



Board Report

File #: 2018-0577, File Type: Plan

Agenda Number: 42.

EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE SEPTEMBER 20, 2018

SUBJECT: TRANSIT LINE OPERATIONAL NAMING CONVENTION

ACTION: APPROVE RECOMMENDATION

RECOMMENDATION

DIRECT the Chief Executive Officer to return to the December 2018 Board meeting with a recommendation on a Transit Line Operational Naming Convention, including an implementation plan, and cost estimate.

ISSUE

The Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) is implementing the largest transportation expansion program in the nation. As Metro grows, the agency will add more rail and bus rapid transit (BRT) lines across LA County. In addition, when the Regional Connector Project is complete, the agency will unite the operations of the Blue and Gold Lines, providing a one-seat ride between Azusa and Long Beach, and the operations of the Gold and Expo Lines, facilitating a one-seat ride between East LA and Santa Monica. The current naming convention impacts the customer experience and contributes to difficulties in navigating the system. As a result, the agency will need to establish the future operational naming convention for the rail and BRT system that can sustain the expansion.

BACKGROUND

Metro's current transit line naming convention is inconsistent. Most names are based on colors (Blue, Red, Gold, Purple, etc.) with one exception - the Expo Line. This is the only transit line that doesn't follow the consistency of the color designation system. As the system grows, continuing with color names will mean selecting line names based on shades of color (i.e. Lime, Rose, Aqua, Olive, Lavender, etc.). This can sometimes be difficult to decipher on maps and signage.

DISCUSSION

Metro's system is growing and changing. There are currently eight rail and BRT lines in Metro's system. With the passage of Measure M in 2016, the agency will build out and operate eight additional rail and BRT lines in the coming years. Staff believes the time is right to establish the naming convention of the future due to the following logic:

Clarity and Consistency

- The agency needs a clear, consistent, uniform navigation system to enhance the riding experience.
- Clarity of information and making it easy to use the system reflects the goals of The Metro Vision 2028 Strategic Plan, which commits to the agency being customer-focused and working to improve customer satisfaction.

The Timing is Right

- The New Blue Improvements is an opportunity to launch a new naming convention
- The Regional Connector will unite the Gold and Blue Lines between Azusa and Long Beach, and the Gold and Expo Lines between East LA and Santa Monica, which will change the existing operations and how the agency will refer to the lines.

World-Class System

- Metro already serves a diverse population that lives, works and plays in LA County, which will grow, especially when the agency welcomes the world for the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Staff researched naming conventions used by various transit agencies around the world and found some main alternatives: colors paired with numbers, colors paired with letters, and colors only. In some cases, agencies name their lines for destinations or geographic location. Colors are used in all cases and often paired with another identifying factor since colors define the differences among lines on maps and other informational materials.

Staff then conducted a series of focus groups through a consultant partnership of Consensus and FM3 Research. The team tested the alternatives most commonly used in the transit industry: colors paired with numbers, colors paired with letters, colors only and Metro's current naming convention, a combination of colors and geographic location. Five focus groups were conducted at different locations around LA County with a cross-section of participants representing diverse backgrounds from each county supervisorial district. The focus groups were conducted with English-speaking riders, English-speaking non-riders, Spanish-speaking riders, English-speaking visually impaired individuals, and Korean-speaking residents to get feedback from a group whose language uses a different alphabet. While focus groups do not result in statistically precise data, they are an opportunity to collect qualitative feedback that helps guide a rationale for preferences.

Several findings emerged from the focus groups. Participants felt that consistency across the system is the most important factor when naming the lines, and that naming the lines with logic in mind is important. Non-riders said that simplicity and knowing Metro will expand the system to serve more places makes them more likely to try Metro in the future. Also, participants said if Metro decides to change its operational naming system, to do it as soon as possible to give people the chance to get used to it as the system grows.

When focus group participants were asked which naming convention they preferred most, responses fell into the following order of preference: *(For detail, see presentation attachment.)*

1. Colors paired with numbers
2. Colors paired with letters
3. Colors only
4. Combination of colors and geographic names

While focus group results are an important data point, staff will conduct additional broader research on how the alternatives appear on signage and the trip planner. Research is one of several factors including industry lessons learned that should be considered when making a decision about the transit line naming convention.

Another preference unrelated to the naming convention that emerged during the focus groups among riders and non-riders alike was the desire to have more help at stations to figure out how to get where they want to go (i.e. which lines to take, how to get to the right platform, etc.).

Moving forward, there are some important factors that help shape perspective when considering the operational naming convention for Metro's system. Clear, consistent, simple information enhances the customer experience and makes riding Metro less intimidating. Legacy names like the Expo Line, Gold Line, Crenshaw/LAX Line, etc. and the operational names of the lines can live in harmony. People can still refer to the legacy or corridor names, but consistent operational names are important for navigation purposes. And finally, no naming convention is perfect; there are benefits and challenges with all of them. A robust public education and marketing program will be a key component to helping riders understand the system, while also helping non-riders find the experience more inviting.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Staff is developing cost estimates for a change of signage and customer information across the system, as well as marketing outreach costs to educate the public. If the agency changes to a new naming convention, staff will transition to the new naming system through a phased implementation plan that takes advantage of planned capital projects (i.e. New Blue Improvements, Project, Crenshaw/LAX Project, Regional Connector Project). If approved, the estimates could be presented to the Board along with a staff recommendation and implementation plan at the December meeting.

If the Board chooses to keep the existing naming convention but decides to change the naming convention in the future after some capital projects are complete, it will require retrofitting signage and customer information, which will ultimately result in increased costs.

NEXT STEPS

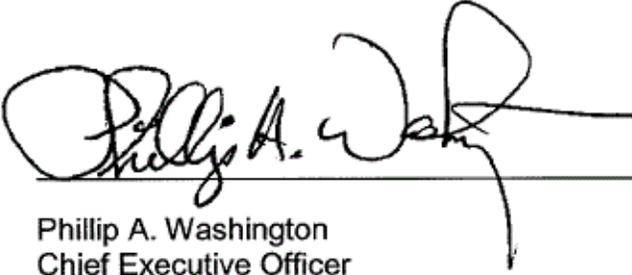
Staff will conduct additional research with diverse groups to test naming alternatives and how they appear on signage and the trip planner. Additional activities will include online quantitative research and field research pop-ups at some Metro rail stations.

ATTACHMENT

Attachment A - Transit Line Naming Focus Groups

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Phillip A. Washington
Chief Executive Officer



Transit Line Naming Convention

Overview and Focus Group Results

Executive Management Committee
September 20, 2018



Metro

Naming for the Future

- Metro is growing and the system is changing
- Time to establish the naming convention of the future
 - Clarity and Consistency
 - Need a clear, consistent, uniform navigation system
 - Reflects Strategic Plan goals (customer-focus and satisfaction)
 - Metro's Magic Moment
 - New Blue is an opportunity to launch a new naming convention
 - Regional Connector will unite Gold and Blue Lines, and Gold and Expo Lines
 - Crenshaw opening will mean changes for Green Line
 - World-Class System
 - Always ready to welcome the world – especially in 2028



Metro

Current Transit Line Name Factors

- Metro's naming convention is 28 years old and riders have learned how to navigate the system
- Current naming is inconsistent – colors and Expo
- Future corridor names aren't clear (West Santa Ana)
- Current naming is a challenge for those who are color-blind
- Shades of colors can sometimes be difficult to decipher on a map or sign

Our System is Growing



Crenshaw/LAX

Sepulveda Transit Corridor

Transit Extension from Westwood to LAX Metro Connector

West Santa Ana Transit Light Rail Corridor

LAX BRT Connector

Vermont BRT Connector

BRT Connector Orange/Red Line to Gold Line

North San Fernando Valley BRT

*Anticipated by 2028



Metro

Industry Examples

New York City Subway

23 lines



Chicago CTA L

8 lines



Denver RTD

10 lines



Portland TriMet MAX

5 lines



Toronto TTC

7 lines



Washington Metro Metrorail

6 lines



Paris Metro

15 lines



Focus Groups Methodology

- 5 focus groups with current and future riders
- Focus groups were two hours each
- 47 total participants

Methodology

- Various locations and recruitment criteria to reflect some of the diversity of current and potential Metro riders

Date	Location	Group Type
August 22	Sherman Oaks	English-Speaking Non-Riders
August 25	Downtown LA	English-Speaking Metro Riders
August 25	Downtown LA	Spanish-Speaking Metro Riders
August 28	Mid-City	English-Speaking Visually-Impaired Residents
August 28	Koreatown	Korean-Speaking Residents

Focus Group Perspectives

- Participants were recruited to represent diverse backgrounds and perspectives, but are not statistically precise
- Provided an opportunity to collect qualitative feedback, i.e., the rationale for their preferences
- Allowed for testing visual collateral in real time and see people's expressions, verbal and non-verbal cues, and how they talk about this question with others

Structure of Focus Groups

Discussions were designed to assess preferences among four different transit line naming convention options:

- Combination of colors and geography (approximating the current system)
- Colors only
- Colors with numbers assigned in chronological order
- Colors with letters assigned in chronological order

Familiarity
with
Current
System

Initial
Comparison
of 2028
Maps

Preferences
for Station/
Platform
Signage

Ease of Trip
Planning

Reactions to
“Transition”
Flyer

Final Re-
Review of
2028 Maps

Current System Map



Metro Rail

- Blue Line** ● Downtown LA to Long Beach
- Red Line** ● North Hollywood to Union Station
- Green Line** ● Redondo Beach to Norwalk
- Purple Line** ● Wilshire/Western to Union Station
- Gold Line** ● East Los Angeles to Azusa
- Expo Line** ● Downtown LA to Santa Monica

Metro Busway

- Orange Line** ■ Chatsworth to North Hollywood
- Silver Line** ■ San Pedro to El Monte
Street Service in Downtown LA and San Pedro

AUG 2018 Subject to Change

Current System Map

- Current riders are mostly comfortable with the existing map and mostly understand it.
- For some riders, particularly Spanish-speakers and visually-impaired, it took a significant amount of work to learn the system.
- None of the non-riders had even seen the map in the past and they were surprised by the number of lines.
- Some found it hard to distinguish between colors of Red and Orange lines and some thought gold looked yellow
- Several people (including some who ride often) are confused by the “E” on the light blue dot for the Expo line and think it stands for “East,” “Express” or “Extension.”
- Some mentioned concerns about the inconsistency of having one line not named for a color.

Combination Map – 2028



Conceptual



Names are not official – for testing purposes only

Metro Rail

- Blue Line** ●
Montclair to Long Beach
- Red Line** ●
North Hollywood to Union Station
- Green Line** ●
Expo/Crenshaw to Norwalk
- Purple Line** ●
Westwood/VA Hospital to Union Station
- Gold Line** ●
Santa Monica to Whittier
- South Bay/LAX Line** ●
LAX to Torrance
- East San Fernando Valley/Sepulveda Line** ●
Sylmar to West LA
- West Santa Ana Line** ●
Downtown LA to Artesia

Metro Busway

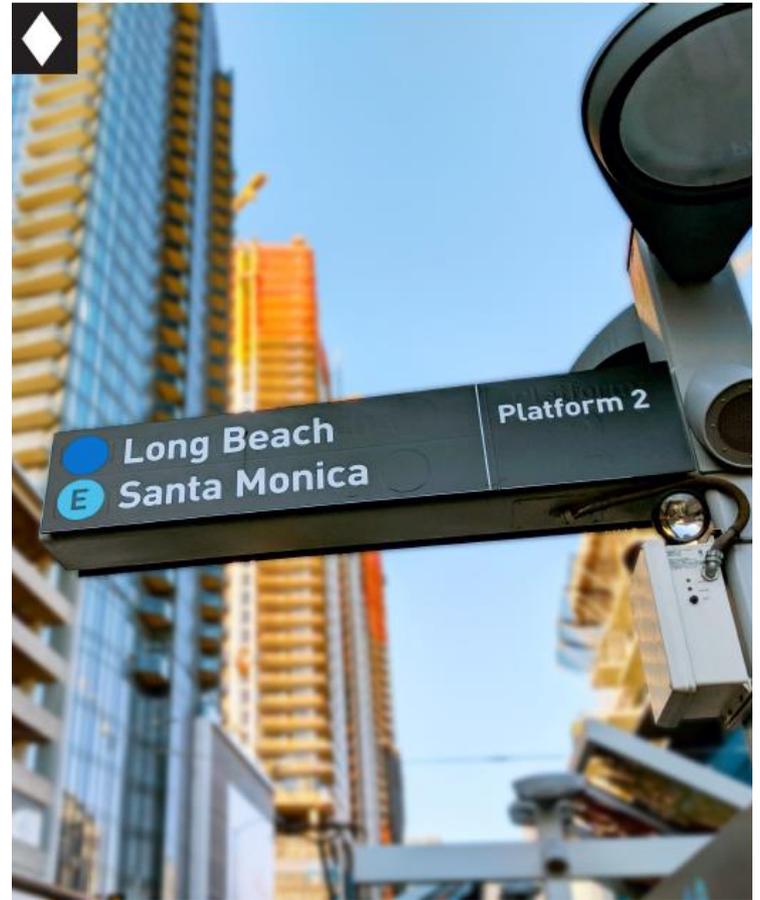
- Orange Line** ■
Chatsworth to North Hollywood
- Silver Line** ■
San Pedro to El Monte
Street Service in Downtown LA and San Pedro
- Arroyo Verdugo Line** ■
North Hollywood to Pasadena
- North San Fernando Valley Line** ■
Chatsworth to North Hollywood
- Vermont Line** ■
Los Feliz to West Athens

Some projects in study phase.

AUG 2028

Subject to Change

Combination Signage



Combination

PRO

Continuation of current system

For some lines, gives a sense of where the line goes

CON

Lack of internal consistency

Some names are too long to say

Hard for quick references when catching a train/bus

Colors Only Map – 2028



Conceptual



Names are not official – for testing purposes only

Metro Rail

- Blue Line** ●
Montclair to Long Beach
- Red Line** ●
North Hollywood to Union Station
- Green Line** ●
Expo/Crenshaw to Norwalk
- Purple Line** ●
Westwood/VA Hospital to Union Station
- Gold Line** ●
Santa Monica to Whittier
- Olive Line** ●
LAX to Torrance
- Lime Line** ●
Sylmar to West LA
- Pink Line** ●
Downtown LA to Artesia

Metro Busway

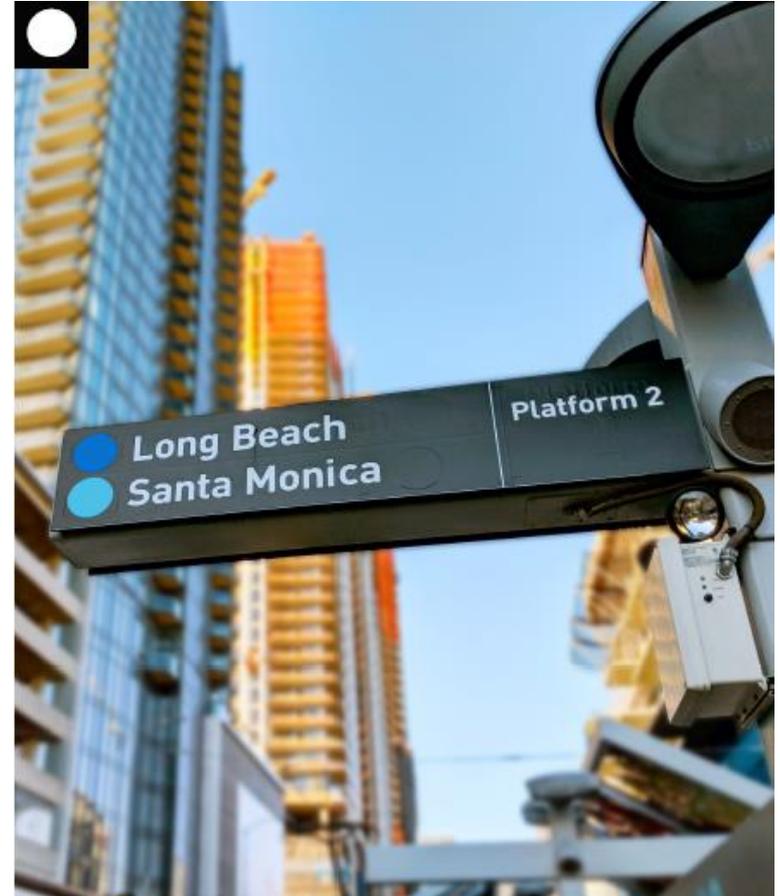
- Orange Line** ■
Chatsworth to North Hollywood
- Silver Line** ■
San Pedro to El Monte
Street Service in Downtown LA and San Pedro
- Aqua Line** ■
North Hollywood to Pasadena
- Brown Line** ■
Chatsworth to North Hollywood
- Lavender Line** ■
Los Feliz to West Athens

Some projects in study phase.

AUG 2028

Subject to Change

Colors Only Signage



Colors Only

PRO

Consistent across system

Similar to current system

Simple

Preferred by
Spanish-dominant speakers

CON

Can be hard to distinguish between similar colors; color blindness

Only one point of reference

Hard for quick references when catching a train/bus

Multiple terms for the same color (i.e., aqua, sky blue, light blue, turquoise, etc.)

Colors are “just words” to those born blind

Numbers w/Colors Map – 2028



Conceptual



Names are not official – for testing purposes only

Metro Rail

- 1** Montclair to Long Beach
- 2** North Hollywood to Union Station
- 3** Expo/Crenshaw to Norwalk
- 4** Westwood/VA Hospital to Union Station
- 5** Santa Monica to Whittier
- 9** LAX to Torrance
- 12** Sylmar to West LA
- 14** Downtown LA to Artesia

Metro Busway

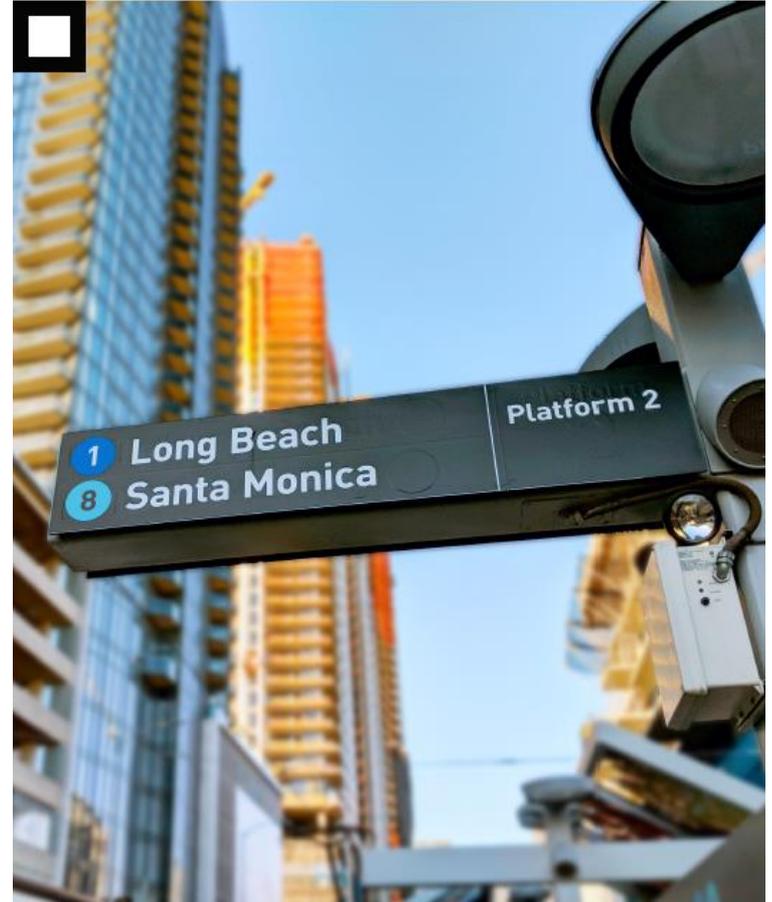
- 6** Chatsworth to North Hollywood
- 7** San Pedro to El Monte
Street Service in Downtown LA and San Pedro
- 10** North Hollywood to Pasadena
- 11** Chatsworth to North Hollywood
- 13** Los Feliz to West Athens

Some projects in study phase.

AUG 2028

Subject to Change

Numbers w/Colors Signage



Numbers w/Colors

PRO

Consistent across system

Simple

Intuitive to many

Second point of reference

Makes map clearer at end points of lines and the transfer points

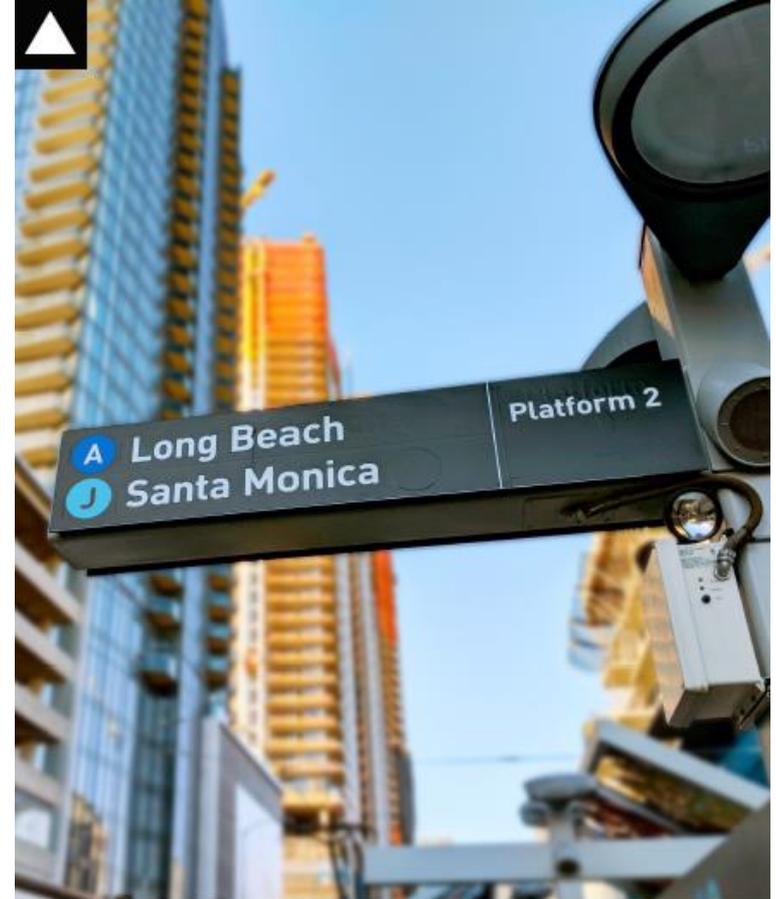
CON

Different from current system

Conflicts with bus numbering

Conflicts with platform numbers

Letters w/Colors Signages



Letters w/Colors

PRO

Consistent across system

Second point of reference

Makes map clearer at end points of lines and the transfer points

Intuitive to many

CON

Some people try to associate letters with places or color names

Letters often have meaning (H=hospital, E=East, etc.)

Skipped letters were confusing to some

Different from current system

Difficult for people whose languages don't include the Roman alphabet/lack English literacy

First Choice for Naming Convention after All Information

	Colors	Letters	Numbers	Combination
English-Speaking Non-Riders	2	3	5	0
English-Speaking Metro Riders	2	4	3	1
Spanish-Speaking Metro Riders	5	1	4	0
English-Speaking Visually-Impaired Riders	1	3	0	3
Korean-Speaking Residents	0	0	10	0
Total	10	11	22	4

Other Findings

- Consistency across the system is one of the most important factors
- Riders and non-riders think the way the lines are named is important
 - For non-riders, simplicity and expanded system makes them more likely to try Metro
- Most could be satisfied with either numbers or letters
- Riders and non-riders alike want more help figuring out how to go where they want to go
 - Which lines to take
 - How to get to the right platform inside each station
- Readability matters to many
 - Contrast of colors with each other
 - Contrast of text to colors

Transit Line Naming Options 2028

Option 1 Colors	Option 2 Colors and Corridor Names	Option 3 Numbers	Option 4 Letters
1990 Blue Line 	1990 Blue Line 	1990 	1990 
1993 Red Line 	1993 Red Line 	1993 	1993 
1995 Green Line 	1995 Green Line 	1995 	1995 
1996 Purple Line 	1996 Purple Line 	1996 	1996 
2003 Gold Line 	2003 Gold Line 	2003 	2003 
2005 Orange Line 	2005 Orange Line 	2005 	2005 
2009 Silver Line 	2009 Silver Line 	2009 	2009 
2019 Olive Line 	2019 South Bay/LAX Line 	2019 	2019 
2022 Aqua Line 	2022 Arroyo Verdugo Line 	2022 	2022 
2023 Brown Line 	2023 North San Fernando Valley Line 	2023 	2023 
2027 Lime Line 	2027 East San Fernando Valley/Sepulveda Line 	2027 	2027 
2028 Lavender Line 	2028 Vermont Line 	2028 	2028 
2028 Pink Line 	2028 West Santa Ana Line 	2028 	2028 

Keeping it in Perspective

- A consistent, clear, uniform system enhances customer experience and makes riding Metro less intimidating
- Legacy names and operational names can live in harmony
- No naming convention is perfect; there are benefits and challenges with all of them
- A decision should take into account all of the following:
 - Research – what do “the people” think?
 - Knowledge and expertise
 - Industry lessons learned
 - What is best for Metro and LA County



Next Steps

- Conduct additional research with diverse groups to test alternatives, signage and trip planner
 - Online Survey
 - Field Research Pop-Ups at Metro Stations if necessary
 - Additional focus groups if necessary
- Present overview and Recommended Action at September Board meeting
 - Action to return to the Board at Nov./Dec. meeting with staff recommendation, cost estimation and schedule
- Provide staff recommendation to Board at Nov./Dec. meeting including cost estimate and schedule



**Thank you.
Questions?**



Metro