U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System

Status of the VA's Agreements with LA Metro relating to the Purple Line Extension January 2020

Purpose

This document provides background and status information relevant to certain current and expected agreements between the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (LA Metro), in coordination with the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Transit Administration, and the California Office of Historic Preservation, regarding the extension of LA Metro's Purple Line rail service onto VA's West Los Angeles (WLA) Campus.

Background and Authority

VA's WLA Campus sits at the intersection of Wilshire Boulevard and the 405 Freeway. Once the Pacific Branch of the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers, the 132-year-old WLA Campus has evolved from a rural institutional housing facility to a modern hospital complex at the heart of L.A.'s bustling West side. Today, the WLA Campus houses a large hospital and related research and outpatient buildings, a Community Living Center, a Domiciliary facility, and various auxiliary services. Between the WLA Campus, two ambulatory care centers, and eight outpatient clinics, the VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System (VA GLA) serves 1.4 million Veterans, employs 5,000 employees, and trains over 500 university residents, interns, and students from more than 45 academic affiliates each year.

VA GLA also runs VA's largest program of services for homeless Veterans, providing a variety of clinical, residential, and outreach services to over 8,000 Veterans each year. At present, approximately 350 homeless and at-risk Veterans are housed in permanent, transitional, and domiciliary care programs on the WLA Campus, with a new 100-bed bridge housing facility scheduled to open in March 2020. 100 additional domiciliary care beds expected to open in June 2020, and more than 100 Veterans currently reside in GLA's Community Living Centers. VA's WLA Campus Master Plan calls for the establishment of at least 1,200 beds of permanent supportive housing for homeless or at-risk Veterans and their families over the next ten years, and for a variety of other services for Veterans living on the WLA Campus or elsewhere in the area.

Between 1899 and 1953, the Los Angeles Pacific Railroad and, later, the Southern Pacific Railroad operated rail service to the WLA Campus from downtown Los Angeles and Santa Monica. Since that time, Veterans, employees, and visitors have had to rely on private automobiles and municipal bus service to reach the WLA Campus.

The WLA Leasing Act of 2016, Public Law 114-226 (September 29, 2016) (the "Act"), authorizes VA to enter into a limited range of leases and other land-use agreements at the WLA Campus. Section 2(e)(1)(A) of that Act specifically authorizes the VA Secretary to "grant easements or rights-of-way on, above, or under lands at the Campus to … any local or regional public transportation authority to access, construct, use, operate, maintain, repair, or reconstruct public mass transit facilities, including, fixed guideway facilities and transportation centers".

Status

In 2019, both VA and LA Metro completed thorough analyses under the National Environmental Protection Act and the National Historic Preservation Act to identify and mitigate potential adverse

impacts of locating a Purple Line station on the WLA Campus. The results of those analyses may be found at http://www.westladraftmasterplan.org/documentation/nepa-and-nhpa.

To date, VA has executed several preliminary access agreements that enable LA Metro to carry out certain due diligence and pre-construction site preparation activities. VA and LA Metro are currently negotiating formal easement agreements, expected to be signed in the next few months, which will document LA Metro's obligations to compensate VA for the land, to mitigate adverse impacts on VA operations, and to provide additional services for the specific benefit of Veterans. At the same time, legislation (H.R. 5094) is pending to amend the Act to authorize and require VA to use any compensation VA receives pursuant to the easements exclusively for the renovation and maintenance of the land and facilities at the WLA Campus. In keeping with its commitment to transparency with respect to all WLA Campus land use decisions, VA will make all Purple Line-related agreements available via the VA FOIA Service Reading Room website as soon as the agreements are signed and update this status document as necessary.