

**Examining the Role of Community Participation in the
Expansion of the Los Angeles Metro Gold Line**

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Abstract

Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) presents a unique opportunity to align the interests of developers, planners, and community members in supporting economic revitalization and in tackling urban congestion and environmental issues. Despite these benefits, TOD policies continue to be met with vigorous resistance from suburban homeowners who seek to preserve the character of their neighborhoods. These residents are frequently classified as NIMBYs, an acronym for “not in my backyard.” This opposition to new housing is a pressing policy concern as constraining a city’s supply of housing contributes to rent increases, the reduction of economic productivity, environmental harm, and the exacerbation of spatial inequalities.

This thesis examines how NIMBYism has affected the production and spatial distribution of fair housing in Los Angeles by identifying the predominant concerns raised by community members along the Gold Line’s extension from Azusa to Montclair. Although the benefits of TOD are well understood, less can be found in current literature addressing the role of community participation in the implementation of such policies. This thesis looks at how differences in the socio-political dynamics at work surrounding the Gold Line impact station development and the megaproject’s planning process. In doing so, this thesis contributes to conversations regarding the future of transit, urban planning, and housing policy in Los Angeles.

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Introduction

In the early 1900s, Los Angeles residents and visitors used a surprising mode of transportation to traverse the region: the historic streetcar. By the 1920s, the city's streetcar system was the largest in the world, with over 1,100 miles of track and 900 electric cars. The exploding popularity of single-family tract housing and automobile use in the 1950s eventually shifted the city's population away from the urban core, rendering the streetcar nearly obsolete. On March 31, 1963, after nearly 90 years of service, all streetcar systems were abandoned.¹

Today, the City of Los Angeles is notorious for its automobile-dominated landscapes and resultant car-dependent culture. The region is home to more than 4.5 million commuters, 73% of which drive alone to work. Transportation sector emissions represent nearly 40% of the state's total greenhouse gas emissions.² African American, Latino, and Asian Californians are exposed to particulate matter pollution (PM_{2.5}) at rates 43%, 39%, and 21% higher, respectively, than white Californians.³ The city is also plagued by an affordable housing shortage, with 73% of households qualifying as rent burdened and over 60,000 people qualifying as homeless. While Los Angeles leads the state in housing production, only 9% of the units added over the past five years have served the population earning below the Area Median Income (AMI). The persistence of the city's affordable housing crisis suggests that simply providing more housing does not trickle down to serve the population earning below the AMI. This shortage has depressed the metro area's GDP by over 2%, or \$18-22 billion annually, as households reduce their consumption in other areas to afford their rent or mortgage.⁴

Los Angeles's affordable housing deficit and excessive transportation emissions have a common solution: transit-oriented development (TOD). TODs locate dense, mixed-income, mixed-use communities within a reasonable walk of public transit. These compact pedestrian and bicycle-friendly environments are built with the intent to help station areas achieve high transit ridership and low Vehicle Miles of Travel (VMT), to ensure the provision of mixed-income housing, and to create healthy, prosperous neighborhoods.⁵

¹ "Streetcar History."

² Stein, "Los Angeles's Transit-Oriented Communities Program: Challenges and Opportunities."

³ "Inequitable Exposure to Air Pollution from Vehicles in California."

⁴ Woetzel et al., "Affordable Housing in Los Angeles."

⁵ "Transit-Oriented Development and Sustainable Urban Planning."

TOD presents a unique opportunity to align the interests of developers, planners, and community members in supporting economic revitalization and in tackling urban congestion and environmental issues. Despite these benefits, TOD policies continue to meet vigorous resistance from suburban homeowners who seek to preserve the character of their neighborhoods. These residents are frequently classified as NIMBYs, an acronym for “not in my backyard.” This opposition to new housing is a pressing policy concern as constraining a city’s supply of housing contributes to rent increases, the reduction of economic productivity, environmental harm, and the exacerbation of spatial inequalities.

Research Question

This thesis examines how NIMBYism has affected the production and spatial distribution of urban public infrastructure in Los Angeles by examining the social and political discourse surrounding the Gold Line’s extension from Azusa to Montclair. Although the benefits of TOD are well understood, less can be found in current literature addressing the role of community participation in the implementation of these policies. This thesis looks at how differences in the socio-political dynamics at work surrounding the Gold Line have impacted station development and the megaproject’s planning process. In doing so, this thesis contributes to conversations regarding the future of transit, urban planning, and housing policy in Los Angeles.

Chapter 1: Background & Literature Review

Setting the Scene: Housing & Transportation in Los Angeles

Like freeways, bridges, and the Los Angeles Metro Gold Line, housing is infrastructure. Stable, affordable housing strengthens a community's productivity and economic growth, promotes economic mobility, and provides greater household stability. As housing resides at the intersection of several themes, including equity, urbanization, infrastructure, and construction and government productivity, the state of housing in Los Angeles is a bellwether for the state of the city as a whole.

While Los Angeles currently leads the state of California in housing production, only 9% of the units constructed within the city over the past five years have been affordable to households earning less than the Area Median Income of \$91,100. Compounding this issue, wage growth has not matched increases in rents and home prices within the region. In order to afford the county's median asking rent without strain, renters need to earn 3.6 times the local minimum wage of \$15.50.⁶ Housing unaffordability affects renters significantly more than homeowners, as renters are subject to fluctuations in market rent, changes in building ownership, and redevelopment plans. Additionally, property owners are incentivized to convert their affordable housing stock to market-rate apartments in thriving real estate markets, a fact particularly concerning as 10,000 of the city's units have affordability covenants expiring before the end of 2023.⁷

To expedite the residential development process, the city has made some progress in simplifying the zoning code, streamlining housing approvals, and encouraging density. The state has also enacted legislation that allows developers to circumvent local zoning ordinances to build denser, more affordable developments under certain conditions. For example, Senate Bill 9, passed in 2020, allows homeowners to subdivide their current residential lot or construct a duplex without discretionary review or hearings.⁸ Senate Bill 10, also passed in 2020, allows cities to upzone parcels in transit- or jobs-rich areas and urban infill sites to permit up to 10 dwelling units without having to partake in the expensive and lengthy California Environmental

⁶ Woetzel et al., "Affordable Housing in Los Angeles."

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ "California Governor Newsom Signs Three Important New Bills into Law Impacting Residential Zoning and Development."

Quality Act (CEQA) environmental review process.⁹ In 2022, Assembly Bill 721 rendered recorded covenants limiting residential development unenforceable against the owner of a 100% Below Market Rate (BMR) housing development.¹⁰ Despite this momentum, California stopped short of passing Proposition 10 in 2018, a ballot measure that would have repealed a state law preventing cities and counties from imposing rent control on single-family homes and apartments built after 1995, due to fierce opposition from landlords, developers, realtors, and Wall Street real estate investors.¹¹

Los Angeles is also experiencing unprecedented momentum surrounding the expansion of transportation infrastructure. The passage of Measure R in 2008 initiated the massive investment of \$120 billion over the next 40 years into the county's transportation projects and improvements.¹² The implementation of Measure M in 2016 commenced a major expansion of the county's public transit system using funds from a sales tax increase.¹³ The development of the Long-Range Transportation Plan in 2020 provided a detailed roadmap for the funding and policies the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Agency (Metro) will need to improve mobility within the county over the next 30 years.¹⁴ These transportation improvements, if aligned with the city's land use planning and housing policy initiatives, have the potential not only to increase public transit ridership rates, support the city's environmental goals, and protect the access of county residents who rely on public transit daily, but also to mitigate the affordable housing crisis and facilitate the upward economic mobility of the city's residents.

Defining Transit-Oriented Development

Los Angeles has become increasingly interested in transit-oriented development (TOD) in an effort to maximize the benefits of the city's transit investments. TOD aligns land use and transportation planning by locating dense, mixed-income, mixed-use communities within a reasonable walk of mass transit. If done correctly, TOD offers more than a mobility solution, reducing auto-dependence, congestion, greenhouse gases, and the combined costs of housing and

⁹ "California Governor Newsom Signs Three Important New Bills into Law Impacting Residential Zoning and Development."

¹⁰ Maclean et al., "California's 2022 Housing Laws: What You Need to Know."

¹¹ Levin, "Why Is California's Rent-Control Initiative Tanking so Badly?"

¹² "Measure R."

¹³ "Measure M."

¹⁴ "Long Range Transportation Plan."

transportation, while encouraging residents to bike and walk, expanding transportation choices for households of all incomes, and contributing to the region's economic development and job growth.

This density has significant economic benefits. According to a continuing study at Harvard, the single strongest indicator of a low-income family's likelihood of escaping poverty is their commuting time.¹⁵ Expanding public transit access to households of all incomes thus contributes to the upward economic mobility of a city's residents. Additionally, the doubling of population density leads to a 3-5% increase in economic productivity.¹⁶ Increasing employment density by 10% leads to a 9% increase in access to jobs.¹⁷

Neighborhood vibrancy and transportation access often leads to an increase in property values and an influx of capital. This resultant increase in real estate value often flows to the pockets of property owners, developers, and investors. Ideally, cities will capture this increase and use it to finance transit improvements, affordable housing, and other initiatives that promote sustainable inclusive growth.¹⁸ This is seen in the City of La Verne in Los Angeles County, for example, which established an Enhanced Infrastructure Financing District (EIFD) to fund the construction of infrastructure improvements near the city's future Gold Line light rail station. The incremental increase in property taxes above those collected in the base year of 2017 is restricted for use in the funding of 14 infrastructure projects identified in the Infrastructure Financing Plan, projected to cost \$33 million.¹⁹

High-density development and public transit mutually reinforce each other, with the concentration of nearby jobs and residences supporting ridership and the financial viability of public transit, and with mass transit supporting the significant number of people that comes with compact development.²⁰ Residents living near transit are 30% more likely to utilize it.²¹ A residential density of at least 10 to 20 people per acre is considered transit-supportive for bus service, 67 people per acre for light rail, and 119 people per acre for heavy rail.²²

¹⁵ Bouchard, "Transportation Emerges as Crucial to Escaping Poverty."

¹⁶ Rappaport, "Consumption Amenities and City Population Density."

¹⁷ Mondschein et al., "Congested Development: A Study of Traffic Delays, Access, and Economic Activity in Metropolitan Los Angeles."

¹⁸ "Transit-Oriented Development and Sustainable Urban Planning."

¹⁹ "Enhanced Infrastructure Financing District (EIFD)."

²⁰ "Fostering Equitable and Sustainable Transit-Oriented Development."

²¹ Ewing and Cervero, "Travel and the Built Environment."

²² Cervero and Guerra, "Urban Densities and Transit: A Multi-Dimensional Perspective."

The environmental, economic, and social benefits of TOD are strengthened by providing nearby affordable housing. Doing so mitigates the displacement of a neighborhood's original residents and the lower-income residents who would benefit most from infrastructure improvements. Additionally, vehicle ownership is more common among wealthier residents, regardless of transit proximity. The provision of affordable housing along transit lines consequently maintains a ridership base.²³

Demand for location efficient, transit-oriented housing options in Los Angeles is steadily increasing. The Center for Transit-Oriented Development has forecasted that over 1.7 million households in the region will want to live near transit by 2030, with nearly two thirds of these households earning less than the city's median income.²⁴ It is imperative that Los Angeles invests in affordable housing development as it continues to expand its public transportation infrastructure. The city and state have taken some steps to connect housing policy with transportation planning. Passed in 2016, Measure JJJ incentivizes affordable housing development near transit hubs within a half-mile of major transit stops by awarding developers with density bonuses and parking requirement reductions in exchange for making up to 20 percent of a project's units affordable for low-income renters and paying laborers prevailing wages.²⁵ Additionally, state law requires Los Angeles to update the Housing Element of its General Plan every eight years to demonstrate sufficient zoned capacity for housing to accommodate the number of units identified in the Regional Housing Needs Assessment.²⁶ Continuing to coordinate strong partnerships among city and state housing and transportation functions will maximize the co-benefits of transportation infrastructure and housing investments, mitigating the affordable housing crisis while supporting the city's environmental goals.

There are multiple types of TODs, the slight variations in which permit the model to fit a variety of contexts. Single-node TOD consists of a single neighborhood situated around heavy rail stations in either an urban or suburban location. Multi-node TOD reaches further than a single location, creating a regional network of nodes around heavy rail stations. This type of TOD aims to realign entire urban regions around rail transport and to decrease their dependency

²³ Kralovich, "Cultivating Successful Transit-Rich Communities in Los Angeles: Strategies for Equitable TOD."

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Zhu et al., "Los Angeles' Housing Crisis and Local Planning Responses: An Evaluation of Inclusionary Zoning and the Transit-Oriented Communities Plan as Policy Solutions in Los Angeles."

²⁶ "Housing Element Update."

on automobiles. Finally, corridor TOD is based around light rail or bus stops in urban areas, resulting in a linear or ribbon-like pattern along transit lines because the nodes are near each other. The Los Angeles Metro Gold Line presents an opportunity for corridor TOD.

The implementation of TOD is often challenged by fiscal, organizational, and political factors. Fiscal obstacles include higher costs and risks associated with urban infill development, additional construction costs required by multistory buildings, the engagement of local governments in fiscal zoning to maximize property tax revenue, and the high costs of density-supportive infrastructure. Organizational obstacles include the difficulty of coordinating TOD-supportive policies among stakeholders, resistance to change within public agencies, and the clash of dissimilar architectural and urban design standards. Political obstacles include exclusionary land use regulations as well as community opposition to multifamily housing, infill development, and public transit expansion.²⁷ This thesis will predominantly consider the political factors impacting Gold Line station development.

Because of myriad obstructions, TOD often does not occur naturally, but often requires national, regional, and local government coordination to facilitate a conducive environment. Local governments need to express support for TOD through general plans, transportation plans, station area plans, special zoning provisions, and transit design guidelines. Cities also need to direct economic development to station areas, while transit agencies need to adopt policies and procedures concerning joint development and air rights.²⁸

While many may feel that California's car-dependent culture is inconducive to transit-oriented development, the state boasts several examples of successful TOD. One exemplary TOD is the Del Mar station, located in Pasadena, California along the Los Angeles Metro Gold Line. The project offers 347 apartments within walking distance of the station, 15% of which qualify as affordable. A network of plazas, paseos, and courtyards connects the development's 20,000 square feet of retail. Parking is reduced and out of sight, located in a subterranean parking garage that is shared by all buildings and the light rail station. The development seamlessly integrates its transportation access by detailing the light rail right-of-way as a public street. In

²⁷ "Transit-Oriented Development in the United States: Experiences, Challenges, and Prospects."

²⁸ Chisholm, "Transit-Oriented Development and Joint Development in the United States: A Literature Review."

doing so, this project achieved relatively high density for a suburban town without sacrificing pedestrian-friendliness or human-scale.²⁹

In Hollywood in the 1980s and 90s, the production of TOD around three new Red Line subway stations in Hollywood revitalized the neighborhood. This revitalization was the result of a concerted effort by a coalition of community groups, business owners, and government agencies who worked to remove blight and produce and preserve affordable housing in the area by bringing buildings up to code and prosecuting slumlords. The Red Line reconnected the neighborhood with Downtown, the San Fernando Valley, and other parts of the city, acting as an anchor for high-end development, and boosting the perception of Hollywood as a well-served, interconnected and exciting place to live, work, and play.³⁰

In 2004, the completion of Oakland's Fruitvale Transit Village transformed a run-down parking lot in one of the city's most underserved neighborhoods into a vibrant, mixed-use community center. Planning for this project began in 1991, when Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) announced their plans to construct a multi-layered parking facility on the vacant parking lot. Fruitvale residents resisted BART's plan, organizing to develop instead a nonprofit health clinic, a library, a "head start" education program, a foster children's counseling clinic, a senior center, 45,000 square feet of office space, and 45,000 square feet of retail and restaurant space. Today, 32% of Fruitvale Village residents use BART to get to work, a number four times greater than that of Oakland as a whole.³¹

These examples of successful TOD in California stress the importance of community organization as well as early planning for affordable housing provision and preservation. Successful stakeholder coordination can ensure the maximization of community benefits and the provision of a development unique to the needs of the neighborhood in which it is located. Prioritizing income diversity in station areas early on is crucial because maintaining affordable housing options becomes more difficult as property values in the area rise. Additionally, long-term affordability planning ensures the possibility to include value capture mechanisms, like Tax Incremental Districts or La Verne's Enhanced Infrastructure Financing District, at the neighborhood level before gentrification begins.³²

²⁹ "Del Mar Station."

³⁰ Kralovich, "Cultivating Successful Transit-Rich Communities in Los Angeles: Strategies for Equitable TOD."

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

Currently, there are 40,000 parcels near transit across the City of Los Angeles that utilize less than 25% of their zoning potential. Prioritizing these sites for mixed-use, mixed-income development could accelerate affordable housing production within current zoning resolutions while capitalizing upon the ongoing expansion of public transit.³³

Introducing NIMBYs

“NIMBY” is a colloquialism that signifies one’s opposition to locating land uses deemed undesirable within their neighborhood. These “locally unwanted land uses” are frequently referred to as LULUs.³⁴ This opposition is premised on a variety of concerns relating to the built environment, neighborhood character and composition, and the development process. NIMBYs often cite fears of increased traffic flow, strained parking, reduced environmental and lifestyle quality, and loss of property value. Some residents argue that increased density would exceed a neighborhood’s carrying capacity or ruin the neighborhood’s character. Others express their distaste for proposed architectural styles. Residents of wealthier neighborhoods often voice the risk of increased crime as a reason for opposing affordable housing or higher density. NIMBYs occasionally also challenge the motives and morality of builders and developers, condemn variances and discretionary views, allege political corruption, question zoning legality, and cast doubt on the neighborhood’s need for a project.³⁵

In 1993, Robert Lake wrote that “rather than reflecting conflict between a local community and the broader society, local opposition to LULUs expresses conflict between community and capital, and between community and the state acting on behalf of capital’s interests.”³⁶ As housing is a vehicle for capital accumulation in America, NIMBYism may be interpreted as a rational response within this context. However, many NIMBY concerns are founded in fear rather than fact. For example, many NIMBYs express fears of a decrease in their property’s value if affordable housing is sited nearby. There is sufficient evidence to indicate that affordable housing is more likely to have no impact or minimal impact on surrounding home prices.³⁷ This suggests NIMBYism is rooted in something else.

³³ Woetzel et al., “Affordable Housing in Los Angeles.”

³⁴ “Not in My Backyard Phenomenon.”

³⁵ Monkkonen and Livesley-O-Neill, “Overcoming Opposition to New Housing.”

³⁶ Lake, “Planners’ Alchemy Transforming NIMBY to YIMBY: Rethinking NIMBY.”

³⁷ “Student Corner: Does Affordable Housing Negatively Impact Nearby Property Values?”

Historically, there has been a strongly racist element of some NIMBY movements in the United States. Wealthy white homeowners might mask their endeavors to keep minorities out of a neighborhood by introducing density controls for seemingly innocuous reasons such as “preserving neighborhood character” or “preventing crime.”³⁸ This persistent prejudice is evidenced by the racial integration of metropolitan areas between 1980 and 2000, where local governments permitted denser developments.³⁹ It is also illustrated by the sharp increase of white residents who refuse to enter or try to move out of a neighborhood as the percentage of black residents rises. Housing audits carried out over the past two decades reveal the persistence of discrimination against black renters and homebuyers in both securing housing and in the allocation of home mortgages.⁴⁰ The resultant exclusionary land use policies that support NIMBYism have greatly shaped the foundation and maintenance of suburbs and urban enclaves in America.

It is important to note that those who are particularly vulnerable to displacement are just as likely to oppose new luxury or market-rate housing developments, reacting to a lack of affordability and potential ensuing gentrification.⁴¹

NIMBYs have several systemic opportunities for operationalizing their opposition. They can communicate their concern through the planning system by commenting in public forums, writing letters, using social media, hampering design reviews, filing historic designation petitions, appealing certain projects, influencing community planning processes, capturing regional planning agencies, and advocating for requirements beyond the baseline zoning standards. NIMBYs can also employ the legal system by suing developers and Construction Authorities under CEQA, threatening to sue (“greenmailing”) developers to get pay-offs or concessions for non-environmental community benefits, suing developers for not meeting a discretionary condition, and suing to invalidate a permit or policy. NIMBYs can utilize the political system by running ballot initiatives to place a moratorium on development, lobbying city councilmembers to block discretionary permits, recalling city councilmembers, electing anti-development councilmembers, and lobbying for anti-development state laws. Other NIMBY

³⁸ Tretter and Heyman, “YIMBYism and the Housing Crisis in Canada and the United States: A Critical Reflection.”

³⁹ Whittemore, “The Role of Racial Bias in Exclusionary Zoning: The Case of Durham, North Carolina, 1945–2014.”

⁴⁰ Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass*.

⁴¹ Lake, “Planners’ Alchemy Transforming NIMBY to YIMBY: Rethinking NIMBY.”

devices include using negative labels for certain types of housing to influence public opinion, accusing developers and politicians of corruption, and building coalitions with a shared ideology of fighting growth.⁴²

The converse position to NIMBYism is YIMBYism (“yes in my backyard”), a housing movement that maintains that building more, denser housing is the solution to urban sprawl, habitat destruction, automobile dependency, racial segregation, and global climate change. YIMBYs lean on the assumption of supply and demand, which implies that increasing the housing supply should directly decrease housing prices. They primarily strive to replace restrictive local land use controls, such as single-family zoning, with forms of zoning that facilitate development, such as zoning for denser residential buildings.⁴³

YIMBYs position themselves as environmentalists and progressives, despite legitimate concerns about whether new housing developments will actually be affordable. However, it is by no means a consensus among academics that simply supplying more housing without affordability requirements reduces the cost of consumption. Los Angeles’s housing crisis persists despite the fact that the city leads the state of California in housing production. With only 9% of the units constructed within the city over the past five years priced affordably for households earning less than the Area Median Income, it is clear that simply increasing housing production does not make housing more affordable citywide.⁴⁴ Benjamin Teresa asserts that “to the extent that any YIMBY formation pairs with long-running urban neoliberalization that assumes laissez-faire deregulatory approaches as solutions to urban problems, it is negotiating the conflicts that capital produces.”⁴⁵ In calling for the “right to build,” YIMBYism attempts to manage the housing crisis within the same capitalist mode of production that created it.

The Relationship Between Cities & States

In 1891’s *Trustees of Dartmouth College v. Woodward*, the United States Supreme Court determined that the role of the city government is to protect private property against state power.⁴⁶ One of the most efficient ways a city does so today is through its local land use

⁴² Monkkonen and Livesley-O'Neill, “Overcoming Opposition to New Housing.”

⁴³ Teresa, “Planners’ Alchemy Achieved? How NIMBY and YIMBY Reproduce the Housing Question.”

⁴⁴ Woetzel et al., “Affordable Housing in Los Angeles.”

⁴⁵ Teresa, “Planners’ Alchemy Achieved? How NIMBY and YIMBY Reproduce the Housing Question.”

⁴⁶ Frug, *City Making*.

regulation. US courts have supported municipalities' power to enact zoning laws for the "health, safety, morals, or the general welfare of the community," to preserve property values, and to foster economic development.⁴⁷ This power is granted to localities in part because municipal governments are by nature more sensitive to the needs and conditions of their constituencies than a centralized government could be. Additionally, city power enables citizens to engage in an "essential ingredient of democratic government: participation in local decision-making," which Alexis de Tocqueville asserted "will always more powerfully produce social welfare than the authority of the government."⁴⁸

However, cities frequently behave more like private businesses than governments. According to Harvey Molotch, a city is essentially the expression of the interests of a land-based elite, who stand to profit if rents and real estate prices rise. This leads interest groups to push government levers to generate growth for their metropolis as a whole and for their sections of it in particular, fueling the "urban growth machine."⁴⁹ Additionally, property taxes comprise a significant percentage of municipal income, motivating driving cities to raise and preserve property values in order to provide city services. This means cities are systemically incentivized toward rent-seeking behavior. These fiscal and political incentives are difficult for any individual jurisdiction to overcome on its own.⁵⁰

Homeowners have a particularly high incentive to participate in local politics because their assets are invested in the value of their homes. Because homeowners are often the dominant and most outspoken group of voters in small towns and suburbs, local elections often have an absence of party competition.⁵¹ This is the crux of the "homevoter hypothesis," a term coined by William Fischel.⁵² Those who testify at land use hearings are typically a proposed project's immediate neighbors, with half of the attendees living on the same block as the proposed development, and a mere 15% of them expressing support for the project.⁵³ The structure is consequently biased toward zoning restrictions and exclusion.⁵⁴ State power is thus uniquely

⁴⁷ Frug, *City Making*.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ Logan and Molotch, *Urban Fortunes: The Political Economy of Place*.

⁵⁰ Kazis, "Ending Exclusionary Zoning in New York City's Suburbs."

⁵¹ Klein and Demsas, "How Blue Cities Became So Outrageously Unaffordable."

⁵² Fischel, *The Homevoter Hypothesis: How Home Values Influence Local Government Taxation, School Finance, and Land-Use Policies*.

⁵³ Kazis, "Ending Exclusionary Zoning in New York City's Suburbs."

⁵⁴ Schleicher, "City Unplanning."

positioned to curtail NIMBY operationalization in the form of exclusionary zoning, through Senate and Assembly Bills tackling density and land use controls and through the exercise of eminent domain.

California is ground zero for the battle between NIMBYism and YIMBYism, with YIMBYism's earliest and most vocal supporters in California, and California historically having gone further than most in empowering NIMBYism. While "liberal" NIMBYs do not deny that California has a housing problem, they blame investors who buy single-family houses, big technology companies, and inequality generally rather than exclusionary and low-density zoning. Meanwhile, opponents paint YIMBYs as being in the pocket of real estate interests and investors.⁵⁵ The extension of the Los Angeles Metro Gold Line represents a snapshot of this conflict.

⁵⁵ Dougherty, "Twilight of the NIMBY."

Chapter 2: Methodology

The first step in my research was to provide context for each station by gathering background information and factual data through literature searches. The Foothill Gold Line's website provided ample information regarding project timelines, route and station placement, station design, and the project's Environmental Impact Statements (EIS). The U.S. Census Bureau provided information on each city's demographic composition.

I then performed a mixed methods discourse analysis, employing both qualitative and quantitative research methods, to illuminate the social and political discourse surrounding the extension of the Gold Line from Azusa to Montclair. To do so, I coded and catalogued stakeholder claims recorded in the Gold Line's Environmental Impact Statements from the time of the light rail's conception to the present year. Environmental Impact Statements are prepared in conformance with the California Environmental Quality Act of 1970 and evaluate a project's potential environmental effects. Each of these reports includes community members' comments received after initial drafts of the EIS were circulated for public review. In electing to focus on data collected from these documents, my thesis illustrates the dialogue specifically between stakeholders and the Gold Line Construction Authority. This narrows my data to community input directly considered by the Construction Authority when determining project modifications.

I logged these comments in a claims database organized by station, actor, operationalization, concern, proposed solution, and attitude, coding each as follows:

Actor	Code
City government	1
General public	2
Interest group	3
County government	4
Tribal	5
State government	6
Federal government	7

Operationalization	Code
Lawsuit	1
Public hearing	2

Concern	Code
Positive comments	1
Impact on neighborhood	2
Project delivery	3
Visual impact/design	4
Property values	5
Traffic/parking	6
Safety	7
Multimodality	8

Solution	Code
None	1
Move station	2
Alter work schedule/management	3
Streamline permit approval	4
Change design	5
Further evaluation	6

Attitude	Code
Against	-1
Neutral	0
For	1

I determined these categorizations by identifying trends in the recorded comments. Concerns regarding the Gold Line’s impact on the neighborhood may include impacts on local land uses, natural habitats, and landscape design. Concerns regarding project delivery may include questioning Gold Line authority and challenging the adequacy of the Construction Authority’s environmental review process in addition to management, phasing, and timeline concerns. Visual impact and design concerns may also include reservations about the project’s potential noise and vibrations.

This method of discourse analysis was developed by Koopmans and Statham as a way to establish the link between actors and contents in a discourse by “collecting data not just on the actors and their forms of action, but also on the interpretations by actors involved.”⁵⁶ It uses a

⁵⁶ Koopmans and Statham, “Political Claims Analysis: Integrating Protest Event and Political Discourse Approaches.”

single data set to identify a “multi-organizational field of relevant actors,” analyze the distribution of claims made by these actors, map these actors on a one-dimensional scale, and assess the degree of polarization between actors.⁵⁷ I elected to use this method of analysis as it is a useful tool for studying the political implications of written and spoken text. Historically, it has been applied to discourse surrounding ethnic relations, citizenship and immigration, European integration, and intellectual property rights.⁵⁸

I added nuance to these statistical findings by layering them with insights from ten interviews. I held nine interviews with city councilmembers of the cities along the Gold Line’s proposed extension and one interview with the Gold Line Construction Authority’s Director of Community Relations. These interviews examined each city’s predominant concerns with the proposed extension, obstacles the project has faced, the predominant interest groups, and how each city has prepared for the Gold Line’s arrival. Using a mixed methods approach is crucial in developing a nuanced understanding of the socio-political dynamics surrounding the Gold Line’s extension.

The final analytical step was to assess the implications of these stakeholder claims for the megaproject’s development process.

Limitations

Interviews with San Dimas city councilmembers were difficult to secure, as the city is currently involved in litigation with the Gold Line. Additionally, Montclair city councilmembers did not respond to requests for comment. This limited data collection for these two cities.

It is important to note the limitations of the community engagement process utilized to collect this public input. Pomona City Councilmember Nora Garcia pointed out that the only requirement for community engagement is alerting those within 400 feet of the proposed project, and only through a newspaper advertisement. Claremont City Councilmember Jennifer Stark also spoke about the importance of recognizing those not in attendance at community engagement meetings. The findings in this thesis, therefore, do not reflect the views of all stakeholders but of the most vocal and the most proximate ones.

⁵⁷ Koopmans and Statham, “Political Claims Analysis: Integrating Protest Event and Political Discourse Approaches.”

⁵⁸ Ibid.

Chapter 3: Findings

History of the Los Angeles Metro Gold Line

The Los Angeles Metropolitan Transit Authority (Metro) was created by the state in 1993 by merging the Los Angeles County Transportation Commission and the Southern California Rapid Transit District. Today, Metro is responsible for operating the clean air CNG-powered Metro bus fleet, Rapid Bus lines, and the Blue Line, Red Line, Green Line, and Gold Line. The agency also funds and constructs multimodal transportation solutions throughout Los Angeles County.⁵⁹

Metro purchased the right-of-way for the Gold Line in 1993, when Amtrak ceased operations on the Atchinson, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railway's connection from San Bernadino to Los Angeles. Construction began in 1994 but was halted only a year following due to cost overruns. After a state Senate Bill created the Construction Authority to expedite project delivery, the project's first phase from Los Angeles to Pasadena was completed within time and budget requirements. The line began revenue operations in July 2003.⁶⁰ The line's second phase broke ground in 2010 and began service in 2016, extending the Gold Line from Pasadena to Glendora. This extension was fully funded by LA County's Measure R.⁶¹ The line's third phase, the focus of this research, will extend service from Glendora to Montclair upon completion. The Gold Line Construction Authority awarded the \$805.6 million design-build contract for the 9.1-mile segment between Glendora and Pomona to the Kiewit-Parsons Joint Venture in 2019. This segment is predominantly funded by Measure M, along with residual Measure R funds from the previous phase.⁶² As of February 2019, the estimated cost to complete the six-station project from Glendora to Montclair was \$2.1 billion, leaving the 3.2-mile segment from Pomona to Montclair unfunded by \$340 million to \$430 million (Figure 1).⁶³

⁵⁹ "Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro)."

⁶⁰ Parra, "A Decade of The Metro Gold Line."

⁶¹ "Pasadena to Azusa."

⁶² "Glendora Station Fact Sheet."

⁶³ "Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Report for Metro Gold Line Foothill Extension."



Figure 1. Gold Line Extension

Transit-oriented development has always been a key consideration of the Gold Line program, as there are approximately 1,200 acres of transit-adjacent sites with development potential. As of 2017, there was \$6.7 billion of private investment value along the Gold Line, including 12,500 new housing units, 3.6 million square feet of commercial and industrial space, 1,400 hotel rooms, 49,000 direct and indirect jobs from construction, 12,000 continuous jobs housed in the corridor’s new development, and \$50 million in annual revenue from property taxes, sales taxes, and transient occupancy taxes for LA County. The line’s second phase has the potential to generate over \$9 billion of private investment value, resulting in 17,000 new housing units, 10 million square feet of commercial and industrial space, 250 hotel rooms, 66,000 direct and indirect jobs from construction, 45,000 continuous jobs housed in the corridor’s new development, and \$100 million in annual revenue for LA County.⁶⁴

The population of the San Gabriel Valley is projected to hit approximately 2.5 million by 2035. To accommodate this 600,000-person increase over the current population of 1.9 million, over 170,000 new housing units will need to be constructed.⁶⁵ In the initial phase of the line, several “wide spots” in the right-of-way created the opportunity to sell land at station sites to

⁶⁴ “Foothill Gold Line Transit Oriented Development Update.”

⁶⁵ “TOD Corridor Development Assessment Study.”

develop as TOD. This not only created additional revenue to fund construction but also set the tone for TOD at future Gold Line stations.⁶⁶

Glendora

The City of Glendora was founded in 1887 and officially incorporated in 1911. Originally a small citrus-producing community, the city gave way to large residential development in the late 1950s.⁶⁷ Located approximately 27 miles from downtown Los Angeles, Glendora has a population of 51,569 and a median household income of \$103,159. The city is 61% white, 38% Hispanic or Latino, 12% Asian, and 2% Black or African American. 16% of the population is aged 65 and over. The median value of owner-occupied housing units is \$662,400. 39% of the population over the age of 25 years old has a bachelor's degree or higher. The mean travel time to work for workers over the age of 16 is 33.9 minutes.⁶⁸

Glendora's Gold Line station will be located just south of downtown. It will have an associated parking facility with amenities for riders arriving by foot, bicycle, bus, and drop-off.⁶⁹ In addition to station construction, permanent changes will also include safety enhancements at all street crossings, relocation of the freight track to the southern half of the corridor, and new overhead lines to power the Gold Line's 200 daily trains. New light rail bridges will be constructed over the Foothill Boulevard/Grand Avenue intersection and Lone Hill Avenue.⁷⁰ By 2035, passenger daily boardings are projected to total 1,850.⁷¹

The most vocal stakeholders were the general public (83%) and state agencies (4%) (Figure 2). Other stakeholders included county agencies, as well as the Foothill Village Homeowners Association interest group. The most frequently cited concerns pertained to the project's visual impact and design (39%), safety (13%), and project delivery (13%) (Figure 3). Of the proposed solutions, 30% of comments recommended streamlining permit approval, 25% recommended moving the station, and 18% requested further evaluation (Figure 4). Only 18% of the comments expressed support for the current proposition. Those who expressed concern frequently commented on the safety risk the Gold Line would pose to the city's youth,

⁶⁶ "Foothill Gold Line Transit Oriented Development Update."

⁶⁷ "Glendora."

⁶⁸ "U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Glendora City, California."

⁶⁹ "Glendora Station Fact Sheet."

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ "Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Report for Metro Gold Line Foothill Extension."

suggesting locating the station in a more remote area to mitigate safety risks, traffic impacts, and the imposition of “negative aesthetics” on the downtown area.

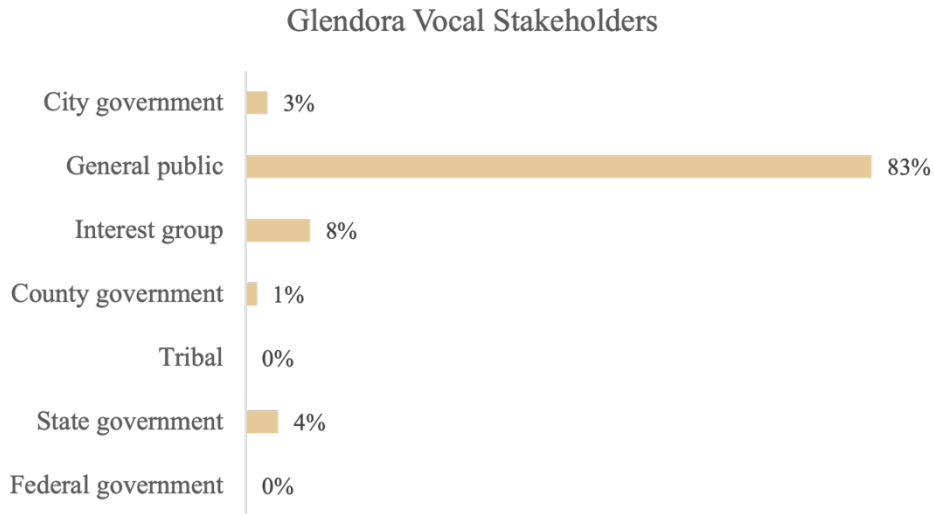


Figure 2. Glendora Vocal Stakeholders

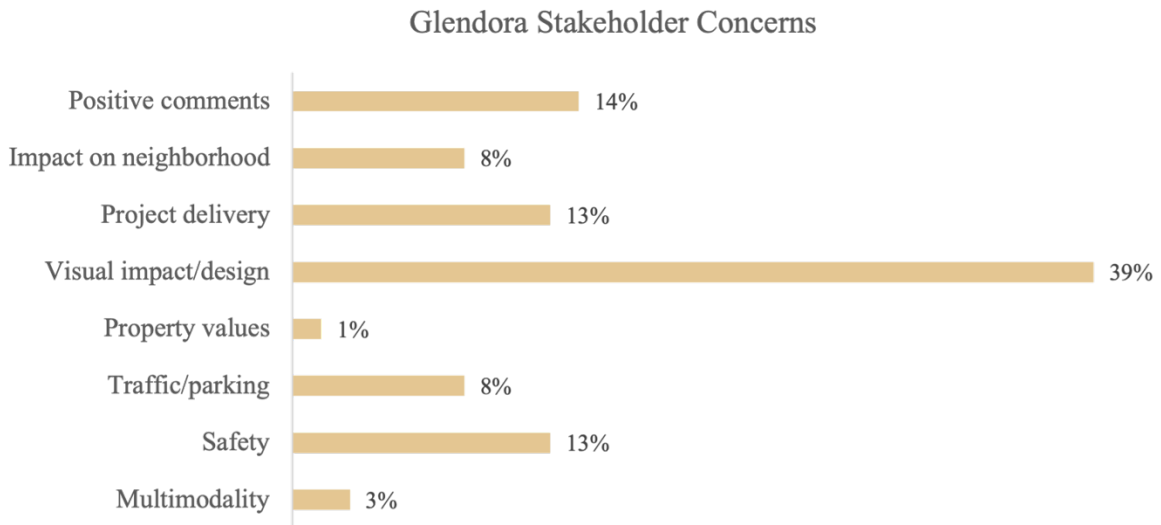


Figure 3. Glendora Stakeholder Concerns

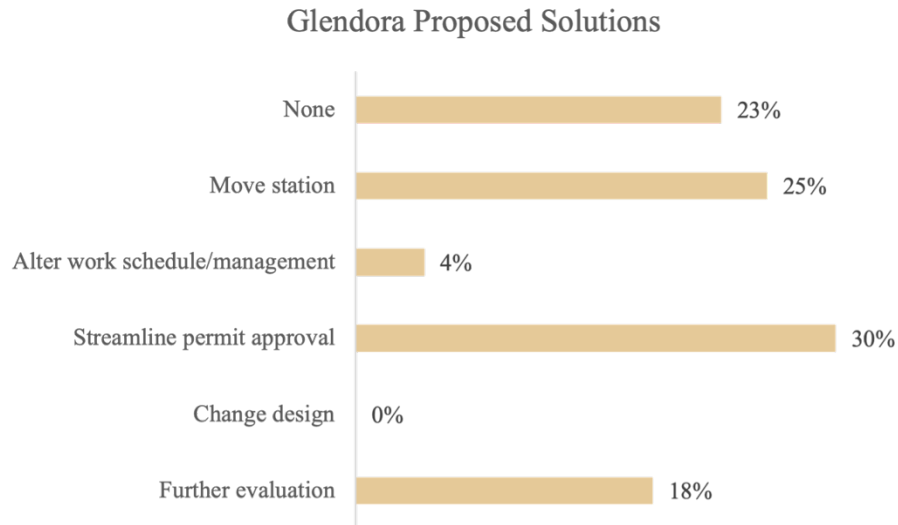


Figure 4. Glendora Proposed Solutions

Mayor Gary Boyer spoke of the irony in Glendora residents’ reminiscing about the city’s history as a stop along the historic Red Line streetcar while simultaneously lamenting the arrival of the Gold Line. He acknowledges three positives of the expansion: residents of Glendora will have more and easier access to their surrounding neighborhoods, visitors will see how great the Glendora community is, and the light rail will be hugely beneficial for the city’s job development.

City Councilmember Michael Allawos ran on the promise to protect the city’s “hometown values,” asserting that “protecting our way of life is paramount, which requires controlling our growth in a responsible and balanced manner that fits our lifestyle and community needs.”⁷² He listed the city’s primary concerns as parking availability, public safety, and an increase in the homeless population. He emphasized the need for sufficient parking, as “cars are the equivalent of freedom,” rendering the state’s transit-oriented goals mere “fantasies.” He cited the lack of law enforcement and Metro’s combative relationship with the LA County Sheriff’s Department as the reason for declines in Gold Line ridership. In his words, riding public transit is “taking your life into your own hands.” He also expressed frustration with the “central, communist” government’s imposition of housing and density mandates along the Gold Line. In response, Glendora is doing its best to “maintain neighborhood character” by implementing medium-density development near the station. The city is also developing a

⁷² “Michael Allawos for Glendora City Council.”

First/Last Mile program for the station that will include bike lanes, changes to traffic flow, and a dial-a-ride program.

San Dimas

The City of San Dimas was officially incorporated in 1960. Its downtown is defined by its distinct western style, featuring wooden sidewalks and western storefronts.⁷³ Located approximately 30 miles from downtown Los Angeles, San Dimas has a population of 34,064 and a median household income of \$101,144. The city is 59% white, 35% Hispanic or Latino, 17% Asian, and 3% Black or African American. 19% of the population is aged 65 and over. The median value of owner-occupied housing units is \$626,000. 38% of the population over the age of 25 years old has a bachelor's degree or higher. The mean travel time to work for workers over the age of 16 is 32.6 minutes.⁷⁴

San Dimas' Gold Line station will be located east of San Dimas Avenue, bifurcating the city's downtown. The station's 289-space parking facility, complete with electric vehicle charging stations, bicycle parking, and a passenger drop-off zone, was recently relocated just south of the railroad tracks and west of San Dimas Avenue. In addition to station construction, permanent changes will also include safety enhancements at all street crossings, relocation of the freight track to the southern half of the corridor, and new overhead lines to power the Gold Line's 200 daily trains.⁷⁵ By 2035, passenger daily boardings are projected to total 1,800.⁷⁶

The most vocal stakeholders were the general public (72%) and the city government (24%) (Figure 5). The most frequently cited concerns pertained to the project's visual impact and design (23%), traffic and parking impacts (19%), and potential impact on neighborhood (18%) (Figure 6). Of the proposed solutions, 43% suggested moving the station, 26% proposed changing the station design, and 16% requested further evaluation of environmental impacts (Figure 7). There were significant requests for further evaluation as it pertains to the environmental impacts of the station's parking facilities. Only 11% of comments expressed support for the current proposition. This station also featured concerns about the integrity of the Gold Line, due to a disappointment in community outreach efforts. There were also concerns

⁷³ "San Dimas."

⁷⁴ "U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: San Dimas City, California."

⁷⁵ "San Dimas Station Fact Sheet."

⁷⁶ "Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Report for Metro Gold Line Foothill Extension."

expressed about the state’s imposition of “mandatory affordable housing components” that will be required with the arrival of a new light rail station.

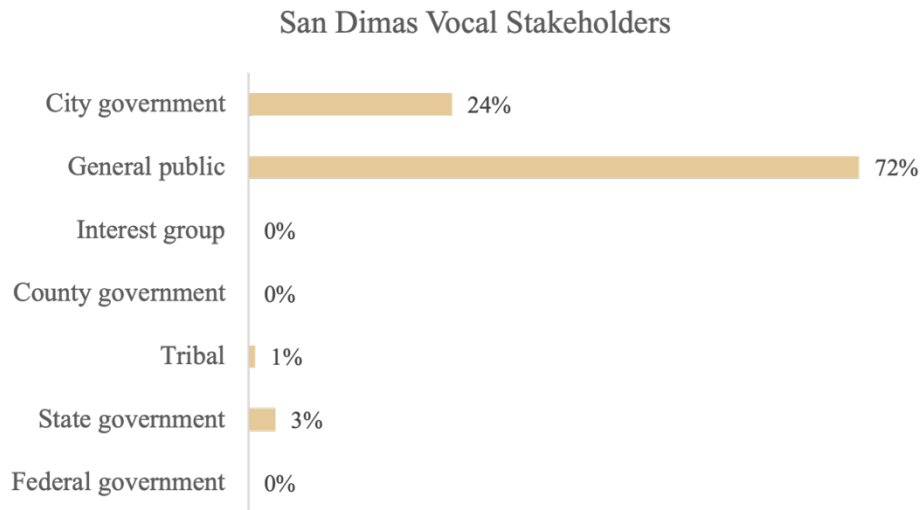


Figure 5. San Dimas Vocal Stakeholders

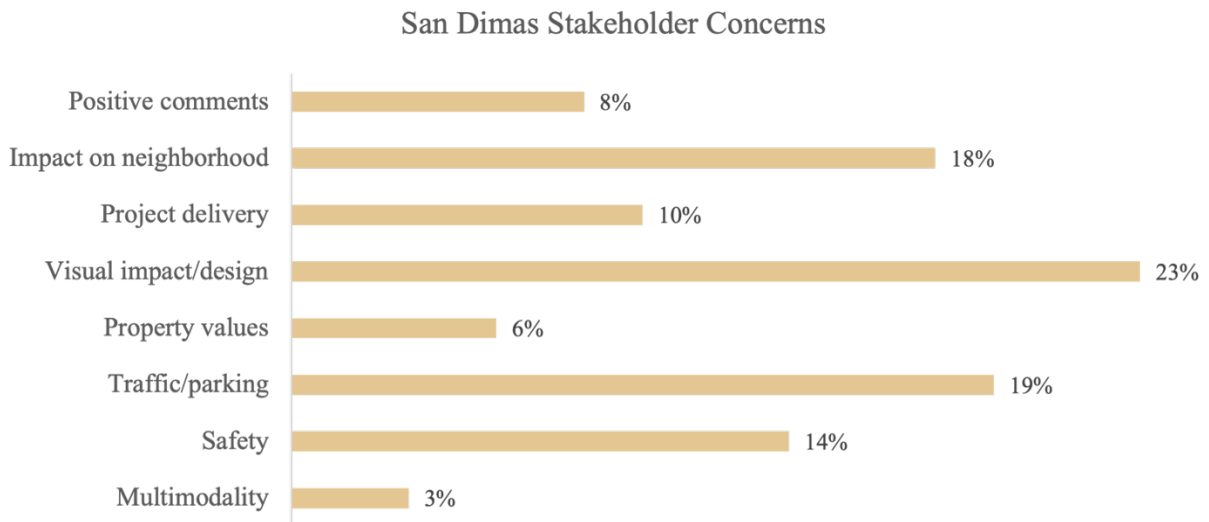


Figure 6. San Dimas Stakeholder Concerns

San Dimas Proposed Solutions

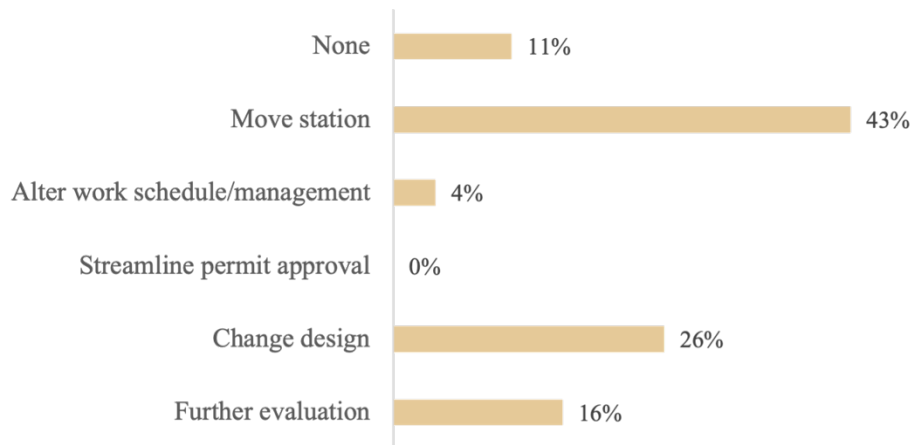


Figure 7. San Dimas Proposed Solutions

This past September, the City of San Dimas filed an environmental lawsuit against the Gold Line Construction Authority, claiming that the environmental review of the proposed parking area was inadequate. The lawsuit halted construction 2.5 years into the five-year construction period. In response, the Construction Authority has threatened that Gold Line service will skip San Dimas to ensure the megaproject’s 2025 completion. Upon completion of the parking facility, the train’s controls would be reprogrammed to include the San Dimas station. The Construction Authority has also threatened to use eminent domain to condemn the 2.5-acre property in order to expand station parking from 170 spaces to 275.⁷⁷ This is not the first instance the Construction Authority has exercised eminent domain in San Dimas. It acquired a 111,214-square-foot property along San Dimas Avenue in 2020 for “Public Transit Purposes,” with minimal resistance from the city.⁷⁸ Despite their lawsuit, the city is planning for the development of new housing and commercial uses nearby the proposed station.⁷⁹

Interviews with city councilmembers were difficult to secure, as the city is currently involved in litigation with the Gold Line. City Manager Chris Constantin spoke first of the city’s excitement for the economic development the light rail’s expansion will bring to the city. He also spoke to the city’s concern that increased mobility will “bring urban issues to the suburbs,” such as an increase in the homeless population and threats to public safety. Additionally, he expressed

⁷⁷ Scauzillo, “CA: San Dimas lawsuit over light-rail parking project may mean the train skips that station.”

⁷⁸ “Agenda Item: 10.a.”

⁷⁹ Sharp, “Despite Lawsuit, San Dimas Plans for New Development around Metro Stop.”

concern about the line's bifurcation of the city's downtown, as the train's frequent schedule during peak times will lead to significant traffic buildup in the neighborhood. The station was originally located in a predominantly residential district, but due to community displeasure, it was moved to its current location.

Much of the city's local media focuses on the issues limited parking has posed for existing Gold Line stations. *The San Dimas Community Post* quoted Azusa Mayor Robert Gonzales as saying, "In hindsight, if I knew then what I know now, I would have gone for a larger parking structure." The article urges the San Dimas city government to plan for these challenges before the light rail is constructed, a concern reflected in comments catalogued in the Environmental Impact Statements.⁸⁰

La Verne

The City of La Verne was founded in 1887. The city has a successful tradition of planning that can be traced to the 1920s.⁸¹ Located approximately 30 miles from downtown Los Angeles, La Verne has a population of 30,680 and a median household income of \$101,144. The city is 64% white, 38% Hispanic or Latino, 9% Asian, and 4% Black or African American. 22% of the population is aged 65 and over. The median value of owner-occupied housing units is \$625,000. 40% of the population over the age of 25 years old has a bachelor's degree or higher. The mean travel time to work for workers over the age of 16 is 30.9 minutes.⁸²

The city's station will be located just south of La Verne, between the University of La Verne and the Pomona Fairplex. It will have a 299-space parking facility complete with charging stations for electric vehicles, bicycle parking, and bus and drop off areas. In addition to station construction, permanent changes will also include safety enhancements at all street crossings, relocation of the freight track to the southern half of the corridor, and new overhead lines to power the Gold Line's 200 daily trains.⁸³ By 2035, passenger daily boardings are projected to total 1,850.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ Lee, "Advice for San Dimas: Plan for Gold Line Parking!"

⁸¹ "La Verne."

⁸² "U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: La Verne city, California."

⁸³ "La Verne Station Fact Sheet."

⁸⁴ "Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Report for Metro Gold Line Foothill Extension."

The most vocal stakeholders were the general public (94%) and state agencies (4%) (Figure 8). The most frequently cited concerns pertained to the project’s visual impact and design (36%), traffic and parking impacts (16%), and potential impact on neighborhood (13%) (Figure 9). Of the proposed solutions, 33% recommended changing the station design, 16% requested further evaluation of environmental impacts, and 15% suggested moving the station (Figure 10). Only 18% of comments expressed support for the current proposition. Those who expressed concern frequently commented on the safety risk the Gold Line would pose due to its speed and proximity to houses and other buildings.

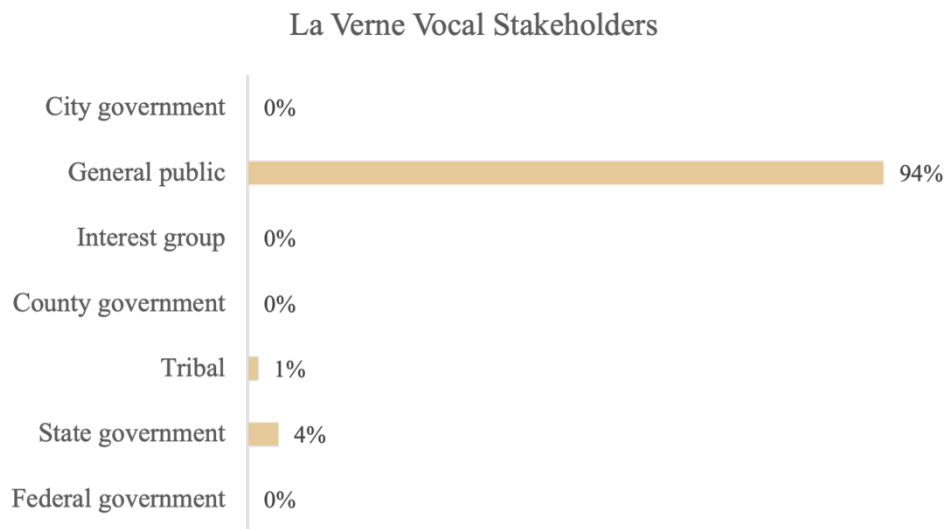


Figure 8. La Verne Vocal Stakeholders

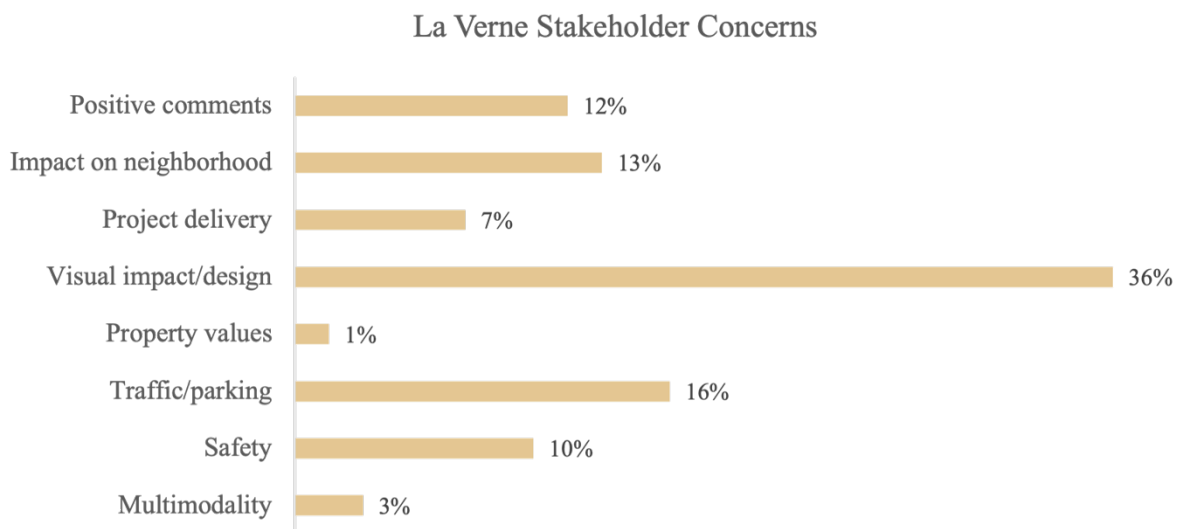


Figure 9. La Verne Stakeholder Concerns

La Verne Proposed Solutions

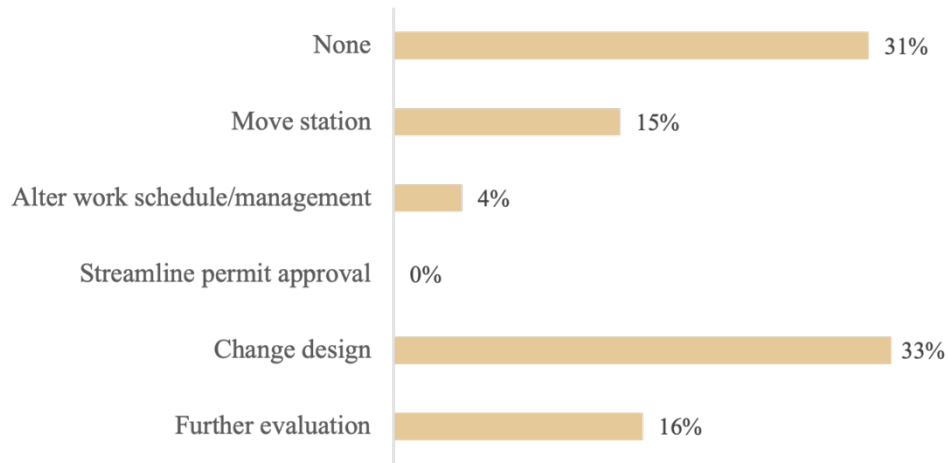


Figure 10. La Verne Proposed Solutions

La Verne City Councilmember Wendy Lau spoke about the inevitability of Gold Line expansion and the unavoidable need for increased residential development due to the region’s population growth and affordability crisis. While acknowledging that the station will likely bring an increase in the homeless population and stress the neighborhood’s capacity, she said La Verne is taking an offensive approach by preparing for negative externalities before the train arrives. This approach includes the allocation of \$300,000 to the Homeless Outreach Support Program (HOST), which provides mental health support, housing vouchers, family reunification, food for residents without permanent shelter, and substance dependency assistance. They are also hiring a grant writer whose entire job is to “chase the money” La Verne needs to avoid straining resources. To address public safety issues, the city is looking to install emergency blue light boxes and defibrillators at the station. To maximize mobility, La Verne is improving road conditions within the station’s vicinity and expanding the city’s bike lane network.

One point of contention with the City of La Verne was the Construction Authority’s attempt to widen White Avenue in the anticipation of increased traffic. According to the Director of Community Relations Yesenia Arias, the long-term residents living along White Avenue were incredibly effective in securing the support of City Council in preventing the Construction Authority from doing so. The Construction Authority ended up repaving and restriping the existing avenue to facilitate the anticipated increases in traffic flow.

Pomona

The City of Pomona was incorporated in 1888. It was named after the Roman goddess of fruit due to the city's prominent position in the region's citrus industry.⁸⁵ Located approximately 30 miles from downtown Los Angeles, Pomona has a population of 148,338 and a median household income of \$67,549. The city is 34% white, 71% Hispanic or Latino, 11% Asian, and 6% Black or African American. 12% of the population is aged 65 and over. The median value of owner-occupied housing units is \$446,300. 18% of the population over the age of 25 years old has a bachelor's degree or higher. The mean travel time to work for workers over the age of 16 is 31.7 minutes.⁸⁶

The Pomona Gold Line station will be located west of Garey Avenue, approximately a 10-minute drive north of the city's downtown, and directly north of the existing Pomona North Metrolink station. A pedestrian walkway will provide circulation between the two transit systems. A 300-space parking facility complete with charging stations for electric vehicles, bicycle parking, and bus and drop off areas will be located directly south of the station. In addition to station construction, permanent changes will also include safety enhancements at all street crossings, relocation of the freight track to the southern half of the corridor, and new overhead lines to power the Gold Line's 200 daily trains.⁸⁷ By 2035, passenger daily boardings are projected to total 3,000.⁸⁸

The most vocal stakeholders were the general public (83%) and state agencies (5%) (Figure 11). The most frequently cited concerns pertained to the project's visual impact and design (33%), traffic and parking impacts (18%), and potential impact on neighborhood (12%) (Figure 12). Of the proposed solutions, 39% recommended changing the station design, 15% requested further evaluation of environmental impact, and 15% suggested moving the station (Figure 13). Only 19% of comments expressed support for the current proposition.

⁸⁵ "La Verne."

⁸⁶ "U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Pomona city, California."

⁸⁷ "Pomona Station Fact Sheet."

⁸⁸ "Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Report for Metro Gold Line Foothill Extension."

Pomona Vocal Stakeholders

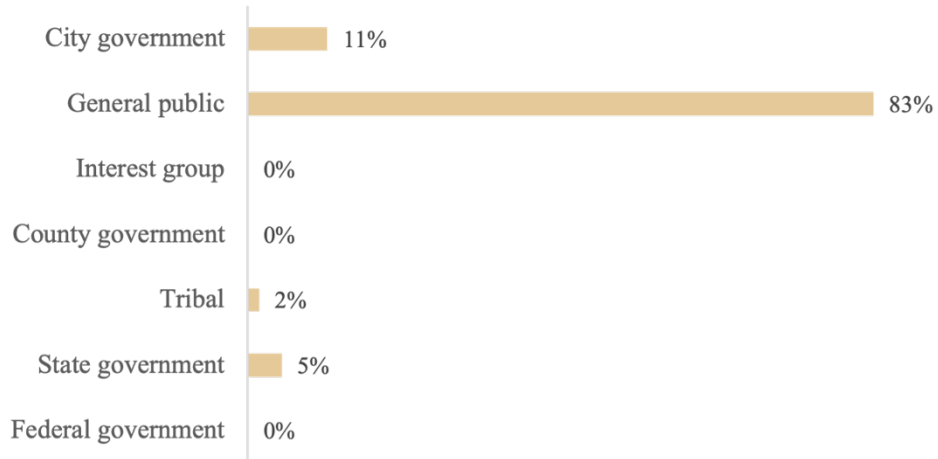


Figure 11. Pomona Vocal Stakeholders

Pomona Stakeholder Concerns

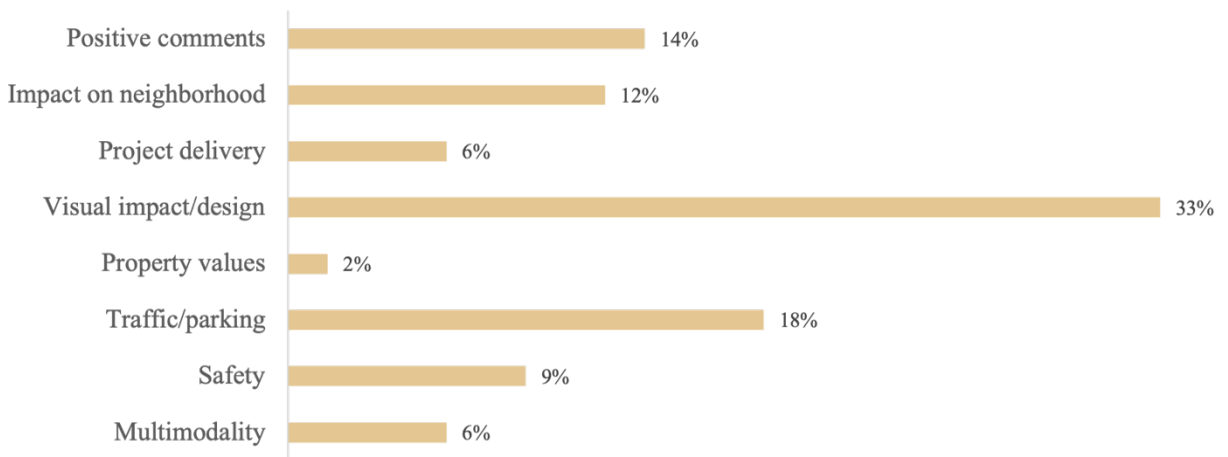


Figure 12. Pomona Stakeholder Concerns

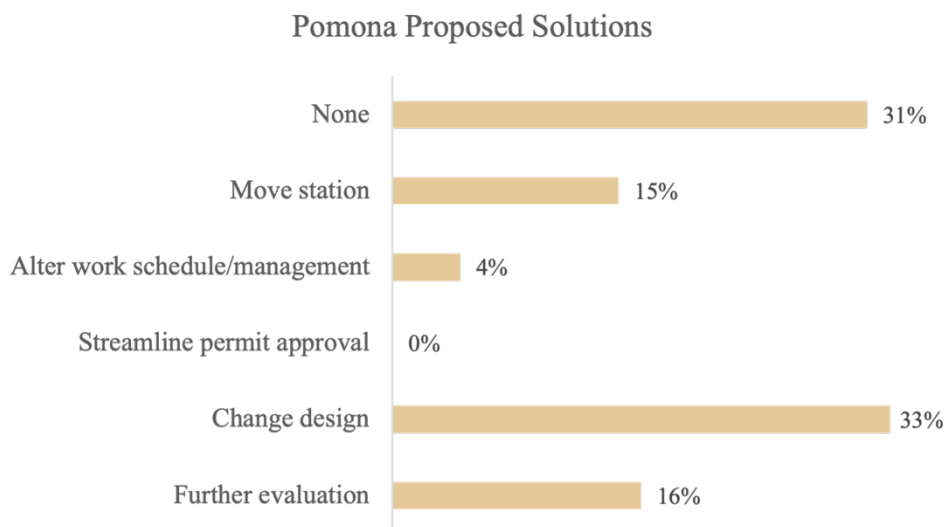


Figure 13. Pomona Proposed Solutions

In October 2017, the City of Pomona filed a lawsuit against the Construction Authority requesting additional environmental analyses for modifications made to construction designs. The city took issue with the Authority’s plan to replace a single flyover bridge over Towne Avenue, approved by both sides in 2013, with two bridges. To resolve the issue, the Authority reverted to the original bridge design.⁸⁹

Interviews with Pomona city councilmembers reflected the city’s general excitement for the Gold Line’s arrival. However, predominant concerns included the city’s “last mile problem” and the threat of gentrification. City Councilmember Victor Preciado mentioned inadequate plans for affordable housing around the station, as the latest multi-family development to be constructed near the future station is currently renting one-bedroom units for \$3,000 a month. While he would “never be one to undervalue his city,” he also wants to ensure the benefits of the Gold Line reach all community members. As the station is currently sited in northern Pomona, residents in southern Pomona will have significant difficulty accessing the station due to limitations with the city’s current transportation infrastructure. Councilmember Preciado also expressed frustration about missed opportunities for higher-density development around the station, questioning whether the Construction Authority is “properly planning or just rubber stamping.” Rather than a surface parking lot, which brings safety and pollution concerns, he says Metro could have planned for a mixed-use development with an activated ground floor and

⁸⁹ Scauzillo, “San Dimas, Pomona Sue the Gold Line Construction Authority over Plans for the Train’s Expansion.”

community services such as daycare. Construction Authority Director of Community Relations Yesenia Arias clarified that Metro opted for surface parking lots rather than parking structures to give cities the future option to convert these lots to mixed-use developments.

City Councilmember Nora Garcia also questioned the thoughtfulness of the Construction Authority's community engagement. The city is only legally required to notify people living within 400 yards of the project, and through an advertisement in the newspaper, leaving an opportunity to exclude those who might benefit most from the project's planning process. She also spoke about the difficulty of implementing multimodality initiatives in the city, saying her Active Transportation Plan met resistance from community members who believe that "bike lanes are a part of the Biden anti-car conspiracy."

Claremont

The City of Claremont was officially incorporated in 1907. Featuring tree-lined streets and historic buildings, it's home to the nationally recognized Claremont Colleges.⁹⁰ Located approximately 33 miles from downtown Los Angeles, Claremont has a population of 35,703 and a median household income of \$111,937. The city is 58% white, 24% Hispanic or Latino, 15% Asian, and 6% Black or African American. 20% of the population is aged 65 and over. The median value of owner-occupied housing units is \$711,800. 58% of the population over the age of 25 years old has a bachelor's degree or higher. The mean travel time to work for workers over the age of 16 is 28.2 minutes.⁹¹

Claremont's Gold Line station will be located just south of downtown, where the current Metrolink station is located today. It will feature a new 539-space parking facility for both Metrolink and light rail riders, with amenities for riders arriving by foot, bicycle, bus, and drop-off. In addition to station construction, permanent changes will also include safety enhancements at all street crossings, relocation of the freight track to the southern half of the corridor, and new overhead lines to power the Gold Line's 200 daily trains.⁹² By 2035, passenger daily boardings are projected to total 2,850.⁹³

⁹⁰ "Claremont."

⁹¹ "U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Claremont city, California."

⁹² "Claremont Station Fact Sheet."

⁹³ "Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Report for Metro Gold Line Foothill Extension."

The most vocal stakeholders were the general public (89%) and state agencies (4%) (Figure 14). The most frequently cited concerns pertained to the project’s visual impact and design (37%), traffic and parking impacts (16%), and potential impact on neighborhood (11%) (Figure 15). Of the recommended solutions, 36% proposed changing the station design, 21% proposed changing the station design, and 14% suggested moving the station (Figure 16). Only 17% of comments expressed support for the current proposition.

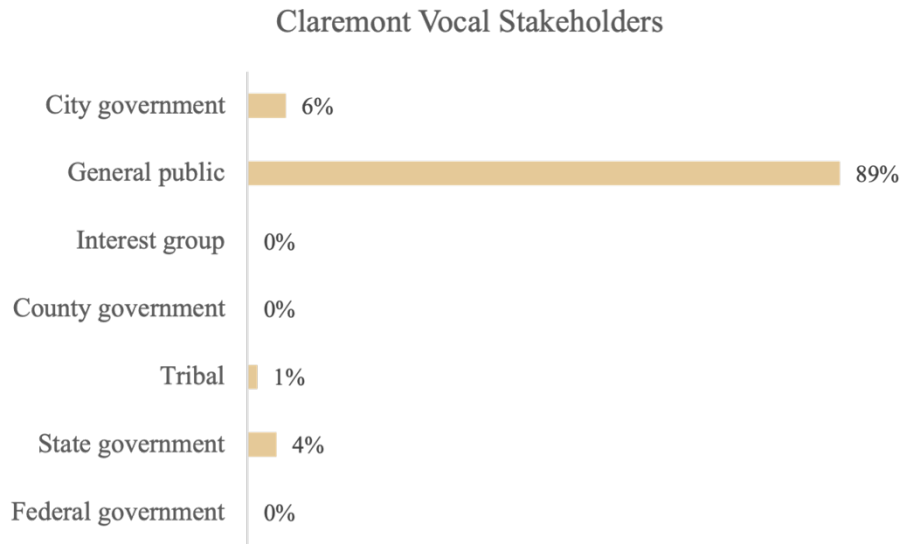


Figure 14. Claremont Vocal Stakeholders

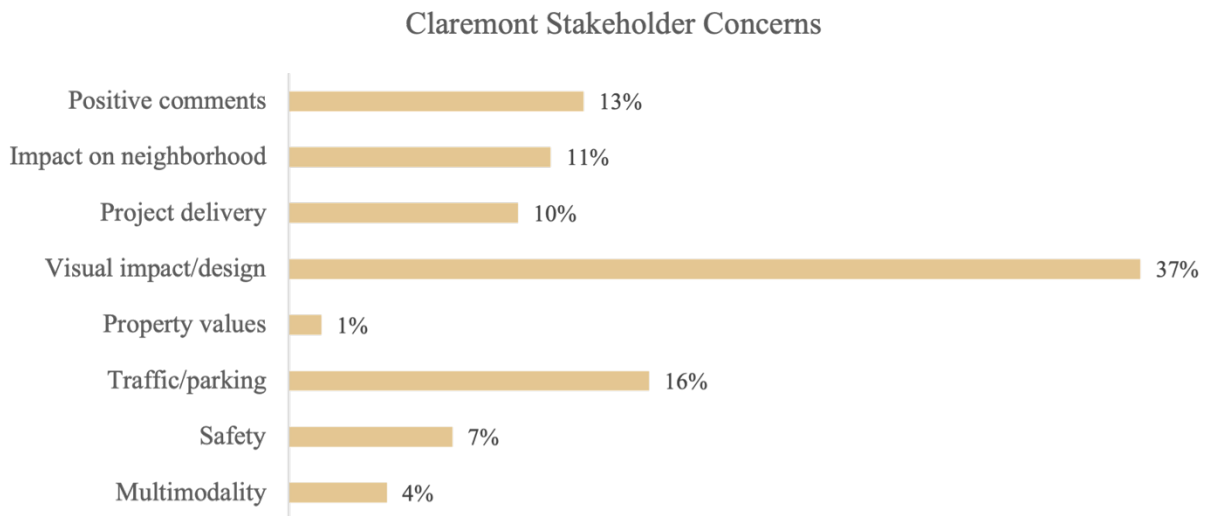


Figure 15. Claremont Stakeholder Concerns

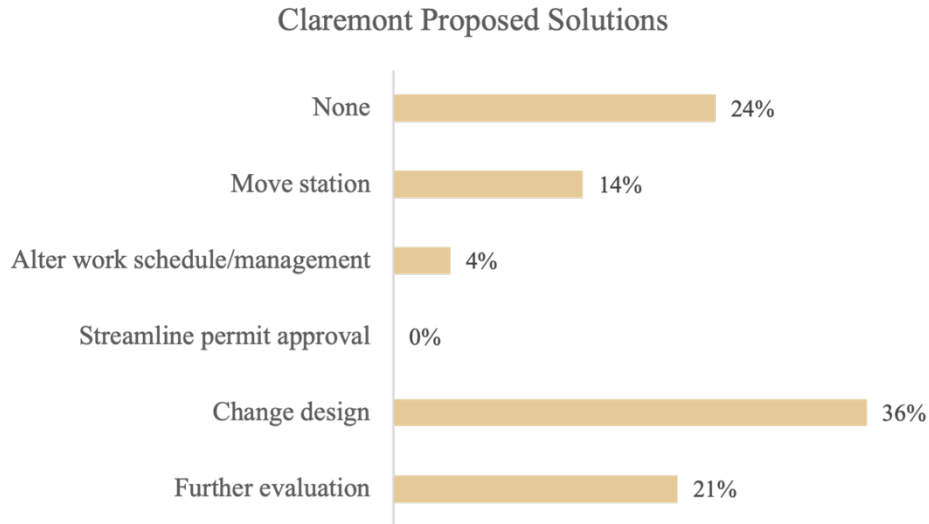


Figure 16. Claremont Proposed Solutions

A concern unique to this station is the potential competition the Gold Line would pose to Metrolink’s ridership. Due to its frequency and \$1.75 fare, the Gold Line will make an attractive alternative to Metrolink’s lower-frequency commuter rail and substantially higher ticket cost, albeit a faster mode of transportation. Metro staff reported a decline in Metrolink ridership following the completion of the Gold Line extension to Azusa, leading Metro to “evaluate the benefits and/or impacts related to eliminating the Metrolink Claremont Station.”⁹⁴

City Councilmember Jennifer Stark spoke about Claremont’s excitement about the Gold Line’s arrival, as “transportation and access are at the heart of equity.” She also alluded to the lessons the city can learn from existing stations in areas such as public safety. Claremont is embracing transit-oriented development with its Village South Specific Plan. Phase 1 of the 12.4-acre development will contain a large mixed-use building, a 380-space parking structure, and a 10,000-square-foot public plaza. Phase 2 will contain two large mixed-use buildings containing 30,000 square feet of retail and restaurant space, 15,000 square feet of live/work or office space, and 406 residential apartments, as well as 564 parking spaces. Phase 3 will include two residential condominium buildings, a 216-space subterranean parking garage, and a small townhome building. Claremont also has a 10-year plan to extend bike path infrastructure to the southern portion of the city.

⁹⁴ Sharp, “Gold Line Extension Could Lead to Closure of Claremont Metrolink Station.”

She also provided insights as to why the Gold Line expansion plans are currently stalled at Pomona. As Claremont did not have the infrastructure to be the terminus station, and because there was not adequate funding to extend the line to Montclair as of 2020, the timeline for construction in Claremont is currently unclear.

Montclair

The City of Montclair was certified as a general law city in 1956. The opening of the regional mall Montclair Plaza in 1968 solidified the city's position as a leader in retail trade and ushered in a new era of growth for the region.⁹⁵ Located approximately 35 miles from downtown Los Angeles, Montclair has a population of 38,061 and a median household income of \$67,483. The city is 44% white, 72% Hispanic or Latino, 10% Asian, and 5% Black or African American. 10% of the population is aged 65 and over. The median value of owner-occupied housing units is \$423,300. 17% of the population over the age of 25 years old has a bachelor's degree or higher. The mean travel time to work for workers over the age of 16 is 31.9 minutes.⁹⁶

The Montclair Gold Line station will be located at the Montclair Transit Center, which currently serves Metrolink's San Bernadino Line and Omnitrans and RTA bus services. The existing 1,600-space parking lot will be shared by Metrolink, Gold Line, and local bus services, and will include new charging stations for electric vehicles, bicycle parking, and improvements to the bus and drop off areas.⁹⁷ By 2035, passenger daily boardings are projected to total 6,450.⁹⁸

The most vocal stakeholders were the general public (91%) and state agencies (5%) (Figure 17). The most frequently cited concerns pertained to visual impact and design (36%), traffic and parking impacts (11%), project delivery (11%), and potential impact on neighborhood (11%) (Figure 18). Of the recommended solutions, 32% proposed changing the station design, 18% suggested moving the station, and 16% requested further evaluation (Figure 19). A notable 23% of comments expressed support for the current proposition. Montclair city councilmembers did not respond to requests for comment.

⁹⁵ "Montclair."

⁹⁶ "U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Montclair city, California."

⁹⁷ "Montclair Station Fact Sheet."

⁹⁸ "Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Report for Metro Gold Line Foothill Extension."

Montclair Vocal Stakeholders

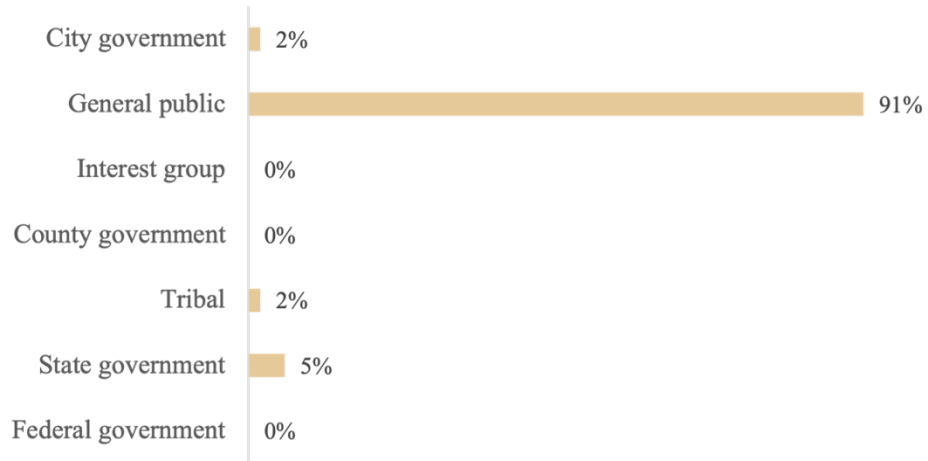


Figure 17. Montclair Vocal Stakeholders

Montclair Stakeholder Concerns

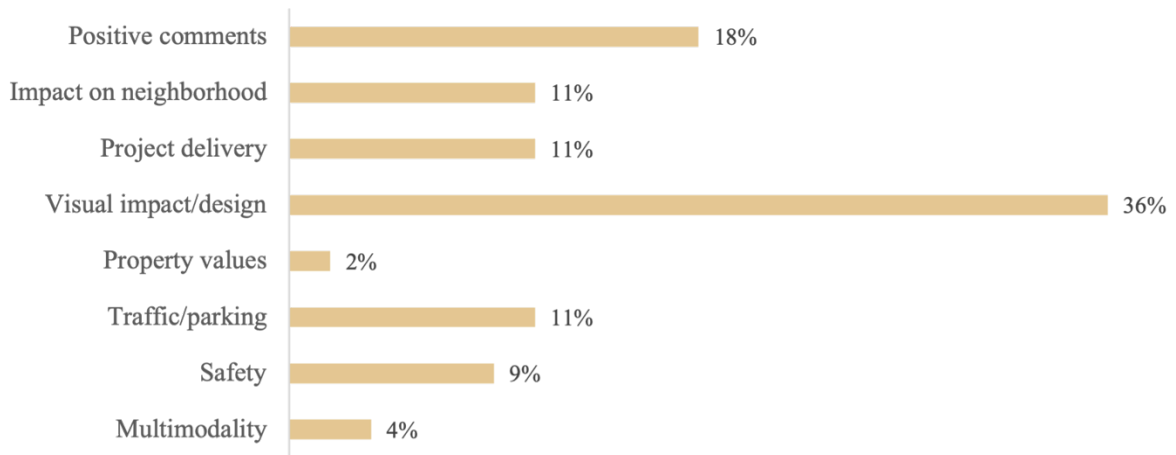


Figure 18. Montclair Stakeholder Concerns

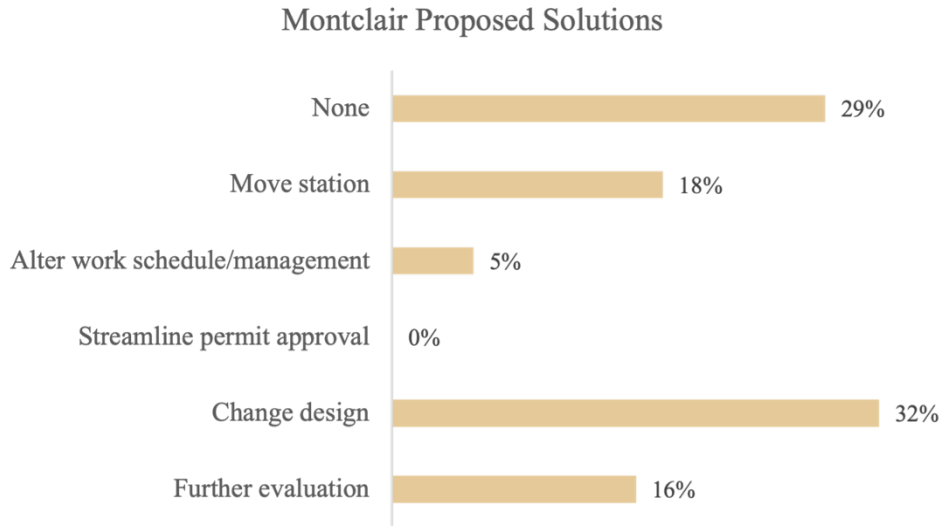


Figure 19. Montclair Proposed Solutions

Composite Results

Across the board, the most vocal stakeholders were the general public (82%) and state agencies (5%) (Figure 20). The most frequently cited concerns pertained to visual impact and design (33%), traffic and parking impacts (14%), and potential impact on neighborhood (13%) (Figure 21). Of the proposed solutions, 24% recommended changing the station design, 22% suggested moving the station, and 18% requested further evaluation of environmental impacts (Figure 22). Construction Authority Director of Community Relations Yesenia Arias attributed the high percentage of noise and vibration complaints to the increased number of people working from home during COVID-19, as well as the common conflation of the Gold Line light rail with the Metrolink, a heavy rail commuter system with louder horns and significant vibrations.

Vocal Stakeholders

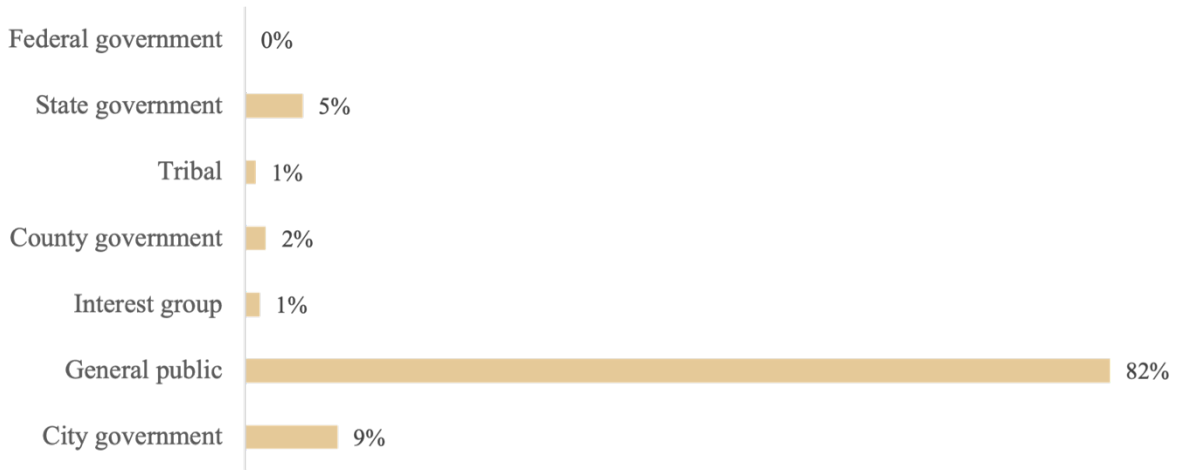


Figure 20. Composite Vocal Stakeholders

Primary Stakeholder Concerns

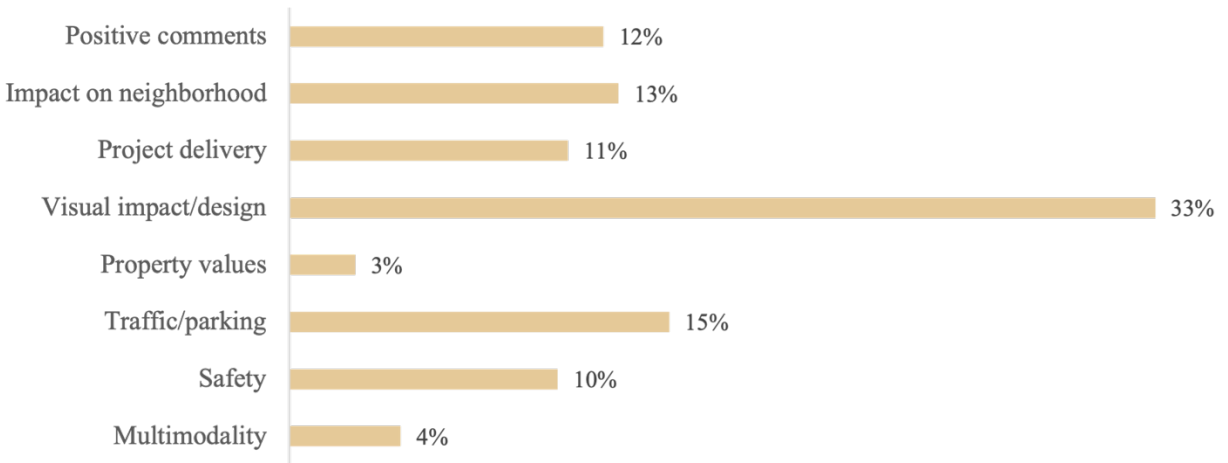


Figure 21. Composite Primary Stakeholder Concerns

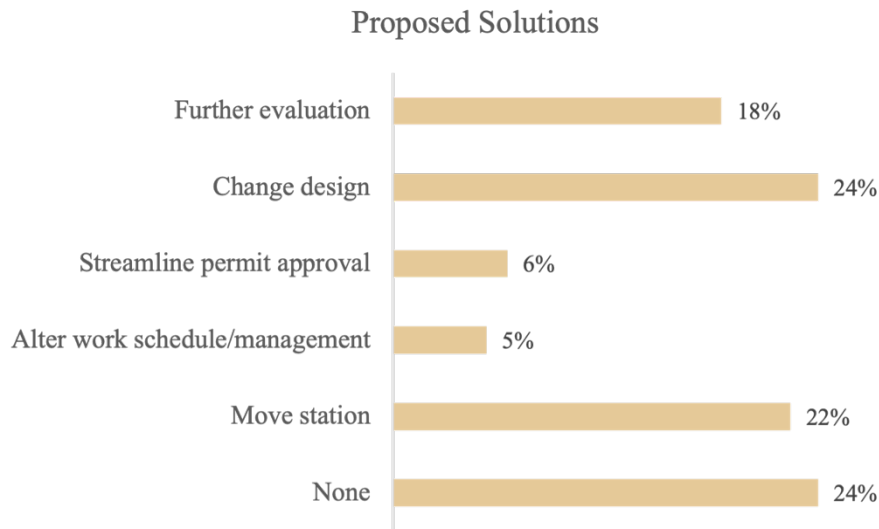


Figure 22. Composite Proposed Solutions

Station Comparisons

Montclair, Pomona, and Glendora recorded the most positive comments regarding the Gold Line’s extension. Glendora’s support comes as a surprise in light of Councilmember Michael Allawos’s passionate expression of reservations toward the project. Glendora was the city most concerned with the project’s visual impact and design, followed by Claremont and La Verne. San Dimas was the city most concerned with the project’s impact on the neighborhood, property values, and traffic and parking impacts. San Dimas recorded the fewest positive comments. Pomona expressed the most concern regarding multimodal options connecting the city with the proposed station (Figure 23). This is likely due to the station’s siting in north Pomona, limiting access to residents of south Pomona.

San Dimas’s city government was significantly more vocal than other city governments in communications with the Gold Line Construction Authority (Figure 24). San Dimas is particularly litigious.

Glendora was the only city to recommend streamlining the project’s permit approval. San Dimas suggested moving the station at a significantly higher rate than other cities. Pomona was the keenest to change the station’s design. Claremont most frequently requested further evaluation (Figure 25).

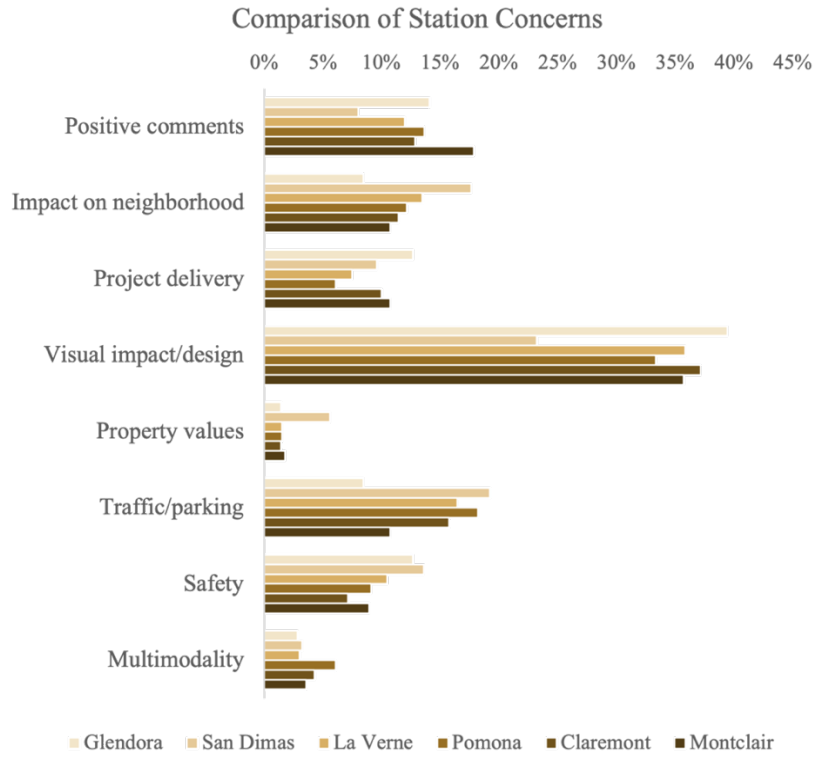


Figure 23. Primary Stakeholder Concerns

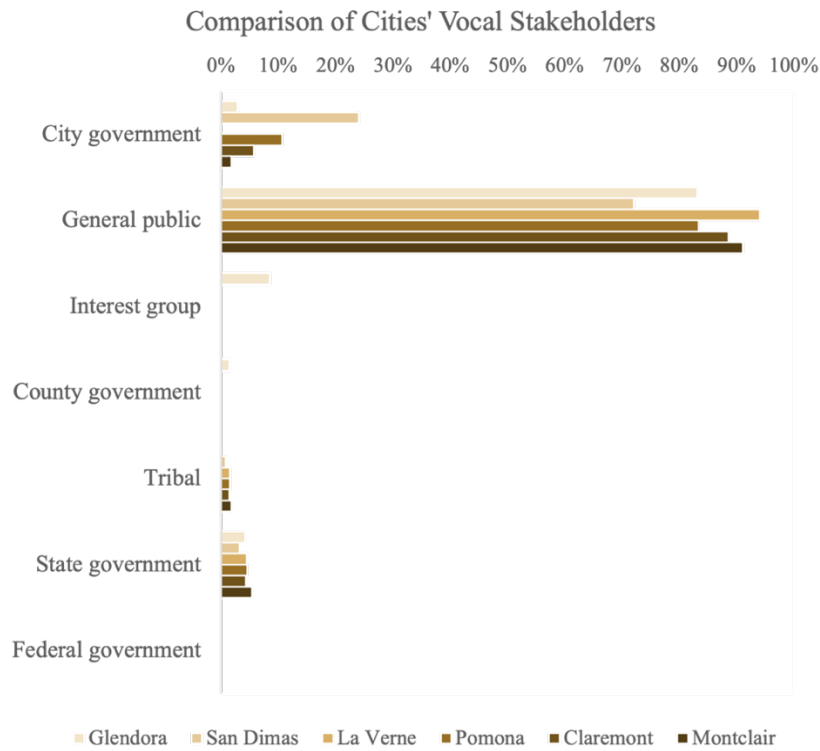


Figure 24. Comparison of Cities' Vocal Stakeholders

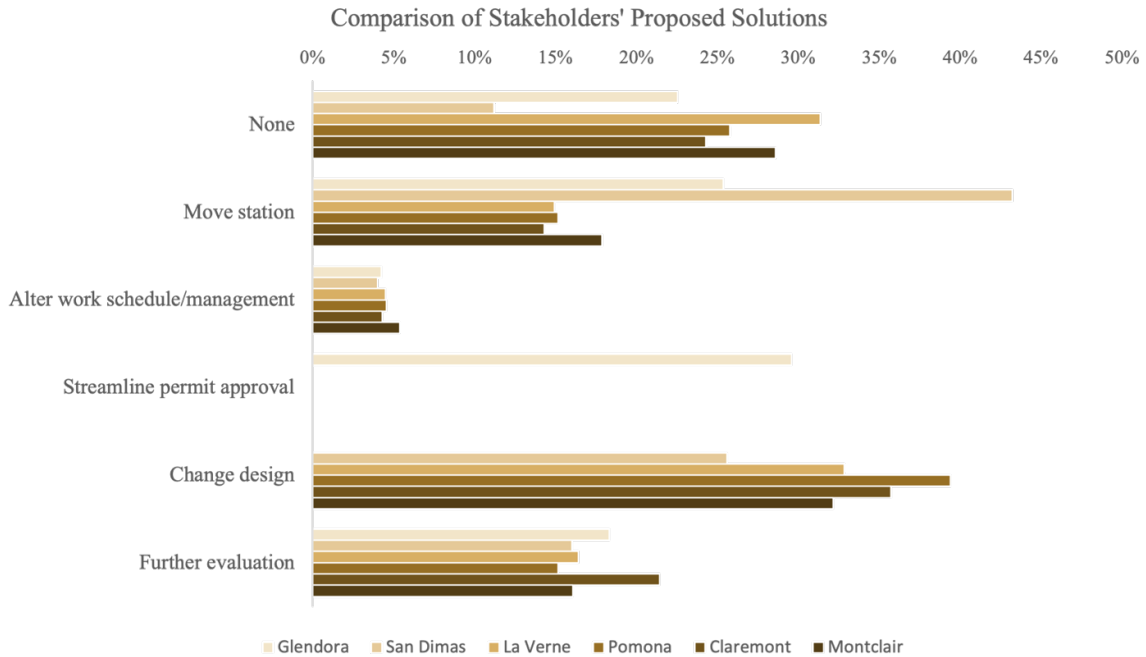


Figure 25. Comparison of Stakeholders' Proposed Solutions

On a pro/contra scale, San Dimas was most opposed to the proposed light rail station earning a score of -0.7. Pomona and Montclair were the least opposed, with scores of -0.52 and -0.45, respectively (Figure 26).

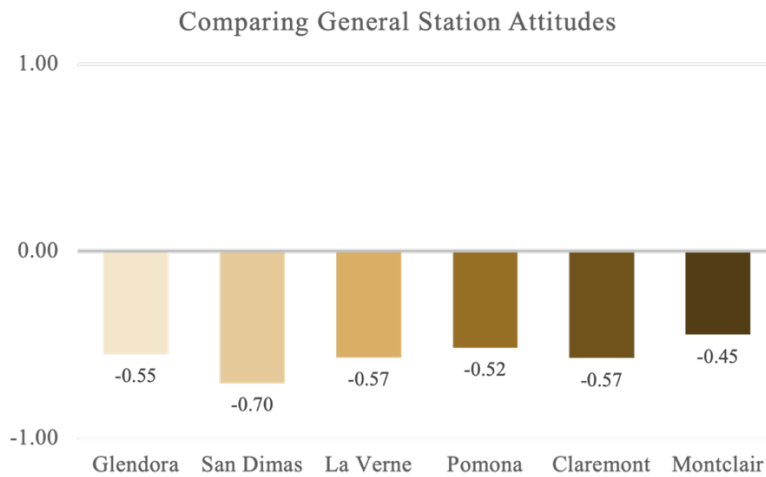


Figure 26. Comparing General Station Attitudes

When these statistical findings are layered with results from the interviews, we get a slightly more nuanced picture of the social and political discourse surrounding the Gold Line's extension. These results will be discussed further in the following chapter.

Chapter 4: Discussion

With the Construction Authority's state power, the question of the Gold Line's extension from Azusa to Montclair is not an *if*, but a *when*, *where*, and *how*. A common sentiment among all cities slated for Gold Line stations is disappointment with the community engagement process. While the Construction Authority's Board of Directors is comprised of local city councilmembers in an effort to balance state power, a majority of members are affiliated with South Pasadena, rather than any city along the Gold Line's expansion. Delays caused by community backlash and requests for further evaluation can stall a project by causing cost overruns and other funding challenges. However, claims that the Construction Authority has sped through the community engagement process to "check a box on public input" paint the entity as irresponsible and willfully ignorant of the public's concern in public and political discourse. Pomona and San Dimas, in particular, felt the planning and community engagement process was rushed in order to meet time and budget requirements, with adverse effects on station conditions. In the case of Pomona, residents sought higher density and more dynamic parking solutions to maximize the benefits of the project. In the case of San Dimas, residents sought alternate station siting to minimize the project's environmental effects.

The threat of eminent domain severely limits opportunities for NIMBY opposition along the Gold Line's expansion. This leaves litigation as one of the few tools available to local governments to influence local conditions. As San Dimas continues to plan for 14 new sites of residential and commercial development surrounding the proposed station, it is clear that their recent lawsuit is not meant to prevent the station from coming to the city, but rather to influence the planning process more effectively.

Another concern consistent across all cities slated for Gold Line expansion stations is the provision of adequate parking. Urban planning theory generally agrees that an excess of parking has the potential to minimize the benefits of TOD. Donald Shoup argues that minimum parking requirements encourage sprawl, subsidize cars, pollute the air, penalize low-income people, increase housing costs, prevent walkability, destroy urban design, and damage the economy. He also suggests that parking revenue be used to fund public service improvements.⁹⁹ For the Gold Line, this could look like multimodality and First/Last Mile program expansions at each station. Dan Chatman argues that the benefits of TOD are the result not of transit proximity, but of

⁹⁹ Shoup, *The High Cost of Free Parking*.

higher development density, smaller residential units, less parking, and the immediacy of shops and services. The positive outcomes associated with TOD are mitigated by excess parking, low density, and large residential units.¹⁰⁰ Consequently, communities should focus on improving access to stations rather than expanding parking facilities. The Gold Line Construction Authority is currently collaborating with cities to develop parking management plans in the case of parking spillover, including parking meters and permit parking.

Interviews conducted with city councilmembers generally highlighted public safety and homeless population concerns to a degree not reflected by the Environmental Impact Statements. Claremont City Councilmember Jennifer Stark and La Verne City Councilmember Wendy Lau spoke about the power of social media in the exacerbation of these fears and NIMBY opposition. Platforms such as Nextdoor and Facebook are used by “baby boomers to wring their hands about everything going to hell in a handbasket.” We see some city councilmembers employing statements based on fear rather than in fact to describe the anticipated effects of the Gold Line’s expansion, such as “riding the Gold Line is to take your life in your own hands” and “homeless people are a danger because three days’ worth of crack only costs \$3.” Gold Line Construction Authority Director of Community Relations Yesenia Arias spoke of how frequently she encountered the misconception that public transit is just for the “transit dependent.” These statements are used to garner political resistance to the Gold Line’s expansion, and it is imperative that Metro take steps to assuage these fears in order to preserve ridership and minimize public resistance to the megaproject’s delivery.

The results of this discourse analysis are interesting when considered in conjunction with each city’s demographic composition. Glendora and San Dimas are the most conservative and the most politically outspoken about their distaste for the project. La Verne and Claremont are more politically liberal, with city councilmembers expressing their excitement for expanding equity and access throughout the city. However, they expressed more negative comments in the Environmental Impact Statements than did Glendora. These cities are relatively whiter and wealthier than Pomona and Montclair.

Pomona and Montclair are the most enthusiastic about the project, with Pomona in particular pushing for more density, less parking, and more affordable housing. According to the Gold Line Construction Authority’s Director of Community Relations, Yesenia Arias, Montclair

¹⁰⁰ Chatman, “Does TOD Need the T?”

was so excited for the project's delivery that its city councilmembers included the Foothill Gold Line logo on their email signatures. These cities are relatively racially diverse and lower income than the other cities along the Gold Line's proposed expansion.

Chapter 5: Conclusions

Regardless of demographics and predominant political affiliation, the consistency of concerns expressed among all cities illuminates the bipartisanship of NIMBYism. The only thing that varies between each city is the terminology used to refer to certain concerns. While one city councilmember may express concerns about a city's "capacity to provide services targeted toward the transient population" and another city councilmember may express concerns about "the risks a crack-addicted homeless population pose to public safety" the sentiment is the same.

In general, the community engagement process was used predominantly to express concerns pertaining to the infrastructure project's potential environmental effects, rather than to make suggestions for maximizing the infrastructure project's benefits. When delivering urban public infrastructure of this scale, however, the community engagement process must be focused on ensuring equitable development. While urban planning literature begrudges NIMBY opposition to affordable housing and transportation infrastructure expansion, the employment of state authority in silencing these voices may also silence the voices of those who would benefit most. There is thus room for improving the community engagement process to avoid the "homevoter hypothesis."

While the Construction Authority's state power ensures that the Gold Line will be built, NIMBYs can still limit the benefits of the light rail's extension by limiting affordable housing and imposing parking minimums. As the Del Mar, Hollywood, and Oakland case studies have shown, early planning for the provision and preservation of affordable housing opportunities are crucial in preventing displacement, protecting the light rail's ridership base, and contributing to mitigating Los Angeles's affordable housing crisis. Where affordable housing is being built near stops, parking can be even further reduced to reflect the tendency of many lower-income households to own fewer automobiles. Rationalizing parking and affordable housing policies in relation to TOD is essential in boosting a station's future performance. Future research could assess the density, housing, and parking plans surrounding each station to better understand the community and economic development benefits each station will bring. It could also examine the efficacy of each city's plan to increase multimodality and accessibility at their station, ensuring that those who would benefit the most from the project are doing so.

The proliferation of "culturally induced ignorance or doubt," particularly the publication of inaccurate or misleading scientific data, is a successful tool for garnering support for NIMBY

sentiments.¹⁰¹ Social media in particular is a powerful tool for “naysayers” adept in fearmongering and aligning stakeholder interests against a project. However, successful TODs rely on shared, positive visions. Station area branding, with the same social media tools weaponized by NIMBYs, may play a crucial role in mitigating communities’ Gold Line-related concerns. Doing so can create community pride and attract and retain retail residents, businesses, and investment.¹⁰² Future research could examine the role of social media and the effect of this misinformation on transportation project delivery.

¹⁰¹ Proctor, “Agnotología.”

¹⁰² “Neighborhood Branding and Marketing.”

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