



Valley VOTE

Organized Toward Empowerment Voters
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VALLEY VOTE REPORT: March 16, 2015 MEETING

Minutes accumulated by Denny Schneider

Galpin Ford - 2nd Floor Meeting Room, 15555 Roscoe Boulevard, North Hills, CA 91343

*Valley Vote meetings are held the third Monday of each month to address critical public policy issues impacting the San Fernando Valley. **The next meeting will be April 20, 2015.***

This meeting featured Former CA Assembly Speaker and Metrolink Director Richard Katz and Daily News Opinion Columnist Susan Shelly along with timely, topical committee reports on several subjects key to Valley quality of life. Come join us early at the meetings and interchange ideas with Valley community leaders.

President Joe Vitti encouraged active participation in community affairs either as Board members or Executive Board members of Valley Vote. He noted that this volunteer organization has made major contributions to the Valley quality of life by being leaders on numerous issues. Visit our website: www.ValleyVOTE.org to see the dozens of positive position statements.

Richard Katz, Director Metrolink

Richard Katz is a native of Los Angeles. He lives in Studio City with his wife Wendy Mitchell, their seven year-old son Mitchell Robert and their two dogs. Richard Katz has been a long time member of Valley VOTE and has invested decades working to achieve Valley improvements. He has a long history of involvement in transportation issues.



In June 2005, Richard served on the Board of Directors of the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) and was later appointed to the Metrolink Board on which he continues to serve. In this capacity he is actively pushing to increase transportation opportunities in the SFV.

Richard was head of the 1996 CA Assembly. Richard served 10 years as Chair of the Transportation Committee authoring Proposition 111, a 10 year Transportation Blueprint which raised more money for mass transit and highways than any effort in California history.

Richard Katz owns public policy/ government relations firm, Richard Katz Consulting (RKC), Inc. and serves on the Management Committee and Board of the Valley Economic Alliance and the Boards of Heal the Bay and Valley Presbyterian Hospital.

Richard Katz told us the Mayor is looking for transportation improvement projects and acknowledged the list of projects by Bart Reed's Transit Coalition is critical to being ready to move forward as funding becomes available. He noted that all types of transportation are important, not just rail.

The new MTA CEO starts mid-May who will need to account for the competing interests within the large MTA foot print. Many traffic mitigations are urgently needed and deserved for Valley residents. The Valley has been shorted in the past. One set of traffic fixes at Victory and VanOwen are needed, but whatever plan is concluded must ensure that more vehicle traffic is not driven into the neighborhoods.

Supporting a new Measure R2 (or whatever its name will be) is crucial and when it is passed we need to be ready to act quickly to use the funds approved. The vetting process for projects, Richard told us, is going on right now by the Council of Governments and other funding agencies. VICA support is equally

vital. Richard talked about the importance of having “shovel ready” projects with heavy lobbying by our local organizations of all types to keep our projects in the forefront.

Our LA Council members are an important element in realizing opportunities and everyone should be contacting them regularly to remind them of the importance of transportation. One example proposal is for a 405 Reliever Program from the Valley Civic Center to UCLA. This MTA project is to be a public-private partnership when the route is determined. It will be a two level tunnel with rapid transit in the upper level with four toll lanes on the bottom level to fund the project. Paul Korretz and other current MTA Board members need use their influence to keep this project on track. Another relief project is on Ventura Boulevard. Funding for high speed rail should be encouraged as well with a route along San Fernando Road to Burbank Airport from Palmdale.

Richard reminded us that unless we insist on our projects being a priority, they will not happen. LA City has four votes on the 13 member MTA Board. There’s over \$40B in unfunded transportation projects. One way to engage MTA is to use the LA City Council member transportation deputies to stay on top of issues and work with MTA staff members.

Train Safety is paramount! All intersections should be grade separated to save lives. Richard noted how Metrolink has an exceptional safety record and that Art Lahey has just become its new CEO. Metrolink acted to improve train safety by ordering new crash energy zone cars. Similarly, Metrolink changed to Tier 4 locomotives which eliminated 84% of pollution from their discharge when compared with the tier 3 vehicles used by other jurisdictions.

Only Metrolink will meet the 2015 requirement to implement Positive Train Control (PTC). This system uses GPS to track train movements. PTC will automatically stop trains if something happens to the engineer. PTC identifies unusual speeds along the route and will automatically slow the train. Further, BNSF and other trains will be then be able to communicate with each other through this system; something that didn’t happen in the past. The PTC also includes an earthquake early warning. PTC will use the 20 second advance warning to slow trains or to move trains into a safer location should an earthquake occur.

Susan Shelly, Sunday Opinion Columnist Los Angeles Daily News

Susan Shelley authored three books on the U.S. Constitution. Her books have been acquired by many university, state college and public libraries across the United States and in Canada and New Zealand. She has had varied jobs including associate producer for the Jeopardy TV show. Susan is an Executive Board member of Valley VOTE.



In 2012, she ran unsuccessfully for Congress, but won the endorsement of the Los Angeles Daily News and the Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association.

Susan came close in a 2013 California Assembly special and also in her second Assembly campaign in 2014. While she did not win, she won the respect of supporters and opponents alike for her comprehensive grasp of issues.

Her talk at Valley VOTE addressed the importance of the Piece College Farms. Pierce College started as a school for agriculture. It is a source of Valley pride. Many of the agricultural programs at the school are run using volunteers. Of the original 400 acres, only 240 remain allocated to farm investigation studies of any sort. All kinds of investigation programs are run on this land such as drought tolerance studies, food studies, crop growth studies, irrigation techniques, environmental studies, and more. This land is used for such an important purpose and Susan has been reviewing ways to ensure that these lands are not sold off by the Junior College System or used for other purposes.

No one has called for an immediate selling of this land, but there is a valid concern that this will be done in the future if preventions are not put in place now. Much of the Pierce College land was sold in the past to raise money for the Junior College system general fund without helping our local school.

When pushed on the subject, the current Board of Trustees stated, "There are no plans to sell any of the land today." There was no mention that there are large, planned developments to be constructed right across from the College nor any promises not to sell the land for other uses in the future.

Imminent action to protect the land is important to Susan and others so she spoke to the Trust for Public Land and other legal experts to find a method to protect the land.

She found a way to protect the land by establishing a non-profit to which the Pierce College Foundation will give title to the land with a special agricultural conservation easement covering the remaining 240 acres. This would allow only agriculture related development and no sale for other purposes—residential or commercial development.

Pierce College is so well regarded that many students are able to go directly from this Community College directly into a veterinary college. For those interested in a meld of history and today attend the Pierce College farm walk April 26.

Valley VOTE Committee Reports:

Joe Vitti – re: membership

Our purpose is to fight for fair representation for the SFV and to ensure the City acts in the best interest of its citizens. Membership applications were distributed and can be found on the website www.ValleyVOTE.org.

Vic Viereck - VERY GROSS RECEIPTS TAX

As a business man who has been consistently paying the City of Los Angeles Gross Receipts Tax for over 32 years, I'm well aware of how gross it is. Although its tax rate on professional services of just over ½% and just over 1 1/4% on rental income may seem small, that tax is on total revenue, before any expenses are deducted. If a business is losing money, especially due to a minimum wage or rent control, the Gross Receipts Tax increases the amount of loss.

But in managing the Gross Receipts Tax the Los Angeles Office of Finance makes it worse. Even though business owners properly and timely file (including payment) their business tax returns, they are harassed by the Office of Finance for non-payment and non-filing of the returns. Especially if somebody has more than one rental property or business, the Office of Finance fails to properly review what has been filed, and notices of non-payment are prepared and mailed to the business owners. That creates a lot of extra work for the business owner to prove that requirements were met. It not only creates more work and expense for the business owner, it requires more staff time at the Office of Finance, costing the taxpayers more for the wasted time.

If an owner has more than one type of business, involving a different business tax rate for each type of business, and one of the businesses generates over 80% of the business revenue, in the lower of the two tax rates, the owner can choose to pay a singular (lower) tax rate for what is called the Primary business. Even though the business owner checks the necessary little box to claim the Primary rate, a letter can be expected. Naturally if the letter from the Office of Finance led to more tax being collected, sending the letters is productive. Considering the several letters I have received from that office over the years, without having to pay anything more, the waste is proven.

It's no wonder that many businesses will not open shop in the City of Los Angeles, and many leave. Los Angeles history has shown that when the Los Angeles Gross Receipts Tax rate is reduced, the lost revenue is more than covered through sales tax revenue. That is good reason to authorize a well-publicized phase out of the Gross Receipts Tax. If business owners know that it will definitely be terminated over a short period of time, they can plan ahead to invest in Los Angeles.

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Bart Reed – Transportation issues

The Transit Coalition has been active with its Urban, Government and Community Affairs Program utilizing the California State University Northridge Tiger Team interns.

Several local projects were identified to improve Valley transportation.

CicLAvia is in the S.F. Valley on Sunday, March 22, 2015 on East Valley

For more information: The Transit Coalition website: <http://www.thetransitcoalition.us> or via e-mail: bart.reed@thetransitcoalition.us

Ralph Kroy - Sunshine Canyon

The landfill is located at 14747 San Fernando Road, near and West of the "Five and the Fourteen" freeway intersection. The facility is now owned and operated by Republic Services Inc. , as the BFI Landfill, and as a joint City / County operation.

The landfill is undergoing many changes in an attempt to reduce the environmental problems and the MANY violations it has received from the AQMD, and the City / County LEA

The landfill has received well over 6000 complaints from the residents, more than all the other City / County landfills combined!

The latest meeting of the Sunshine Canyon Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC), March 12, 2015 at the Knoll wood Country Club was informative and contentious. The meeting had, in addition to the normal representatives from the City, County, and AQMD, members of the County Department of Health, and from the LAUSD Safety Department.

Bill Piazza, who is the Environmental Assessment Coordinator of the Office of Environmental Health and Safety for the LAUSD, made a report. He stated that the air filters in the air conditioning system within all the Van Gogh Street School classrooms have been changed. New activated carbon filters were installed with very favorable results.

More needs to be done for the school safety, however, and further meetings with the public the school system are planned.

There was substantial discussion in reference to BFI's letter stating that there was only "occasional" and "minor" odor problems. This is a continuing problem.

Ralph Kroy rekroy@aol.com

Denny Schneider - Airport Report

Everyone acknowledges the importance of air commerce and airports to Southern California.

What remains at issue is how to meet our needed capacity. Almost everything is currently concentrated at LAX. LAX has 95% of all international and over 75% of domestic travelers. This is satisfactory to the airlines and LA City, but it puts our economy at risk if any disaster should occur at LAX.

There used to be a Southern California Regional Airport Authority to coordinate needs, but it died about a decade ago due to distrust among the participants.

Regional planning by the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) still occurs, but at a different level and for a different reason—qualification for Federal funds.

SCAG encompasses the six counties of Imperial, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino and Ventura. It develops a long-range Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) which is due to be updated next year. Only highway projects in this Plan may receive Federal funding. The RTP must also be consistent with the South Coast Air Quality management plan which is designed to meet Fed air quality standards.

The airport component of the RTP is done by the SCAG Aviation Technical Advisory Committee (ATAC). The first ATAC meeting in seven months will be this Friday and Saturday, March 13 and 14, 2015 in Imperial County to correspond with the Imperial County Air Show if anyone is interested in attending.

Air traffic estimates for each airport determine the amounts of available Federal funds. Traffic estimates for LAX will likely be increased to make additional money available around LAX. Other airports, like Ontario, are likely to have their usage estimates reduced resulting in less Federal funds to be available for them. These "outlying" airports will not have funds for infrastructure so that they will improve as needed. As the "rich" LAX gets bigger more infrastructure money will be made available and the resultant ground traffic will become total gridlock.

Meanwhile the work at LAX continues. Today, March 9, is the due date for comments to the Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Review of the Landside Access Projects.

The search continues for a new LAWA Executive Director as Gina Marie Lindsey announced her intent to leave next month.

Denny Schneider, President Alliance for A Regional Solution to Airport Congestion
www.RegionalSolution.org Denny@WeLiveFree.com 213 675-1817 mobile

Sound Off!

Valley Vote's has added a public comment period to its monthly meeting. Coming toward the end of the meeting, Sound Off! will give members and guests an opportunity to briefly voice their opinions and concerns in brief two-minute presentations. Members attending our meeting will have the opportunity to discuss their concerns.

The press and public are invited to attend the meeting.

The next Valley VOTE meeting will be on Monday, April 20, 2015 at Galpin Ford.

Valley VOTE Mission Statement

Valley VOTE is a diverse coalition of San Fernando Valley residents, business people, educators, community activists, and organizations, committed to exploring and fostering the implementation of programs that empower the people of the San Fernando Valley and the City of Los Angeles, to improve local governance, education and public participation on policy matters. We meet monthly to address key policy issues and hear reports from our standing committee chairs. For additional information about Valley VOTE, for an upcoming meeting agenda, or for previous meeting reports and press releases, we encourage you to go to the Valley VOTE website.