

US Transit Growth Despite Funding Cuts

The prospect that US urban rail systems will continue to enjoy robust growth over much of the next decade seems surprisingly good. This is despite the fact that only two years ago, the conservative Republican Congress was hostile to urban transit, and there was a threat to transit funding from a strong drive to reduce the federal deficit.

William D Middleton

BY FAR the largest US network expansion is in **San Francisco**, where Bay Area Rapid Transit District (Bart) is completing three major extensions that will add almost 36km of line and five new stations to the 115km regional metro by the end of the year. Bart opened an initial section of a 12.6km extension to the Concord Line from Concord to North Concord/Martinez in December 1995. The next section is scheduled to open to Pittsburg/Bay Point this autumn. This will coincide with the opening of a 20.6km branch off the Fremont Line at Bay Fair to stations at Castro Valley and East Dublin/Pleasanton in Alameda County.

A 2.6km extension opened in February from Daly City south to Colma, in northern San Mateo County. Bart plans to begin construction this autumn of a 12.9km extension from Colma south to San Francisco International Airport, which should open by 2000.

Early next year, San Francisco Municipal Railway will open a 3.2km addition to its Muni Metro light rail network from the

present city-centre underground terminal to a new turnback facility on The Embarcadero and a new terminal at Sixth and Berry streets. By 2000, Muni should also complete an 8.4km extension that will take its new historic streetcar F Line along The Embarcadero to Fisherman's Wharf, and it is planning a Muni Metro light rail extension in the Third Street/Bayshore corridor that could open as early as 2001.

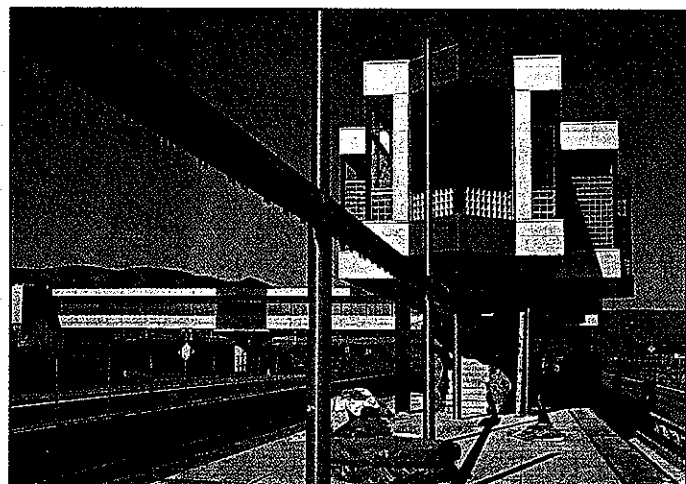
Sacramento's Regional Transit District plans to complete a 3.7km extension of its Folsom Corridor light rail line to Mather Field Road by late next year, while a planned 10.1km South Corridor Line could open by about 2000.

In **San Jose**, Santa Clara County Transit District is ready to begin construction of an 11.3km initial seg-

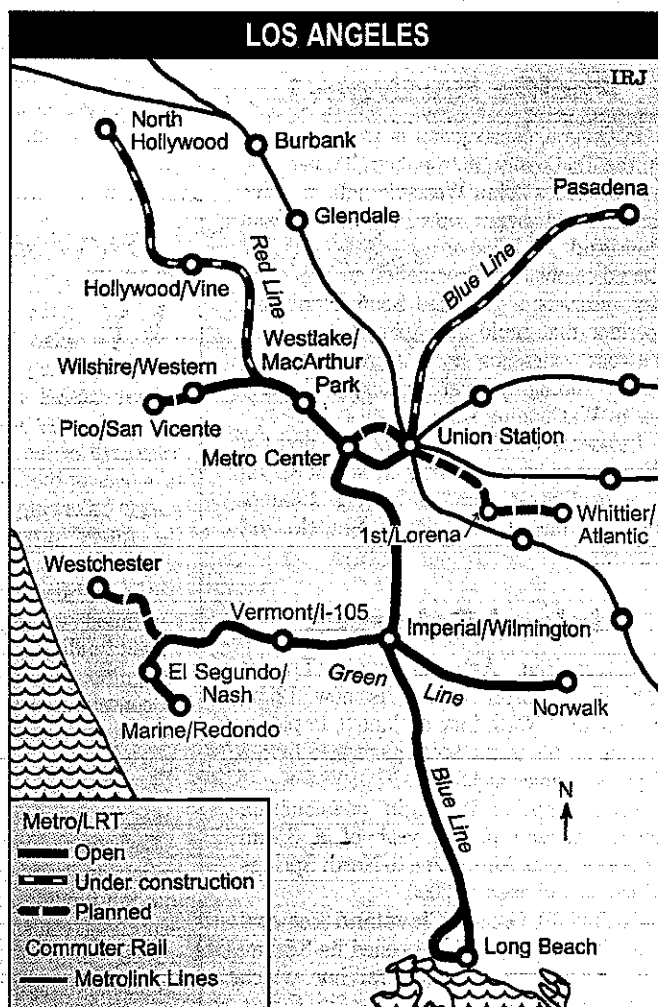
ment of the Tasman Corridor extension to its Guadalupe Corridor light rail line which should begin operating to Mountain View by 2000.

In **Los Angeles**, Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) opened a 3.2km, three-station extension to the Red Line metro from Westlake/MacArthur Park to Wilshire/Western in July. MTA plans to add another 7.6km to the Red Line by 1999, extending it to Hollywood Boulevard/Vine Street. The entire 37.7km, 22-station Red Line is due for completion early in the next decade.

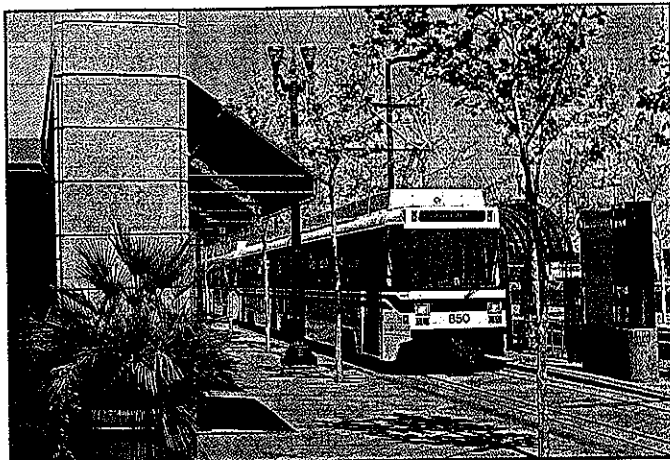
MTA has begun construction of the 22km Blue Line light rail line that should begin operating between Union Station and Pasadena in 2001. The new line will not be connected to the existing Blue Line to Long Beach as this terminates at Metro



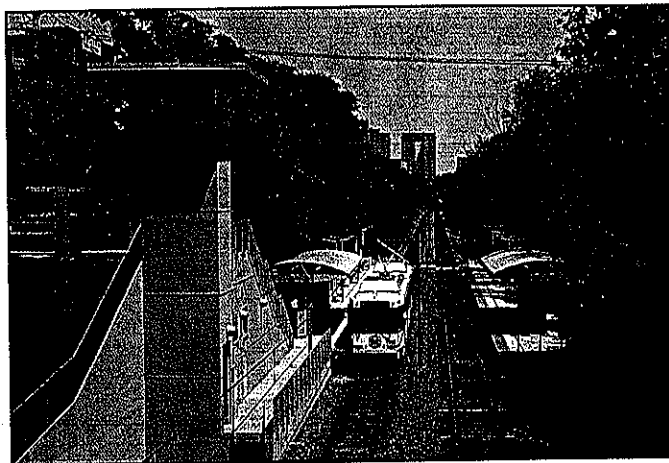
Bart services will be extended to Pittsburg/Bay Point this autumn.



Two extensions to LA's three-line network are under construction.



Santa Clara is ready to extend the initial LRT line in San Jose.



St Louis is extending its LRT line east into St Clair County.

Center. Passengers will have to use the Red Line to bridge the gap.

San Diego County's Metropolitan Transit Development Board (MTDB) opened an addition to its growing regional light rail system on June 16, with a 5.1km extension of the North-South line to Old Town San Diego. MTDB expects to open the 9.8km Mission Valley West Line by late 1997. MTDB is studying a Mission Valley East line to link its North and East lines. Other lines are proposed which could expand the network to about 110km by 2010.

Pacific Northwest

In Oregon, construction is well advanced on the Tri-County Metropolitan Transportation District's 29km Westside light rail line that should begin operating west from Portland to Hillsboro in 1998. Tri-Met should complete environmental studies early next year for a projected South/North rail corridor that could add 40km to the LRT network, extending north from Clackamas County through central Portland to Vancouver in Washington state.

Residents in the Puget Sound area of Washington state will vote in November on a regional transit plan that calls for 40km of light rail lines to be built in Seattle and Tacoma.

Inland Schemes

Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (Marta) opened its new 12km, three-station North Line on June 8, in plenty of time for the traffic boom generated by the Olympic Games in July.

Marta expects to begin construction before the end of the year of a 3.2km extension of its North Line to North Springs which should open in 2000.

On July 10, Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority (RTA) opened its 3.5 km, four-station Waterfront light rail line, which extended service from the Tower City Center station to a growing sports and entertain-

ment district in time to handle record crowds attending festivities celebrating the city's bicentennial.

Pittsburgh's Port Authority Transit is completing studies for a proposed 11.3km Spine Line LRT route linking the centre of Pittsburgh with areas to the north and east.

St Louis' popular MetroLink light rail line is being extended 28km east into St Clair County, Illinois, from East St Louis, with service scheduled to begin in 2001, and studies have begun for planned lines in three other corridors.

New Orleans Regional Transit Authority is studying both a 13.5km Canal Street rail line and a new line that would restore service on the famous Desire route in the French Quarter.

Memphis Area Transit Authority plans to open a 3.7km Riverfront Loop addition to its Main Street Trolley light rail line next year.

Denver's Regional Transportation District has begun final design for a 14km Southwest Corridor project that should extend its Central Corridor light rail line to Englewood and Littleton by 2000.

Utah Transit Authority is due to begin construction next year of a 24km light rail line in Salt Lake City. It should open to Sandy by the end of 2000.

East Coast Projects

New Jersey Transit is beginning construction of an initial 16km Bayonne-Hoboken

Federal Funding Remains Vital

WHILE local funding, and some federal support, is already in place for many transit projects, most are likely to materialise only if federal capital support remains strong. Although this seemed unlikely in the aftermath of the conservative Republican take-over of the Congress in 1994, and the budget-balancing emphasis that followed, the future prospects for transit have brightened considerably in recent months.

As the Clinton administration has continued to give strong support to transit funding, there has been a growing recognition that good transit is a concern of conservative suburban constituencies, as well as urban liberals, and transit legislation has been getting surprisingly favourable bi-partisan support in Congress.

Early in the year, the Clinton administration announced its intention to enter into full funding grant agreements for six major rail transit projects, and followed this up with a budget submittal that proposed transit funding of almost \$US 4.3 billion for the 1997 fiscal year. This

would represent a \$US 245 million increase over the previous year.

In June, the House Appropriations Transportation Subcommittee recommended 1997 funding equal to the previous year, while in mid-July the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee concerned with transportation recommended funding at \$US 331 million above the 1996 level. However the bill turns out in conference, 1997 is likely to be a fairly good year for transit project funding.

Even more important to transit projects on a long-term basis will be the outcome of deliberations on the reauthorisation of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991, which expires in September 1997.

Hearings have already begun in the House Surface Transportation Subcommittee, where the reauthorisation bill will originate, and a bill is likely to reach the floor at the beginning of the 1997 Congressional session. The original bill passed with strong bi-partisan support, and hopes are high that reauthorisation will get the same kind of support.