



NORTHEAST SAN FERNANDO VALLEY

SUSTAINABILITY & PROSPERITY STRATEGY

Revision 4 - June 2016



NORTHEAST SAN FERNANDO VALLEY SUSTAINABILITY & PROSPERITY STRATEGY



MULHOLLAND INSTITUTE

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¹ Partial list

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Northeast San Fernando Valley Sustainability & Prosperity Strategy addresses all three pillars of sustainability—Environment, Economy, and Equity.

Livable communities and opportunities for prosperity are the key goals for the Northeast Strategy. The next several decades will see the investment of billions of dollars in mobility, affordable housing, environmental remediation and infrastructure projects in Los Angeles County. As one of the most overlooked and underserved areas of the county, the Northeast Valley has to be ready with vision, planning and civic leadership able to benefit fully from these resources.

Metro's plan to ease traffic is expected to be on the November 2016 ballot, and will impose a new 40-year 1/2 cent sales tax in Los Angeles County, expected to generate \$120 billion for transportation and infrastructure. In addition the proposition would extend the existing Measure R half-cent sales tax. A portion of this could fund Light Rail Transit (LRT) on the East Valley Transit Corridor¹ instead of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT). It would also contribute to converting the Metro Orange Line from BRT to LRT and support additional projects for grade separations at key intersections.

Under Assembly Bill 32 (AB 32) and Senate Bill 375 (SB 375), state Cap-and-Trade funds are becoming available for projects that reduce Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions. The central goal:

Linking land use and transportation planning to support community sustainability

As governmental leadership evolves, there will be opportunities to create unified economic, environmental and mobility initiatives. By unifying around a common set of goals, Northeast communities can provide the necessary civic vitality to drive agendas and garner the crucial support of elected officials.

The cycle of economic success begins by fueling the Northeast Strategy with the application of human capital; the development of seed funding; the accumulation of financial capital; and the leveraging of these elements to make a long-term difference.

From an economic development perspective, unique business and industry clusters must be established—clusters that are community-friendly and also able to provide well-paying employment and careers.

Local residents should be able to access the education, and develop the skillsets needed to fill these positions. Hiring locally fuels the

community economy, reduces commutes, and cuts the overall Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT).

Community colleges such as Los Angeles Mission, Valley, Pierce and Glendale are a ready resource to support these initiatives. In addition to skills, disciplines and certifications, they also specialize in laying the necessary foundation for students to transfer to four-year institutions.

In the broader commute-shed, the Northeast Valley is blessed with a number of world-class institutions: Caltech, Cal Arts, UCLA, USC, Pepperdine, Loyola, Woodbury, a host of specialty schools, and the Valley's own Cal State Northridge. Northeast residents need the wherewithal to participate fully in these resources—thereby cultivating the future brain trust for local economic development.

As the Northeast subregion improves, communities and residents should be able to grow with it—not be displaced. One way to achieve this is the cultivation of home-grown entrepreneurship and innovation. In addition to educating employees, schools and other institutions need to focus on the one-in-ten or one-in-twenty locals with potential to start new home-grown businesses and industries.

The five target area centroids (see Figure 5) typify the serious demographic and economic challenges in the Northeast subregion. They have generally lower incomes, and a higher level of transit dependency. The areas are also uniquely positioned to improve their mobility and with it, their quality of life.

A great deal of progress has been made in the Southern California region over the last several decades, with smart growth, public transportation and environmental protection. After many years and lengthy processes, the Southern California Association of Governments' (SCAG) sustainability program comes down to a few core principles: mobility, livability, prosperity and sustainability.



Community Workshop- Vaughn Next Century Learning Center

¹ The East Valley Transit Corridor will extend from the Sylmar/San Fernando Metrolink Station to the Van Nuys Orange Line Station. (See Figure 19)

TRANSPORTATION NETWORKS

To its residents, the Northeast Valley has seemingly been last in line for transit and infrastructure, including sidewalks, curbs, street lighting, street trees and other essential improvements. The recently-adopted *San Fernando Valley Mobility Matrix* identifies some of these needs. It was created by the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) in concert with stakeholders and the San Fernando Valley Council of Governments.

CHALLENGES

- Urban sprawl-based growth patterns
- Poor planning for land use and complementary transportation
- Lack of meaningful public transit or transportation alternatives for reducing VMT
- Many low-wage residents unable to afford private vehicles
- Need for first- and last-mile solutions, especially for seniors and transport of goods
- Streets and sidewalks in poor condition or configured poorly for active transportation¹
- Students unable to conveniently access educational institutions and opportunities

¹ Walking, bicycling and other forms of non-motorized travel

STRATEGIES AND SOLUTIONS

- Funding for East Valley Transit Corridor as Light Rail Transit
- Extension of Existing bus routes and circuits
- Extended timetables to cover shift-workers and manufacturing employees
- Need for DASH/Trams to feed into the Metro network
- Security, amenities and facilities at stations and stops
- Street and sidewalk maintenance and repair
- Bike lanes, curb extensions, streetscape and human-scale walking enhancements
- Street lights for safety and security
- Inter-modal connections, bicycle lockers and station accommodations
- Funding through assessment districts, parking districts and Business Improvement Districts (BIDs)



Articulated bus departs from the Sylmar/San Fernando Metrolink Station



Northbound rails at the Sylmar/San Fernando MetroLink Station

Mode Shift to Public Transit

Shifting drivers from automobiles to public transit not only reduces congestion, but it also reduces the amount of vehicle traffic on freeways and surface streets, providing downstream congestion reduction benefits.²

Light Rail and Conversions

Building the East Valley Transit Corridor as a rail line and converting the Orange Line to grade-separated light rail service would increase speed, efficiency and capacity markedly. Thus, making these options much more attractive to drivers.

Regional Trip Strategies

- Embrace public transit and active transportation
- Create a regional bikeway network
- Develop first- last-mile strategies to fill the gap from home to trunk lines, and last-mile in particular, to serve heavily-traveled destinations.

Local Transit Integration Strategies

- Livable transit corridors and centers
- Car-share and bike-share facilities and lockers
- Adopt SCAG's "Livable Corridors" strategy.
- Implement SCAG's Neighborhood Mobility Areas

Short Trip, First- and Last-Mile Strategies

- First- last-mile connections
- Use of technology and telecommuting to replace common trips and private autos

² Source: Victoria Transport Policy Institute < <http://www.vtpi.org/>>

- Focus primarily on destination feeders
- Sidewalk repair and upgrading
- Bike lanes and local bikeway networks

Education and Encouragement

- Public awareness programs to shorten commutes, reduce wasted time and the costs of travel
- Focus on transit hubs and institutions
- Promote Safe Routes to School
- SCAG encouragement and safety campaigns

Successful Implementation

- Must represent the long-term vision and land-use challenges
- Meets federal, state and regional criteria for demand, configuration and emissions
- Able to attract funding a long-range planning horizon, 20+ years into the future
- Is financially-constrained—where revenues equal costs
- Meets SB 375 GHG requirements

High Quality Transit Areas

Planning around High Quality Transit Areas (HQTAs) is the future focus of Transit-Oriented Development (TOD). Done properly, this can help to improve local economies, and foster local employment within neighborhoods. Van Nuys Boulevard, San Fernando Road, Foothill Boulevard, Maclay Avenue and Roscoe Boulevard present some of the best opportunities for HQTAs.

Appropriate DASH/Tram circuits can also help to transport local workers to local jobs. The level of service must be truly useful, and provide a meaningful alternative to personal vehicle trips.



New housing in the far north of the San Fernando Valley

LAND USE AND PLANNING

A key goal of this strategy is to integrate transportation, land use, housing and environmental planning with economic development that will heighten prosperity in the region. Further, to develop an overriding strategy for “Location Efficiency” to complement transit modes and technologies being identified and brought online by SCAG and Metro. By rethinking the basic urban form of our communities, we can enjoy the dividends of reduced fuel consumption, less environmental impact, shorter travel times and a resultant increase in quality time.

CHALLENGES

- Poor planning in much of the region for land use and complementary transportation
- Sprawl-based, low-rise growth patterns
- Large industrial tracts with low-density employment and little or no residential use, reduce potential for transit ridership and increase distance-based demand
- Homeless population, vagrancy, shortage of housing and lack of affordability
- Challenges to preserving access to existing housing and maintaining current affordability
- Need to add housing capacity to accommodate a projected increase in population

STRATEGIES AND SOLUTIONS

- Incorporate local input, civic participation and feedback on future growth.
- Make the case for substantial service improvements to the Northeast Valley in addition to the East Valley Transit Corridor BRT/LRT and the existing Metrolink service.
- Identify strategic areas for Compact Development, and infill investment.
- Structure planning around development of Town Centers and public transportation.
- Mixed-use planning particularly near transit
- Create Town Centers with a complete range of amenities and opportunities.
- Adopt community-friendly Specific Plans, bonuses, variances and incentives for developing sites along transit corridors.
- Take advantage of SB 375 incentives and exemptions under CEQA¹ that apply to projects that are RTP/SCS² compliant.
- Develop nodes on transit corridors, joint-use strategies and partnerships around stations.

¹ California Environmental Quality Act

² RTP/SCS 2012-2035, *Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy*, Southern California Association of Governments, Los Angeles, CA 2012

- Develop “Complete Communities” with a full array of amenities and opportunities.
- Plan for housing and jobs near transit.
- Seek equilibrium in localized jobs-housing balance to reduce travel demand.
- Plan for changing demand in types of housing—extended families and intergenerational configurations.
- Continue to protect and preserve existing, stable, single-family neighborhoods.
- Avoid density outside centers and corridors.
- Protect and develop higher-end manufacturing industries that still dominate in the Valley.
- Leverage the potential for expansion into more green- and clean-tech industries.
- Ensure adequate access to open space, and take care to preserve habitat.

HOMELESSNESS AND HOUSING CHALLENGES

- Homeless population, vagrancy and shortage of housing
- Low and declining housing affordability
- Lack of a variety of housing stock
- Overcrowding of neighborhoods
- Excess demand on resources and infrastructure

STRATEGIES AND SOLUTIONS

Any sustainable community must have a jobs-housing balance. To support the economy, housing should be available in a variety of levels, from executive to blue collar and workforce.

- Add housing capacity to accommodate a projected increase in population.
- Housing innovation: small lots, greater elevations, “granny flats,” extended family and intergenerational formats
- Entitlement exemptions and variances to increase production and speed the process
- Enhanced housing production policies
- Preserve the supply of affordable housing.
- Preserve access to existing housing and maintain current levels of comparative affordability.
- Support economic development and employment policies that enhance resident’s ability to remain in their homes.
- Protect the rights of renters and owners.
- Impact fees on new market-rate developments

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND JOBS CHALLENGES

- Aesthetically-challenged main streets, gateways and corridors
- Insufficient retail/shopping facilities
- Perception of high crime
- Residents work and shop elsewhere.
- Shrinking manufacturing sector
- Inadequate built industrial space
- Obsolete commercial and retail space
- Shortage of capital and business revenues
- Lower-than-average median incomes
- Below average educational attainment
- Poor alignment of employment skills, preparation and education
- Expensive and time-consuming development and redevelopment process
- Need to conform to AB 32 and SB 375 while improving employment and the local economy
- Risk of gentrification and displacement

NORTHEAST VALLEY ADVANTAGES³

- Eligibility for economic development initiatives
- Existing goods movement infrastructure
- Proximity to transportation infrastructure: freeways, airports, rails and ports
- Geographic location - proximity to major metropolitan business clusters and markets
- Access to regional services, supply chains, and the Los Angeles central business district
- Proximity to the largest regional consumer market in the United States
- Local market of over 400,000 residents
- Strong regional economic base
- Proximity to world-class educational resources
- Diverse subregional labor pool
- Young families and ambitious workforce
- Comparatively affordable housing
- Access to a variety of regional cultural, recreation and entertainment facilities
- Equestrian lifestyle communities and facilities
- Low-density development of rural communities
- Potential industry, cluster development and ultimate re-purposing of remediation sites

³ *Economic Development Assessment & Strategy*, Los Angeles Economic Development Corporation, Valley Economic Alliance, Mulholland Institute, Sherman Oaks, CA, 2003

STRATEGIES AND SOLUTIONS

- Intervene and assist with more viable commercial tenant mixes and “Complete Streets.”⁴
- Develop capital in the subregion by inviting quality investment.
- Shop locally—patronize local merchants and service providers.
- Develop a “Culture of Education” focused on careers, excellence and prosperity.
- Encourage local innovation.
- Cultivate home-grown entrepreneurship.
- Showcase unique local assets throughout the greater region.
- Seek outside capital and trade.
- Promote safety and security in centers.
- Cultivate subregional industry clusters.

CLUSTERS

Industry will be attracted to an area if:

1. The local area provides unique strategic advantages over other locations.
2. There is a concentration of similar or competitive firms or organizations.
3. The educational institutions are supportive of their needs.
4. The local institutional knowledge base provides resource advantages.
5. The quality of life is excellent as an attraction for qualified employees.
6. Cost of living is within bounds.
7. Real estate availability is consistent with needs.

Some of the Competitive Clusters prevalent in the Los Angeles County region are:

- Construction
- Entertainment and Media
- Apparel Manufacturing
- Aerospace Manufacturing
- Information Technology
- Analytical Instruments
- Health Services
- Medical Devices Manufacturing
- Pharmaceuticals Manufacturing
- Leisure, Hospitality and Tourism
- Insurance
- Financial Services
- Business Services
- Trade and Logistics

⁴ Centers that offer safe access for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit riders of all ages and abilities

ENVIRONMENT AND GREEN INDUSTRY

Sustainable Lifestyles and Clusters

This strategy seeks to couple economic growth with environmental betterment in a positive way, showing that economic expansion and environmental quality can be compatible and mutually supportive.

CHALLENGES

- Deteriorated infrastructure from heavy truck traffic and long-term industrial demands
- Higher than average health problems
- Health impacts from traffic and industrial uses
- Inadequate code enforcement in residential and heavy industrial areas
- Lack of lighting, curbs, gutters, storm drainage and landscape in many areas.
- Need to conform to AB 32 and SB 375

STRATEGIES AND SOLUTIONS

- Reduce travel demand for commuters by improving localized jobs-housing balance and increasing availability of public transportation.
- Implement “Smart Growth.”
- Foster economic revitalization and expansion by retrofitting existing businesses and structures to reduce pollutant output and water consumption.
- Increase energy efficiency, attract new green businesses and promote local investment and job creation.
- Prevent additional pollution growth, through traffic mitigation, transportation planning, zoning and land use actions.
- Work to develop Green Goods & Services industries, clusters and practices in ways that improve employment and the local economy.
- Attract existing green industries to take advantage of the area’s manufacturing and aerospace capacity.

CIVIC AND POLICY ENGAGEMENT

Enlightened Activism

CHALLENGES

- One of the densest population regions in Los Angeles County
- Congestion, commute times/flows
- Time taken to develop improvements
- Redevelopment without the CRA⁵
- Public policy disconnects and inequities

⁵ Community Redevelopment Agency

- Underserved and disenfranchised residents and communities
- The Valley makes up 65 percent of the land area of the City of Los Angeles, but only 47 percent of its population—it lacks a legislative majority for self-determination.
- The Northeast Valley has 15 percent of the city’s land, and 11 percent of its population.
- Competition with dozens of other Los Angeles neighborhoods for limited resources
- Shortage of City of Los Angeles personnel focused exclusively on the Northeast Valley

STRATEGIES AND SOLUTIONS

For a community development strategy to be successful, it must be carried forward by local community leaders who have a vested interest in their neighborhoods and “Town Centers”— those whose lives are the most affected.

- Assemble human capital in the form of stakeholders and civic organizations.
- Collaborate among interested groups to develop proactive consensus on principles.
- Establish persistent and ongoing programs for civic implementation.
- Raise seed capital sufficient to field a grant-writing team with limited administration.
- Aggressively pursue foundation grants through a not-for-profit fund of the *Community Foundation of the Valleys* or *The Valley Economic Alliance*.
- Aggressively pursue government grants and subventions through the *San Fernando Valley Council of Governments*, or a participating jurisdiction.
- Provide guidance and support for local initiatives early in the decision-making process.
- Recruit credible and proactive advocates.
- Take ownership of issues where you are in favor—not just opposition.
- Preserve what is good and be willing to make it better.
- Fully and aggressively participate in local government by organizing and allocating responsibilities in the most efficient fashion.
- Monitor business and residential opportunities, and be prepared to intervene in positive ways.
- Seek out responsible investment in the community to fulfill unmet needs.

Northeast San Fernando Valley Sustainability & Prosperity
Strategy Full Report and Updates:
www.NortheastStrategy.org



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