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# Metro says subway will move people between Valley and Westside faster than monorail

New data shows a subway under Sepulveda Pass will be quick, offer a UCLA stop and carry more riders

 The Los Angeles SkyRail Express is shown in the median of the 405 Freeway in an artist rendering. A team wants to build a monorail to satisfy Metro's Sepulveda Pass Corridor project to link the Westside of L.A. to the San Fernando Valley. (Rendering courtesy of BYD)

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Traveling from Van Nuys to UCLA on an underground subway would take about 12 minutes, compared to a ride on an aerial monorail that would take more than twice as long, according to new data released by LA Metro regarding its proposed Sepulveda Transit Corridor Project.

The data also showed that of six options, the underground subway — outlined as alternatives 4 to 6 — would carry a maximum of about 120,000 weekday boardings, much more than the monorail alternatives numbered 1 to 3.

An underground rail would carry nearly twice as many riders as two of the monorail options, mostly because two of the three monorail options would not include stations at UCLA, a prime destination that is projected to be the busiest station. Instead, the first two monorail alternatives require transfers to get to UCLA, one to a shuttle bus and the other to an automated people mover, adding travel time and reducing ridership, Metro reported.

The data was released last week in presentations focused on the six alternatives under consideration for the [first rail transit to connect the San Fernando Valley with the Westside](#), to be built either over or under the Santa Monica Mountains as an alternative to the busy 405 Freeway.

On the table at presentations held in Westwood and online by LA Metro were six configurations, with Alternatives 1 to 3 mostly monorail, and Alternatives 4 to 6 heavy rail. The six alternatives are:

Alternative 1: (15.3 miles) Monorail with aerial alignment on 405 corridor and electric bus connection to UCLA.

Alternative 2: (15.8 miles) Monorail with aerial alignment on 405 corridor and aerial automated people mover connection to UCLA.

Alternative 3: (16.2 miles) Monorail with aerial alignment on 405 corridor and underground alignment between Getty Center and Wilshire Boulevard. This would allow for an underground station at UCLA.

Alternative 4: (14 miles) Heavy rail with underground alignment south of Ventura Boulevard and aerial alignment generally along Sepulveda Boulevard in the San Fernando Valley, with four aerial stations.

Alternative 5: (14 miles) Heavy rail with underground alignment including along Sepulveda Boulevard in the San Fernando Valley.

Alternative 6: (12.6 miles) Heavy rail with underground alignment including along Van Nuys Boulevard in the San Fernando Valley and a southern terminus station on Bundy Drive.

Travel time and boarding projections are part of environmental impact reports which are scheduled for completion sometime in 2025. Ultimately, the LA Metro Board will determine the preferred alternative, route, station alignments — and updated cost estimates. Completion is estimated between 2033-2035, according to Metro.

With new data in hand, Metro emphasized the importance of travel time in getting people to switch from driving to public transit. “A successful transit system attracts high ridership because it moves people faster and more reliably so they can go about their lives with greater opportunities and more time to do so,” read the Metro staff presentation.

All six options would move people from the Van Nuys Metrolink Station to UCLA Gateway Plaza in 12 to 39 minutes and 31 to 48 minutes from Van Nuys to the E (Expo) Line in Santa Monica. Travel time when starting from the G (Orange) Line in Reseda to UCLA would take 23 to 46 minutes.

No matter which alternative is chosen, their times compare favorably to driving times, which range from 40 to 90 minutes when driving from Van Nuys to UCLA, and 45 to 100 minutes when driving from Van Nuys to Santa Monica during peak morning hours, Metro reported.

Shorter travel times are underscored by reliability, meaning that commuters, students or people going to medical appointments who must arrive on time won't have to worry about traffic, car crashes and Sig Alerts if they take Metro, said Dave Karwaski, director of mobility planning and traffic systems at UCLA on Friday, Nov. 3.

“Driving is challenging and stressful. All things can happen,” he said. “But with alternatives 4, 5, and 6 (subway rail) having travel times under 20 minutes — some at 12 and 15 minutes — it's a benefit that isn't obvious.” Travel times on the monorail from Van Nuys to UCLA range from 24 to 39 minutes, Metro reported.

He wasn't surprised that the subway alternatives would be faster, since they would be built directly between the Valley and the Westside, while the monorail option would follow the arc of the 405 Freeway. And the monorail proposal includes transfers to UCLA, adding to the trip times, he said.



A rendering of what the BYD SkyRail monorail would look like coming down the Sepulveda Pass on an elevated track in the middle of the 405 Freeway. (courtesy of BYD)

In [agreements signed with LA Metro](#), the monorail concept planned by LA SkyRail Express, with an aerial line built on the 405 Freeway median and most stations located on the freeway's shoulder, was projected to cost \$6.1 billion. Proponents say it can be built faster and cheaper than the subway.

Bob Anderson, a member and board chair of the Sherman Oaks Homeowners Association (SOHA) transportation committee, said Metro could build the monorail using the \$7.5 billion put aside by Metro for the project. He estimated that the other option, an underground subway rail, would really cost upward of \$25 billion and that Metro would not have the money to complete it. Metro has not released new cost figures.

“You shouldn’t be building something you can’t afford,” he said on Thursday, Nov. 2. The SOHA and the Bel-Air Association are opposed to the underground subway, saying tunneling could damage homes. Instead, these two groups prefer the monorail option.

Anderson also criticized the ridership and travel time estimates put out by Metro. “To me these numbers are more Metro deceit,” Anderson said.

Sepulveda Transit Corridor Partners, including Bechtel Development Company, Meridiam Infrastructure and American Triple I Partners, put the cost of their subway project at \$10.8 billion. STCP says its project, either alternatives 4 and 5, would provide the fastest and greenest option, easing congestion on the 405 Freeway and reducing pollution.

The heavy rail alternative is supported by the UCLA Undergraduate Student Association Council and Graduate Student Association, which represent over 45,000 students. “We firmly believe heavy rail is the only alternative that works for UCLA’s students, faculty and the greater Los Angeles community,” wrote Evan Curran, a USAC facilities commissioner, in an emailed response.

Streets For All, Sierra Club, Climate Resolve, LA Forward and other nonprofit groups support the heavy rail option and oppose the monorail.

UCLA is fourth-largest employer in Los Angeles County, with about 80,000 people on campus every day, Karwaski said.

“This rail line should not be built cheap. It will be the most important investment in Los Angeles for over 200 years,” said Bart Reed, executive director of The Transit Coalition.

 The Trust Project 

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