



# Valley VOTE

Voters Organized Toward Empowerment  
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Minutes accumulated by Denny Schneider

## VALLEY VOTE REPORT: June 20, 2016 MEETING

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.*

To become an active Valley Vote volunteer or to see the dozens of position statements addressing numerous key issues, visit the Valley Vote website: [www.ValleyVOTE.org](http://www.ValleyVOTE.org). This meeting featured LA City Councilmember Bob Blumenfield and Metro Community Relations Manager Karen Swift. Prior to our main speakers several board members reported on numerous topics of community interest. The normal "Speak Out" was cut short because interest in the speakers' topics was so great that we continued an extra twenty minutes after the scheduled meeting end.

### LA Councilmember Bob Blumenfield



Councilmember Blumenfield joined us at Valley VOTE again to discuss several key issues impacting the San Fernando Valley. He is our champion on budgetary and environmental issues. He is outspoken on ensuring that the SFV gets a fair share of services.

Bob is adamant that the SFV get a fair share of Metro funded projects and even some extra to make up for past shortages. He notes that of the 88 stations within LA County ONLY TWO are in the Valley. His mantra, "The new transportation funding bill MUST include a fair share of shovel ready projects to be started in the Valley almost immediately after passage of the proposition."

Under Bob's leadership in the Assembly as Budget Chair he ensured that CSUN Art Center remained funded despite other shortages. It did, and we now

have a major cultural icon in the Valley.

LA City recently passed a \$8.7B general fund budget which will be increasing police on the streets. This, he pointed out, is important in all areas of the City because there has been an increase in both violent and property crimes. The police presence is to be bolstered by moving 300 sworn, uniformed officers back into patrol operations instead of being used in civilian clerical areas. Still, 70% of the total budget is for "safety."

Despite significant cuts to many departments the City is adding substantial efforts to reducing homelessness. The Council has created a comprehensive plan to address this major humanitarian issue. Generally homelessness increased 11% last year in LA while in the SFV it's up 30%. Homelessness is complex with over 40% attributed to domestic violence. Just creating housing for these people is beyond the City capacity since it cost over \$350K for each housing unit. Additional support efforts for health care, employment training, and mental health care, and addiction treatment for many and much more is needed to address the comprehensive problem. The Council earmarked \$138M for this effort this year and needs over a \$Billion overall. Two approaches are considered for a ballot measure: parcel tax (~\$102/parcel/year) or bonds (~\$88/yr/\$350K property tax valuation).

Four years ago there was a CA proposition to address mental health, but it had a fatal flaw of being only for new construction not on-going efforts. There's an effort right now to change requirements to better use this money for housing and services for mental health patients.

Jobs! This economy must be improved. We need to create more and better jobs. Bob heads the Innovation, Grants, Technology, Commerce, and Trade Committee to address this. It oversees both City Proprietary Transportation Departments—LA Port and Los Angeles World Airports. LAX includes \$12.5B in projects at the airport to be overseen by his committee. Some projects are public-private partnerships as a people mover to connect LAX central terminal area to the MTA Crenshaw-LAX Line.

Another important goal of Councilmember Blumenfield is to improve the use of technology in all tasks of Los Angeles. He strongly supports “open data” so that all of the City transactions are available for review and analysis. He is ensuring that technology is used in planning and communication efforts as well. Every department can improve via technology use. Posting information can involve more people to generate more, and better ideas.

Bob is championing a new effort to use available backbone capabilities to work with the private sector to develop a total internet access system for the entire City. Basic level service will be available to all with upgraded services made available at a cost.

He is also a firm advocate for LADWP reform to improve efficiency and cost effectiveness. LADWP is better priced than surrounding companies, but it still can be improved with a different governance structure.

Another of his avocations is with Parks and Recreation which includes upgrading the LA River and quality of life improvements for all in the City.

## **Metro Community Relations Manager Karen Swift**



Ms. Swift is responsible for the San Fernando Valley and Malibu Los Vergennes area. She is a 20 year resident, UCLA graduate, and mother of three who shares our community concerns. She briefed the group about the upcoming proposition to augment the current Measure R that would add a new half-cent sales tax to continue upgrade and modernization of our transit system. Dubbed many names, as Measure R2, it is now the LA County Traffic Improvement Plan.

Metro has been actively planning for future growth to reduce local and freeway impacts. A draft plan was released in March with community outreach meetings held. LA City, County, and other valley cities identified thousands of projects which the local elected officials helped to prioritize. Metro staff then worked to see how these could be integrated to improve safety and flow. An updated plan was released last week. We are not only severely congested but we also have one of the highest rates of pedestrian accidents.

The new plan extends past 2040 with the funding stream approval to remain in effect indefinitely until the voters cancel it. The idea is to accelerate new highway improvements as well as bus and rail transit now rather than gradually. Some of the money will be “local return” where the local entity will have money for repairs. Part of the money will also go towards handicap access and to keep fares affordable for the poor and elderly. Orange and Gold line ridership exceeds all expectations.

Several priorities will support the San Fernando Valley:

1. Orange Line grade separations speed improvements
2. North Hollywood-Pasadena bus rapid transit project
3. Pilot bus project from Valley supporting Red, Orange, Gold Lines and to Burbank area
4. Light rail along Van Nuys boulevard
5. Sepulveda Pass project. Details TBD, possible high capacity tunnel; there's talk of public-private partnership. Restriping of lanes and bus lanes possible as well.

There was concern expressed of a tax without a sunset clause.

Several questions also asked about North Valley and East Valley priorities. The Van Nuys light rail target is 2027 with environmental reviews in process. Another concern was that the proposed projects used as a basis for approval of the tax will actually be built. All projects will require a 2/3 vote of the Board to add new projects. Availability of parking in support of mass transit was also raised as well as the varied costs. It was mentioned that parking at CBS designed for mass transit support should actually be used for that purpose. Cars are here to stay, but many younger people are being more mass transit oriented.

CSUN integration was also brought up as a needed priority. Bus pass availability at CSUN is being made a priority to increase ridership of students. TAP cards will be obtainable on campus. Stickers will be added to the student IDs and be part of on-line student registration. Goal is to reduce the number of student cars in the surrounding neighborhoods.

High speed rail concerns were also raised about the above ground construction through populated areas. People wanted to know how Metro would coordinate with the HSR efforts. Metro has no official position, but is looking at how to have adequate connections.

When asked about how to assess Metro successes and failures, people were sent to Metro.net where specific projects are reported with projected completion times and costs. If a project is completed below cost the funds are available to Metro Board to allocate for other projects.

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

### **SB 1069 (Wieckowski) Accessory Dwelling Units - Vic Viereck**

SB 1069 would limit the regulatory requirements that municipalities could impose on the construction of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs).

An ADU is an additional living space on single-family lots that are independent of the primary residence. The ADUs are either attached or detached, and provide complete living facilities for one or more persons. Local ordinances can designate areas where second units are permitted and may impose standards such as parking, setback, lot coverage, and maximum size. Local areas that have not adopted an ordinance governing ADUs can grant a variance or special use permit for the creation of ADUs if the unit complies with certain zoning and building requirements.

The cost of ADUs would be provided by owner investments, not tax revenue. More housing would be provided by investors, and more tax revenue would be generated from more property improvements and spending by more residents.

Victor N. Viereck (818) 985-9174 vicviereck@sbcglobal.net

### **Sunshine Canyon – Ralph Kroy**

The landfill is located at 14747 San Fernando Road, West of the I-5 and the 14 freeway intersection. It is one of the largest landfills in the country. It is also one of the most cited landfills in the State, if not in the country.

The landfill continues to receive more complaints and violations from the citizens and the Southern California Air Quality Management District, SCAQMD. The complaints now stand at 9,098 (Jan 2009-May 2016), and the Notices of Violation at 188 for the same period.

The new acting head of the SCAQMD (Wayne Nastri) and the Directors for their Engineering & Compliance, and the Planning and Rules Department held a second local Town Hall Meeting on the evening of June 9, 2016, at the Van Gogh Street Elementary School, in Granada Hills, to address comments and complaints received from the community at the previous Town Hall meeting held in April 2016, regarding the fresh trash odors and the landfill odors (methane) and other gases.

As a part of their presentation, the SCAQMD said they will file for an Order of Abatement for Odors within 45 days. Among the proposed restrictions are:

1. The reduction in the daily tonnage of trash received (currently permitted 12,100 tons per day).
2. Changing the permitted hours of operation when trash is accepted (currently 31% of all fresh odors are reported between 6:00 am. and 9:00 am.).
3. Use Alternative Daily Cover, and implement Improved Intermediate Cover.
4. De watering of wells, and analysis of well integrity and landfill gas collection.
5. Improve odor management at the working face and at transfer stations (remote facilities owned by Republic, other disposal companies, and the City of Los Angeles).

While the residents still hold out hope, the SCAQMD must first go in front of a SCAQMD Hearing Board composed of lawyers, environmentalists, and other professionals, and it is this same Board which in the past has failed to impose similar restrictions on the other previous Orders for Abatement of Odors issued to Sunshine Canyon Landfill.

Ralph Kroy [rekroy@aol.com](mailto:rekroy@aol.com)

### **Losing local control of development: the link between transit and housing policy - Susan Shelly**

"Bait and switch" is a type of fraud that involves the sale of one thing and the last-minute substitution of something else.

That's what's going on with transportation taxes and housing policy in California.

Voters in L.A. County have approved three half-percent sales taxes for transportation projects since 1980, and another is likely to be on the November ballot. Each of these has been sold with the promise of reducing gridlock.

However, California has enacted laws to encourage the construction of apartments along transit corridors and planned transit corridors. And this, of course, increases density and traffic, because even if some people do stop driving and instead use public transit, there are more people. Hence the "bait and switch" of selling voters on transit as a way to reduce traffic, and then vastly increasing the population density near those transit lines—in some cases, near planned transit lines that won't be built for years, if ever.

Under current law, residential developments within one-half mile of a "major transit stop" (like an Orange Line station) can go forward without a study of the impact on traffic speed, parking, or aesthetics.

Now Gov. Brown has proposed "by right" development of residential developments that include up to 20 percent affordable units, as long as the projects are consistent with local zoning. That means whatever is in the "Specific Plan" for a community is the final word on what can be built. No local review will be allowed.

This could adversely affect residents near areas including Warner Center, where the Warner Center 2035 plan calls for urban development with an increase in residential units from the current 8,500 to over 26,000.

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### **Veterans Affairs Ernie Hilger**

Update on the approved Master Plan for the West Los Angeles (WLA) Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) campus as it moves through Congress since our last meeting May 17, 2016.

A bipartisan bicameral Omnibus Bill with HR 3484 included was submitted to Congress for passage in May 2016 and for signature by the president by May 30, 2016.

The omnibus bill containing HR 3484 was pulled at the last minute by Chairman Miller.

One senator raised objection stating that the funds to pay for the construction were coming from rounding down on veteran's disability benefits.

A political spat over veterans' benefits has prompted a powerful committee chairman to put a hold on legislation that would have authorized \$866 million worth of construction at several Veterans Affairs medical facilities in California.

Rep. Jeff Miller, the Chumuckla, Fla., Republican who chairs the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, postponed discussion of the bill last week after veterans advocacy groups began complaining to lawmakers that the bill would result in a reduction in cost-of-living benefits for veterans. The hold on the legislation halts what had been the crown jewel in the Department of Veterans Affairs' plan to end veteran homelessness in Los Angeles.

"If enacted, this round down would take more than \$1.6 billion from the pockets of ill and injured veterans, many of whom rely solely on this benefit to support themselves and their families," Garry Augustine, executive director of the Disabled American Veterans group said in the May 23 letter.

In an interview, Augustine said the 10-year cost-of-living adjustment would be the largest reduction in veterans' benefits that Congress sought in recent history. Outpatient facilities should not be built "on the backs of veterans," he said, calling for Congress to find other ways to fund the Department of Veterans Affairs' construction projects.

It is my understanding that HR 3484 Legislation will be resubmitted to Congress attached to a Military Spending Bill in a bipartisan bicameral format. The timing and path is yet to be set.

We await passage of this bill to codify the changes in the WLA VA Master Plan and the supportive housing scheduled for construction on the campus.

Ernie Hilger [erniehilger@hotmail.com](mailto:erniehilger@hotmail.com)

### **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.

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**The press and public are invited to the next meeting of Valley VOTE is Monday, July 18, 2016 at Galpin Ford.**  
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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.*