# STAFF REPORT

## COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

**DATE:** April 22, 2025

**TO:** Justin Hess, City Manager

**FROM:** Patrick Prescott, Community Development Director
BY: David Kriske, Assistant Community Development Director, Transportation

**SUBJECT:** Approval of a Configuration Change to the North Hollywood to Pasadena Bus Rapid Transit Corridor Project in Downtown Burbank on Olive Avenue between First Street and Glenoaks Boulevard

## RECOMMENDATION

Approve a configuration change to the North Hollywood to Pasadena Bus Rapid Transit Corridor Project in Downtown Burbank on Olive Avenue between First Street and Glenoaks Boulevard to expand the transit station at the San Fernando Boulevard and Olive Avenue Intersection while maintaining all existing travel lanes.

## BACKGROUND

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) is currently designing its North Hollywood to Pasadena Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Corridor Project. This 18-mile project would construct a BRT between the North Hollywood Red Line / Orange Line Station and the A Line in Pasadena, passing through the cities of Los Angeles, Burbank, Glendale, and Pasadena. BRT is high-capacity bus transit that offers fewer stops and speed improvements over a traditional bus route. Unlike a traditional transit project operating in Metro right of way, the project uses local city street right of way for operations as well as the location of stations.

The proposed project alignment (Attachment 1) would generally run from North Hollywood via Lankershim Boulevard and the Route 134 freeway before exiting the freeway in Burbank to serve the Burbank Media District and Downtown Burbank before continuing east to Glendale and Pasadena. The project would construct six stations in Burbank:

1) Hollywood Way at Olive Avenue / Riverside Drive,

2) Buena Vista Street at Alameda Avenue,
3) Olive Avenue at Verdugo Avenue / Sparks Street,
4) Olive Avenue at Lake Street,
5) Olive Avenue at San Fernando Boulevard, and
6) Glenoaks Boulevard at Alameda Avenue.

To achieve higher speeds and capacities, BRT generally operates in dedicated bus lanes on city streets but is also flexible to operate in mixed-flow traffic using traffic signal technology or short bypass lanes to speed up travel times. BRT also offers additional speed and reliability improvements over traditional local buses such as all-door level boarding, payment required prior to boarding, further space between stations, and traffic signal priority. In Burbank, the route is proposed to operate as a mix of bus lanes and mixed-flow traffic. In April 2022 the City Council (Council) requested that Metro construct and operate the portion of the project on Olive Avenue between Buena Vista Street and Interstate 5 as mixed-flow via a letter sent to Metro as part of the project's Final Environmental Impact Report.

In 2024, Council approved a Cooperative Agreement with Metro to define how both agencies work together to design and construct the project. Under the agreement, the City works with Metro to review, comment, and collaborate on Metro's design plans for the project. Since Summer 2024, City and Metro staff have held ongoing project review meetings and in early 2025, City staff provided comments on Metro's 30 percent design plans. Metro continues to refine the project plans with the goal of completing them by the end of the calendar year.

## DISCUSSION

As part of the plan comment process, City staff has reviewed the 30 percent plans for the planned BRT station layout at the San Fernando Boulevard and Olive Avenue intersection. Metro's plan for Olive Avenue in Downtown Burbank between First Street and Glenoaks Boulevard is to utilize the existing street width and sidewalk width to install bus lanes along the curb (curb-running) where on-street parking is currently located, and to construct the transit station and station amenities within the existing sidewalk where local buses currently stop. Planned transit amenities at BRT stations include shelters to provide shade for those standing or waiting, benches, trash receptacles, lighting, Metro brand signage, and electronic real-time transit arrival signage. The architecture of the shelter improvements is common across the corridor, and the shelter improvements are wider and longer than the typical transit shelters that are currently installed in Burbank. The shelters resemble shelters at light rail stations rather than bus stops and are meant to accommodate higher volumes of riders waiting for the BRT. The overall design of the proposed station canopy improvements is included (Attachment 2).

Staff's Detailed Review of Metro Preliminary Design Plans

While reviewing the plans, City staff discovered that the planned station at San Fernando and Olive would be highly constrained within the current sidewalk when considering the sidewalk width, lack of building setbacks, and presence of street trees at the stop location. Because of these constraints, Metro is currently planning to install a much smaller BRT station at this location to fit within the existing constraints, which will compromise the ability for the future station to serve both existing transit riders and future BRT riders. The current arrangement of street and sidewalk at the planned San Fernando / Olive BRT station is included (Attachment 3). This constrained station is planned at a location that is expected to have some of the highest ridership in Burbank, especially when considering that one in five transit trips in Burbank originates along the Olive Corridor between First Street and Glenoaks. This station will be used to serve the BRT itself, while also serving as a transfer point to several existing Metro local buses and is one of two stops that connect the BRT to the Downtown Burbank Metrolink Station. According to Metro's BRT ridership forecast, it is estimated that there will be 1,200 daily BRT-exclusive riders in addition to the 400 riders currently using local bus lines at this station. Given the steady increase in transit ridership year over year in the past several years and considering that Downtown Burbank experiences the highest pedestrian volumes in the City, installing a constrained station at this location would significantly undermine the rider experience. Additionally, the limited space would create crowding conditions for both transit users and pedestrians, diminishing the functionality of one of Burbank's most critical BRT stops. The constrained station would significantly narrow the public sidewalk in an area of high pedestrian activity that will see even more foot traffic in the future as new housing units are built Downtown. The configuration of the existing Olive Avenue corridor and the constrained station layout planned by Metro is included (Attachment 3).

At some other locations along the corridor, Metro plans to accommodate a full transit station configuration by extending the sidewalk curb and gutter outward into the street by approximately six to eight feet, into the area of the street where cars would park. This allows the station platform to be built outside of the main pedestrian path and around other sidewalk impediments like street trees and other street furniture. Constructing a station curb extension in this way allows Metro to install a full-length transit shelter and amenities while maintaining most of the existing sidewalk width. This configuration accommodates far more passengers waiting for the bus, while still allowing pedestrians on the street to comfortably pass behind the transit station. Further, the curb extension is built in the roadway area where cars park or where transit vehicles already stop to board and alight passengers, so roadway travel lanes are maintained.

Station Curb Extension Consideration

As part of the plan review, City staff investigated with Metro staff whether a curb extension could be constructed at the San Fernando and Olive station location in lieu of the constrained station that is currently planned. Unfortunately, as currently planned, a curb

extension is not possible because the bus lane for the project in Downtown will be installed against the existing curb (in a “curb-running” bus lane) where cars normally park; a station curb extension cannot be constructed because it would conflict with the bus lane.

To accommodate the curb extension, Metro would have to either 1) reconfigure the bus lane near the stop so that buses would travel in mixed-flow traffic (instead of a dedicated bus lane), thereby making the parking lane space available for a curb extension, or 2) convert the bus lane in Downtown from “curb-running” (where parking is converted to a bus lane) to “side-running” (where a travel lane is converted to a bus lane). Reconfiguring a portion of the bus lane would slightly increase BRT travel times along Olive Avenue during peak periods because the bus would be operating in regular traffic. Alternatively, converting the entire bus lane along Olive Avenue in Downtown from curb-running to side-running would maintain improved BRT travel times by keeping the bus lane intact, but would increase vehicle delay by converting the street from two vehicle lanes to one vehicle lane in each direction. Given the amount of traffic on Olive Avenue in Downtown, converting the bus lane from curb-running to side-running would noticeably increase average vehicle delay to drivers.

Proposed Reconfiguration

Based on the different traffic and transit tradeoffs to Olive Avenue caused by implementing either of these reconfiguration options, and acknowledging the importance of achieving a full capacity, standard transit station at the most popular BRT stop in Burbank, City staff worked with Metro staff to confirm that reconfiguring one and a half blocks of bus lane on Olive Avenue (between First Street and just east of San Fernando) and maintaining mixed-flow at the San Fernando/Olive intersection could be accommodated as part of the BRT project’s final design. This reconfiguration would allow the BRT to maintain efficient operation through Downtown Burbank, maintain existing vehicle travel lanes along the entire Olive Avenue corridor in Downtown, and allow Metro to construct a full, standard BRT station at the San Fernando/Olive stop including all possible transit amenities. A rendering of potential transit curb extensions at this location is included (Attachment 4). The reconfiguration is inconsequential to Metro’s BRT operations because Metro already plans to operate the BRT as mixed flow west of First Street over the Olive Avenue Bridge, and therefore the BRT project already needs to transition buses from mixed-flow to bus lane operation along Olive Avenue between First Street and San Fernando. By slightly extending the transition point so that it occurs east of the station platform, Metro is able to accommodate the curb extension and all vehicle travel lanes on Olive Avenue through Downtown. Metro has also stated that constructing curb extensions for the transit station will allow them to consolidate BRT and local buses to stop at one location, thereby improving transfers between BRT and local service. The transit curb extensions would also improve pedestrian safety for those crossing Olive Avenue by reducing distance needed to cross the street by 6 to 8 feet. A comparison of

Metro's planned roadway configuration using curb running dedicated bus lanes versus City Staff's recommended reconfiguration of bus lanes to accommodate transit curb extensions and mixed-flow use is included (Attachment 5).

Changing the design of Olive Avenue to reconfigure one and a half blocks to mixed-flow to accommodate BRT station curb extensions would have minimal impacts to vehicle delay and fire response times. Because four travel lanes and a center turn lane would be maintained throughout Olive Avenue, the effects of the BRT project on the operations of the street would be functionally comparable to the current Metro curb-running bus lane plan with no curb extensions. Vehicle delay would only occur when buses would be boarding and alighting passengers in the travel lane, rather than pulling to the curb. This operation slightly slows traffic immediately behind the bus during heavy traffic periods if vehicles cannot immediately move around the stopped bus. However, this condition currently occurs along many arterial streets in Burbank where buses cannot pull completely to the curb due to narrow curb lanes or the presence of on-street parking. Additionally, because four mixed-flow lanes are maintained, all types of traffic (cars, trucks, buses) are free to safely maneuver into all available lanes to pass a bus that is stopped at the station. Also, this scenario could present an opportunity to incorporate right turn lanes from Olive Avenue to San Fernando to improve vehicle circulation. While the curb extension at the BRT station narrows the street slightly and could prevent traffic from pulling completely to the right in response to an active fire engine, it's anticipated the impact would be minimal because the fire engines would still have the full roadway (four lanes plus a center turn lane) to maneuver. Moreover, any curb extensions and all other project elements will continue to be designed with consideration for fire truck turn radius requirements.

The proposed reconfiguration has several benefits, along with some tradeoffs over the current Metro proposal. A summary table of these benefits and tradeoffs is included (Attachment 6).

<u>Consistency with Burbank2035 General Plan and City Council Goals and Policies</u>
Reconfiguration of the BRT project on Olive Avenue in Downtown Burbank to accommodate curb extensions and full station platforms is consistent with the Burbank2035 General Plan Mobility Element Goal 1 (Balance), Goal 3 (Complete Streets), Goal 4 (Transit), and Goal 9 (Safety, Accessibility, Equity). Specifically, the proposed reconfiguration satisfies the following General Plan Mobility Element Policies:

- Mobility Element Policy 1.5: Design transportation improvements to be compatible with the scale and design of existing infrastructure.
- Mobility Element Policy 3.2: Complete City Streets by providing facilities for all transportation modes.

- Mobility Element Policy 3.5: Design street improvements so they preserve opportunities to maintain or expand bicycle, pedestrian, and transit systems.
- Mobility Element Policy 4.7: Integrate transit nodes and connection points with adjacent land uses and public pedestrian spaces to make them more convenient to transit users.
- Mobility Element Policy 4.8: Promote multimodal transit centers and stops to encourage seamless connections between local and regional transit systems, pedestrian and bicycle networks, and commercial and employment centers.
- Mobility Element Policy 9.1: Ensure safe interaction between all modes of travel that use the street network, specifically the interaction of bicyclists, pedestrians, and equestrians with motor vehicles.

The reconfiguration also supports several of City Council's adopted Fiscal Year 2025-26 goals, including:

- Coordinate improvements and integration with the development of high-speed regional rail and transportation hubs.
- Encourage Bus Rapid Transit Systems.
- Prioritize multimodal transportation systems including bike lanes and safe walking paths.
- Analyze new and alternate modes of transportation and potential impacts to the City.

The proposed reconfiguration of the BRT project to provide curb extensions and full station amenities in Downtown Burbank supports the Burbank Center Plan Long-Term Goal:

- The goal of the Burbank Center Plan is a city center with mixed-use development that integrates multiple forms of public transportation.

Finally, the reconfiguration accommodates high quality transit necessary to support the City's housing goal to provide 12,000 new housing units over the next 15 years and to provide the City's share of state-mandated housing capacity. The reconfiguration supports the Burbank 2021-2029 Housing Element Policy 2.1 which directs the majority of new residential development into centralized areas like Downtown Burbank to support the building of neighborhoods where people can live, work, shop, and benefit from access to public transit services including Metrolink train service, Metro bus and BurbankBus lines, as well as a network of bike trails and pedestrian walks. Residents in these areas can take advantage of high-quality walking, biking, and public transit networks to reduce the City's greenhouse gas emissions. The proposed reconfiguration accommodates more transit riders' ability to connect to the BRT and local buses in Downtown within walking

distance to new and future housing units and maintains high-quality pedestrian connections along Olive Avenue to support the pedestrian activity expected by new housing construction in Downtown. The reconfiguration provides all these benefits with little to no impact on existing transportation operations along Olive Avenue by maintaining four travel lanes along the corridor.

Side Running Option Impacts

Staff analyzed the effects of implementing curb extensions by converting the curb-running bus lane to a side-running bus lane, whereby one vehicle travel lane would be converted to a bus lane. The City utilized traffic counts, the City's travel demand forecast model, and a computer simulation of traffic conditions on Olive Avenue to simulate the conversion of one travel lane to a bus lane. This analysis found that intersection delay would increase significantly along Olive, particularly at the intersection of First Street and Olive Avenue. Vehicle delay during the PM peak hour at this intersection could increase from 68 seconds to 103 seconds in 2028 versus the Metro plan to maintain four travel lanes, meaning that vehicles travelling through the intersection would likely wait through 2 to 3 red light traffic signal cycles during the PM peak hour. The simulation also found that vehicle queues on eastbound Olive Avenue would extend several hundred feet further back over Olive Bridge, and on westbound Olive Avenue would extend back into the adjacent San Fernando intersection, causing secondary backups at that intersection. This peak hour delay would have far greater impacts to vehicle congestion entering Downtown as well as fire response effects for emergency vehicles navigating through more congested intersections on Olive Avenue. The side-running option had additional benefits to preserving more on-street parking, reducing conflicts between cars and pedestrians at intersections (due to the reduction of general-purpose lanes), and slowing vehicle speeds at peak hours. However, because the congestion and emergency response effects were much greater, City staff does not recommend implementing the station curb extensions in this manner.

City Council BRT Subcommittee

City staff met with the City Council BRT Subcommittee comprised of Vice Mayor Takahashi and Council Member Mullins, on three occasions to discuss the concern over Metro's current plans to construct constrained BRT stations and amenities, and to discuss the tradeoffs needed to implement station curb extensions with full station amenities. This discussion originally centered around the benefits and tradeoffs of implementing station curb extensions by converting the bus lanes to side-running; however, as part of the subcommittee's discussions, City staff were able to further investigate the option to instead accommodate the curb extensions by reconfiguring the bus lane transition to mixed flow so that the curb extensions could be provided while maintaining four vehicle travel lanes. The Subcommittee's input resulted in the staff recommendation included in this report.

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Metro conducted extensive community outreach and engagement throughout the development of the North Hollywood to Pasadena BRT Corridor Project, during both conceptual project development as well as through the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) analysis and related environmental impact report (EIR) process. This extensive outreach process helped Council develop its formal input to the project and resulted in the City's formal position to support the project with caveats for maintaining mixed-flow on Olive Avenue west of Downtown Burbank and for requesting support from Metro to develop a BRT station on the Olive Avenue Bridge. City staff's recommendation to reconfigure the portion of the project along Olive Avenue in Downtown Burbank (which is separate from the larger bus lane concern west of Downtown) aligns with the City Council's current support for the BRT project.

## ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Metro as the lead agency for the Project conducted environmental review pursuant to CEQA and an EIR was prepared pursuant to 14 Cal. Code Regs. § 15080 et seq., which was certified by the Metro Board of Directors on April 28, 2022. Metro has determined that proposed reconfiguration and operational adjustment of the dedicated bus flow lanes to mixed-flow lanes on Olive Avenue in Downtown Burbank to expand the transit station is consistent with the project EIR.

## FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact to the City requesting the reconfiguration change for Olive in Downtown Burbank to accommodate transit curb extensions. Metro staff have indicated that if requested by the City Council, Metro can incorporate the change into its ongoing project plan review and provide updated plans for City review. The reconfiguration will increase Metro's overall cost of the project by constructing additional curb, gutter, and sidewalk improvements, and by enlarging the transit station shelter canopies. Metro staff believe at this time that Metro can absorb this cost and support the change to gain the ridership and operational improvements over the current design. However, Metro also indicated that as final plans are being completed and costs analyzed, there is a general risk that this improvement could be later adjusted or removed if cost estimates for the overall project come back higher than expected. At that time, the City could be asked to revert the station back to the constrained layout or contribute local funding to make up a Metro budget shortfall. Further, if the City does not request the reconfiguration at this time but rather, requests it at a later date after final project plans are completed, the City may be solely responsible for paying the increased costs related to the reconfiguration as a "Betterment" under the Cooperative Agreement.

With respect to ongoing project maintenance, and in accordance with the project's Design and Construction Cooperative Agreement, the City will be responsible for maintaining facilities in the public right-of-way, such as trees, gutters, sidewalks, and streets.

However, it will not be responsible for maintaining the shelter infrastructure, including all furniture and solid waste operations and maintenance, throughout the project, thereby minimizing BRT station-related routine maintenance and operational costs.

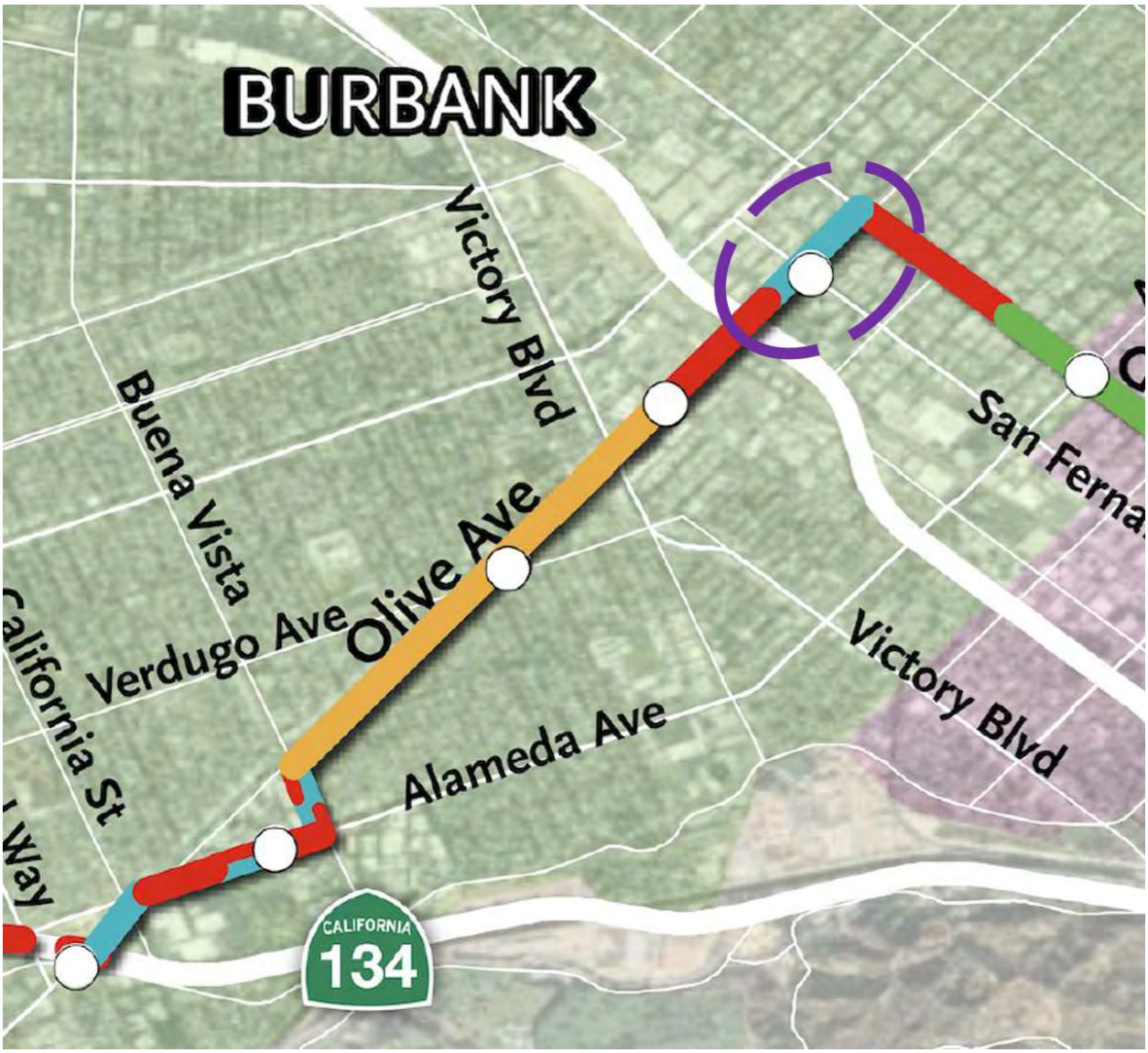
## CONCLUSION

Staff recommends the City Council direct staff to request that Metro modify the design for the North Hollywood to Pasadena BRT Corridor Project in Downtown Burbank to implement transit station curb extensions at the San Fernando Boulevard and Olive Avenue Intersection while maintaining all existing travel lanes along Olive Avenue. This modification significantly improves the ability for Metro to support future BRT and local bus ridership expected along Olive Avenue by providing more transit passenger waiting areas and shelter amenities while preserving wide sidewalks along Olive Avenue for non-transit pedestrians passing by the station. This improvement can be accomplished while not affecting vehicle travel lanes on Olive Avenue by modifying bus lane striping around the station to maintain all existing travel lanes. As a result, vehicle travel times and emergency vehicle response times should not be significantly impacted. These proposed improvements align with several General Plan and City Council goals and policies and are supportive of the City's future vision for Downtown Burbank.

## ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – Project Alignment
Attachment 2 – Station Canopy Architectural Rendering
Attachment 3 – Existing Olive Avenue Layout at the San Fernando Boulevard
Attachment 4 – Staff Recommended Transit Curb Extensions Rendering
Attachment 5 – Olive Avenue Roadway configuration – Metro Plan versus Staff Recommendation
Attachment 6 – Configuration Change Benefits and Tradeoffs Summary Table

**Attachment 1 – Project Alignment**




**Bus Lane Next to Curb / Parking Removal**

**Bus Lane in Median / 6 to 4 car lane Reconfiguration**

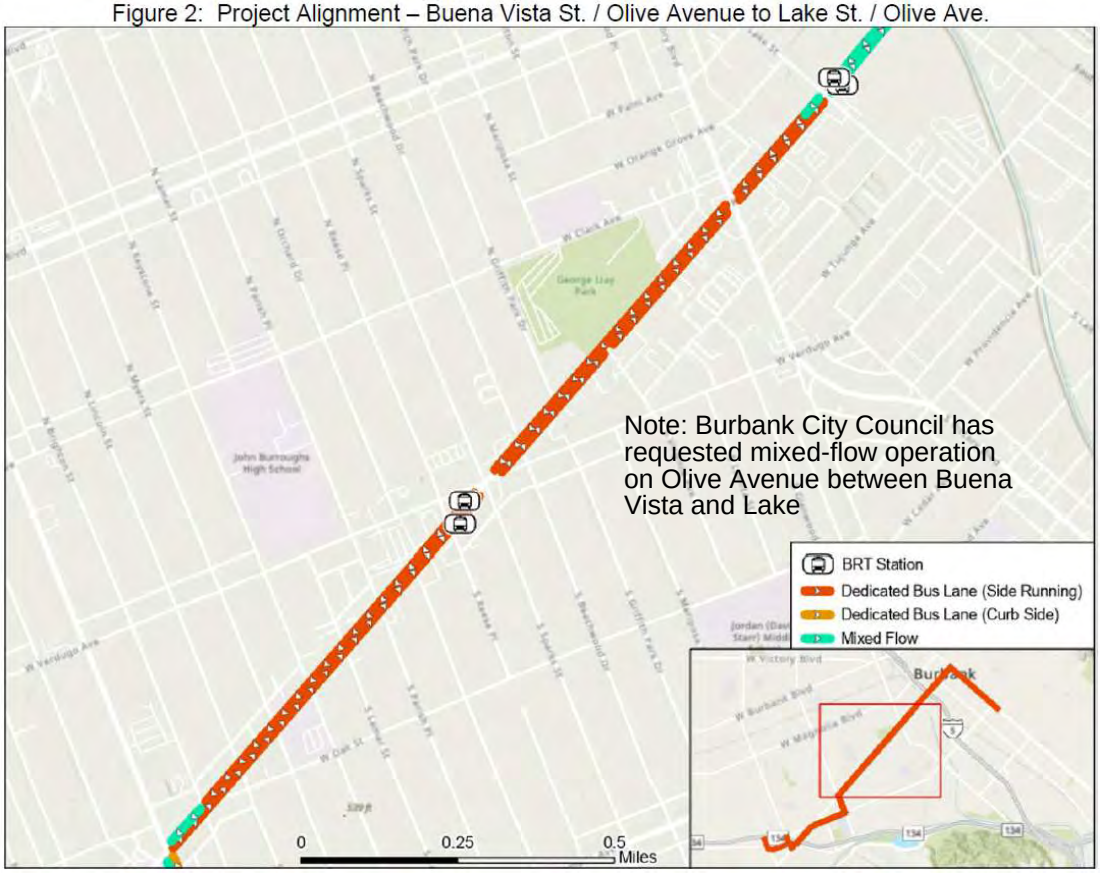
**Buses in Mixed Flow w/ Cars**

**Buses in Mixed Flow w/ Cars (Burbank City Council)**

**Station**

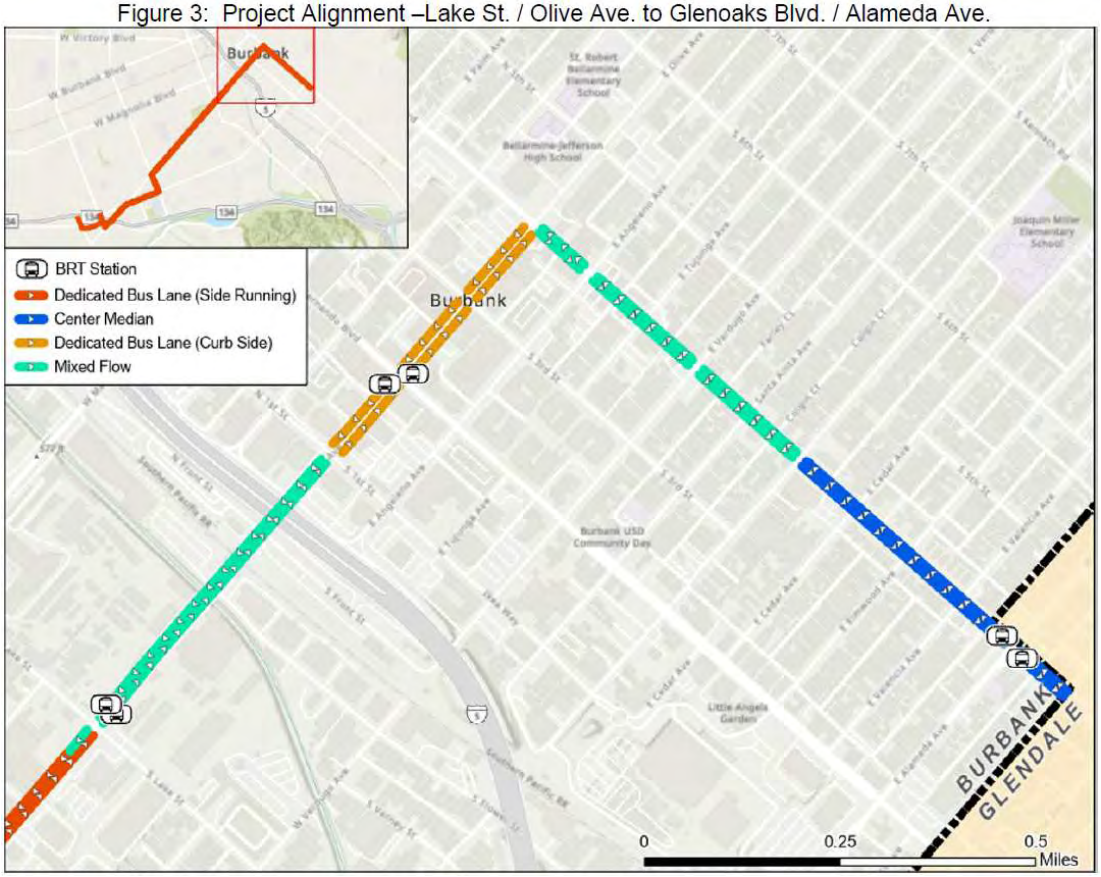
Figure 1: Project Alignment – Pass Ave / SR-134 Ramps to Buena Vista St. / Olive Ave.


Figure 2: Project Alignment – Buena Vista St. / Olive Avenue to Lake St. / Olive Ave.



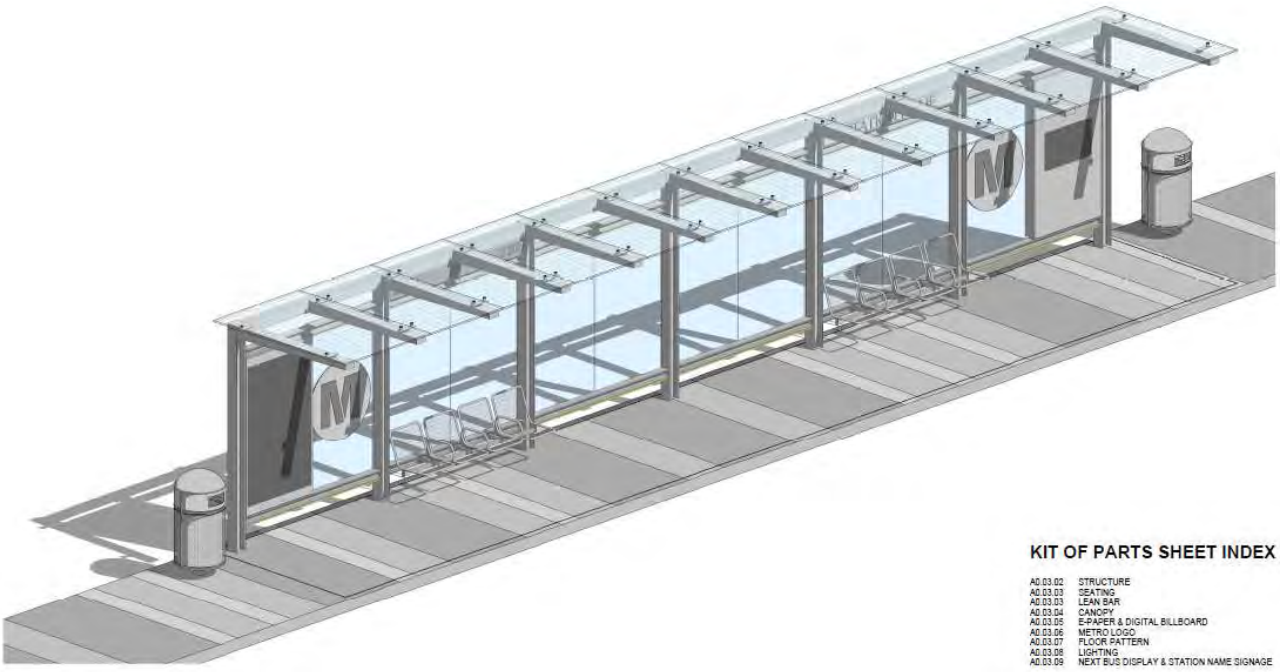

ATTACHMENT 1-2

Figure 3: Project Alignment –Lake St. / Olive Ave. to Glenoaks Blvd. / Alameda Ave.



**Attachment 2**

**BRT Station Canopy Rendering**



**Attachment 3**
**Existing Olive Avenue Layout at the San Fernando Boulevard**

**Metro Proposed BRT Station Design**
**Westbound Direction**


Note: Existing conditions are shown because proposed station would be located within existing sidewalk width; station shelter amenities would replace existing shelters

**Eastbound Direction**

Note: Existing conditions are shown because proposed station would be located within existing sidewalk width; station shelter amenities would replace existing shelters

## Attachment 4

### Staff Recommended Transit Curb Extensions (Rendering)

**Westbound Direction**

ATTACHMENT 4-1

**Eastbound Direction**

**Attachment 5**

Olive Avenue Roadway configuration – Metro versus Staff Recommendation (First Street to Third Street)

Top: Metro curb-running bus lane between First Street and just east of San Fernando Boulevard
Bottom: Staff Mixed Flow lanes transition to curb-running bus lane east of San Fernando to accommodate station curb extensions

Attachment 6

Configuration Change Benefits and Tradeoffs

| Benefits of Configuration Change | Trade-offs of Configuration Change |
|---|---|
| Improve bus stop amenities and space to wait | Slow vehicle speeds on Olive during peak times when buses are boarding |
| Maintain wide sidewalks next to bus station with improved ADA access | Minor impacts to police, fire & ambulance response times travelling through Olive / San Fernando intersection if buses are stopped at station |
| Slow vehicle speeds on Olive during peak times when when buses are boarding | Vehicles behind buses need to switch lanes when buses are stopped to board passengers at stations |
| Shorten the distance to cross Olive at San Fernando | Mixed-flow conditions could result in minor delays to BRT |
| Maintain on-street parking between First and San Fernando including Post Office drop off zone. | Increased risk of bus stacking in vehicle lane due to simultaneous local and BRT bus arrivals |
| Retain same number of travel lanes as today | Curb parking is still lost on Olive east of San Fernando |
| Potentially improve right turn capacity | |
| Extend San Fernando Reconfiguration amenities and benefits to the BRT Stop | |
| Maintain vehicle throughput capacity with no spillover traffic effects | |
| Consolidate local and BRT bus stops to improve transfers | |

Olive Avenue Roadway configuration – Metro versus Staff Recommendation (San Fernando and Olive intersection)

Top: Metro curb-running bus lane between First Street and just east of San Fernando Boulevard
Bottom: Staff Mixed Flow lanes transition to curb-running bus lane east of San Fernando to accommodate station curb extensions


**ATTACHMENT 5 -2**