Item #
IV. A

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

PASADENA TRANSIT

FOREST SERVICE US DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

NATURE FOR ALL

Bryan Matsumoto, Senior Project Manager
bryan@lanatureforall.org (626) 246-8634

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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

ACTIVE SGV · Amigos de los Ríos · FORWARD MOVEMENT · COFEM Consejo de Federaciones Mexicanas · day one · NATIONAL PARKS ASSOCIATION · OUTWARD BOUND ADVENTURES · SIERRA CLUB

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Mt. Wilson Express Partners

Project Development Team

Transit operator

PASADENA TRANSIT

Public Land Manager

FOREST SERVICE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

NGO Project Manager

NATURE FOR ALL — PROTECT • CREATE • CONNECT

Transportation Planning Consultants

Kimley»Horn

FEHR & PEERS

Kathryn BARGER — 5th District Supervisor • County of Los Angeles

Los Angeles County Supervisor HILDA L. SOLIS — First District

Metro

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

U.S. Congressmember Judy Chu

SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS CONSERVANCY — EUREKA

MOUNT WILSON OBSERVATORY

The Wilderness Society

SIERRA CLUB

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

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

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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

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San Gabriel Mountains Transit-to-Trails Pilot Shuttles

Fish Canyon

Sturtevant Falls

Echo Mtn.

Chantry Flat

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

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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

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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

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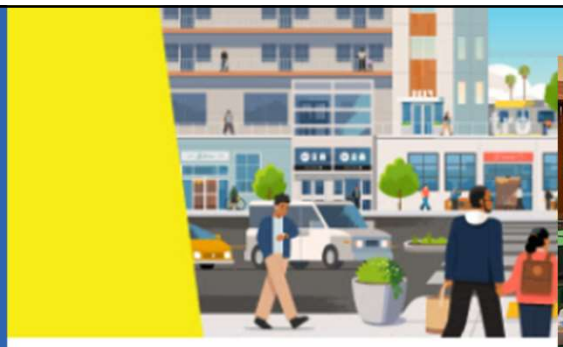

November 2022

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

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Metro Transit to Parks Funding (March 2023)

Recreation Access Competitive Grant: One-time, $1M available Board report*

City of Glendale:

Bus to Deukmejian Wilderness Park & Stone Barn Nature Center ($253k)

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 ($747k)

In development

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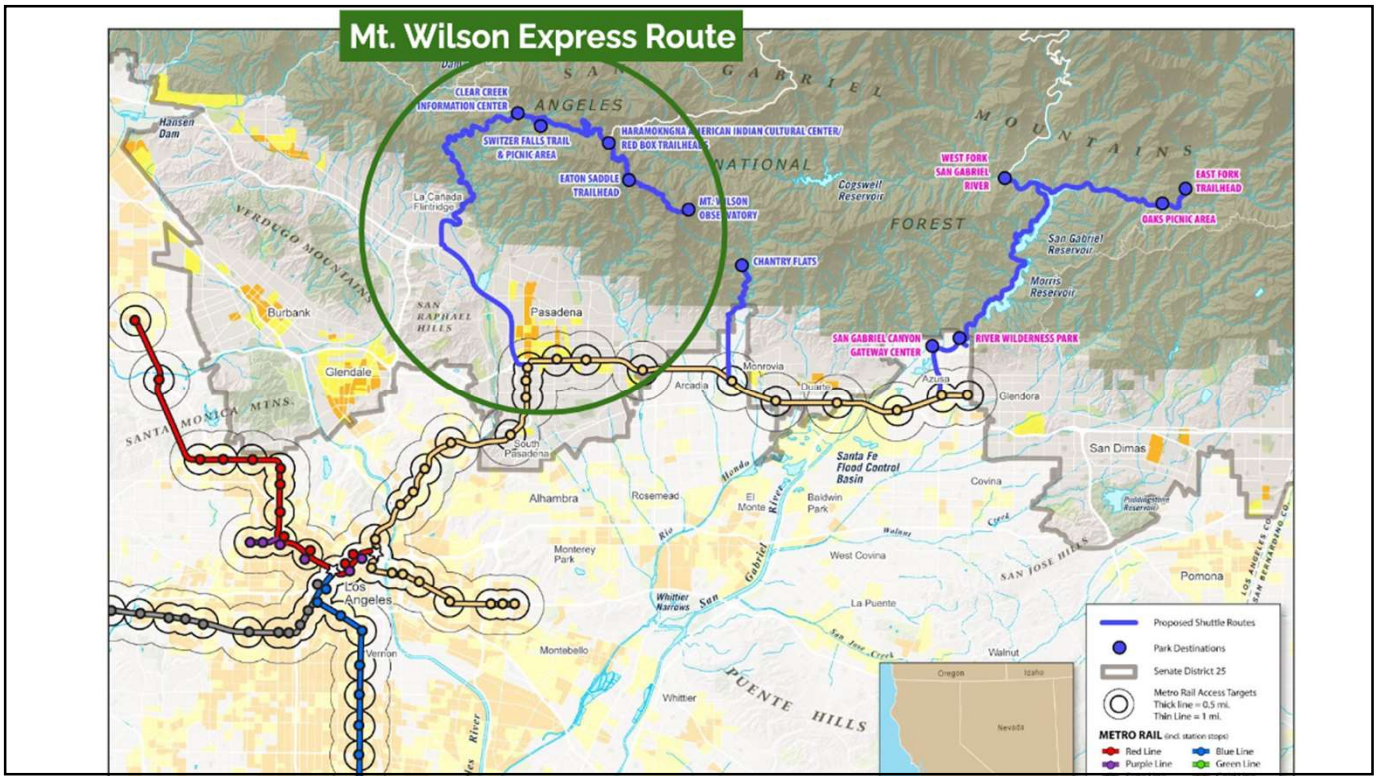
Mt. Wilson Express Route
CLEAR CREEK INFORMATION CENTER
SWITZER FALLS TRAIL & PICNIC AREA
HARAMOKNGNA AMERICAN INDIAN CULTURAL CENTER/ RED BOX TRAILHEAD
EATON SADDLE TRAILHEAD
MT. WILSON OBSERVATORY
CHANTRY FLATS
WEST FORK SAN GABRIEL RIVER
EAST FORK TRAILHEAD
OAKS PICNIC AREA
SAN GABRIEL CANYON GATEWAY CENTER
RIVER WILDERNESS PARK
Hansen Dam
La Canada Flintridge
Burbank
Glendale
Pasadena
Arcadia
Monrovia
Azusa
Glendora
San Dimas
Covina
Alhambra
Rosemead
El Monte
Baldwin Park
West Covina
La Puente
Pomona
Monterey Park
Montebello
Whittier
Los Angeles
Vernon
Walnut
Santa Fe Flood Control Basin
Cogswell Reservoir
San Gabriel Reservoir
Morris Reservoir
VERDUGO MOUNTAINS
SAN RAPHAEL HILLS
SANTA MONICA MTNS.
SAN GABRIEL MOUNTAINS
NATIONAL FOREST
PUENTE HILLS
SAN JOSE HILLS
Proposed Shuttle Routes
Park Destinations
Senate District 25
Metro Rail Access Targets
Thick line = 0.5 mi.
Thin Line = 1 mi.
METRO RAIL (incl. station stops)
Red Line
Purple Line
Blue Line
Green Line

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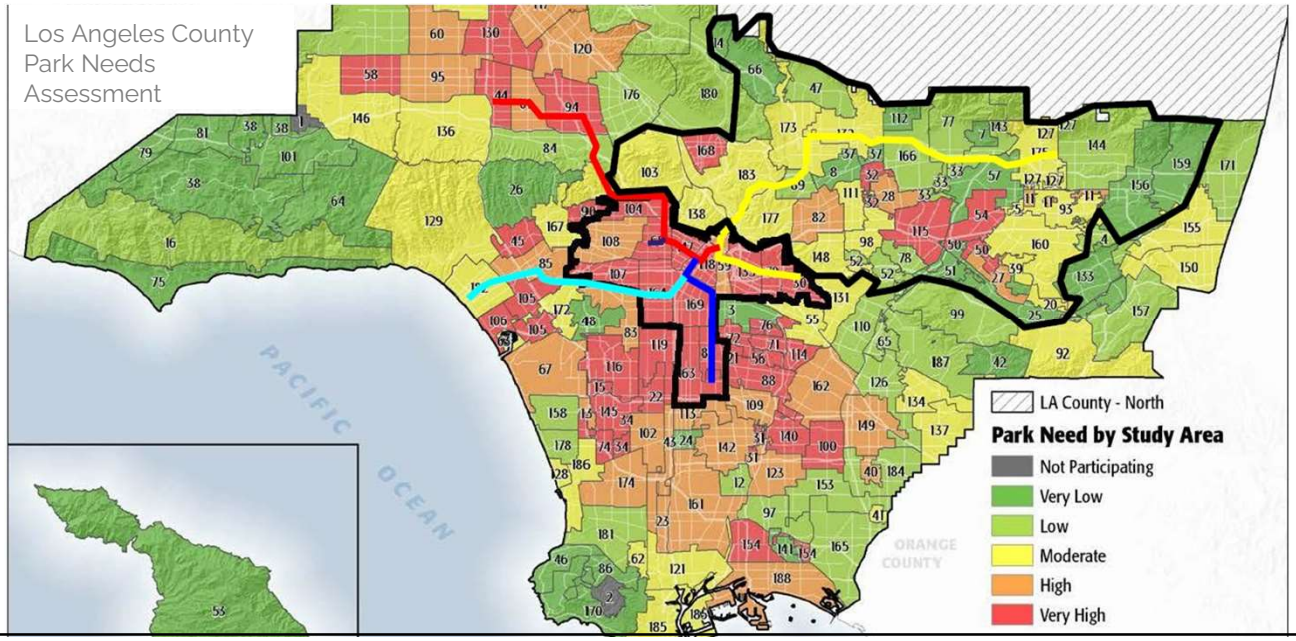
Access for All: LA's Park-Deficit Communities



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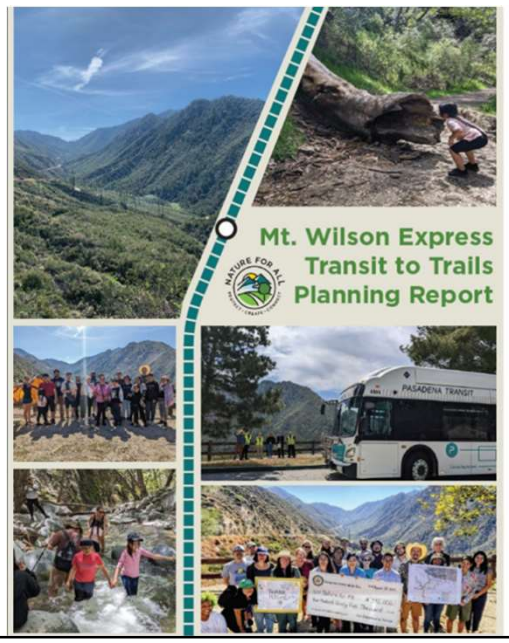
Preliminary Planning Report



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.[4] 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

[4] 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."

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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. **Haramoknga American Indian Cultural Center/Red Box**
15. **Eaton Saddle Trailhead**
16. **Mount Wilson Observatory**

Updated: July 24, 2024 1

- **Tentative: Apr-Oct 2026**
- **Weekend service**

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Hahamongna Watershed Park, Arroyo Seco (Pasadena)

Gould Mesa: Gabrielino Trail to Brown Mountain Dam

Switzer Falls

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Visitor Education: "Recreate with Respect"

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

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Research study funded!

Urban Transit to Trails:

Evaluating the equity, transportation, safety, ecological and social impacts of implementing the Mt. Wilson Express Shuttle (Los Angeles)

Federal Highways Administration

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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

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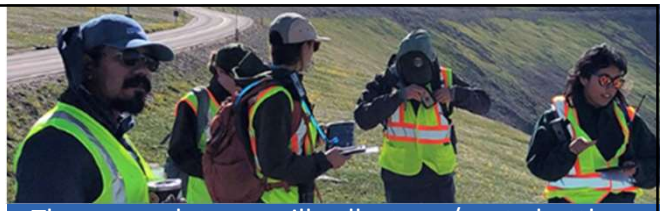
How Research Will Address the Problem

- 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

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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

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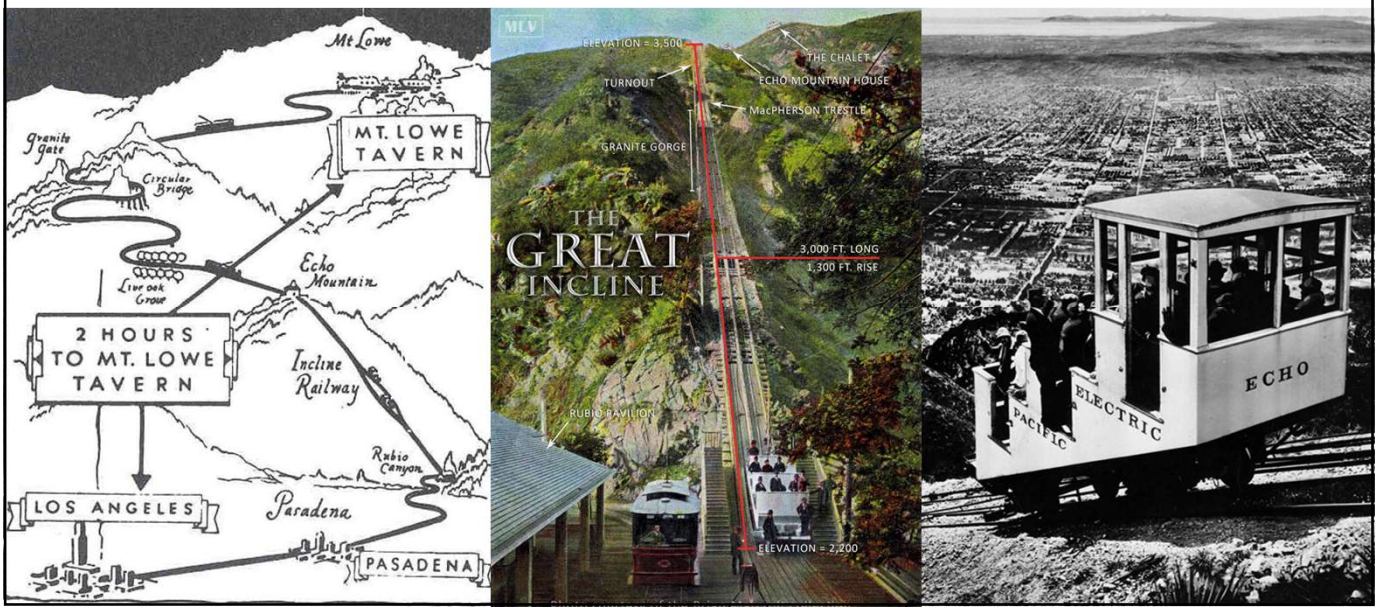
LA's Transit-to-Trails History: Mt. Lowe Railway



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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

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