211 (Robbins) which prohibits a light rail from North Hollywood all the way to Hazletine Avenue; and support of any legislative and/or administrative action by the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) which would prioritize the development of rail-based transit for corridors with the highest ridership in the San Fernando Valley in its Long Range Transportation Plan.

PRESENTED BY:



TOM LABONGE  
Councilman, 4<sup>th</sup> District

SECONDED BY:



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JUN 18 2013



July 18, 2013

The Honorable Tom LaBonge  
Los Angeles City Council  
200 N. Spring Street, Suite 480  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

**SUBJECT: Repeal of Senate Bill 211 (Robbins) RE: Orange Line Upgrade (CF 13-0002-S100)**

Dear Councilmember LaBonge,

The Valley Industry and Commerce Association wishes to thank you for introducing a resolution in support of repealing 1991's Senate Bill 211 (Robbins), which banned the installation of light rail transit (LRT) along the Metro Orange Line route. VICA strongly supports upgrading the Metro Orange Line to LRT.

LRT was the clear top choice for MTA and Valley residents until SB 211 removed that option. It was—and still is—the most economically-efficient option, with significantly higher ridership potential than buses and lower cost than underground subways.

The Valley has simply outgrown its Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system. When BRT was determined as the only affordable alternative following the passage of SB 221, MTA estimated that Orange Line ridership would average 16,100 weekday riders; as of September 2012, average ridership was 31,787 — more than double the initial estimate. During rush hours, Orange Line buses are often too crowded for new passengers at many stops, requiring potential riders to wait extended periods or forcing them back into their cars.

Along with ridership growth, automobile and pedestrian traffic is steadily increasing as the Valley population grows. This additional traffic is causing Orange Line buses to be delayed, leading to unreliability for riders to reach Valley businesses. These issues are not present for other Metro lines, including the San Gabriel Valley's LRT Gold Line system.

The Valley needs a rail system on par with other parts of the City of Los Angeles, particularly as our tax dollars through Measure R are spent on projects in the Westside and downtown. The repeal of SB 211 will be the first step toward the Valley finally having a 21<sup>st</sup> Century transit system.

Sincerely,

David Adelman  
Chair

Stuart Waldman  
President

CC: Members of the Los Angeles City Council  
Los Angeles Metropolitan Transportation Authority Board of Directors