

Letters to The Times

Metro Rail Project in L.A.

Your editorial (Sept. 11), "Metro Rail's New Danger," in support of the L.A. Metro Rail, was misguided because the Metro Rail is a lemon for taxpayers.

The Metro Rail is essentially designed to serve San Fernando Valley commuters who are in general financially capable of owning cars. Because cars can take people right to the doorstep of their destination and because they have trunk space for groceries, commuters are unlikely to abandon their cars for the Metro Rail. This has been proven true in Washington, Atlanta, Baltimore and San Francisco.

Taxpayers can ill afford an expensive rail system designed to serve those who need it least. A more sensible policy would be to improve bus transportation in and near the city center, close to low-income earners who heavily depend on public transit for work trips.

DAVID T. LEUNG
Los Angeles

The people of Los Angeles are entitled to "absolute assurances" that it is safe to build and operate a subway in this area. Mayor Tom Bradley announced in Washington that he has no doubt "whatsoever" about the safety question. Will he personally take full responsibility for this decision in writing? I doubt it—he is being misinformed because the issue of safety has not been adequately addressed.

From my 35 years as a licensed architect in Los Angeles and with firsthand knowledge and experience of the methane gas in the La Brea tar pits area, I don't know of any responsible consulting engineer and/or contractor who would issue a personal guarantee that the sub-surface conditions can be designed, built and maintained with adequate safety.

The presently known "feasible" methods of protecting the subway "tube" from water and/or methane gas, its installation, workmanship and maintenance are very unsure. A small crack in the protective membrane—a spark from the subway or a lighted cigarette—and you've had it. What about the cracks in all the surface streets? Monitoring devices along with back-up devices are also not much of a guarantee. Suitable venting of the methane gas to the atmosphere is expensive and almost impossible to maintain in working order due to the sandy soil saturated with tar that would clog the venting system.

WILLIAM KRISEL
Los Angeles

Consistency, thou are a jewel

I read your paper daily and many times I have read an editorial viewing with alarm the mounting federal deficit. With that I agree, for we can not continue to spend more than we take in. But usually you are criticizing the Reagan Administration for the huge deficit when we all know that Congress does the spending and Democrats have controlled Congress for many years. Now I read that the debt will exceed \$2 trillion soon.

Then I read that you are pleased that Los Angeles is to receive half a billion dollars to start its subway. And that is just the start.

No one has ever explained to me why the citizens of California outside of Los Angeles and the citizens of the other 49 states should pay for a subway to be used by the people of Los Angeles. Particularly when the federal government does not have the money but will have to borrow it. Why can not the people who will benefit from a subway pay for it? Issue bonds just as is done by others.

A.O. WHEATLEY
Laguna Hills

How, in good conscience, can Los Angeles increase the federal deficit by pressuring Congress for hundreds of millions of dollars for Metro Rail?

The Times thunders editorially about the dangers of the deficit. It, however, chooses to ignore this rapid transit rip-off of the federal taxpayer.

Your mayor chants "victory." What he really is saying is that selfish local interest supersedes the national interest.

If such "principles" prevail, heaven help the nation.

ROBERT L. IRVIN
Cypress

The wisdom of spending \$3.3 billion dollars for an 18.6-mile Metro Rail system (at \$177 million per mile) completely escapes me.

If Metro Rail attracts 100,000 riders a day, and they all pay a \$1 fare it will take 93 years to recover the estimated cost of construction. Being realistic we can assume that the actual cost of construction will be much higher than \$3.3 billion and conversely, the benefits much less, i.e., less than 100,000 riders a day with a fare higher than \$1.

Once the yearly operating costs are included, and they will be in the millions, the only certainty about this project will be the constant influx of our tax dollars necessary to keep Metro Rail running.

Only government bureaucrats and their associated sycophants can contemplate such extravagant expenditures because only government can tap the pockets of the people without regard for the product given in return.

I look forward to boarding the Metro Rail at Bradley Station for Yaroslavsky Station, hoping the ride is worth it.

FRANK ERBEZNIK
Camarillo