



# Valley VOTE

Organized Toward Empowerment Voters  
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## **VALLEY VOTE REPORT: April 20, 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 May 20, 2015.***

This meeting featured a history and current status of Sunshine Canyon landfill issues by Wayde Hunter and an overview of Metro's plan for construction in the San Fernando Valley by Lillian DeLosz-Guiterrez, SF Valley Area Deputy. Topical committee reports on several subjects key to Valley quality of life were also presented. Come join us early at the meetings and interchange ideas with Valley community leaders.

President Joe Vitti explained that Valley VOTE is recognized as a premier volunteer organization making major contributions to the Valley quality of life by being leaders on numerous issues. Several positions as Board members or Executive Board members of Valley Vote are available. Visit our website: [www.ValleyVOTE.org](http://www.ValleyVOTE.org) to see the dozens of positive position statements.

### **Wayde Hunter, President North Valley Coalition of Concerned Citizens**



Wayde Hunter has had a long tradition of identifying and working toward resolution of community impacting projects in various capacities including VP of the LA Commission on Environmental Affairs. His talk addressed the Sunshine Canyon landfill operations which currently has a major impact on a three plus mile radius local surrounding area and impacts the entire region's water supply.

Sunshine Canyon is near Granada Hills in the area where the Interstate 5 and 210 meet just north of the Los Angeles Reservoir. Wayde explained that the landfill started in the 1950s as a small illegal dump site which was legalized by L.A. City as a small, 40 acre repository for garbage in 1958. It was then expanded to 200 acres in 1966. It was not extensively used as a dump site until 1978 when a moderate amount of 400 tons per week of garbage was deposited. In the early 1990s its use was dramatically expanded to as much as 7,500 tons per day and then later in the decade Los Angeles County opened an adjacent site to allow over 12,000 tons per day. Today the landfill has grown so that the two sites are against each other.

As the landfill has expanded, the landfill operation impacts have grown massively. Despite iteratively imposed garbage height limits and vehicle traffic restrictions being imposed over the years, they have been routinely ignored and the operators rewarded with ever increasing revenue streams by local agencies anxious to dispose of their trash.

Wayde explained that a major byproduct of landfills is methane gas and odors. Despite the collection and filtering systems on-site, surrounding areas for miles are subjected to health impacting odors.

Prior to 2008 when BFI/Allied Waste Industries was purchased by Republic Services, Inc. the landfill operation was a large nuisance. Since then complaints to Southern California Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD) have sky rocketed from a few dozen per year to thirty times that number. It appears that none of the regulation agencies are able get the problem under control because the City and County have been conflicted. Problems include fugitive dust contamination as well as the odors.

Citizen complaints to SCAQMD related to Sunshine Canyon are massive. There are 23.5 times more complaints about Sunshine Canyon than the combined total for the other fifteen landfills within SCAQMD's 10,500 square mile jurisdiction!

Sunshine Canyon related 139 Notices of Violation have been issued by SCAQMD since 2008 and these are based on two state regulations, Rule 402 Nuisance and Rule 1150.1 Control of Gaseous Emissions. The problem is that penalties for violation are relatively small are likely considered a "cost of doing business" rather than a deterrent to being a bad neighbor. Wayde indicated that 50 of the thousand plus trucks per day covers these fines.

Wayde ended his update with hope but without optimism. At a recent March 12, 2015 commission hearing on Sunshine Canyon Dr. Cyrus Rangan, Director, Bureau of Toxicology and Environmental Assessment, County of LA Public Health, stated that "...it really does actually cause adverse health effects..." This leads to the hope that the legal challenges by local residents will force real controls and restrictions. The jury is still out...

### **Lillian DeLoza-Gutierrez, San Fernando Valley Area Deputy Metro**



Lillian DeLoza-Gutierrez started her discussion by mentioning that Metro impacts all transportation in the area, not just our trains and buses. Metro builds carpool lanes, improves highways, adds bike lanes, and even traffic controls in numerous locations throughout the region.

A prime statistic is that Metro operates 2200 buses covering 1400 square miles and has over 1,000,000 bus boardings per day in addition to 350,000 boardings on Metro rail lines. Metro has the largest fleet of clean fuel buses with over 2000 of their buses having been converted to compressed natural gas. It further encourages reduced traffic via vanpools and offers a \$400 monthly lease subsidy to participants. Metro also supports bike sharing and has a pilot program to start in LA, Pasadena, and Santa Monica. The goal is to have 250 bike stations by Spring 2016 with each station ¼ to ½ mile separation with ten bikes per station.

Lillian noted that there is a major increase in rail construction due to Measure R and an unprecedented five rail lines are currently in the construction stage. Measure R funds \$35 billion over 30 years and is responsible for 400,000 jobs. She also mentioned several non-measure R projects such as, but not limited to, parking improvements for the Metro Red Line stations in North Hollywood and Universal City or the Universal City Pedestrian Bridge projects.

A recent upgrade is that technological advances are resulting in a common payment method, a TAP card which will be accepted on all regional transit operators.

Of six projects being studied for implementation two were related to the SFV; Sepulveda Pass Transit Corridor connecting the SFV with the Westside, and East San Fernando Valley Transit Corridor to improve N-S between the Orange Line and Sylmar Metrolink station with either bus or light rail options.

Although the East SFV Transit Corridor Project is under study it was noted that currently identified funding is limited and that any light rail options would need significant additional funding sources. In the case of the Sepulveda Pass Project funding is again an issue with about \$1 billion earmarked for the expected costs of \$6-8 billion. The Sepulveda Pass project is likely to be a public-private partnership to establish the needed funding.

Several questions were raised about the amount of transportation dollars allocated to the Valley as opposed to other areas. Lillian acknowledged earlier shortages. Again we were reminded that if the SFV is to get its fair share detailed projects must be ready for implementation with details established. Attendees noted that if Metro expects the SFV residents to vote in favor of a Measure R follow on it must include adequate assurances that the SFV will be at least its fair share and even some extra to make up for prior short falls.

## **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. Please send your dues to help defray costs. Your board is all volunteers. Membership applications were distributed and can be found on the website [www.ValleyVOTE.org](http://www.ValleyVOTE.org)

### **Vic Viereck - Minimum WAGE**

While we have heard a lot (but not enough) about the additional costs and consequences for a requirement to increase minimum wages, I have not heard about the increased costs incurred by the employees lucky enough to keep their jobs and receive the mandated increase.

The UC Berkeley study, which was the first study the Los Angeles City Council used regarding the Minimum Wage issue, put a lot of energy into indicating public benefits low income people receive. While I have not investigated how much of such benefits workers would lose upon getting a boost from a minimum wage mandate, I did look into how much income tax, FICA tax, and Medicare tax such a wage increase would cost.

If an employee who works 40 hours a week for 50 weeks during the year got a wage increase from \$9.00 to \$12.00 an hour, the wage increase for the year would be \$6,000.00. While that increase would cost the employer an additional \$459.00 for FICA and Medicare taxes, and at least another \$600.00 for workers compensation insurance for restaurant employees, the employee actually receives much less than the \$6,000.00 increase. The increased income tax, FICA tax, and Medicare tax on \$6,000.00 is \$1,297.75. Deducted from the \$6,000.00 leaves \$4,702.75. Because of increased workers compensation insurance, FICA tax, and Medicare tax the \$4,702.75 net increase in compensation will cost the restaurant employer \$7,059.00, and for hotels (at over 19% for workers compensation insurance) it's over \$7,599.00. The restaurant employee winds up receiving no more than 66.62% of the cost of the raise, just under 2/3 of the cost. The hotel worker would receive just under 62% of the cost increase. If a married couple has two dependents, and are in a similar earnings level as above (and both are lucky enough to keep their jobs), they would also lose a lot of Earned Income Credit.

The only offset against the \$7,059.00 or \$7,599.00 increased cost would be the cost savings of reducing the number of employees. Meanwhile, the cost increases would be a basis for more inflation in the economy. For many, they will have to be concerned about having no wage.

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### **David DeVoss-Water Use Report- People or Smelts**

In response to four years of drought, Gov. Jerry Brown has ordered a mandatory 25% reduction in urban water use. Though statewide in scope, the order targets Southern California, which depends on Sierra Nevada snowmelt and water from the Sacramento and San Joaquin River Delta.

Brown's edict punishes those who already are saving water. Californians have saved 15% per capita on water since 2004. LA has cut water usage 10% since early 2014 and is on track to meet Eric Garcetti's goal of a 20% reduction by 2017.

People looking for somebody to blame invariably focus on farmers, whose water allowance will not be cut. The statistic most often cited is that it takes five gallons of water to produce each California walnut.

The statistic you most often hear is that agriculture uses 80% of California's water. In fact agriculture uses 80% of the delivered water. Half of the state's water is undelivered. Fifty percent of the state's water goes to preserve the environment. In actual fact, our water is not divided 80/20 between farms and cities. Fifty percent flows undiverted for environmental purposes, 40% goes to agriculture, and 10% is left for the cities, whose populations have doubled over the past 30 years.

There is plenty of water but since 2008 half of it has gone to protect delta smelt, sturgeon, salmon and steelhead trout. Indeed, 76% of the Sierra Nevada snowmelt today flows into San Francisco Bay instead of the California aqueduct. Hydrology exists to send this water South, but since 2008-2009 it has not been used. Environmental diversions consume 4.4 million-acre feet of water, enough to sustain 4,000,000 families.

Like the manufactured electricity shortage of 2001 the water shortage today is not what it appears. Failure of political leadership. Until last year California was the only western state that failed to manage groundwater extraction from private wells. Last year, Brown finally signed a bill but it won't take effect for ten years.

What does this mean for Valley? Stop watering traffic medians, willing to let those trees die. But city also has easements between sidewalks and street where large trees most often are planted. Can't stop watering those trees in heat of summer.

California celebrated for climatic diversity, a fact the governor's mandatory 25% reduction fails to recognize. The Valley already has cut water usage by 10%. It is irresponsible to demand an additional 25% reduction.

David DeVoss [EastWestNewsServ@aol.com](mailto:EastWestNewsServ@aol.com)

### **Don Schultz – Van Nuys Airport News**

Last Thursday, at approximately 4:00 p.m. a small fixed wing aircraft collided with an unoccupied media helicopter on the ground at Van Nuys airport. Fortunately no one was injured, but the helicopter did receive some damage.

The accident occurred while the small propeller aircraft was taxiing to another location on the airfield.

Helicopter News: A group identified as the Los Angeles Area Helicopter Noise Coalition (LAAHNC) comprised of Congressman Schiff, Senators Feinstein and Boxer along with other congressional members, helicopter pilot groups and members of the LAAHNC worked with the FAA for over two years with the result being an FAA generated form explaining how to complain/report Helicopter noise in Los Angeles County.

This Automated Complaint System is funded and will be in place from April, 2015 to March, 2016.

The form was passed out to those who attended the VV meeting of April 20, 2015. Track helicopter flights at <http://heli-noise-la.com/webtrak/> . Report noise by phone to (424)348-HELI (4354) or complete an on-line report at <http://heli-noise-la.com>.

Don Schultz [dittoschultz@aol.com](mailto:dittoschultz@aol.com)

### **Susan Shelley - Report on Pierce College Farm**

The Valley VOTE board voted unanimously to support the resolution by the board of the Foundation for Pierce College to call for the permanent preservation of the Pierce College Farm. The specific mechanism for such protection is suggested to be an agricultural conservation easement or its functional equivalent, which would legally prevent the development of the land for commercial or residential uses in perpetuity.

At least one member of the Pierce College Board of Trustees has expressed an interest in voting for a feasibility study of a conservation easement or its equivalent.

Both the union representing faculty members at Pierce and the Associated Students Organization have scheduled votes on a measure in support of the conservation easement or its equivalent. Despite the assurances by Board of Trustees president Scott Svonkin, who told the public at the board's November 5, 2014, meeting that there were no plans or discussions about selling any of the Pierce farm land, the LACCD has in fact begun the process of soliciting bids from real estate developers for "real estate development advisory consultant services." The deadline for submission of qualifications was November 3, 2014. It's unknown at this time whether this relates directly to the Pierce Farm, but the timing raises concerns about the transparency and veracity of the board's assurances to the public.

Separately, the president of Pierce College, Kathleen Burke, has released the outline of a plan for the farm that includes expanded offerings in the curriculum and proposals for expanded agriculture. Copies of the plan are available on the school's website at [www.piercecollege.edu](http://www.piercecollege.edu). Nothing is definite, the president is seeking community input on the plan.

Pierce College will hold its annual Farmwalk event, open to the public, on Sunday, April 26, from 9:30 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. Farmwalk offers tours of the farm, equestrian demonstrations, a petting zoo, a sheep-shearing and wool-spinning demonstration, music, food, a magic show, and tips on water-conservation techniques for successfully growing roses and vegetable gardens.

Susan Shelley [Susan@SusanShelley.com](mailto:Susan@SusanShelley.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  
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#### 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.