

Critical History of Transit Planning and Decisionmaking

The recent history of planning for rapid transit in the Los Angeles metropolitan area reveals the range of issues confronting policy makers concerned with developing transit systems for today's metropolitan regions. During the past 10 years, the Southern California Rapid Transit District has presented two rapid transit proposals to the voters of Los Angeles County, and both times the proposals were voted down. Although some similarities exist between the first defeat in 1968 and the second in November 1974, the period between them witnessed the arrival on the scene of new institutional and political forces that have signaled fundamental shifts in the public perception of the role of rapid transit systems in metropolitan areas.

Between the two referenda, the context for rapid transit planning changed in the region. The Southern California Rapid Transit District (SCRTD) stuck firmly to its basic commitment to design and implement a rapid rail system for the region. But other participants in the process began to take a more active role and to raise critical questions about the advantages and disadvantages of such large-scale regional systems. Federal transit policy moved away from giving unreserved support to rail rapid transit; both the City of Los Angeles and the Southern California Association of Governments joined UMTA to urge the SCRTD to place more emphasis on community and neighborhood-level circulation and short-term transit solutions; and Los Angeles area citizens and their representatives increasingly began to raise questions about the financial feasibility, social equity, and political and technical wisdom of committing the area to the implementation of a long-term program that might become obsolete before it was finished. By the end of 1974, the planning process had not resolved the differences between all these contending policies and viewpoints, and after the failure of the transit referendum in November of that year, the major participants in the process once again began to search for a new institutional framework for rapid transit planning.

The subject of this historical narrative is the evolution of the regional planning process. After a brief review of the early history of transit in Los Angeles and a look at the failures of the SCRTD'S first attempt to finance the development of a rapid transit system in 1968, the narrative will trace the evolution of the plans that went before the voters in 1974. It will conclude with a description of the present status of rapid transit planning in the region. For some observers the story is one of a turbulent but increasingly sophisticated planning process; but for others it is nothing more than an example of the institutional struggles that for years have characterized decisionmaking in Southern California.

EARLY HISTORY

The history of transit in the Los Angeles region dates back nearly 100 years. Between the time the first interurban electric railway lines were organized in 1876 and the establishment of the Southern California Rapid Transit District in 1964, the region witnessed the growth and decline of what has been called the most complete and comprehensive system of interurban and suburban electric commuter transit in the Nation. The image of this system persists today in the pattern of the transit corridors proposed in SCRTD'S plans.

Los Angeles' rail transit system encompassed both municipal trolley lines and an interurban electric system. The Southern Pacific Railroad and Henry E. Huntington, one of its largest stockholders, figured prominently in the development of both systems. The first municipal street railway company, the Los Angeles Cable Railway Company, was organized in 1887. During the next 10 years, this company joined several other single-line companies serving the city to form the Los Angeles Railway Company. Following its failure, Huntington bought and reorganized it in 1899. The company remained a local passenger operation primarily serving the City of Los Angeles, and it made little effort to expand with the growth of the

city during the period from 1913 to 1925, when Los Angeles annexed several surrounding areas.

The growth of the region's extensive interurban electric railway system began in 1876, when four independent electric railway enterprises started serving the region. With the exception of the line connecting Long Beach and Wilmington, the routes centered on three major corridors connecting downtown Los Angeles to Santa Monica, to Sawtelle and Hollywood, and to Monrovia in the San Gabriel Valley.

The several interurban railways were consolidated into the Pacific Electric Railway Company (P. E.) in 1911. The Pacific Electric Railway was owned by the Southern Pacific Company and operated both passenger and freight services. At its height the P.E. included over 1,100 track miles and formed a completely integrated system linking downtown Los Angeles with most of the cities in Los Angeles County and urbanized sections of Orange, San Bernardino, and Riverside counties.

The Pacific Electric Company network had a definite influence on the development and eventual urbanization of the Los Angeles area. By linking the scattered cities of the county together, it provided a regional passenger and freight system that spurred suburban residential development in a number of ways. It made it possible for people to live in outlying cities and new suburban developments and work in downtown Los Angeles. And with its freight service, it provided a system for the distribution of goods throughout the region that facilitated the location of commerce and industry outside Los Angeles. The Pacific Electric's ownership of land development companies made its influence on land development even stronger. These subsidiary companies owned property in Glendale, Burbank, the San Fernando Valley, Redondo Beach, and Newport Beach.

The growth which the Pacific Electric helped promote eventually contributed to the demise of the interurban railway. These new developments of single-family dwellings on separate lots produced a pattern of settlement too dispersed to be effectively served by fixed-rail transit. The pattern was better served by more flexible modes of transportation such as private automobiles or buses. Gradually, as the growth of the metropolitan area accelerated, the P.E. began to operate more bus lines. Conversion of rail lines to bus service increased after 1930; and, as private

auto ownership grew, freeway construction expanded and traffic congestion increased. The trolleys and electric interurban railway suffered ever-greater financial losses. Although World War II halted the abandonment of some of the lines, the number declined steadily after the war, until the last one stopped operating in 1961.

Los Angeles has come to be known as the freeway capital of the world, but the region's experience with the electric railways left an indelible image of a comprehensive regional rapid transit system in the minds of public transit advocates. Long before the abandonment of the electric railways, public officials and civic leaders began to make proposals to study and build subway lines or rapid transit systems. As early as 1906 twin subways were proposed from downtown Los Angeles to Fourth Street and Vermont Avenue, where the line would surface and continue to Santa Monica and Venice. A business recession stopped work on this project, but in 1924 a proposal was made to build a 4-mile subway. This proposal led to construction of the 1-mile Hollywood Subway in 1925.

The Hollywood Subway was the one rapid transit proposal that was actually carried out. Two other extensive proposals were made before the war, but both were rejected because of high costs. In 1926 proposals were made to convert the Pacific Electric routes serving Santa Monica and Long Beach subway, but the projected \$20 million cost of the Santa Monica extension and the \$40 million cost of the Long Beach subway both were considered to be exorbitant. Again in 1933, during the depth of the Depression, proposals to extend the Hollywood Subway to Glendale and to build subways to Santa Monica and Pasadena along with an elevated railway to Long Beach also were rejected for reasons of cost.

Despite the upturn in transit usage during the Second World War, Los Angeles moved away from support for public transportation. Both the city and the county supported a freeway-building program in 1943, and by 1947 construction of California's famous freeway system was well underway.

The first major step toward revitalizing public transit and providing an alternative to the private automobile was taken by the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce in 1948. Representing a broad spectrum of business interests in the downtown area, the Chamber sent a Rapid Transit Action Program to the California State Legislature. This

effort led to the creation of the Los Angeles Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) in 1951.

Civic leaders and public officials promoted the MTA for two reasons. They believed that an integrated public transportation system was essential to the economic health of the metropolitan area, and that a public agency should provide a system since private investment lacked the necessary capital.

In addition, there were intense rivalries between local communities over the control of transportation. MTA's supporters believed that one way to overcome these rivalries was to create an independent agency authorized by the State. The Governor of the State appointed the MTA board after consulting local officials.

The Metropolitan Transit Authority was empowered by its original enabling legislation to formulate plans for a mass transit system, but it was not empowered to develop or operate a system until that legislation was amended in 1957. Under its original mandate, it did a feasibility study and presented a plan for a monorail system connecting the San Fernando Valley to Los Angeles and Long Beach. Later on, once it obtained the power to purchase and operate existing bus lines with capital provided by the sale of revenue bonds, the MTA presented two more extensive rapid transit proposals. The one presented in 1960 was for a 75-mile, four-corridor line, and the other, presented in 1963, was a 64-mile, four-corridor line. It should be noted that during that period, in 1957, the Bay Area Rapid Transit District in San Francisco was created to plan, build, and operate a rapid transit system, and the successful referendum adopting the BART plan took place in 1962.

The MTA revenue base was hardly sufficient to finance the implementation of a mass transit system. In an effort to establish a firmer financial basis for its activities, the MTA was abolished and replaced by the Southern California Rapid Transit District (SCRTD) in 1964.

The creation of SCRTD not only sheds light on the financial constraints restricting the MTA's operation but also reflects the political opposition that surrounded the MTA. The MTA's autonomy had been vigorously criticized by other municipal and county officials in the region. Many of these leaders considered the MTA to be excessively oriented to downtown Los Angeles, paying too little attention to the concerns of other local areas.

The character of SCRTD appears to reflect a response to these criticisms. The district did not extend beyond Los Angeles County, and the members of the board of directors were appointed by the county supervisors, the City of Los Angeles, and by a city selection committee representing 76 other municipalities in the district. However, many of the criticisms about MTA accountability and lack of responsiveness are now leveled against SCRTD.

The creation of SCRTD set the stage for the 1968 referendum. Before discussing the proposal of 1968, it is important to outline several other institutional changes that occurred in 1964-65 to shape the context in which SCRTD operated. These affected the forum for transportation planning and comprehensive regional planning. Although they did not seriously hinder SCRTD'S activities in 1968, they later shaped the planning and decisionmaking process that led up to the 1974 referendum.

In 1960 and 1964, two organizations were established that immediately had bearing on the highway planning process. The first was the Los Angeles Regional Transportation Study (LARTS). Like its counterparts in other cities—such as Chicago (CATS), the San Francisco Bay area (BATS), and **Atlanta** (AATS)—the Los Angeles Regional Transportation Study was created by the State Highway Department to undertake long-range regional transportation plans. LARTS researched regional land use and travel patterns, and its population and employment forecasts provided the foundation for much of the technical analysis carried out in the planning for the 1968 and 1974 proposals by SCRTD'S consultants. LARTS issued a long-range transportation plan in 1968 that, predictably, was oriented toward highway travel and also included the proposal that led to the construction of the 11-mile San Bernardino-El Monte busway. This busway has become an integral part of SCRTD'S transit system.

The birth of another highway-oriented institution occurred in 1964. Responding to the Federal requirements for a "continuous, coordinated, comprehensive" planning process contained in Section 134 of the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1962, the California State Highway Agreement established the Transportation Association of Southern California (TASC). Through a committee structure that included representatives of the State Highway Department and municipal and county transportation agencies, the TASC exer-

cised the required policy and technical review function for the regional transportation planning process. The Transportation Association operated as an independent institution until February 1971, when it merged with the Southern California Association of Governments (sCAG).

The Southern California Association of Governments was the third arrival on the regional planning scene in the mid-1960's. Organized in 1965 to undertake comprehensive planning for the Los Angeles region, SCAG'S membership includes the county governments of Los Angeles, Orange, San Bernardino, Riverside, Ventura, and Imperial, as well as the governments of 111 cities within these counties.

When it was created, SCAG was solely concerned with comprehensive planning for land use, open space, air and water quality, housing, and other non transportation matters. Although it is now the A-95 review agency and U.S. Department of Transportation's designated Metropolitan Planning Organization, it did not take over transportation functions until it merged with the Transportation Association of Southern California in 1971.

DECISION ON SYSTEM SELECTION: THE 1968 REFERENDUM

The Southern California Rapid Transit District was given an explicit mandate by the legislature in 1964 to operate the existing public transit system as well as design, engineer, and implement a mass transit system. The enabling legislation authorized the district to submit to the electorate a plan for financing the construction of such a system

Soon after SCRTD was created, its board and staff took steps to carry out this mandate. As guardians of the transit mission in Southern California, they seem to have felt a driving obligation to follow the example of BART and to finish what the MTA had started but had been unable to complete.

Planning for the new system had begun by early 1966. SCRTD contracted Kaiser Engineers; Daniel, Mann, Johnson & Mendenhall; and Coverdale and Colpitts to prepare the plans. (The first two firms later were members of the consulting team that prepared the plans for the 1974 referendum.)

Funds for the planning work came from two main sources other than revenues transferred from

the MTA to SCRTD. In 1966 the State appropriated \$3.6 million from State tidelands oil and dry gas revenue to complete the planning and engineering of the first stage of a rapid transit system. The following year, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development gave SCRTD a \$975,000 technical study grant. This was one of the first such grants given for the development of a rapid rail transit system, and it marks the beginning of the Urban Mass Transportation Administration's financial support for this aspect of SCRTD'S work.

The rapid transit proposal was prepared in two stages. As required by the State legislature, a preliminary report was issued to the public for review in October 1967. After nearly 1,000 conferences with community leaders and public officials, SCRTD drew up a final plan that the board adopted in August 1968.

The preliminary report proposed a 62-mile rapid rail system with four corridors connecting in downtown Los Angeles. The north-south corridor ran from the San Fernando Valley to Long Beach, and the east-west corridor ran from El Monte to Fairfax Avenue. The total cost of the plan was \$1.5 billion.

A final report was issued in May 1968. Reflecting the results of the period of review, the new plan contained a number of major changes. It was expanded to become a five-corridor, 89-mile rail system. According to one observer, the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce and other downtown business interests pushed for the adoption of the fifth corridor, which connected downtown Los Angeles to the Los Angeles international Airport.

Other major changes responded to both business interests and community demand for immediate improvements in transit service. Rather than use property taxes to finance the plan, the report recommended the use of the proceeds of a %-cent increase in the general sales tax. In order to expand transit service immediately, the report also recommended the development of 250 miles of express bus lines and 300 miles of feeder bus services.

Understandably, the total cost of this revised plan was also greater: \$2.5 billion. This figure included approximately \$8 million dollars for preliminary engineering for the second stage of the plan, and a cost escalation factor of 7 percent per year until 1975, the year in which SCRTD'S consultants expected the system to be finished.

The Southern California Rapid Transit District adopted the final 89-mile, five-corridor plan on August 20, 1968. Between then and November, transit supporters campaigned for passage of Proposition A, the proposal for sales tax financing that the State legislature had authorized SCRTD to place on the ballot of the general election in November.

According to newspaper accounts, support for the sales tax approach was widespread in Los Angeles County. The Citizens' Committee for Rapid Transit, which was organized in August to promote the proposition, was directed by representatives of major businesses, civic organizations, and the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor. Other groups supporting the proposal, listed by SCRTD board member Herbert H. Krauch in early May in an article in the *Los Angeles Times* (May 2, 1968), included the Los Angeles Chapter of the League of California Cities; the League of Women Voters; the L.A. Chamber of Commerce and the chambers of commerce from the Harbor District, Long Beach, and Wilshire Boulevard areas; Governor Reagan; the County Board of Supervisors; and city officials of more than 17 municipalities in the area.

Opposition to the proposal was presented by highway interests and outlying communities in the county. The Southern California Automobile Club opposed the plan and helped form the California Freeway Support Committee, which hired a public relations firm to mount a campaign against the proposal. The communities that opposed the plan generally were those that would not have been served well enough by the system to justify their participation in financing it.

The attitude of the *Los Angeles Times* also raised questions about the system. The paper's general editorial position argued that public transportation was important for the people of the region, but that citizens should make sure the system would live up to the claims of its advocates. Using information gleaned from a benefit-cost study of the proposal that the Stanford Research Institute had prepared for SCRTD, some of the advocates of the system were arguing that it would return \$1.87 to the community for every dollar invested, that over 50 percent of the projected passengers would be former automobile users, and that the system would constitute a major economic boon to the region. Opponents of rapid transit questioned these claims, and their criticisms subsequently

were supported by experts like Martin Wohl. The *Los Angeles Times* also unearthed a scandal involving the general manager of SCRTD during the period of the campaign.

The activities of the opposition had not produced a discernible groundswell of public reaction against the plan before the referendum. Nevertheless, when the voters of Los Angeles County went to the polls in November, they came out strongly against Proposition A. All the propositions on the ballot were defeated that year, and Proposition A, which by law had to receive 60 percent of the vote to pass, only received 44.7 percent.

Although no single reason for the proposition's defeat can be identified, two studies of the referendum cast some light on the question. SCRTD and Dorothy Corey Research did a post-election survey to analyze the reasons for the failure, and 2 years later a report prepared by a Harvard Law School group on Atlanta's 1968 transit referendum drew some interesting comparisons with the defeat in Los Angeles.⁴ In general, these analyses point to the overall political and economic climate at the time of the elections, the socioeconomic background of the voters, and the technical characteristics of the proposed transit system.

The general climate in which the referendum took place did not favor a major public works project financed by a tax increase. Los Angeles was suffering from the consequences of the economic recession that hit the aerospace industry in 1968, and the residents of the area were by no means predisposed to face the possibility of both higher prices and unemployment. Both the city and the State had already raised taxes once, and the Federal Government had put a 10 percent surcharge on personal income taxes. The Presidential election campaign also had the Republican candidates blasting the Democrats for excessive government spending. It was hardly a propitious time to get the residents of the area to saddle themselves with the responsibility for financing a long-term project like the proposed transit system.

The findings of the survey taken by Dorothy Corey Research clarify how the favorable votes were distributed among different socioeconomic levels. In general, low-income center city residents

⁴ Matthew A. Coogan et al., *Transportation Politics in Atlanta*, Cambridge, Mass., 1970.

and high-income suburbanites supported the proposition, while the middle-income population voted against it. Within the upper-income category—defined as people with over \$20,000 a year income—56 percent voted in favor of the proposition; in the lower-income category, defined as people with less than \$7,000 per year, 58 percent supported the proposition. In the middle, 42 percent of the people with incomes between \$7,000 and \$10,000 supported the proposition, and 47 percent of the people with incomes above \$10,000 favored it. The distribution of these income groups within the metropolitan area also suggested that support for the proposition was strongest within the City of Los Angeles and weakest in outlying municipalities.

One ethnic aspect of the vote is noteworthy. The black population in the Watts-Willowbrook area strongly supported the proposition. But the Mexican-American population, which tends to be concentrated closer to the downtown area, did not favor it.

Some of the technical characteristics of the plan also raised doubts in the minds of public officials and voters. According to newspaper accounts, some residents of some of the outlying areas rejected the system not because it was too large and expensive, but because it was not large enough. These people believed that there was no point in paying for a system that would not provide their community with the service it needed,

Debate also arose about the rapid transit technology that SCRTD proposed to use. Following the lead of the Bay Area, SCRTD'S system would have used modern high-capacity fixed-rail transit cars similar to BART's. According to Coogan's comparative study, SCRTD'S critics argued against committing the region to such an inflexible technology at a time when new advanced technologies were being developed that might be better suited to the region's needs. News of cost overruns and technical difficulties with the BART system imbued this argument with special force in the minds of many critics.

The argument against adopting a large-scale, relatively inflexible system that would require a long time to build also coincided with the views of people who felt that the public transportation problem in Los Angeles needed an immediate solution. As many of SCRTD'S community review sessions showed, many people believed that the

best remedy was the quick one of expanding and improving the existing bus system.

SCRTD'S proposed system was not helped by the criticism of the Regional Plan Association (RPA) of Southern California, an organization devoted to the promotion of integrated-regional planning. In its official bulletin, *The Planner*, this private organization sharply criticized SCRTD and its plan. The RPA's overriding concern was that the proposed system was not coordinated or integrated with other systems in adjacent areas in the region. In addition, the system was not related to other transportation modes in the corridors, failed to provide the governmental machinery that would be required to coordinate its development with environmental and land-use plans, and had not been justified on the basis of a benefit-cost analysis.⁵

The weight that should be given to any one of the reasons behind the defeat of the 1968 referendum is difficult to judge. Clearly, traffic congestion and smog were not onerous enough to overcome the basic attachment of area residents to their automobiles. Furthermore, SCRTD'S plan represented an expensive proposition that many people were unwilling to accept in bad economic times.

But it is worth noting that there are many parallels between the SCRTD'S defeat in 1968 and the failure in 1974. Along with the difficult economic situation in 1974, many of the questions that were raised about the plan in 1968 came up again in 1974. The record suggests that either the people of Los Angeles County have not yet reached the point where they see the need for rapid transit, or that SCRTD has not learned the lessons provided by past experience.

DECISION ON SYSTEM SELECTION: THE 1974 REFERENDUM

Three years went by before the beginning of the next period of rapid transit planning in Los Angeles. After the failure of the 1968 referendum, SCRTD concentrated on the management and improvement of its bus operations, and it was not until the latter part of 1971 that any serious new

⁵ *The Planner*, Regional Plan Association of Southern California, No. 6, August 1968.

steps were taken to develop another plan for the region.

The round of planning that culminated in 1974 can be divided into two general historical stages. The first is the period of negotiation and preparation that preceded the official beginning of the planning effort, and the second covers the 2 years of technical planning that produced the plan underlying the proposal presented to the voters in 1974.

During the period between November of 1968 and the fall of 1971, several changes took place which influenced the transit planning process in Los Angeles. On the national level the promulgation of the National Environmental Protection Act of 1969, the publication of Circular A-95 in 1969 by the Office of Management and Budget, and the passage of the Urban Mass Transportation Act of 1970, which authorized \$3.1 billion dollars over 5 years for UMTA'S program, all influenced the direction of Federal policy. These changes altered the role of the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG). SCAG became the area A-956 agency, and by early February 1971 it was also responsible for setting policy for the regional transportation planning process when it merged with the Transportation Association of Southern California (TASC). The merger also made SCAG the 3-C agency⁷ for the region. DOT already had begun to support this unified, multimodal approach in June 1970 when it extended the first of what became an annual series of technical studies grants to SCAG to support long-range transportation plans. UMTA was to support the transit element of this process by channeling funds through SCAG (see Table 2).

The prospect for funding rapid transit projects had improved during the 3-year hiatus. On the national level the passage of the Urban Mass Transportation Act of 1970 may have increased local expectation of transit funding.

At the State level in California, the passage of Senate Bill 325 (SB 325) in 1971 also made more money available for transit. The bill permitted a sales tax on gasoline for funding public transporta-

tion improvements, and in July 1972, the first year it went into effect, it made approximately \$55 million available to SCRTD and the City and County of Los Angeles. The availability of this money was one of the factors that stimulated the renewed interest in rapid transit in Los Angeles.

The City of Los Angeles made the first public move that started the process leading to the 1974 proposal. In mid-November 1971, City Planning Director Calvin Hamilton presented the preliminary details of a rapid transit plan to the State, County and Federal Affairs Committee of the Los Angeles City Council. The committee was evaluating the progress that the city departments and SCRTD had made on rapid transit.

The Planning Department proposal called for the development of a \$2.4 billion rapid transit program that would provide the region with a 100-mile system by 1990. The plan was part of the city's General Development Plan, and it suggested tax allocation bonds and levies on gasoline and motor vehicles as the means to secure the bonds needed to build the system. Hamilton urged the city to build the system even if the SCRTD would not.

Councilman Thomas Bradley used the committee session to underscore the lack of leadership and coordination among the agencies supposedly responsible for developing rapid transit. According to the *Los Angeles Times*, Bradley (who would succeed Sam Yorty as mayor in 1973) lamented SCRTD'S lack of progress on rapid transit and said the city's plan represented an attempt to provide some leadership in planning for a rapid transit system.

SCRTD'S General Manager Jack Gilstrap defended the district's record against these charges. He said SCRTD'S top priority had been providing mobility to the region's bus riders, and that it would take action on rapid transit in 1972.

SCRTD did not wait until 1972 to move on rapid transit, despite Gilstrap's statement. On December 7, 1971, less than 3 weeks after the City Council meeting, the district's board of directors unveiled plans for a \$420 million rapid transit line linking the central city and south Los Angeles. The board billed the line as the first-stage "starter" line in the development of an overall master plan and pledged SCRTD to provide \$70 million of SB 325 money to implement the plan. The pledge depended, however, on the county and the city contributing shares of the new funds they would be getting under SB 325.

⁶ The A-95 agency in each region is responsible for reviewing that area's requests for Federal grants.

⁷ The 3-C agency is responsible for seeing that regional transportation planning is carried out in a continuing, comprehensive, and coordinated process.

The plan proposed a 14-mile-long south-central line. Starting as a subway, it would serve the central city, become an elevated line near the Coliseum, proceed south through Watts, and terminate at Willow Brook at the planned Century Freeway. The system was to tie into a bus transit corridor planned for the freeway median strip, which would connect to the Los Angeles International Airport.

The battles that erupted following the publication of this plan pitted the city against SCRTD and eventually brought UMTA into the picture again. Two days after the plan came out, members of the Los Angeles City Council accused SCRTD of "grabbing for headlines" and failing to consult with the city. Although SCRTD board member Ed Macke denied the charges, saying his Advance Planning Committee had been studying the issue for 9 months prior to the announcement, the argument left no doubt that, at least as far as the city of Los Angeles was concerned, its public officials had not been consulted at all.

Shortly after the dispute began, the City Council's Ad Hoc Committee on Rapid Transit began examining the role that Los Angeles should play in the new planning for rapid transit. Before the council adopted a position in early March 1972, the city's Technical Advisory Committee on Rapid Transit, a group composed of eight city department heads, presented a report to the Council's Ad Hoc Committee recommending that a rapid transit system be started in the Wilshire corridor. City Planning Director Calvin Hamilton headed the advisory committee.

The report of the city's Technical Advisory Committee argued that the Wilshire corridor was a far better place to put a starter line than the proposed south-central route. The Wilshire line, starting in subway at Union Station and running 13.1 miles to Westwood, was preferred for a number of reasons. Preliminary analysis showed it could divert more passengers from automobiles and would have a higher overall patronage. In addition, if special tax districts were created, the corridor offered the possibility of using tax increment financing schemes to help implement the plan. The report urged a thorough comparison of the two lines.

The Wilshire corridor for many years had been considered the logical location for a rapid transit lines by downtown business interests as well as city planners in Los Angeles. According to the executive

director of the Committee for Central City Planning, the line was seen as the backbone of any regional system.

The Committee for Central City Planning, a private organization of downtown interests created to plan the development of a downtown urban renewal area, contracted the firms of Wallace, McHarg, Roberts, Todd; Daniel, Mann, Johnson & Mendenhall; Alan M. Voorhees; and Development Research Associates to prepare plans for the large renewal area in 1969-70. These plans, which included a recommendation for a downtown PRT circulation system with a connection to the regional rapid transit system, were completed in the spring of 1972. Once approved, they were to become part of the city's General Development Plan.

Following the presentation of the Technical Advisory Committee's Wilshire corridor proposal in February, the City Council held hearings on the question of rapid transit and prepared both a majority and minority report on the course of action that the city should follow.

On March 2, 1972, the Council voted 10 to 4 in favor of the minority report of its Ad Hoc Committee on Rapid Transit. Both the majority and minority reports addressed the issues presented by SCRTD'S request that the city pledge its estimated SB 325 funds for 11 years for the development of the South-Central Line.

Although neither report accepted the SCRTD proposition, the minority report took a more cooperative position toward the district. Unlike the majority report, which recommended what amounted to a flat denial of the proposition, the minority report favored a modified version of the plan. The report's three main points were:

- "That the City Council impound all of its funds from Senate Bill 325 (sales tax on gasoline) for application toward development and construction of a mass rapid transit system for greater Los Angeles.
- "That the City Council request the County of Los Angeles and all cities within the Southern California Rapid Transit District to commit all their funds from SB 325 for the same purpose; and that SCRTD be requested to commit at least 50 percent of its funds from Senate Bill 325.

- "That the City of Los Angeles join with SCRTD in filing a grant application to the Urban Mass Transportation Administration to conduct a study of feasibility in financing and priorities of routes for the initial stages of the system, and that this study include central, Wilshire and San Fernando Valley routes, as well as the possible use of existing rail lines."⁸

The Council's vote helped define the city's position toward future rapid transit planning. Although the prospects for getting the other 77 cities in the region to reserve SB 325 money were not bright, the adoption of the minority report indicated that the Council would go along with SCRTD'S effort to get assistance from UMTA.

During the months preceding the Council's March vote, the SCRTD staff already had taken steps to secure UMTA funds for planning studies. In December 1971, a SCRTD delegation met with Secretary of Transportation Volpe to discuss the south-central line proposal, and by February of 1972, UMTA representatives had met with SCRTD staff members to iron out the scope of the work that had to be undertaken in developing rapid transit plans.

At the time of the Council's March meeting, UMTA'S position on the impending new planning effort had become clearer. UMTA Administrator William Hurd expressed the Administration's strong support for the region's commitment to developing a rapid transit system, but he also indicated the UMTA financial assistance would be channeled through the Southern California Association of Governments, and that SCRTD'S work had to be closely coordinated with other regional transportation and comprehensive planning studies going on in the area. SCAG had become the regional transportation planning agency the year before, and UMTA wanted SC RTD'S rapid transit studies to be an integral part of the Unified Work Program for fiscal year 1973.

UMTA'S viewpoint also emphasized the need for SCRTD to vigorously maintain and improve the existing service. In addition, according to one source, UMTA also made it very clear that SCRTD could not merely resurrect the 1968 data and plans and expect to get capital assistance.

The negotiations over the scope of transportation studies culminated in April 1972 at the annual meeting of the UMTA-FHWA Inter-Modal Planning Group (IPG) in Los Angeles. At that meeting UMTA insisted that all transportation activities be integrated in the Unified Work Program, and agreements were reached on the activities each agency would undertake. SCAG was to develop a long-range multimodal transportation plan for the region by June 1973. SCRTD was to carry out corridor planning studies covering the full range of possible corridors in the region and including an examination of all transportation alternatives. This work was to be phased into the development of SCAG'S long-range plan.

The IPG meeting also produced an agreement to start a transit study in Orange County which would be coordinated with both SCAG and SCRTD'S activities. This call for coordination went virtually unheeded until nearly two years later when SCRTD was sharply criticized for failing to coordinate its plan with the Orange County Transit District.

Following the IPG meeting, the final steps were taken to initiate the technical planning studies. In June UMTA approved SCAG'S application for a technical study grant of \$1,025,000, out of which SCRTD was to receive some \$600,000 to begin work on the first phase of its analysis of alternative transit corridors and systems.

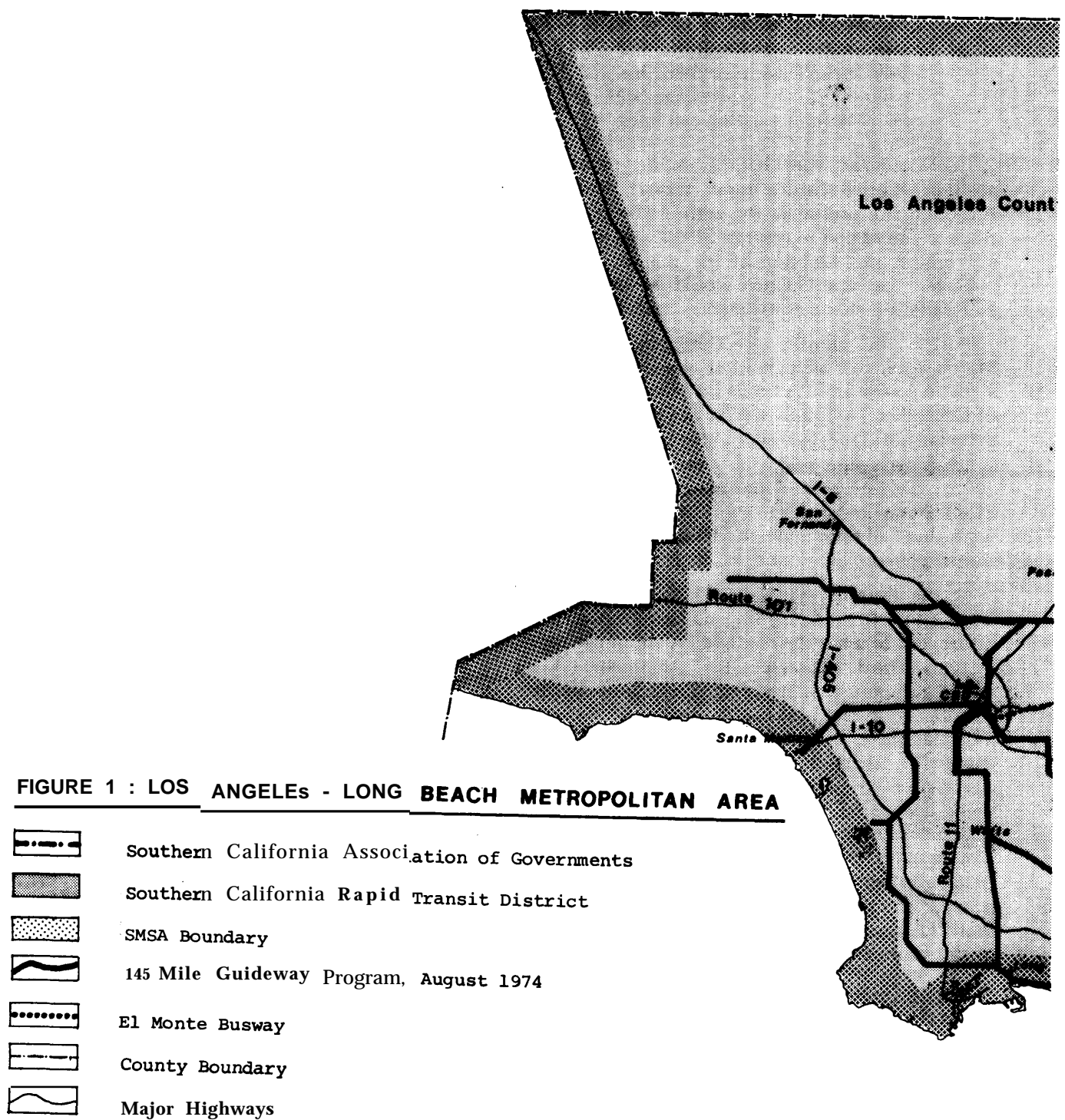
That phase began in October 1972. Between then and the time of the 1974 referendum, UMTA, SCRTD, and SCAG were in a constant debate over the character and extent of SCRTD'S evolving plans for a rapid transit system.

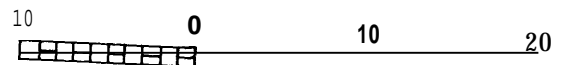
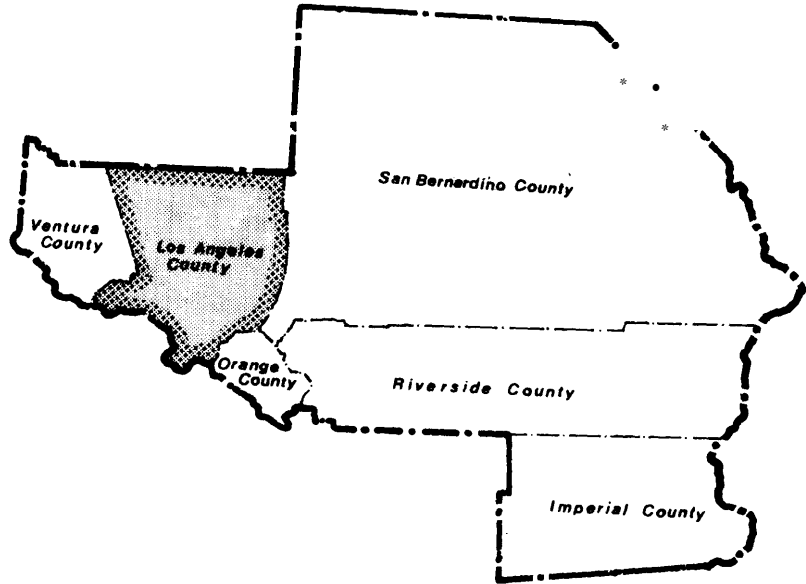
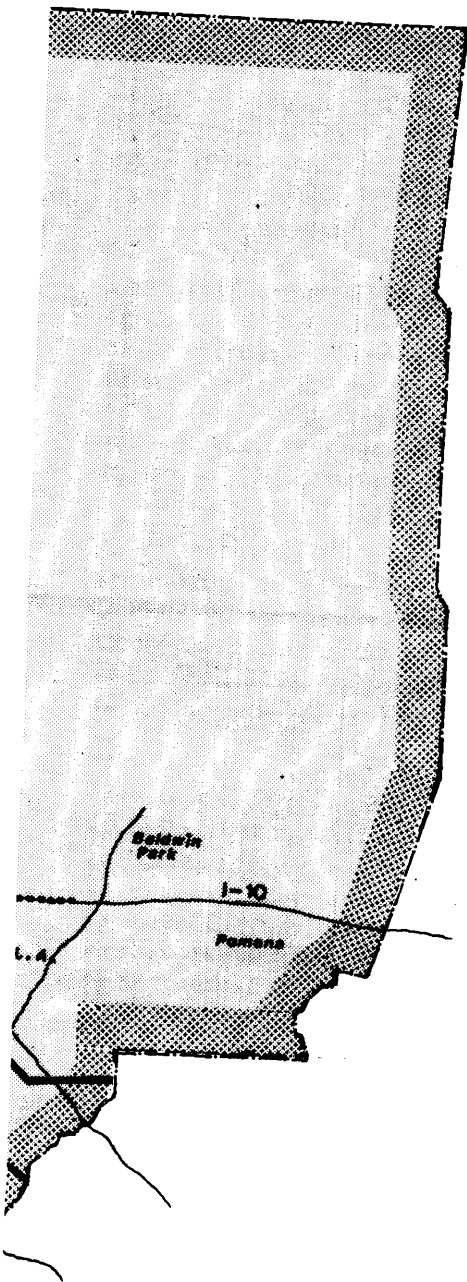
Phase I

In October 1972, the Southern California Rapid Transit District began the first phase of the planning process that culminated in the referendum of 1974. During this phase a controversy erupted between UMTA and SCRTD that marked the beginning of a fundamental shift in UMTA'S policy toward fixed-guideway projects and defined the relation between UMTA and SCRTD for the remainder of the period.

The purpose of Phase I was to establish the basis for selection of the transit corridors and corresponding transportation modes that would be evaluated and developed in subsequent phases of the study. Accordingly, the phase included six basic work tasks: developing the evaluation framework for

⁸*Valley News*, Durwood Scott, March 3, 1972.





corridor and system selection; identifying the alternative corridors; identifying alternative transit technologies; identifying the alternate transit technologies that could be applied to each corridor; examining the potential use of the existing railway network for interim commuter service; and, finally, analyzing the alternative methods for financing a rapid transit system. This phase of work involved an initial evaluation and ranking of alternative corridors and modes but not a full-fledged evaluation of their impacts and benefits. Such an evaluation was supposed to be undertaken in the second phase of the study.

SCRTD hired consultants who already had experience in Los Angeles to do the study. Three veterans of the 1968 planning process—Kaiser Engineers; Daniel, Mann, Johnson & Mendenhall; and Stone and Youngberg—were responsible for engineering, planning, and financial studies, respectively. Three of the other firms—Alan M. Voorhees and Associates (AMV) and Wallace, McHarg, Roberts, Todd/Kennard & Silvers—had worked on the downtown renewal plan for the Committee for Central City Planning. They were in charge of patronage and revenue estimates and socioeconomic and environmental impacts, respectively. The team was managed by Peat, Marwick, Mitchell & Co.

Less than 3 months after Phase I started, UMTA began pushing for a clearer definition of the study and its relationship to the long-range transportation plan being developed by the Southern California Association of Governments. Two events precipitated this action by UMTA.

One of these occurred in November 1972 soon after the study began. After a year of debate and revision the California State Legislature sent Assembly Bill 69 to Governor Reagan for his signature. The bill, which the Governor signed into law on December 10, 1972, established a new multimodal California Department of Transportation (CALTRANS) and called for the adoption of a State transportation plan. The State plan was to be based on plans formulated at the regional level by the accredited regional planning entities.

The Southern California Association of Governments is the certified regional agency responsible for long-range transportation planning in the Los Angeles metropolitan area; area transit agencies like SCRTD and the Orange County Transit District are responsible for preparing the

subregional transit elements of the long-range plan.

The provisions of Assembly Bill 69 set the deadline in completing the State plan for 1976 and required that the regional plan be finished by April 1975. Responding to this stipulation, the Southern California Association of Governments decided to postpone the completion of the long-range transportation plan it was developing with assistance from U.S. Department of Transportation/UMTA until the 1975 State deadline.

This decision was unacceptable to UMTA. As a matter of policy, UMTA insisted that a long-range transportation plan had to be developed in order to provide the framework for assessing transit proposals in the region. If adoption of such a plan were postponed, UMTA would have no basis for evaluating the relationship of SCRTD'S transit proposals to other short- and long-term regional policies and projects.

The steps UMTA took to rectify this situation are reflected in the agreement reached by UMTA, SCAG, and SCRTD at the annual Inter-Modal Planning Group meeting in April 1973. UMTA also sought to resolve its controversy with SCRTD at this meeting.

UMTA'S dispute with SCRTD began before the work on Phase I started in October 1972. UMTA'S acceptance of the work program in the study was based on the understanding that not only all alternative corridors but also the full range of transit modes would be analyzed. Such an analysis would include conventional all-bus transit operations as well as advanced technologies.

SCRTD held a different view of the matter. Convinced that its mandate required the development of a fixed-guideway system, SC RTD'S general manager told the consultants for the study that low-capital-intensive alternatives, such as buses on freeways or buses on radial arterials, were not to be considered as alternatives to a grade-separated rapid transit system. Responding to this stipulation, the consultants did not consider an all-bus system in their analysis of alternatives.

The Urban Mass Transportation Administration did not learn about this situation until January 1973. According to one source, when it did, UMTA staff immediately began to negotiate a revision of the scope of the study that included the bus alternatives. These efforts also were concluded at

the Inter-Modal Planning Group (IPG) meeting in April.

The agreement reached at that meeting involved the interrelated issues raised by UMTA'S relation with both SCAG and SCRTD. Instead of postponing its entire long-range transportation plan until the State deadline in 1975, SCAG agreed to prepare a "Critical Decision Plan" by November 1973. This plan would be used to evaluate critical highway and transit issues prior to developing a more refined regional plan by April 1975.

SCAG also agreed to develop a short-range regional transportation improvement program in order to respond to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) air quality guidelines. According to UMTA, the transportation agencies in the region had not cooperated a great deal with EPA before the IPG meeting.

The program for SCRTD, which emerged from the IPG meeting, required a restudy of all transportation alternatives within the corridors analyzed by SCRTD'S consultants. SCRTD was informed that UMTA would not provide any funds for preliminary engineering until this analysis was complete and SCAG had finished its Critical Decision Plan.

UMTA'S insistence on a thorough study of all alternatives rested on a number of considerations that eventually filtered into the national debate about the Administration's position on rapid transit. As UMTA'S program grew and more cities began to develop plans for rapid transit systems, UMTA found itself faced with the prospect of a vast increase in the demand for capital funds to implement these projects. One effort the Administration made to stem the tide was to try to develop criteria for capital grants that would allow decisionmakers to determine which types of transit technology were most suited to different types of urban areas. Although no official criteria were adopted, this effort raised the question of whether Los Angeles had enough density to support rapid transit. Transit advocates argued that the region as a whole had sufficient density to support a rapid transit system. Skeptics, including some UMTA officials, argued that a less expensive alternative such as a bus system might provide a service more appropriate to such a dispersed metropolitan population.

Another related part of UMTA'S effort to dampen local enthusiasm for expensive large-scale

fixed-guideway systems was the Administration's policy requiring the analysis of all transit alternatives. It was believed that a thorough examination of the costs and benefits of alternative systems and modes would lead local planners to examine less costly solutions. The agreement reached at the IPG meeting was designed to achieve this end.

SCRTD'S Phase I report was published in March 1973, before the IPG meeting took place. Phase II began shortly thereafter, and its work program was supposed to have included the results of the IPG meeting.

Phase II

The primary objective of Phase II of SCRTD'S study was to develop a final proposal for a transit system for the county. Recommendations for short-term transit projects, as well as a long-term rapid transit system, were to be included in the proposal. After it had been reviewed at a series of public hearings and community meetings, SCRTD'S consultants were to prepare a final refined plan that would be submitted to the voters in either June or November 1974.

The consultants began work on Phase II in April 1973 and reported their recommendations in July 1973. The Phase II report recommended a regional master plan for public transit and a short-term program.

The master plan set a long-term goal for a regional system. It recommended a 250-mile system of rapid transit serving the region's most heavily traveled corridors.

The short-term program called for the immediate expansion of the bus transit system. Based on a 5-year implementation period, the program included an increased number of buses, express bus service on freeways, priority treatment of buses on arterials, and additional park-and-ride lots. This plan was to provide the basis for feeder services to the rapid transit system.

The first stage of the long-range rapid transit plan called for the construction of 116 miles of rapid rail transit facilities and 24 miles of exclusive busways. This 116 miles covered the following corridors:

- Los Angeles/CBD and Wilshire Boulevard;
- San Fernando Valley and Hollywood;
- Los Angeles International Airport and southwest;

- **The south-central route from SCRTD'S 1971 plan;**
- **Santa Ana;**
- **El Segundo and Norwalk (busway); and**
- **San Gabriel and Pasadena (busway).**

The total cost of this recommended system was \$3.3 billion in 1973 dollars. Using a 9 percent escalation factor over a 12-year period of construction, the cost rose to \$6.6 billion.

The financing plan for the system rested on a mixture of Federal and local sources. Over two-thirds of the capital cost was expected to come from the Urban Mass Transportation Administration, and the bulk of the remaining requirements were to be financed by bonds supported by a .75 percent sales tax. SCRTD also planned to draw on its share of SB 325 funds.

The reaction by public officials to SCRTD'S Phase II recommendations raised more questions than plaudits. A number of local officials criticized it sharply, and UMTA considered the publication of the report an irresponsible act of defiance.

Local criticism of the plan came out at public hearings held on August 1, 1973, by the Subcommittee on Los Angeles Regional Transportation of the California State Assembly Committee on Transportation. Chairman Alan Sieroty took testimony from a number of witnesses including Los Angeles Mayor Thomas Bradley; Los Angeles County Supervisor Peter Schabarum; Ralph Clark, an Orange County Supervisor; the Executive Director of SCAG, Ray Remy; and two private citizens, Robert Profet, a consultant, and Laura Ingman, a representative of the League of Women Voters.

Mayor Bradley had taken office approximately 2 months before the hearings and his testimony reflected the program he had outlined to his own city department chiefs in June. While supporting the need for a regional transit system, Bradley said that energy shortages and EPA Air Pollution Guidelines made it imperative to develop immediate action programs for transit. An imaginative "immediate" program which used buses, carpools, jitney cabs, and "dial-a-ride" minibuses was necessary. Bradley pointed out that a well-planned program of this sort could help boost transit ridership in corridors in which rapid transit later would be introduced.

Aside from the need for an "intermediate" action program, the mayor also pointed out that the high cost of SCRTD'S regional system raised questions of social and financial equity. Sales tax financing often affected those least able to pay, and Bradley felt that some mechanism was needed to offset this burden. He suggested finding a way to guarantee a low transit fare, as had been done in Atlanta in 1971.

Los Angeles County Supervisor Pete Schabarum, who had opposed SCRTD consistently, raised questions about the purpose of the plan. After pointing out that SCRTD had not yet made any technical data available to the county, he emphasized the need for a system that served suburban as well as local community trips. He claimed that the SCRTD plan was too downtown-oriented and, moreover, that it did not adequately justify the corridors selected, the specific types of interim projects, or the ultimate benefits to be derived from the expenditure of \$6.6 billion on a rapid transit system that would carry only about 4 percent of the total trips in the region. With these issues in mind, Schabarum questioned whether SCRTD should be given a "blank check" to build a transit system.

The testimony of Orange County Supervisor Ralph Clark raised an issue that was reminiscent of 1968. Clark was chairman of the board of the Orange County Transit District as well as chairman of SCAG'S Transportation Planning Committee. He voiced four main concerns about the plan. The first was that it was so exclusively concerned with Los Angeles County that it neglected to give any consideration to the connection between the county system and other regional systems, such as the plan that was being developed by the Orange County Transit District. Secondly, the SCRTD plan appeared to be based on excessively high regional population and employment projections, which SCAG and Los Angeles County were in the process of reducing. Rather than the 16 million population figure projected for the region in 1990, SCAG was considering a figure somewhere between 12 and 14 million. Thirdly, the cost of the SCRTD system was so high that it would put other communities and districts that needed funds at a severe disadvantage; and, finally, Clark pointed out that the plan made no provision for direct service to Orange County. This lack of regional coordination between systems was an excellent example of the problems of subregional transportation planning.

SCAG'S representative, Executive Director Ray Remy, did not comment directly on the plan, but he did explain that the amount of funding required for it would exceed the Federal limit of 12.5 percent of grant monies to any one State.

Both of the private citizens who testified before the State Assembly Committee supported SCRTD'S extensive series of public review meetings and expressed the belief that the region needed a rapid transit system. However, Robert Profet, a transportation consultant who had advised BARTD, pointed to the urgent need to devise a process by which the many outlying communities within SCRTD'S jurisdiction could participate in the formulation and evaluation of policies, objectives, and priorities for the transit district. This issue came to the fore later on when many communities failed to support the system because it appeared to offer them so little.

One other person who testified at the hearing is worth mentioning because his testimony reflects the efforts that were made by the aerospace industry in Los Angeles to influence the planning process. This spokesperson was Jack Irving, vice president of Aerospace Corporation, a scientific/engineering research company engaged in work for government agencies primarily involving the space and military fields. Aerospace recently had presented a PRT proposal to the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors. In lengthy testimony at the hearing, Irving described the basic concept of PRT and the PRT system Aerospace proposed for Los Angeles, claiming that this system would not only be less costly to construct than conventional heavy rail but also that its passenger revenues would cover operating costs. Another strong supporter of the PRT idea was Baxter Ward, a member of the Board of Supervisors, who strongly advocated rejecting RTD's proposal in favor of a PRT system. The industry's exact role is difficult to document without more investigation. But it is clear that manufacturers were out to sell their high technology products long before the planners had defined the technological requirements of the system.

The most pronounced reaction to the SCRTD Phase II report occurred before the subcommittee held its hearings and before the report was released to the public. This was the reaction of UMTA'S staff, who had urged SCRTD not to release the report because its recommendations did not rest on a complete and thorough analysis of alternatives.

The dispute between UMTA and SCRTD centered on the latter's apparent refusal to give serious attention to an all-bus alternative. Despite the IPG meeting, SCRTD treated the all-bus alternative in what appeared to be a perfunctory manner. Although the Phase II report does consider an all-bus alternative, the alternative is dismissed as being too costly and less effective in reducing congestion and pollution than a fixed-guideway system. The report did state that the bus alternative might be suitable to provide community transit service, if this alternative were integrated with mass transit line-haul services.

UMTA renewed its efforts to get SCRTD to analyze alternatives more thoroughly after the Phase II report was released in July. At that time, SCRTD submitted drafts to UMTA of the contracts for the work the consultants were to do on Phase III. In SCRTD'S mind, the purpose of Phase III was to refine the Phase II plan and, accordingly, the draft contracts contained no provisions for further analysis of alternative transportation modes or corridors.

UMTA seized this opportunity to revise the work program for Phase III. In mid-August, after discussions with SCAG and SCRTD, UMTA presented a revised work program that called for a full evaluation of all alternative modes, as well as a corridor-by-corridor analysis. This evaluation was to include the corridors recommended in the Phase II report. Given the emphasis of this effort, UMTA suggested that the transportation consultants (Alan M. Voorhees & Associates), rather than the management group (Peat, Marwick, Mitchell & Co.), be made the project managers. Another objective of the revised work program was to ensure that SCAG and SCRTD integrated their efforts more thoroughly. UMTA made it clear once again that the SCRTD Phase III work had to be closely coordinated with SCAG'S Critical Decisions Plan.

SCRTD reacted strongly to UMTA'S action, arguing that the revised work program made it impossible for SCRTD to place a rapid transit plan on the June 1974 ballot. General Manager Jack Gilstrap emphasized SCRTD'S legislative mandate to design and implement a comprehensive mass rapid transit system, and reiterated that an all-bus system could not satisfy the requirements of the region.

Before the negotiations over the consultant's contract were completed, UMTA Administrator

Frank Herringer traveled to Los Angeles to make UMTA'S position clear. Speaking to the SCAG General Assembly in September, Herringer emphasized that UMTA would examine all the alternatives in order to determine whether fixed rail or buses on freeways were the most cost effective. With limited resources, UMTA was obliged to examine closely the way it allocated capital assistance.

The month after the UMTA administrator's speech, SCRTD submitted to UMTA the revised consultant contracts, which reflected the stipulations UMTA had laid down in August. UMTA approved the contracts and the final phase of the planning process began.

Phase III

The third phase of SCRTD'S planning work lasted roughly from October 1973 until May 1974. During the period a number of plans were debated, and both SCRTD and SCAG approved a plan to present to the voters in November. Despite their action, however, it was clear that no strong consensus on a transit plan existed in the region.

The SCRTD consultants presented a report in March 1974 that contained an entirely new approach. Rather than flatly recommending one short-term and one long-term proposal, the report coupled short-term (1- to 3-year) and intermediate-term (3- to 8-year) proposals with a number of alternative long-term proposals.

The short-term proposal contemplated immediate improvements in local and express bus service, while the intermediate-term proposal called for a continuing program to expand the bus fleet and improve service. The fleet would have been expanded to 2,700 buses in 1977 and 3,400 by 1984.

The long-term plan represented a significant new departure. Recognizing the financial constraints on UMTA, the plan took an incremental approach that rested on four "building blocks," each of which represented a different-size rapid transit system requiring different levels of investment and different assumptions about the extent of Federal participation in that investment.

The least extensive plan was Level I. It covered 33 miles at a total escalated cost of \$2.7 billion over an 8-year implementation period and assumed only 10 percent participation from UMTA.

The second, Level II, was 57 miles of fixed guideway costing \$3.9 billion over an 8-year period of implementation. UMTA'S share of the cost would be 35 percent.

Level III was 77 miles. It would take 9 years to implement, for a total cost of \$5.2 billion, 50 percent of which would be contributed by UMTA.

Level IV, the most extensive, covered 121 miles. It would cost \$7.5 billion over a 12-year implementation period, and UMTA'S share of the cost was assumed to be 60 percent.

All these alternatives included the short- and intermediate-term programs. Level IV was a modification of the Phase II proposal of July 1973.

This "Building Block" plan, presented in March, set the stage for the debate that culminated in summer 1974 with the adoption of a plan more extensive than any of the four long-range alternatives. Although the plan seemed to offer something for everyone and UMTA regarded it as a constructive approach, it stirred up opposition from many of SCRTD'S suburban critics and touched off a round of proposals and counter-proposals that finally concluded in the adoption of a 145-mile system with no incremental features.

The suburban critique of the step-by-step, building block approach rested on the length of time it would take to provide service to outlying jurisdictions. In his article for *Railway Age* (June 1, 1974), Tom Kizzia quotes one businessman who helped kill the incremental approach: "I'm 50 years old," he said. "With these priorities I would be long gone before rapid transit ever got my way."⁹

In April and May several other voices entered the forum. Although they were not directed at the March plan as such, they illustrate the lack of consensus that existed around any one plan.

In April, in a draft of its Critical Decisions Plan, whose publication had been delayed, the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) took a position on transit reflecting an approach to regional growth that ran counter to SCRTD'S rapid transit plans.

SCAG'S view was that the region should be decentralized as it grows, by developing activity centers other than the Los Angeles CBD. With this

⁹Tom Kizzia, "Los Angeles, Will Tracks be Back?", *Railway Age*, June 10, 1974, p. 30.

in mind, the draft plan recommended reemphasizing line-haul commuter trips and improving local community transit services. Accordingly, the recommendations in the plan took a gradualistic approach to the development of transit in the region. They called for implementing immediate transit improvements and waiting until the results of their improvements were known before proceeding with investments in a fixed-guideway system. The report also suggested that an intermediate-capacity rapid transit system capable of carrying up to 25,000 passengers per hour seemed more compatible with original goals and policies than a heavy-rail, high-capacity system.

On May 16, SCAG held public hearings on this draft. Although there was extensive criticism of SCAG'S failure to have more public participation in the preparation of the plan, the most forceful criticism of the plan came from SCRTD and its counterpart in Orange County. Both took particular issue with the recommendations regarding fixed-guideways.

The Critical Decisions Plan was revised after these hearings and a final plan was adopted by the Executive Committee of SCAG on June 13, 1974. This report established the framework for evaluating regional transportation in the *Preliminary Regional Transportation Plan* issued by SCAG in November 1974 as part of the statewide transportation planning process.

The mayor of Los Angeles stated his views on the extent of a new system in early May. Addressing the Council's Ad Hoc Committee on Rapid Transit, Mayor Bradley suggested that an intermediate capacity fixed-guideway system of 50 to 70 miles would be a suitable initial step. The mayor later reemphasized the question of the system's capacity, suggesting that it could be determined during preliminary engineering.

The State of California issued a report on May 31, 1974, on both the SCRTD and the Orange County Transit District (OCTD) plans. Prepared by CALTRANS for the California Legislature, the evaluation raised two points that echoed the criticism of others. First, the report recommended that the SCRTD board of directors strongly consider adopting an intermediate-capacity rapid transit system approximating the mileage of Level IV (120 miles), as well as an improved feeder and local circulation system. It also suggested that this be done after making a thorough comparative

evaluation of such a system in relation to a high-capacity system.

Second, CALTRANS raised a point, made less than a year before at the hearings on the Phase II report, that SCRTD and OCTD had to coordinate their planning and design work more effectively in order to achieve an integrated regional system.

All these suggestions and proposals had been raised by the time the board of directors of SCRTD moved toward a decision on the system they would select to put on the November ballot. In addition, one of SCRTD'S consultants had raised a fundamental question of whether more than 60 miles of fixed-guideway was needed for the foreseeable future.

In May 1974 Voorhees prepared an interim report indicating that there was a need for a 60-mile fixed-guideway system. Such a system would cost between \$2.4 and \$3.2 billion. AMV'S report concluded that 60 miles was clearly justifiable and that a case might be made for a system as long as 120 miles. The issue, the Voorhees interim report said, "is whether it is necessary and desirable for the region to commit to a fixed-guideway development beyond 60 miles at this time." The report went on to say that this question was not so much a technical or financial issue, but a question of basic policy.

The issues raised in the interim report failed to reach the public forum. At a presentation to UMTA representatives, SCRTD had consultants from Kaiser rather than Voorhees explain the proposed plan. They contradicted the Voorhees team, and recommended 145 miles of fixed guideway rather than the 60-mile system.

The plan which SCRTD'S board of directors finally accepted on August 2, 1974, was a modification of this 145-mile system (see Figure 5). Aside from a short-term bus improvement program, the adopted plan called for 145 miles of fixed-guideway, which included a 5-mile extension through Long Beach, and the extension of the n-mile San Bernardino busway for another 20 miles to the Ontario International Airport. The plan contained no priorities for implementation, and it was described as the first stage in the achievement of an overall regional goal of a 240-mile system. The first stage would cost between \$8 and \$10 billion over a 12- to 15-year implementation period.

The reaction to the adoption of this plan was by no means overwhelmingly favorable. Although

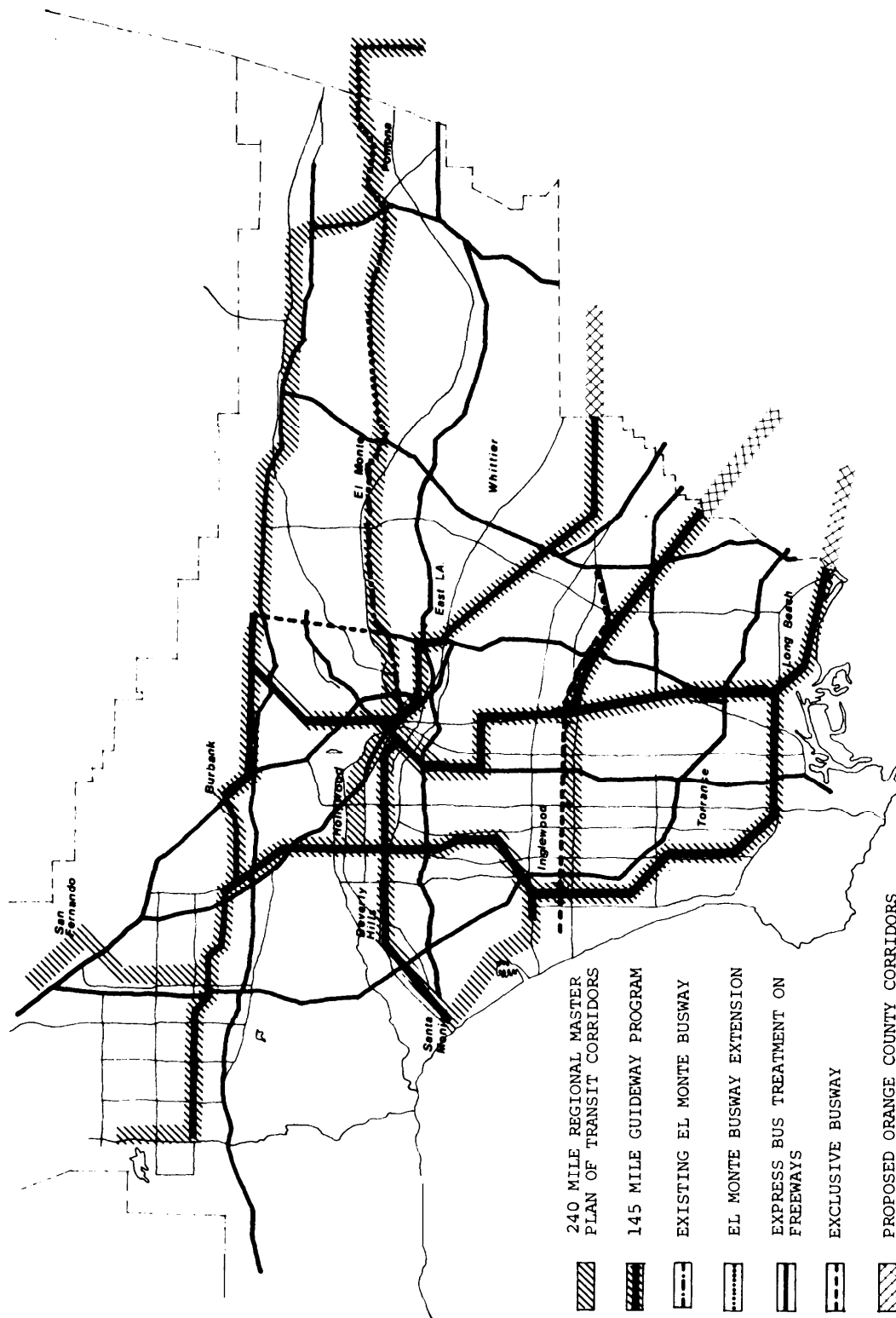


FIGURE 5 : LOS ANGELES – PROPOSED RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEM (1974)

Source Transit for Los Angeles County: A Subregional Transit Element of the Transportation Plan, Prepared for the Southern California Rapid Transit District, July 1974.

SCAG had adopted it on July 11, 1974, as the subregional transit element of the regional transportation plan, and although Mayor Bradley and other transit advocates eventually stood behind it in the election campaign, the plan evoked some forceful criticism from public and private officials.

For some local municipal leaders from outlying communities, the plan was not extensive enough. One councilman from Glendora stated that the plan offered very little to the East San Gabriel Valley. "I can't see the people in may community subsidizing a transportation plan for the San Fernando Valley and the Wilshire Corridor," he said. "I'm going to work very hard against it."¹⁰

For others, it was unrealistically expensive. RTD board member Arthur Baldonado voted against it on these grounds, and a group of Los Angeles County mayors, which were organized in the fall to oppose the measure, called it inflationary and too much oriented to downtown Los Angeles.

Both SCAG and UMTA also stipulated a number of issues that had to be resolved. In preparing the program for the next phase of work to refine the plan, both organizations required that the plan had to be properly meshed with the plans of the Orange County Transit District.

Finally, the Citizens' Advisory Committee on Rapid Transit (CACORT) viewed the sudden adoption of the 145-mile system as a unilateral breach of faith. The CACORT organization had been organized by Mayor Bradley to provide citizen input to the planning process. At the time the SCRTD board acted, the CACORT committee had been working on evaluation of the March 1974 "Building Block Plan." To them SCRTD'S sudden action appeared to obviate all the work they had put into the evaluations, and although CACORT later endorsed the ballot proposal for financing the plan, SCRTD'S action did little to dispel their distrust of the transit agency.

The Vote on Proposition A

The strategy SCRTD adopted to win the support of all the disparate groups was to leave the precise details of the transit plan as vague as possible.

¹⁰ Mike Ward, "Leaders Cool to RTD Tax," *Los Angeles Times*, July 28, 1974.

Following what one SCRTD official called the "Denver Strategy,"¹¹ the district hoped that the voters would vote their approval of Proposition A because they supported the rapid transit concept sketched out in the adopted plan. The details of the system would be worked out in the preliminary engineering stage.

The strategy was based on the correct perception that, among public officials as well as the populace at large, there was broad support for a transit system. The disagreements that existed had to do with the specific characteristics of the system, its mileage, technology, service characteristics, and cost. According to SCRTD'S reasoning, these were all things that people would negotiate later on after voting to give SCRTD the wherewithal to accomplish the fundamental objective of building some sort of public transportation system.

Proposition A was put to the voters of Los Angeles County on November 5, 1974. Unlike the referendum in 1968, the measure required only a simple majority to pass rather than two-thirds of the vote. Despite this advantage, it only received 46.4 percent of the vote in Los Angeles County.

The outcome of the election does not necessarily discredit the basic premises of the SCRTD strategy. But it does cast doubt on the people's confidence in SCRTD, and on the prospects for developing a large-scale rapid transit system in the region. In order to succeed with such a strategy, SCRTD needed the full confidence of the voters. In many people's minds, that confidence had not only been eroded by the persistent institutional battles, but, most importantly, by the bitter and prolonged transit strike that ended only weeks before the vote. The strike exposed SCRTD to daily reporting and, regardless of the merits of its case, the constant glare made the competence and character of SCRTD a primary issue in people's minds.

Other factors also weighed heavily in the vote. The state of the economy made people reluctant to vote an increase in the sales tax; the psychological passing of the energy crisis may have made the need for mass transit less compelling; and in most

¹¹ In 1973 Denver voters approved a $\frac{1}{2}$ -cent sales tax to support the Regional Transportation District in refining and eventually constructing a rapid transit system. Technically the issue before voters was the sales tax levy, although the tax was linked closely to a promotional campaign for the personal rapid transit-type system recommended in the RTD's preliminary plan.

parts of the region there was a low voter turnout. Some people may also have felt that the passage of Proposition 5 in June 1974, which diverted State gas tax money for the development of rail transit, obviated the need for more money to build a system.

All these things may have contributed to some extent to the defeat. One thing worth noting is that Proposition A, like its predecessor in 1968, was not defeated by the lower-income residents of Los Angeles proper, the residents of Santa Monica, or the well-to-do of Beverly Hills. These cities produced 56 percent, 61 percent, and 54 percent of affirmative votes, respectively. It was the voters in the suburban areas that once again brought the measure down.

Postscript

Planning for rapid transit in the Los Angeles area has taken a new course since the defeat of Proposition A. It is a course reminiscent of the proposal for a south-central line that SCRTD put forward in late 1971. Like that proposal, it represents SCRTD'S unswerving commitment to build a rapid transit line, but unlike that proposal it seems to have a reasonable chance of succeeding.

The new approach involves exploring the development of a "starter" line project. After the defeat in November, SCRTD began to examine ways to use relatively unencumbered, "voter-free" Proposition 5 funds for initiating a segment of a rapid transit starter line (see Figure 6).

In order to establish an institutional forum for developing such a project, SCRTD established a Rapid Transit Advisory Committee (RTAC). The committee has representatives from CALTRANS,

SCAG, Los Angeles County, Orange County Transit District, the League of California Cities, and the City of Los Angeles. All of these bodies would be responsible for providing financial support to the project in one way or another, and they were all brought together on the RTAC with the specific mandate to develop a consensus on an acceptable starter line. Both the State Senate and Assembly adopted resolutions urging SCRTD to adopt such a starter line.

Since the creation of this committee in March 1975, progress has been made. A consensus on a broad corridor running through the San Fernando Valley, the central business district of Los Angeles, and Long Beach-San Pedro area has been reached and approved in resolutions by the City Council of Los Angeles and the SCRTD Board. The City Council of Los Angeles had previously adopted a resolution authorizing the city to contribute its share of Proposition 5 funds for 6 years toward the financing of an acceptable starter line; in the fall of 1975, SCRTD received an initial one-half million dollars in Proposition 5 funds from California.¹² The public agencies involved in RTAC are looking currently at more detailed alternatives for an alignment within this broad corridor. This process will be followed by plan refinement and preliminary engineering, and if the local consensus holds, by an application for UMTA funding.

What makes this project more likely to succeed than the other is that it is more limited in scope, not dependent on voter approval, and assured of at least Proposition 5 money as a local share. If it succeeds, it will mark the end of a long struggle to bring rapid rail transit to Los Angeles.

¹² *Engineering News Record*, 4 September 1975.

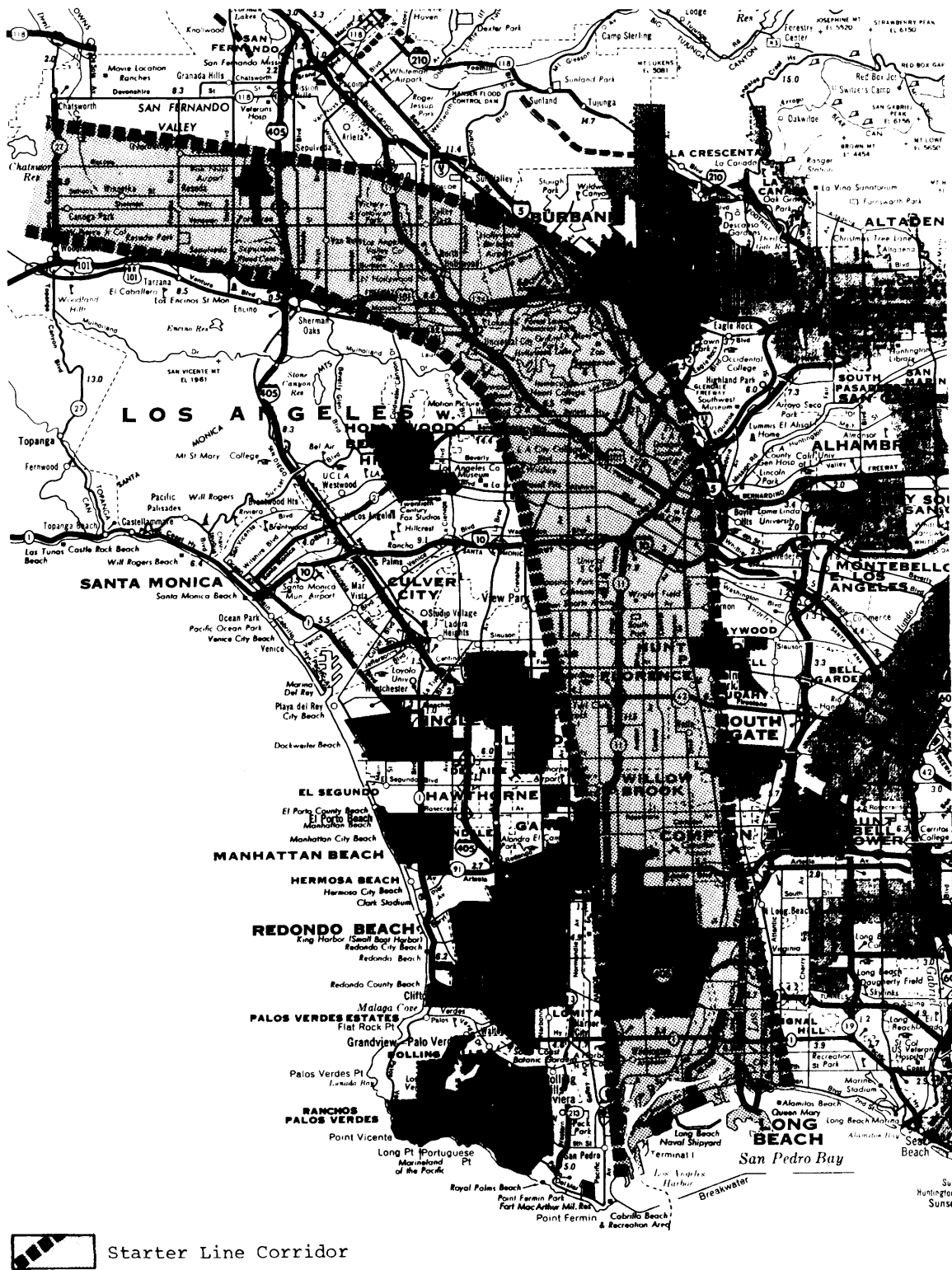


FIGURE 6: LOS ANGELES RAPID TRANSIT STARTER LINE CORRIDOR

Source: Southern California Rapid Transit District, July 1975