

Support Material – Public Comment

Board of Directors Meeting

**January 3, 2024
10:00 a.m.**

Location:

San Bernardino County Transportation Authority
First Floor Lobby Board Room
Santa Fe Depot, 1170 W. 3rd Street
San Bernardino, CA 92410

Public Comment

Written public comment was received after the posting of the agenda and is being provided as Support Material.

3 January 2024

San Bernardino County Transportation Authority
Attn: Supervisor Dawn Rowe, Board President
1170 West 3rd Street, 2nd Floor
San Bernardino, CA 92410
Submitted via email to clerkoftheboard@gosbcta.com.

Re: January 3, 2024 Open Public Comment

Dear Supervisor Rowe,

Happy new year, I am writing to you to provide open public comment on several items. First, I would like to congratulate SBCTA for its role in securing the funding for the construction of Brightline West as well as the funding which has been secured for continued development of the High Desert Corridor that would one day in the future, provide additional travel options and connections to/from Brightline West. These developments are certainly putting our communities on the map and leading the way for better mobility in the broader southwestern region of the country.

However, we cannot rest on our laurels. While it is exciting to see the projects advancing, I also see even greater potential ahead for SBCTA and the aforementioned projects, but only if we take the time to provide a broader vision, not just allowing things to happen. Last year's approval of the study authorizing Metrolink to conduct further study in the goal of reaching 30-minute service frequencies on the San Bernardino Line is a good example of moving forward, but it also presents a lost opportunity as the earlier 2018 study it was building on had already looked at frequencies down to 15-minutes. It would have been ideal to have the study authorized in July to do the same (if not go even further to e.g. 10-minute frequencies) so that there would be a clear path to implement those increased frequencies in the future.

Another large area of opportunity but also concern is the "loop" tunnel project to Ontario International Airport. At the time of the original announcement, it really seemed to be a rather questionable proposal and the loss of the support of the original proponent seemed to solidify the lack of usefulness. Meanwhile, with the increasing certainty around Brightline West, the logic of the tunnel only falls, provided SBCTA would think strategically about the overall situation. Given that environmental work is already proceeding for the tunnel project, there is likely little downside in getting it merely getting it certified. However, the public involvement should end there. If it's *really* that valuable a project, let a private entity come dust off the plans and build them—we don't need to saddle Omnitrans with a white elephant gadgetbahn.

Instead, what SBCTA should do is work on a comprehensive solution for transportation not just to Ontario International Airport, but which is critical for a greatly enhanced mobility system for the whole region (and most importantly, does **not** stick another burden on Omnitrans). There is a far superior solution which would provide many more useful connections and upgrades for the expense which is illustrated in Figure 1. As proposed, it would involve the following:

- **Extend Brightline West to Ontario International Airport:** Several previous studies have identified various routes for providing a rail connection from Rancho Cucamonga Station to Ontario International Airport. As depicted, the extension would follow the Deer Creek alignment which was identified in those studies as that consistently was rated highly, but others from those studies could work as well.

Marven E. Norman
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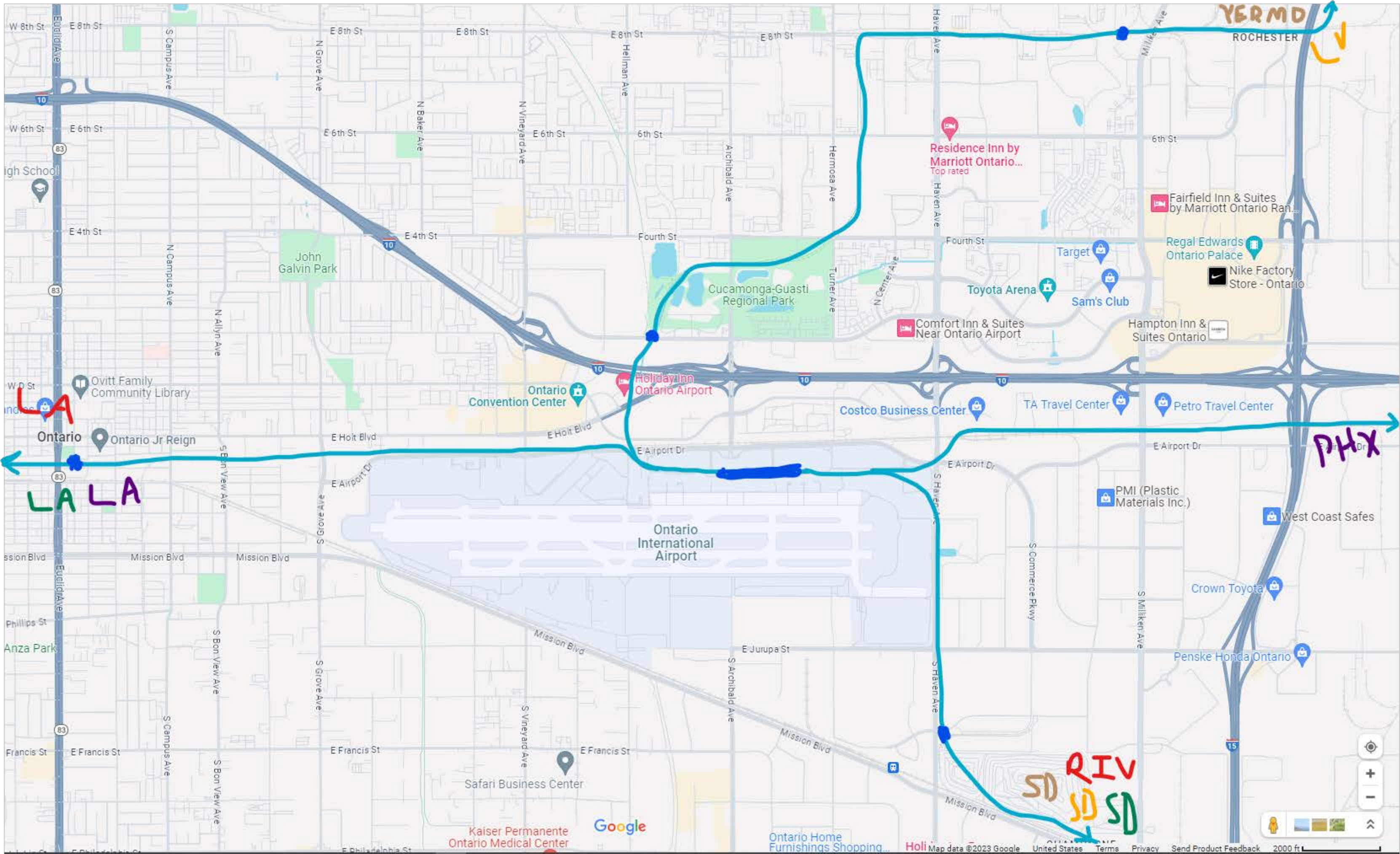
- **Reroute Riverside Line on the east side of Ontario International Airport:** The Riverside Line currently suffers from several ills, but this would remedy one of them which is the lack of connection to many places which are more than park-and-ride lots by enabling the establishment of a station in downtown Ontario. This proposal was also contemplated in several previous studies on the topic of providing service to Ontario International Airport. Additionally, in combination with the extension of Brightline West to the Airport as detailed above, there would be additional connecting service to/from Brightline West for more communities around the region and to provide resiliency in case of closures of the San Bernardino Line, such as we have experienced this morning.
- **Future-proof for CAHSR Phase 2 to San Diego:** All versions of Phase 2 of California High Speed Rail to connect from Los Angeles to San Diego include a station at Ontario International Airport. Thus, the California High Speed Rail Authority should also be engaged on starting the preparatory work for that segment as soon as possible and SBCTA should add that as a priority request to the Legislature and other such decisionmakers. Additionally, because Brightline West and CAHSR are being designed to be interoperable, it would provide an opportunity direct Las Vegas-San Diego trips for faster than if they went through LA, providing the opportunity for us to showcase our region to more people in the process.
- **Future-proof for high-speed rail to Phoenix:** Although the work on high-speed rail to Phoenix is even less advanced than CAHSR Phase 2, it seems unlikely that two completely separate high-speed rail approaches into the LA Basin is a realistic expectation to be built. Instead, it seems far more plausible that HSR to Phoenix would share the infrastructure used by CAHSR for LA-SD to exit the Basin at least through Ontario after which point it would split away from the line to San Diego to continue east. Thus, the provision of this option also needs to be included in the planning work to ensure that it can be built in the future.

In conclusion, SBCTA has the opportunity to help position Ontario International Airport as one of the best-connected airports in all of the country, with at buildout, travelers having access to a train that will be able to literally take them anywhere within 300-500 miles mere steps from their flight. It also would bring the crucial connection of daily train service to Ontario, helping to bolster the Transformative Climate Communities grant which was received several years ago. All it requires is a bit of foresight and planning. Hopefully, 2024 will be a year which continues the good trends which accelerated last year.

Sincerely,

Marven E. Norman
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CC:
Brightline West
CAHSRA
IE Legislative Caucus
Ontario International Airport Authority
RailPAC
USDOT Federal Railway Administration



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