



# Connecting People to Parks

**Session 4: Public Transit Planning to  
Fill Park Access Gaps**

April 9, 2025

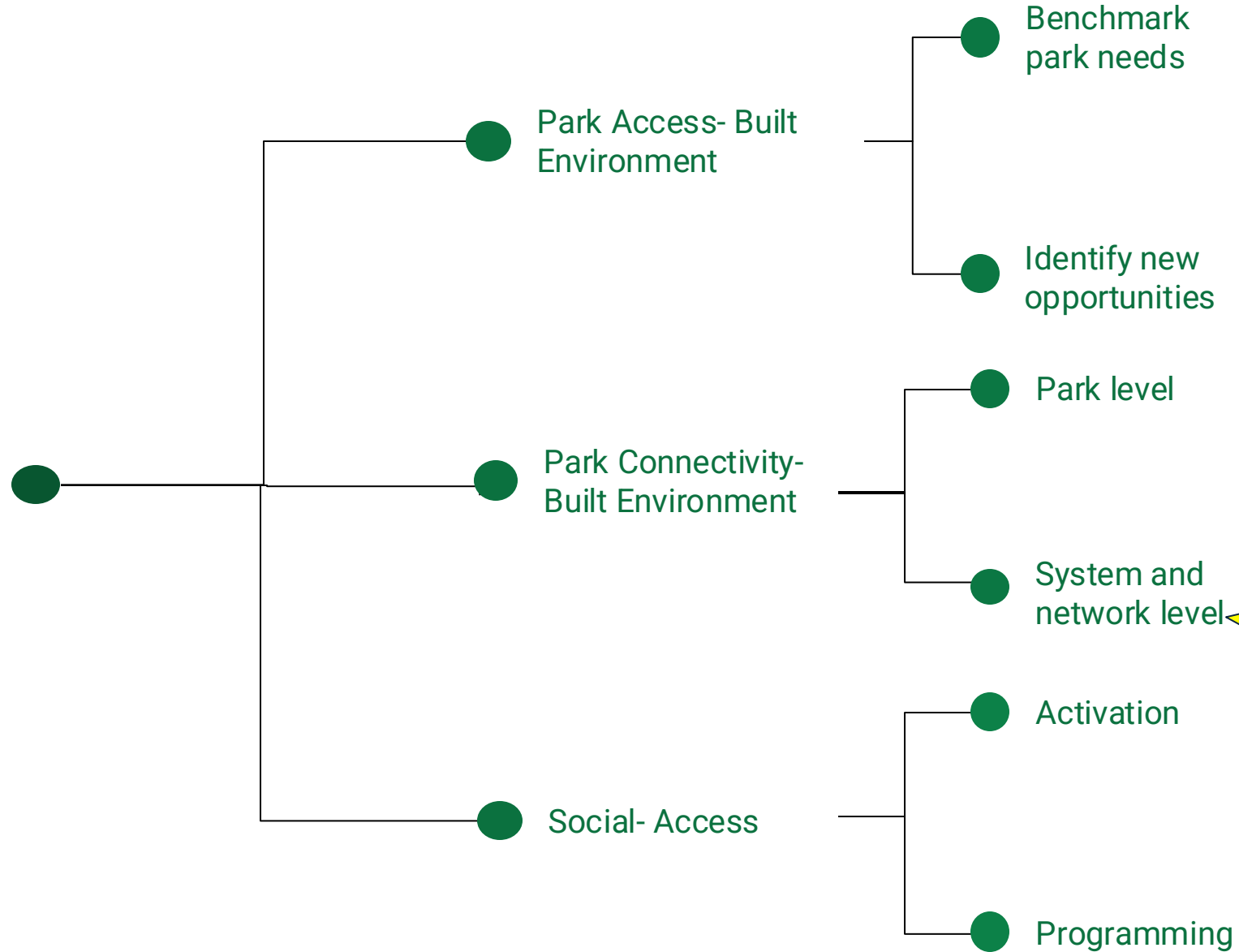


# Agenda

1. Welcome
2. Plenary Presentations (40 minutes)
  - Bryan Matsumoto, Nature for All
  - Q&A
3. Next Steps & Closing
4. Optional- Discussion Groups



# Connecting People to Parks



**Today's  
Session**





# Transit to Trails

Los Angeles County





**What's Next?**

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## Upcoming Webinar

**Date:** May 1, 2025 from 2pm-3pm ET

**Title:** Federal Transportation Funding Opportunities

**Presenter:** TPL Federal Affairs Team

**Goal:** Learn about the 'Safe Streets and Roads for All' federal grants that are due on June 26. We will share the types of projects that are eligible for this transportation funding.

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## **Last Session:**

June 12- Social Access:  
Activation and  
Programming

Fill out exit  
ticket from  
Zoom once  
you leave the  
room.

See you  
on June 12

Peer  
Discussion

Raise your  
hand function



# Discussion Questions

- If you have any questions from your work that you'd like to discuss as a group, please unmute or use your 'raise your hand' function.
- Have there been any successful initiatives in your community (or others) to improve transit routes to parks? What made them work?
- What are the current barriers to accessing parks via public transit in your city, and who is most affected by them? How can we ensure equitable access to green spaces through transit planning, particularly for low-income or underserved neighborhoods?
- How can we gather data and use community feedback to better understand transit needs related to park access?





Since 1972, TPL has protected 4 million acres of public land; created 5,364 parks, trails, schoolyards, and iconic outdoor places; raised \$93 billion in public funding for parks and public lands; and connected nearly 9.4 million people to the outdoors.

To learn more, visit [tpl.org](https://tpl.org).

Connecting everyone to the outdoors™

# Thank you!

Christina Jang  
[christina.jang@tpl.org](mailto:christina.jang@tpl.org)





## Preliminary planning: “Mt. Wilson Express” Weekend Shuttle (Pilot)

Los Angeles County's first modern public transportation to the Angeles National Forest/San Gabriel Mountains National Monument for equitable, sustainable & healthy urban access to nature



**Bryan Matsumoto, Senior Project Manager**  
[bryan@lanatureforall.org](mailto:bryan@lanatureforall.org) (626) 246-8634

# Nature for All

Belén Bernal

Executive Director

Bryan Matsumoto

Senior Project Manager



**Mission:** Build a diverse base of support to ensure that everyone in the Los Angeles area has equitable access to the wide range of benefits which nature provides.



Protect



Create



Connect

Nature for All Coalition Members





# Mt. Wilson Express Partners

## Project Development Team

Transit operator

Public Land  
Manager



NGO Project  
Manager

Transportation  
Planning  
Consultants



Kimley»Horn

FEHR & PEERS



U.S. Congressman  
Judy Chu



# L.A.'s first bus to the Angeles National Forest

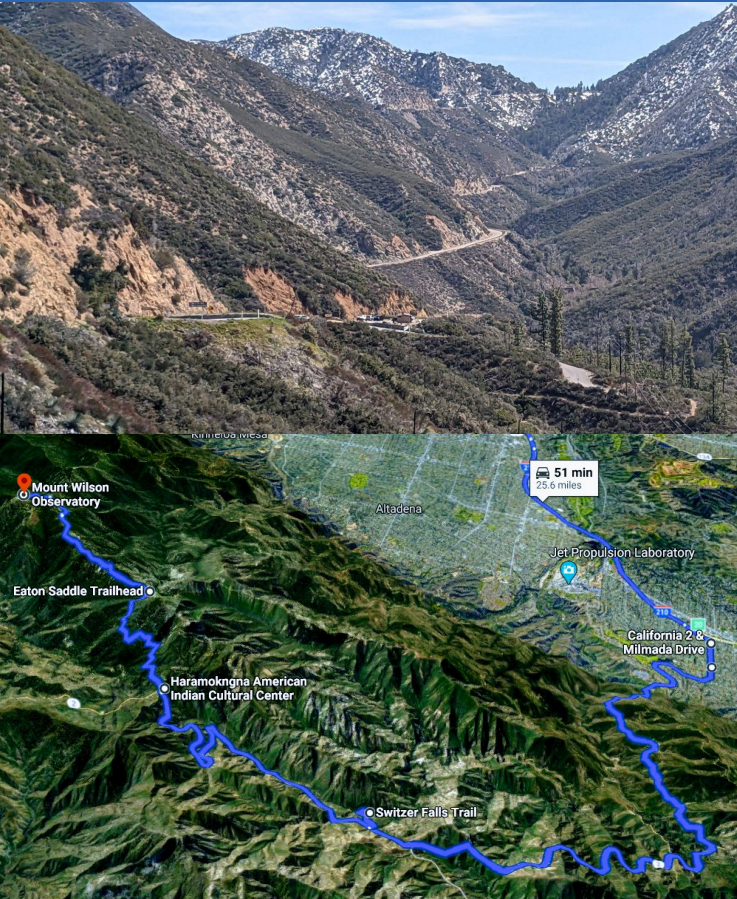


- 0 public transportation
- 50% park-poor residents
- 70% of County's open space





# Project Objectives



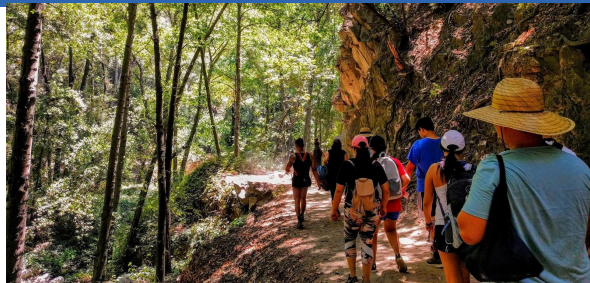
- **Sustainable visitor management**  
Relieve vehicular congestion
- **Environmental / Climate / Safety**  
Reduce VMT/GHG, add road safety improvements
- **Equitable transportation access**  
to Angeles National Forest / San Gabriel Mountains National Monument
- **Public health & healing**  
Mental & physical wellness for urban residents
- Provide critical experiences in nature that build  
**next generation environmental stewards**
- Teach visitors to **“Recreate with Respect”**
- Local **economic** benefits



# San Gabriel Mountains Transit-to-Trails Pilot Shuttles



Fish Canyon



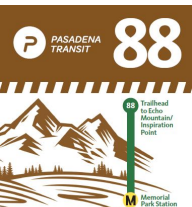
Sturtevant Falls



Chantry Flat



Echo Mtn.



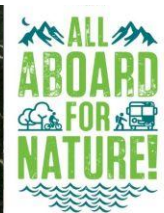
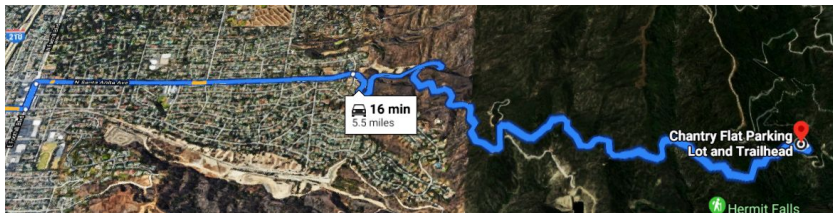
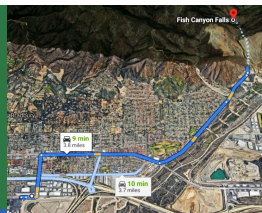
**Get to the Point!**  
**Your Transportation to Inspiration**

Starting April 17 and into the summer, Lake Pasadena Transit Route 88 from Memorial Park Gold Line Station to Echo Mountain/ Inspiration Point Trailhead. This leaves every half hour from the Raymond & Holly bus stop from 7:05 a.m. - 4:35 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays. Last bus leaves the trailhead at 5:00 p.m.

Route 88 is a local service. Travel time to the trailhead is 23 minutes.

For more information call 626-744-4055 or visit [www.pasadenatransit.net](http://www.pasadenatransit.net)

REAL TIME  
ARRIVAL  
INFO ONLINE



2016-2019 Partners: Cities of Duarte, Pasadena, Arcadia, The Wilderness Society, LA County Supervisor Barger 5th District, Trust for Public Land, SCE, US Forest Service, National Forest Foundation, REI & Nature for All



# Metro Transit to Parks Strategic Plan (2019)



“  
Lack of  
transportation is  
routinely listed as  
the number 1 or 2  
barrier to accessing  
public parks and  
open space in the  
LA region.”

“  
With this Plan, Metro describes  
a vision for coordinating access  
goals and strategies at the local and  
County levels so that as a region we  
can better access parks as well as  
funding for transit to parks.”

The Metro Board recently adopted Transit to Parks Strategic Plan (Plan) which is a strategic vision for increasing access to park and open space, specifically for disadvantaged communities. Applicants are encouraged to

# Metro Transit to Parks Strategic Plan (2019)

## 9 Board actions:

1. Designate a Metro Transit to Parks liaison
2. Create marketing/promotional materials for transit lines serving parks/open space, including a web-based access tool
3. Outreach to Councils of Government (COGs), parks organizations, municipal bus operators, and other partner agencies to promote the Transit to Parks
4. Contribute \$1 million for grants for cities and nonprofits transit to parks programs – to be done in conjunction with the L.A. County Regional Park and Open Space District (RPOSD)
5. Pursue funding for Transit to Parks activities, including providing grant writing assistance to eligible partner agencies and nonprofits
6. Collaborate with L.A. County of Los Angeles Parks and Recreation Department to document data on park access
7. Incorporate Transit to Parks in the NextGen Bus service reorganization
8. Make recommendations on integrating transit-to-parks into 28 by 2028 and Measure M project planning
9. Report back to the Metro Board every six months with status updates

Next stop: more access to open spaces.

TRANSIT TO PARKS STRATEGIC PLAN

May 2019



Metro





November 2022

# LA County Transit to Parks Summit

[Website](#)

If you would like better transit access to LA's parks, then join the Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation and Metro for the Transit to Parks Summit on November 14th & 15th at Earvin "Magic" Johnson Park in the community of Willowbrook in South Los Angeles. Special guests invited include LA County Supervisor Holly Mitchell, Metro Board Chair Ara Najarian, Metro CEO Stephanie Wiggins, and LA County Parks & Recreation Director Norma Edith García-Gonzalez.

Co-Hosted By:



# Metro Transit to Parks Funding (March 2023)

## Recreation Access Competitive Grant: One-time, \$1M available [Board report](#) \*



**Wander the Wilderness Bus**

Nature is calling, and Wander the Wilderness Bus is answering!

Enjoy Deukmejian Wilderness Park without worrying about how to get there!  
This free shuttle operates every weekend to help you and your family get to the park.

**SATURDAYS**  
501 S. Pacific Ave., Glendale 91204

Pacific Park to Deukmejian Park  
Departs | 9:00 AM & 11:30 AM

Deukmejian Park to Pacific Park  
Departs | 11:00 AM & 1:00 PM

DECEMBER 7 and 28, 2024  
JANUARY 25, 2025  
FEBRUARY 22, 2025

**SUNDAYS**  
820 E. Maple St., Glendale 91205

Maple Park to Deukmejian Park  
Departs | 9:00 AM & 11:30 AM

Deukmejian Park to Maple Park  
Departs | 11:00 AM & 1:00 PM

DECEMBER 1 and 22, 2024  
JANUARY 5 and 19, 2025  
FEBRUARY 2 and 16, 2025

Adult supervision is required!  
One adult for every three children 17 years and under is required.

Visit [GlendaleCA.gov/Trails](http://GlendaleCA.gov/Trails) or call (818) 937-7428 for more information.  
Հայերեն տեղեկություններ համար զանգահարե՛ք (818) 548-2000.  
Para información en español, llame a (818) 548-2000.

Community Services & Parks

STONE BARN  
NATURE CENTER

Metro  
Partnering with your community

Funding provided by Metro, a partner in our community.

@MyGlendaleParks

Reasonable accommodations will be made upon request. Please notify us within 72 hrs. prior to visit date.

### City of Glendale:

Bus to Deukmejian Wilderness Park & Stone Barn Nature Center (\$252,755)

*Currently operating*

[Website](#) [Video](#)

\* Only these two cities applied. Others did not apply for reasons including: "available funding is insufficient to sustain service long-term, and agencies are hesitant to seek funding for limited term pilots."

### City of Pasadena:

Mt. Wilson Express Shuttle Pilot to Angeles National Forest (\$747,245)

*In development*

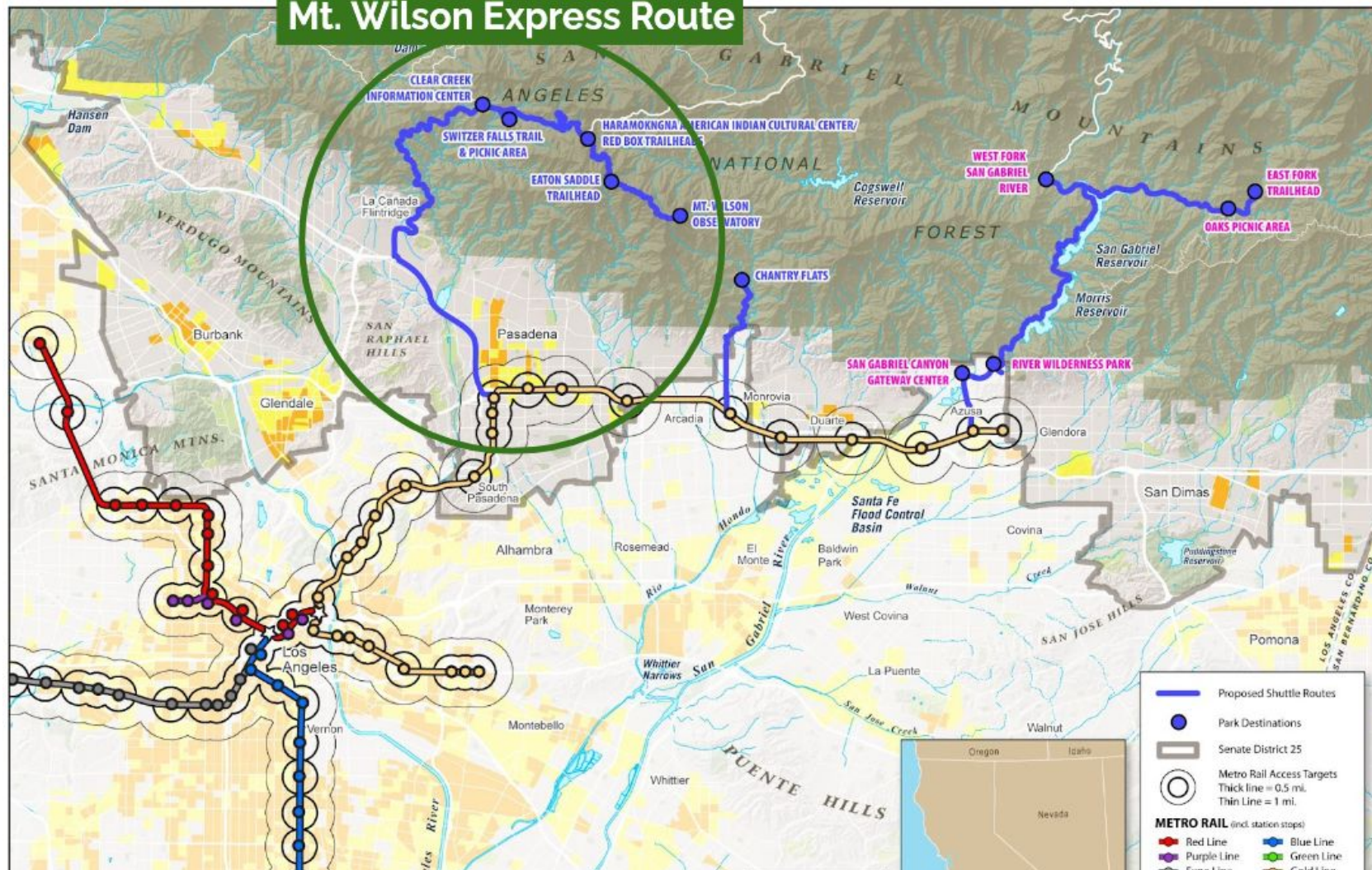






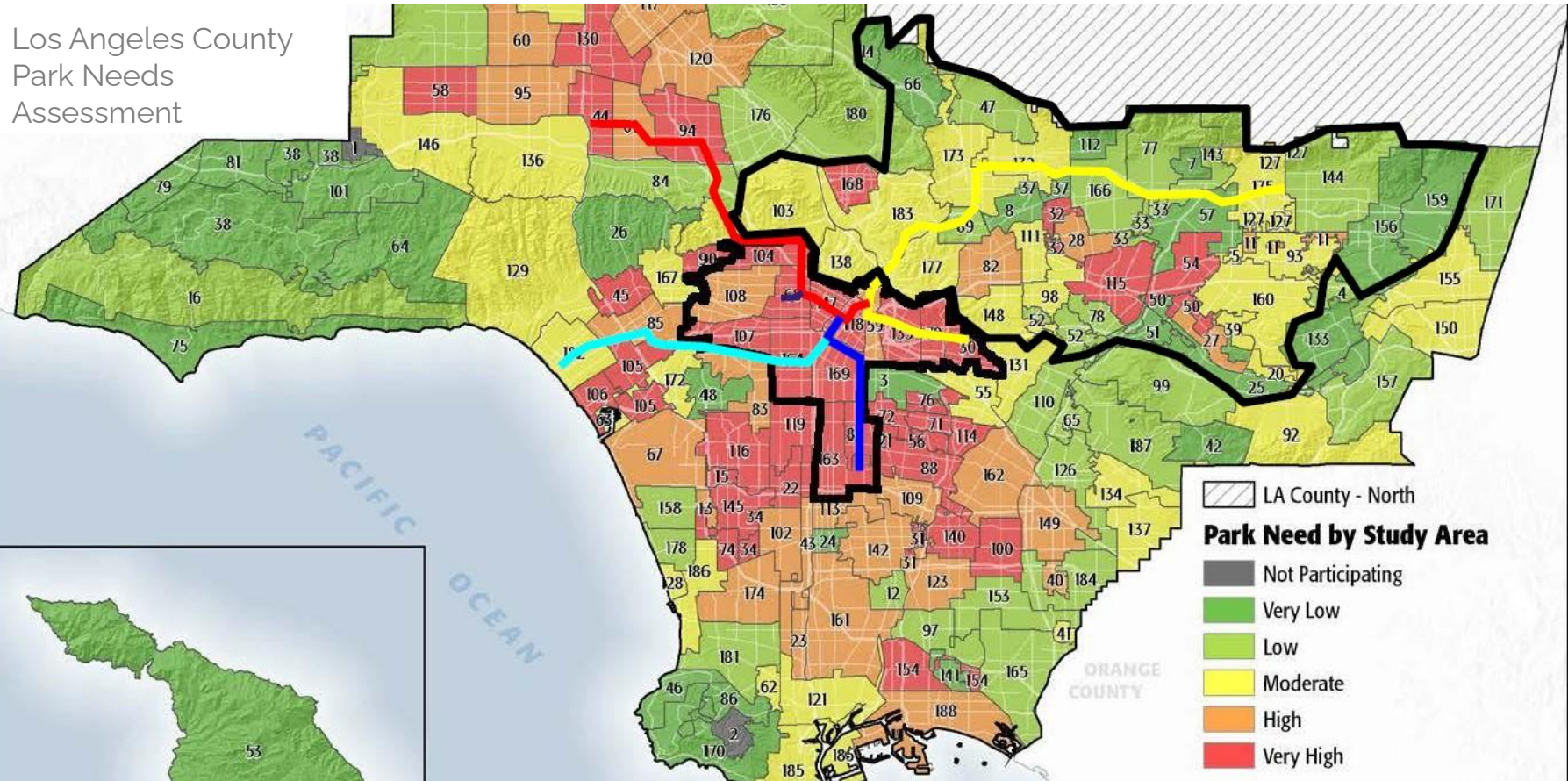


# Mt. Wilson Express Route

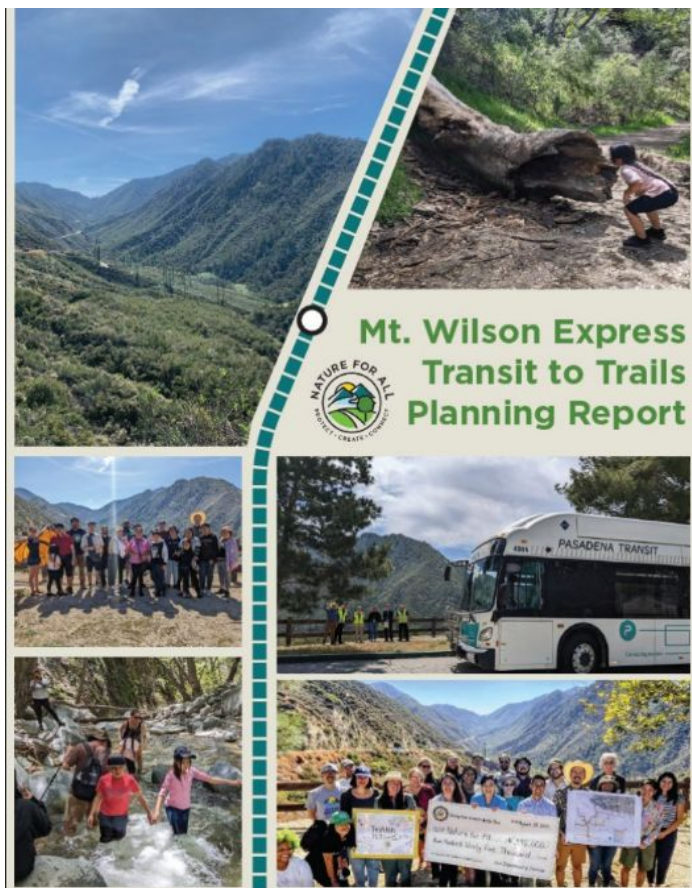




# Access for All: LA's Park-Deficit Communities



# Preliminary Planning Report



The journey to the Angeles National Forest differs greatly depending on the proximity and ease of transit connections to the Memorial Park station.

Map 3 displays a transit travel shed analysis capturing public transit riders within one hour of the Memorial Park station in Pasadena. The model assumed a typical catchment area for a weekend period (Saturday or Sunday) arriving by 9 am.<sup>8</sup> The catchment area could change slightly based on arrival/departure times and weekday vs. weekend schedules. Given that the Mt. Wilson Express pilot program may initiate operations with limited service on weekends, this was used as a basis for analysis.

The map illustrates that public transit access within one hour extend generally from Pasadena to south of downtown LA, west to Burbank, and east to Temple City and Azusa. Riders from East LA, along the I-710 corridor, Vernon, and the eastern edge of Koreatown can also reach Memorial Park Station in one hour.

Map 3: One Hour Travel Shed to Metro Memorial Park Station



Source: Metro EFC, 2019. Prepared by VICUS, 2021.

<sup>8</sup> It is important to note that at the time of this analysis, the Metro Regional Connector was not in operation.

“You can tell the difference when you breathe the air. You feel more relaxed. It is my first time outside of the city. It’s like when you bring a child for the first time.”

“This is the best day ever! (child’s response)”

“Unlike relaxing at home where everyone is on their phones, relaxing in nature allows you to relax the body and mind.”



# Pilot project, Route design, Environmental permitting

- City of Pasadena
- US Forest Service
- Environmental review:
- Caltrans
- LA County Dept. of Public Works

## 1. Project Description

The Mount Wilson Express Shuttle ("Proposed Project") is a pilot bus service from the Metro A Line Memorial Park Station in the City of Pasadena to Mount Wilson Observatory in the Angeles National Forest/San Gabriel Mountains National Monument (ANF/SGMNM). The shuttle service will be operated by Pasadena Transit. The 25-mile bus route will provide seasonal, summer weekend service to nine local, urban stops and seven recreational stops. The service will provide a sustainable transportation alternative and improve access to parks, open space, trails and outdoor recreational destinations within the ANF/SGMNM, especially for underserved and disadvantaged communities in the Los Angeles Basin. The Proposed Project will also improve air quality, including reducing emissions of smog-forming air pollutants and greenhouse gases (GHGs), by alleviating road congestion and replacing vehicle miles traveled (VMT) from private automobiles with hydrogen-fuel cell buses.

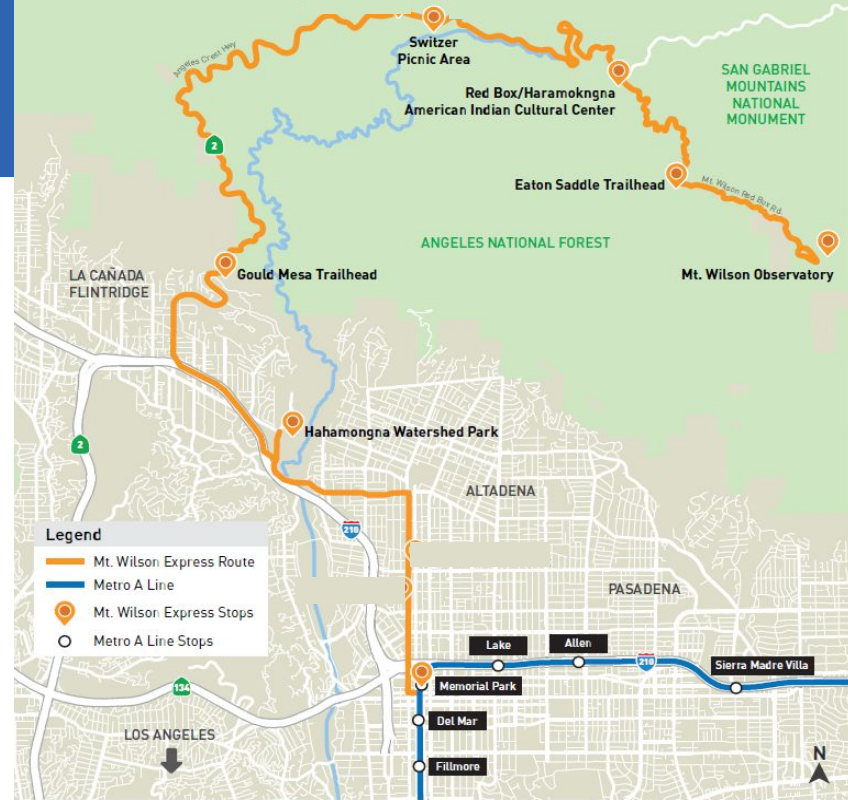
### 1.1 Route and Stops

The Proposed Project route serves existing, local urban stops within the City of Pasadena as well as recreational stops within the City of La Cañada Flintridge and the ANF/SGMNM. Map 1 shows the proposed bus route and the proposed stops. Select stops will be offered as express shuttle service (shown in bold), while the other stops are optional pick-up locations offered along the route. The complete list of stops includes (bold stops are shown on Map 1):

1. Memorial Park Station (Raymond Ave/Holly St)
2. Walnut St/Raymod Ave\*
3. Fair Oaks Ave/Corson St\*
4. Fair Oaks Ave/Villa St
5. Fair Oaks Ave/Orange Grove Blvd
6. Fair Oaks Ave/Painter St
7. Robinson Park (Mountain St/Fair Oaks Ave)
8. Mountain St & Sunset Ave
9. City of Pasadena Maintenance Yards\*
10. Hahamongna Watershed Park (Berkshire Pl/ Oak Grove Dr)
11. Gould Mesa Trailhead
12. Clear Creek
13. Switzer Picnic Area
14. Hahamongna American Indian Cultural Center/Red Box
15. Eaton Saddle Trailhead
16. Mount Wilson Observatory

Updated: July 24, 2024

Draft concept - Not final



Source: Nature For All, 2023. Prepared by VICUS, 2023.

- Tentative: Apr-Oct 2026
- Weekend service

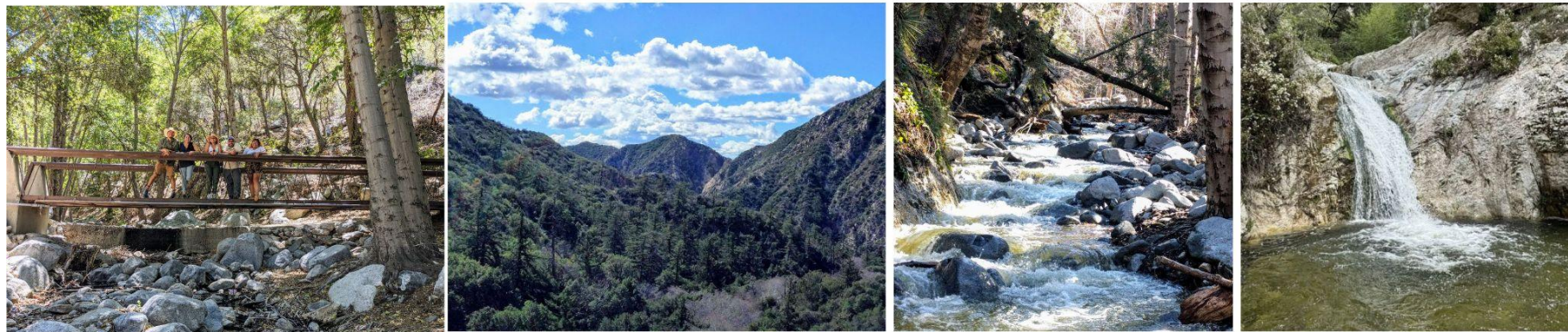




**Hahamongna Watershed Park, Arroyo Seco (Pasadena)**



**Gould Mesa: Gabrielino Trail to Brown Mountain Dam**



**Switzer Falls**

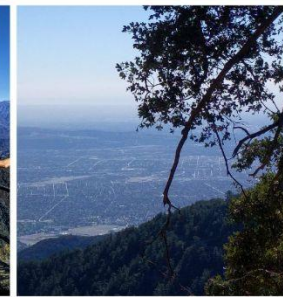




## Haramokngna American Indian Cultural Center at Red Box



## Eaton Saddle



## Mt. Wilson Observatory



# Visitor Education: “Recreate with Respect”



- Trail ambassadors & volunteer educators
- Promote stewardship, safety, volunteering, TrailAngeles.org
- Onboard video, shuttle website, social media







# Can alternative transportation systems, combined with visitor education, mitigate negative impacts?



## Sustainable visitor management pressures

- **Increased demand on public lands:**
  - Social media: increased exposure
  - COVID-19: increased visitation
  - Park-deprived urban communities
  - Equitable representation, access
- **Negative impacts:**
  - Degraded sites, visitor experience,
  - Vehicle congestion, GHG pollution
  - Trash, vandalism

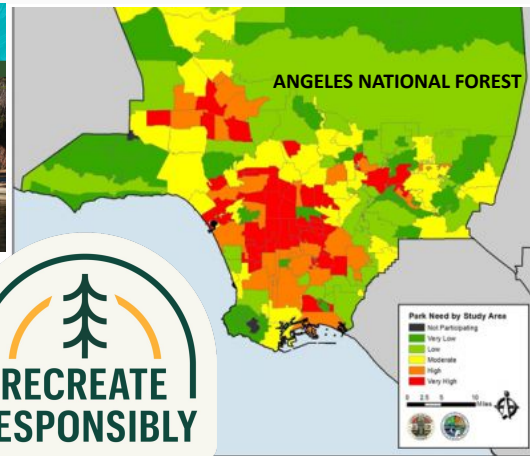


NEWS • News

### Pandemic, snowy mountains draw avalanche of visitors to Angeles National Forest

A record number of visitors to 'LA.'s backyard' were reported in 2021, outpacing Yosemite

“Lack of transportation is routinely listed as the number 1 or 2 barrier to accessing public parks and open space in the LA region.”



Map Source: Los Angeles Countywide Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment. Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation, May 3, 2016.



# How Research Will Address the Problem

- Understanding the **impacts of urban transit to public lands** is crucial for this nationally significant, equity-focused shuttle infrastructure pilot - a novel research opportunity
- Uniqueness of study:
  - Magnitude & Complexity
  - Heavily urbanized setting
  - Service of diverse population & EJ communities
- Modeling a way to bring local visitors into the forest, as compared to tourist-focused NPS shuttles



The research team will collect pre/post-shuttle data to **evaluate impacts of the shuttle service**, educational messaging and guide adaptive management.

- **Data collection:**

- Parking counts
- Trail counters
- Mapping of trash, vandalism, human waste



- **Surveys to understand shuttle riders and non-riders:**

- Transit experience
- Transportation mode shift
- Stewardship ethic
- Demographics



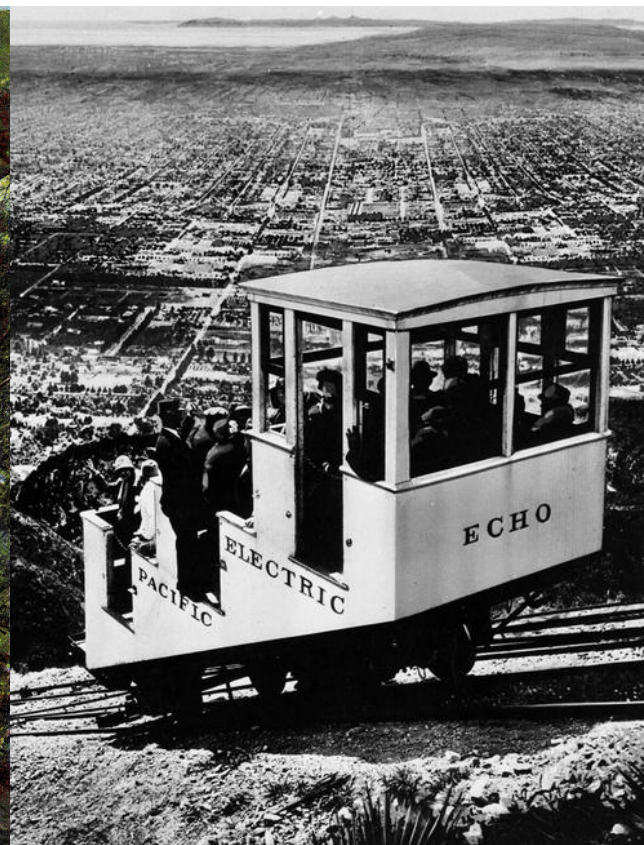
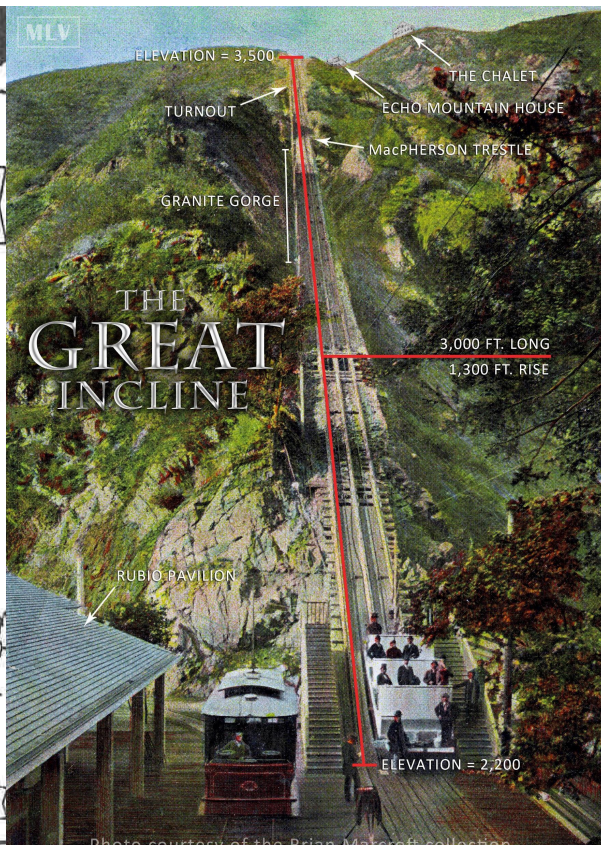
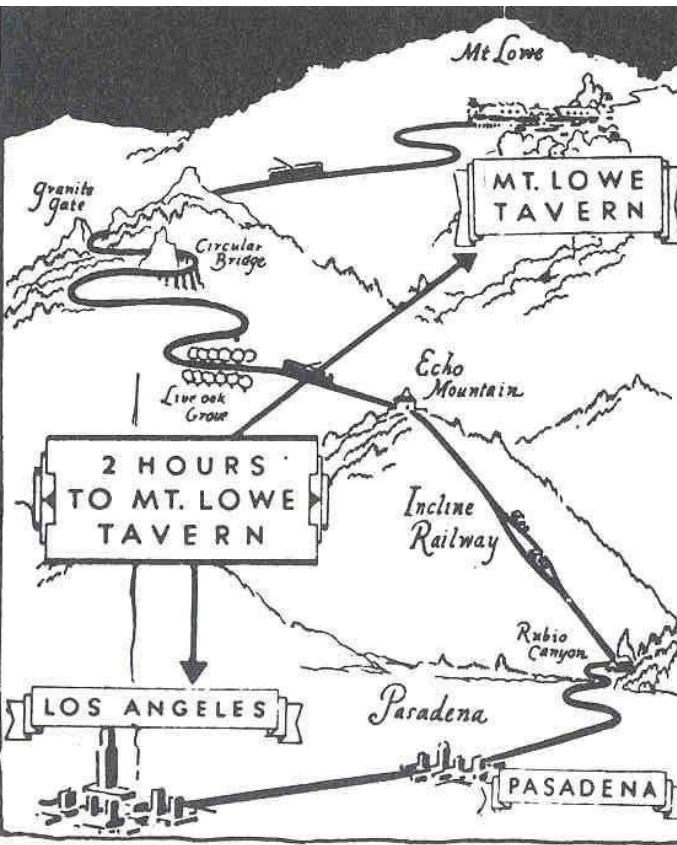
# Partners: How can you support?



- Plan, prepare, promote: Mt. Wilson Express
- Advocate for Transit to Parks funding
- **Late 2025:**
  - Community engagement & education
  - Agencies, CBOs: Train, toolkit, plan trips
- **2026:** Marketing plan, launch event, trips!
- **What does a successful pilot look like?**
  - Positive, sustainable visitor experience
  - Community & stakeholder support
  - Build ridership, plan trips
  - Increased stewardship & workforce
  - Strong champions, case for sustained funding, governance, permanent route



# LA's Transit-to-Trails History: Mt. Lowe Railway





Draft concept - Not final



Preliminary planning: A new legacy

# "Mt. Wilson Express" Weekend Shuttle (Pilot)

Los Angeles County's first modern public transportation to the Angeles National Forest/San Gabriel Mountains National Monument for equitable, sustainable & healthy urban access to nature



PASADENA  
TRANSIT



**Bryan Matsumoto, Senior Project Manager**

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