

Today is Thursday, October 11, 2007
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Crenshaw rail plans back on track?

Officials are discussing line's possible route and whether it should be light rail or a busway. Idea is to link Wilshire Boulevard to the Green Line.

By Gene Maddaus
Staff Writer

Transit planners are dusting off maps of Crenshaw Boulevard with the goal of linking Wilshire Boulevard to the Green Line in the next major expansion of the regional rail network.

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority has been floating plans for a Crenshaw rail line ever since the riots of 1992 - only to see those plans repeatedly shelved amid budget shortfalls and bureaucratic stalemates.

Now the idea is being revived again, and this time there are reasons to believe it might go somewhere. For starters, the MTA has made it a high priority - second only to the Expo Line and Gold Line extensions now under construction. And second, the agency has earmarked funding for the project, up to \$955 million.

The next step is determining a route and deciding whether it ought to be a light-rail project or a dedicated busway, akin to the Orange Line in the San Fernando Valley. The MTA staff is officially agnostic on the latter question, though MTA board members who represent the area have more definite opinions.

"I think at this point we have to say it should be light rail," said Supervisor Yvonne Brathwaite Burke. "Crenshaw is the second-most traveled thoroughfare in Southern California - Wilshire being the first - and there's a tremendous need for something more than rapid bus."

The Crenshaw line would turn the county's train system - now a spiderlike array of radial spokes - into an actual grid. It would run 10 miles, from the Purple Line terminus in Koreatown to the Expo Line and on to the Green Line, and would create two loops, boosting ridership on existing lines and making the whole system easier to use.

Planners have not decided where the route should go as it comes through Inglewood. The initial idea was to continue down Crenshaw. But Inglewood officials noted that Crenshaw is largely residential, and the line would get more ridership if it turned west at Florence Avenue and came down Prairie or La Brea avenues.

If La Brea were chosen, the line could conceivably come as far south as Hawthorne and El Segundo boulevards in Hawthorne.

Another idea is to continue west on Florence - where there is existing track - before turning south at Aviation Boulevard. That route would bring the rail system closer to Los Angeles International Airport, though it would still fall about a mile short of delivering passengers to the terminals.

At this point, no route has preference over any other. The MTA is beginning to take soundings in the community to determine the level of support for each. The agency will hold a series of public meetings on the subject on Oct. 15, 17 and 20.

"It's an open book right now for everyone to contribute ideas," said William Barnett, Inglewood's senior transportation planner. "They're saying, 'Here's an old idea.' And they're refreshing it. But it's on square one in terms of the options."

The initial study is expected to last three years, until August 2010, with the goal of completing construction in 2016. Planners will be investigating the potential ridership for a Crenshaw line, which could determine whether a busway or a light rail line is built.

"It's a question of, 'Is the demand going to be there for that?'" said David Yale, MTA's deputy executive officer for regional programming. "Are we going to need light rail?"

A busway would be significantly cheaper, with current estimates at \$550 million. Any project would require federal funding, which would only be granted after the study is complete in 2010.

"There is a lot of interest in Washington in this," Burke said. "It should be next (after) Expo."

The Crenshaw line had been on long-range plans even before 1992, but gained new impetus with the riots of that year.

But the efforts to build the line stalled repeatedly in the mid-1990s. The problems at the time were related to a conflict between federal and local authorities, and were not inherent to the route.

"It was definitely something the community was supporting 12 years ago," said Karen Heit, who was then MTA's South Bay area team director.

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WANT TO GO?

Residents are invited to give their opinions on a Crenshaw rail line or dedicated bus route at three community forums:

Oct. 15: 6 to 8 p.m. Darby Park, 3400 W. Arbor Vitae St., Inglewood.

Oct. 17: 6 to 8 p.m. Nate Holden Performing Arts Center, 4718 W. Washington Blvd., Los Angeles.

Oct. 20: 9 to 11 a.m. Audubon Middle School, 4120 11th St., Los Angeles.

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"Friends of the green line"

<http://thetransitcoalition.us/GreenLine.htm>

- Tony Czuleger

posted: Wednesday, October 10th at 19:05 PM

"Fogl.com"

Check out the friends of the green line web site for information relating to the south bay and the west side. There are current ideas being floated around but this seems to be getting blind sided by the recently refloated Crenshaw blvd. route. Fogl also has a planed idea for using the existing Santa Fe right of way fomaly known as the Harbor Sub and now (owned By the MTA) which go's to Los Angeles Harbor, starting in down town LA going through the area along slauson Bl. then on to Inglewood, past LAX, El Segundo, Manhattan Beach, Redondo Beach, Torrance, Harbor City, Wilmington, San Pedro. In addition, this as well could extend east along the UP San Pedro sub rail line heading out to connect Long Beach, Paramount, South Gate, Bell and reconnect with an existing MetroLink rail line and continue to Palmdale, LA union station and connect to Santa Barbara, San Diego, Palmdale, San Bernadino at a far lesss cost and be up and running in less time it would take to secure the right of way for and light rail line. Because the rail line already exists.

- Tony Czuleger

posted: Wednesday, October 10th at 8:07 AM

"We used to have one"

We used to have a railway system. The bus companies, notably GM bought it and dismantled to sell us buses. Interesting how history here is repeating itself. Aside from GM and other bus maker, who would want a bus way. It may initially be cheaper, but not in the long run.

- rwareham

posted: Tuesday, October 9th at 10:29 AM

"LINE NEEDS TO COME INTO SOUTH BAY"

Why do all of these politicians keep forgetting the South part of Los Angeles in their plans for traffic relief? South Bay needs light rail to ease the traffic congestion. Why not come all the way down Crenshaw or Hawthorne or Western all the way to PV or San Pedro. More people would ride the rail and take the cars off the streets.

- concerned voter

posted: Tuesday, October 9th at 7:50 AM

"LOOK BACK"

I concur with Ronald, when the Century Fwy (I-105) was first thought of back in the early 60's it's cost was pennies compared to the nearly 7 billion \$ it cost when finally built. But as we all know there will be years of studies, community meetings, swabbling over what neighborhoods it should or should'nt go through. But it all comes down to it should have been built yesterday.

- Mr. Ed

posted: Monday, October 8th at 23:34 PM

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