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May 19, 2011

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New Metro Analysis Shows Potential Money Sources for Leimert Park Light Rail Station and Park Mesa Heights Tunnel

By realigning existing funds, Metro could cover the costs for two key features of the upcoming Crenshaw/LAX Light Rail Line -- construction of a Leimert Park Village light rail station and a tunnel through Park Mesa Heights—a [Metro analysis](#) released Thursday shows.

The funding study, requested by Los Angeles County Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas, examines ways to pay for a rail station at Leimert Park Village (estimated cost \$131 million) and moving an 11-block section of the rail line along Crenshaw Boulevard below ground (estimated cost \$269 million).

The report from Metro's planning division identifies \$2 billion from which portions could be shifted to cover the Crenshaw project costs.

Supervisor Ridley-Thomas' proposal to build the Leimert Park Village Station and Park Mesa Heights tunnel (on Crenshaw Boulevard from 48th Street to 59th Street) will be voted on by the full Metro Board of Directors on Thursday, May 26.

The financial analysis shows that "if there is the will, there is a way," to pay for the proposal, Ridley-Thomas said. "We can and must distinguish great investments from great costs. Finding money is always a challenge, but funding challenges must not shrink our ambitions," he said.

“The need for a Leimert Park Village Station is obvious – a Crenshaw Corridor rail line must include the most prominent cultural center on its route,” Ridley-Thomas said. The Park Mesa Heights tunnel, he added, would prevent disruptions to traffic and local businesses caused by a train running at street level.

“The long-term payoffs for these investments will be great,” Ridley-Thomas said, noting that Leimert Park would become an even greater cultural destination with a rail station. Undergrounding the Park Mesa Heights section would speed travel times for all Crenshaw/LAX line passengers.

“Not making these investments also has a great cost to the cultural and economic life of both the immediate community and greater Los Angeles,” Ridley-Thomas said,

The funding sources named in the Metro study include \$500 million in highway interchange and widening projects, \$585 million in low-priority improvements to existing subway stations and lines and \$943 million in various maintenance projects.

Ridley-Thomas acknowledged only portions of those funds would be available for the Crenshaw/LAX enhancements, but the study confirms the funding challenges are not insurmountable. “There are tough choices to make, but the Metro Board and staff have shown we can make hard decisions to deliver solid results,” he said.

Ridley-Thomas noted the Crenshaw/LAX rail project is now on track for completion in 2016. The project had earlier been designated as a bus-way with a 2029 completion date.

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