

Valley VOTE

Valley Voters Organized Toward Empowerment

October 21 Meeting Report

by

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BUR AIMS TO EXPAND; LA TO DO MORE WITH LESS



Felipe Fuentes

Los Angeles River Untapped Asset

Former state assemblyman Felipe Fuentes, once a deputy to Valley-hating Mayor James Hahn and now 7th District city councilman, told Valley Vote's October meeting that he's "fed up with city hall scandals, bad business practices and lax DWP record keeping." He says DWP has evidenced little management on the issue of water resources and that taxpayers would be willing to pay higher rates if they had a better understanding of how their money is being spent. The current plan involves bringing Sacramento River delta water down to Los Angeles.

Fuentes chairs the city's energy environment committee and says the recent negotiation that pushed back the IBEW's 4% pay raise to a 2% raise four years from now was a win for the city.

To his enormous credit, Fuentes wants to develop the Los Angeles River into a community resource. "Look at cities like San Antonio that have used their rivers to spur urban development." Fuentes worries about recharging the aquifer that lies beneath the San Fernando Valley and views the LA River as a developmental opportunity. Says

Fuentes: "We can't keep flushing all our rain water into Santa Monica Bay through concrete canals."

BUR Primed For Take Off

The Burbank Bob Hope Airport plans to replace its 83-year old terminal with a modern 14-gate facility that meets federal standards for distance from runways and is earthquake safe. Although the flight capacity won't increase (BUR presently handles 737s, A320s and A319s), BUR's communications director **Victor Gill** says the enlarged facility will reduce traffic by adding more rail and bus links, strengthen the Burbank brand and attract new retail and service jobs to the adjacent 59-acre "opportunity site" and the nearby Media District North.



The \$300 to \$400 million expansion will be funded by the FAA, airlines and airport passengers. No public tax money will be involved.

If the number of gates and parking spaces remain the same, what exactly will be added? An additional 41,000 sq. ft. of public space, says Gill, plus an enlarged baggage claim area, additional restroom facilities and more room for airline baggage processing. The

new airport also will have an intermodal transportation center that will offer a free shuttle to the North Hollywood Metro station. “We’re trying to leverage the mass transit opportunities,” says Gill.

Will A Metro Train Ever Arrive at LAX?

Everyone agrees that a Metro train should support people getting to LAX, but not on how to accomplish it, reports Denny Schneider. MTA started talks with LAWA in 2008 but no agreements on funding or pathway were reached. The Measure R transportation Bond issued in 2008 addressed this, but allocated only about \$200M toward construction of a new opportunity into LAX—an amount too small to complete the task.

Short of any agreement, the Crenshaw LAX line was approved this year with a “closer” station, which is still two miles shy of LAX at the intersection of Century and Aviation. Downtown business, the pro-LAX expansion lobby and local residents near the airport all agree that LAX should have a Metro station.

One MTA proposal includes a train into the LAX Central Terminal Area, but it is very expensive and does not provide timely service. LAWA suggests creating a high capacity people mover that would connect LAX with Century Blvd. hotels via an Integrated Transportation Facility Station adjacent to LAX. It appears to be the best opportunity to date to get a functioning train support.

Quake Retrofit

LA’s new city administration is concerned about the safety of older concrete apartment buildings with garages below in the event of an earthquake. Unfortunately, says **Vic Viereck**, there is no funding proposed to pay for the retrofitting or replacement of such buildings.

The Los Angeles Rent Stabilization Ordinance, argues Viereck, prevents owners from solving the problem because under the ordinance owner landlords can’t pass on the cost of retrofitting.

Another problem is the relocation assistance paid to tenants temporarily or permanently moved during the retrofitting. The relocation (or redistribution) cost, which in many cases can exceed \$18,000 a unit, makes it difficult financially to get rid of the problem in such units.

A 50% tax credit against California state income tax or the Los Angeles property transfer tax for the cost of retrofitting could motivate retrofitting. If an owner replaces an older building with a new one a credit may not be necessary, but a waiver from the RSO would be in order. The replacement of older concrete apartments also would generate new tax revenue (and jobs), helping to replace the cost of the tax credit.

More Mass Transit Equals Common Sense

Bart Reed, Executive Director of Transit Coalition and Valley Vote executive committee member, wonders why LAX can’t be more like Bob Hope Burbank Airport when it comes to traffic mitigation. BUR is transforming into a modern airport, reachable by bus and rail as well as automobile. But LAX continues to rely on passengers – and employees – driving cars. “LA World Airports employs 50,000 people with badges,” he says. “Why

isn't the fly away bus filled up at 4 am? TSA employees report to work at 5:30 and 6 am. Why don't the Fly Away buses start earlier in the day?"

Improving the life of LA citizens often requires only minor adjustments. For example, Reed has been working to get the city to add street curbs and gutters to Sylmar to blind people with guide dogs can use public transport. The federal Americans With Disabilities Act requires blind people with guide dogs to be picked up from the curb. That's difficult in an area like Sylmar with no curbs and a city indifferent to citizens with disabilities.



Bart Reed

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