



From the City Manager's Desk

a weekly report from Scott Ochoa, City of Monrovia



February 8, 2008

Community Mobilizes Against Gang Violence

It is unfortunate that it sometimes requires a crisis to draw folks together for a common purpose.

At the beginning of this week, Monrovia was heading into February with nearly a week of relative peace and calm. Yet, residents heeded the call to stay vigilant and remain engaged in the wellbeing of the community. Indeed, residents were now demanding to play a role in any way they could. Beginning with last Saturday's MAP Area 2 Kick-off, City staff members were signing residents up for volunteer efforts with Monrovia Reads & Plays (taking recreation and library services into our MAP neighborhoods), neighborhood Code Enforcement canvassing, the Fire Department's CERT (Community Emergency Response Team) training, Neighborhood Watch, and the YES (Youth Employment Service) program.

And all of this volunteerism was on the heels of other ongoing grassroots programs that were being organized at schools, in churches and in individual neighborhoods.

This wave of activity set the stage for a powerful week in Monrovia's history. Monday night saw the attendance of more than 400 parents at the Santa Fe Middle School Auditorium to come together and discuss issues and efforts relating to student safety. Tuesday night was the City Council meeting and forum (discussed below). Thursday was a truly historic event – the coming together of Immaculate Conception Church and Second Baptist Church. These two institutions – located only a block apart and with nearly 200 years of service to the community between them – had never shared or jointly celebrated their faith before. Yet, on Thursday night, the two congregations came together for a Mass of Healing & Reconciliation. The TV cameras weren't there to cover it, but I suppose it's just as well – no blood, no hyperbole, no sound-bites – just folks, fellowship and an overwhelming sense of community.

Friday night was witness to a gang-related shooting in Duarte. And though the victim's wounds are not life-threatening and the shooters were immediately taken into custody, it served as a reminder that the shadow of gang violence exists like after-shocks following an earthquake. You find yourself constantly bracing for the next one, until you begin to forget to think about it.

This was the mindset heading into Saturday's Pray for Peace Rally in Recreation Park. The realization that there had been no gang violence in nine days in the Monrovia-Duarte-Arcadia and County areas, I think began to create a security blanket for people. Yet Friday night's incident served to create two basic thoughts: 1) it isn't over until the guilty have been brought to justice; and 2) even then it isn't over because the real task is to set to work now, coming together to prevent that next generation of gang members from ever joining a gang. This became the clarion call of the rally – we must end the cycle of gangs and gang violence. This means, as sad a commentary as it seems, that we must reach children and families earlier than before and more intensely than before.

This comprehension of the need to deal preemptively with the complexity of the gang issue was driven home to those at the rally in a very powerful and real way – for only 1,000 feet to the south,

Brandon Lee's funeral was commencing at Immaculate Conception Church (which was itself an unprecedented event amid a week of unprecedented events).

If you would like more information about this matter, if you have information that would be useful to law enforcement, or if you would like to volunteer in some capacity, please feel free to contact me directly, or the Police Department (626/256-8000), or our Neighborhood Services Section (626/932-5521).

City Council Recap

The February 5 City Council meeting was convened with a moment of silence in honor of the families that have been impacted by recent gang violence. Following on the heels of the MUSD's parents' forum the previous evening, Mayor Hammond stated that the first portion of the City Council meeting would be structured as a town hall forum to allow folks to ask questions, raise concerns and offer suggestions about the issues of gangs and gang violence.

Following brief introductory statements from the Mayor and Chief Johnson, the floor was opened to the members of the audience. Several speakers came forward, most notably several members of the Canyon Park Townhomes' homeowners' association. This development is located between Ivy and California, near Julian Fisher Park and just down the street from the site of the Almond Avenue shooting. Other residents, including residents from the County unincorporated area, also approached the Council with concerns and suggestions.

There was not a particularly large turnout for this meeting; however, the comments and questions were much the same as the scores of other meetings that have taken place over the last month – folks want to feel safe, they want to know that law enforcement is dedicating every resource to resolving the matter, and that local government is taking steps to keep this cycle from repeating in the future.

Chief Johnson gave a general description of the operations and investigations that are underway, and also described the unprecedented level of regional resources being directed at this problem. The Mayor and I also touched upon the efforts of the City last year – most notably the MAP (Monrovia Area Partnership) Program – designed to help break the cycle of gang recruitment and gang violence. As I have stated in the past, without the investment of time and resources made by the City all of last year, it is difficult to determine how much more intense this period of time could have been.

This episode of violence is the first real test of the principles of MAP and also the Community Policing philosophy that guides our law enforcement efforts. In short, the City's investment in MAP planted the seeds of credibility with local residents (some of whom have a traditional distrust of government) that the City is a partner to be counted upon; these plantings have borne fruit in the wake of this tragedy. Truly, Monrovia and, especially, our MAP neighborhoods, will be stronger for having endured this cycle of violence.

The business portion of the meeting resumed after the town hall forum was concluded. The four major issues on the agenda were: approval of a business development loan with the Marengue Café (soon to open in Old Town, on East Colorado Boulevard), the acquisition of two properties in the Station Square project area, and the award of construction contracts for the new Monrovia Public Library.

MRA-1 was the approval of business development loan with the principals of Marengue Café. This café and bakery will feature Cuban pastries and confections, similar to the renowned Cuban bakery in Glendale, Porto's. Under the terms of the loan, the Redevelopment Agency will loan \$75,000 to be used for building and façade improvements. The loan is to be repaid in full in three years.

Alternatively, the principals can extend the loan for an additional seven years; however, in that event, the loan would be fully amortized at 6% interest. The loan is secured by a lien on real property. The Agency Board unanimously approved the loan.

MRA-2 & MRA-3 were taken up together. These items concerned the purchase of real property on West Pomona Avenue – the World Gym site and an industrial condominium unit in the Hamby Park industrial complex. An MAI appraisal was conducted on the World Gym site, and the seller agreed to the appraised value of \$4.65 million. It should be noted that staff negotiated the value of an onsite cell tower (\$125,000) with the property owner, which was omitted from the appraisal. The industrial unit was an equally straightforward acquisition, with the property owner offering his unit for sale for \$445,000 plus \$30,000 for relocation. This offered amount is in line with appraisals recently conducted on adjoining units. The Agency Board approved the acquisitions unanimously.

Item AR-3 was the Award of Contracts for the bids contained in Library Bid Pack #2. This bid pack was critically important as it contained concrete, structural steel, plumbing and windows and glass work. The City's Engineer's estimate for this work totaled \$4.45 million. The low bids came in, collectively, at \$3.6 million. While the concrete, plumbing and widows came in near the estimate, the structural steel came in well below. The City's project managers, as well as Public Works Department staff, vetted the bids and spoke with the contractors at length to ensure that that there was not an error or omission that would have resulted in such a low bid. Instead, the contractor warranted that the economy is tightening and work is becoming increasingly scarce, and that this was his best price. We'll take it! Our project manager, Bernards Builders, has worked with this all of these contactors before and all have solid references and credentials.

As far as the Library Project, the building is completely demolished and grading is currently underway. Concrete construction should begin by the end of this month. Bid pack #3, which contains the balance of the building trades, will be released to the market this week. Lastly, the Library Construction Committee (which meets the Wednesday after the second Tuesday of each month) will be taking up the matter of Library interiors at their February 13 meeting.

As always, if you have any questions about any item on the agenda, please feel free contact me directly.

Articles Attached

- **Missing the Transit Mark**

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

MAP Expansion Kick Off A Success. A group of approximately 500 people, including local residents, ministerial groups, city officials, law enforcement and local businesses, came together at Julian Fisher Park on Saturday, February 2, to kick-off the expansion of the Monrovia Area Partnership (MAP). The MAP partnership was established on September 30, 2006 to combat crime and blight and empower neighborhoods. Mayor Hammond, along with the City Council and members of the clergy, addressed the recent violence that has impacted our community. Those gathered put their arms around one another's shoulders and bowed their heads in prayer as our religious leaders called for an end to the violence and spoke of peaceful coexistence. The kickoff event provided an opportunity for people to talk directly with City and law enforcement officials and express their concerns.

The kickoff was Hosted by the City of Monrovia and sponsored by Countrywide Home Loans. Co-sponsors were Southern California Edison, the Home Depot, Focus One Credit Union and the Santa Anita YMCA. A number of local businesses and non-profit organizations were on hand to inform people of their services and offer assistance. The Department of Community Development staff provided MAP information including home improvement grants and other city resources. Public Works provided materials about recycling and storm water protection. The Fire Department highlighted the Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT). Human Resources offered employment information. The Department of Community Services provided games for the youngsters and information about the Monrovia Reads and Plays literacy and activity van. The Police Department distributed crime prevention information and discussed activities under way to curb gang violence and apprehend criminals.



February 13, 2007 Planning Commission Meeting

- San Gabriel Valley Habitat for Humanity is proposing to construct a 4-unit, 2 story detached Planned Unit Development in the RM2500 zone at 1218 Sherman Avenue.
- Jay's Shell Station is proposing to sell beer (Type 20 license. off premise) from an existing mini-mart at a service station location in the PD-J Area 3 Zone at 705 West Huntington Drive
- The homeowners at 336 Heather heights Court are requesting a variance to construct a 125 square foot one-story addition to the rear of their single-family residence that will encroach 6' into the required 20' rear yard setback in the RL zone.

February 6, 2007 Development Review Committee Meeting

- A new sign for Ortho Mattress store located at 1601 South Mountain was approved.

RMC Grant Status. The grant application for the purchase of the 40-acre Leonard hillside property was given Tier 1 Status by the Governing Board of the Rivers and Mountains Conservancy (RMC). Monrovia's application was one of 15 applications that made it to Tier 1 out of 239 applications. The Step 2 applications will be due in May 2008, and we are hopeful that we will secure the final grant to purchase this integral property to add to the Hillside Wilderness Preserve.

COMMUNITY SERVICES HAPPENINGS

RECREATION DIVISION

AARP Mature Driver Safety Program. AARP is the provider of the nation's first and largest classroom refresher course designed especially for drivers 50 and older. Students learn defensive driving techniques, new traffic laws and rules of the road. This interactive classroom program provides students with the opportunity to learn how to safely adjust their driving to compensate for age-related changes in vision, hearing and reaction time. Participants who successfully complete the AARP

Safety Program are encouraged to check with their respective insurance carriers for potential discounts on their premiums.

AARP SAFETY DRIVING PROGRAM

March 6 & 7 - 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

\$10 (for the two day class)

Monrovia Community Center

119 W. Palm Ave

(626) 256-8246

Youth Commission Celebrates MAP Area 2 Kick Off. On Saturday, February 2, the Monrovia Youth Commissioners provided volunteer assistance to the Monrovia Area Partnership (MAP) Area II neighborhood block party held at Julian Fisher Park from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Ten Youth Commissioners assisted with set-up, game booths and clean-up. There were more than 100 youth who participated in the game booths activities which included face painting, fish bowl toss and basketball throw. The Youth Commissioners also enjoyed talking to other teenagers about the importance of community volunteerism and what neighborhood teens can do to get involved and make a difference in the community.

A Youth Commission Double Header. On Saturday, February 2, 13 Youth Commissioners provided volunteer support to the Boys & Girls Club of the Foothills Annual For Love of Youth fundraiser dinner held from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. at the Double Tree Hotel. The Youth Commissioners assisted the Boys and Girls Club staff and Board Members with checking guests in at the registration table, greeting guests and selling raffle tickets. This is the 5th year the Youth Commission has assisted the Boys and Girls Club with this special event benefiting youth from the foothill communities.

LIBRARY DIVISION

Valentine Party. On Saturday, February 9, 2 p.m., the Library presents the Saturday Holiday Party "*Be My Valentine!*". The program includes stories, crafts and snacks and will be held at the Santa Anita YMCA, 501 S. Mountain Avenue, Monrovia.

Box Wednesday. *Monrovia Reads & Plays* was all about boxes on Wednesday, January 30. Shawn Thrasher, Senior Librarian –Youth Services, brought Sherman Avenue kids 30-40 cardboard boxes of all shapes and sizes, paints of all colors, paper, scissors, glue and simple instructions: pick out a box and make something out of it. Imagination ran wild, as kids made dog houses, cars, forts, orange skyscrapers, and the Krikorian Theater. The same program was planned for Thursday's kids, but had to be postponed as Wednesday's kids had so much fun they used up every single box. So now *Monrovia Reads & Plays* needs your help: Although Shawn can find plenty of small boxes he has a need for large appliance boxes. If you have extra-large boxes (the kind a kid can make an awesome fort out of) please call him at the Library.

Baby, Toddler & Munchkin Storytimes. There's still room for babies, toddlers, and preschoolers in all storytimes offered weekly at the Library. Tuesday mornings at 10:15 a.m., Annette Simpson presents Baby Storytime for infants 6 -24 months old and a caregiver. Wee ones are treated to an interactive time intended to delight and stimulate their senses through movement, story, rhyme and song. Toddlers can attend Time for Twos at 10:45 a.m. on Tuesday or Friday. An enthusiastic children's librarian reads stories and presents songs, fingerplays, flannel stories and crafts perfect for active two-year olds and their mom, dad or caregiver. Preschool-aged kids can enjoy Munchkin Storytime on Wednesdays or Thursdays at 10:45 a.m. Longer stories, songs, crafts and play are geared towards three- and four-year olds.

Literacy Coordinator receives National Certification. Library Literacy Coordinator Melanie Goodyear has been awarded the credential "Certification in Volunteer Administration." CVA is the only internationally recognized credential in the field of volunteer management. It is awarded after a rigorous process that includes an extensive self-evaluation, preparation of a performance-based portfolio and a two-hour exam. The process tested knowledge, application and analysis of volunteer administration, including a philosophy and code of ethics; conceptual design; resource development and management; and accountability.

FROM THE FIRE DEPARTMENT

Personnel responded to **77** emergency calls from 0800 hours January 30, to 0800 hours February 6. Significant incidents include:

Gas Leak. On Monday, February 4 at approximately 6:45 p.m., Firefighters responded to a gas leak in the area of Peck and Duarte. Firefighters on scene found a one-inch gas line that had been severed at the meter from an unknown vehicle that left the scene. Firefighters deployed a protective hose line and assisted the Gas Company.

FIRE PREVENTION AND NEW CONSTRUCTION

The National Fire Protection Association reports that during 2005, an estimated 15,600 home structure fires started by candles were reported to local fire departments. These fires resulted in an estimated 150 civilian deaths, 1,270 civilian injuries and an estimated direct property loss of \$539 million. Homes include dwellings, duplexes, manufactured housing and apartments.

Facts and figures

- Although home candle fires fell 8% from 2004 to 2005, more than twice as many were reported in 2005 as in 1990.
- Candle fires accounted for an estimated 4% of all reported home fires in 2005.
- Thirty-eight percent (38%) of home candle fires started in the bedroom, resulting in 41% of the associated civilian deaths.
- December is the peak time of year for home candle fires. In December, 13% of home candle fires began with decorations compared to 4% the rest of the year.
- More than half of all candle fires started when something that could burn, such as furniture, mattresses or bedding, curtains, or decorations, was too close to the candle.
- Falling asleep was a factor in 12% of home candle fires and 26% of the associated deaths.
- The top five days for home candle fires were Christmas, Christmas Eve, New Year's Day, New Year's Eve, and Halloween.

NFPA Safety Tips:

- Keep candles at least 12 inches from anything that can burn.
- Use sturdy, safe candleholders.
- Never leave a burning candle unattended. Extinguish candles when you leave a room.
- Be careful not to splatter wax when extinguishing a candle.
- Avoid using candles in bedrooms and sleeping areas.
- Always use a flashlight, not a candle, for emergency lighting.
- Consider using battery-operated flameless candles.

We have had a few fires in our city involving candles-one resulting in destruction of a large part of the home, so please follow the safety tips when using candles.

ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS

An invitation was received and accepted by the Fire Chief to speak to the New Horizons Club at the community center. Topics of discussion included the renovated Fire Station Project, the newly adopted weed abatement program, the newly adopted administrative fine ordinance and the opportunity to receive new smoke detectors for club members. There was also an opportunity for a question and answer period with an outstanding exchange of ideas and information. It was a great opportunity to meet with the members of our community and address their concerns and needs as they related to the Fire Department.

On another note, the department is pleased to announce that the Office of Emergency Services (OES) has approved Monrovia's Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP) which was required to be updated to meet new Federal and State mandates. Thanks go out to Battalion Chief Haberle, Captain Brian Patrick and Firefighter/Paramedic Ken Struckus for researching and updating the plan for compliance. This OES recognition assures that the City of Monrovia can receive grant monies and subsidies in the event of a local, regional or statewide emergency. Good work gentleman – thanks!

ON THE POLICE BLOTTER

During the last seven day period, the Police Department handled 644 calls for service resulting in 135 investigations. Following are this week's highlighted issues and events:

Gang Suppression Activity. Beginning Wednesday, January 30, eighteen San Gabriel Valley police agencies started sending officers to augment Monrovia Police Department officers with gang suppression enforcement. The purpose of this is to limit the ability of gang members to move around the City of Monrovia without being seen and contacted by police officers. This has resulted in a week without gang violence in our City.

Since January 30, officers have made twenty arrests, completed field interview cards on 55 suspicious individuals, arrested two drivers for driving under the influence, written 61 citations for violations of the vehicle code, and stored seven vehicles.

On Friday, February 1, the Monrovia Police Department and the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department conducted a gang sweep. We were assisted by multiple law enforcement agencies from the San Gabriel Valley. Police conducted raids at 44 gang locations throughout the San Gabriel Valley. Seven suspects were arrested, three firearms were seized, and two stolen vehicles recovered.

Traffic Collision / Driving Under the Influence. On February 1 at 10:35 p.m., officers responded to the 100 block of North Myrtle regarding a vehicle crashing into a parked car. On arrival, the officers observed the driver trying to back up away from the accident. Through investigation, the driver of the vehicle was determined to be driving under the influence and he was arrested.

Shoplifting / Possession of a Controlled Substance. On February 2 at 6:26 p.m., an officer was dispatched to a business in the 1600 block of South Mountain regarding a male subject who was being detained for shoplifting. When the officer arrived, he found the subject was also in possession of methamphetamine. The subject was arrested for petty theft and possession of a controlled substance.

Possession of a Deadly Weapon / Possession of a Spring Loaded Knife. On February 5 at 14:29 p.m., an officer was providing extra patrol in the 100 block of East Royal Oaks when he observed a suspicious vehicle occupied by three male subjects. As the officer contacted the occupants, he noticed the vehicle had an odor of marijuana. The officer received consent to search the vehicle and found a small amount of marijuana and a small metal bat in the car. The driver of the vehicle was

arrested for possession of a deadly weapon and possession of marijuana while driving. A second occupant was arrested for possession of a spring loaded knife.

THE PUBLIC WORKS SCOOP

ADMINISTRATION:

MAP Event. On Saturday, February 2, six Public Works Staff as well as the Utilities/Streets Division Manager and the Director of Public Works participated in hosting a booth for the Monrovia Area Partnership (MAP) event. The event was very successful and 21 community members volunteered to assist Public Works in reporting graffiti, street light outs, sidewalk trip hazards, shopping carts in the public right-of-way, etc. Many thanks to those who have contributed their time for the betterment of our City.

ENGINEERING:

Library Project—Grading. Grading operations has started involving an excavation approximately 5 feet deep; the material will be stockpiled, replaced, and compacted in lifts to build the pad at the proper elevation. Our Engineering staff continues to coordinate with the contractor and the City's Geotechnical Engineer doing the grading operations. Excess dirt from grading operation will be used for the future landscape improvements. Storing the excess dirt will be a cost savings to the project, not having to pay for the removal of the dirt from the site.

Colorado Commons Street Improvements. The alleys have been graded; however will require more time to "dry out" before we can install the concrete. Streets lights are scheduled for installation on Monday. Asphalt pavement grinding is scheduled for February 19 and all paving is scheduled to be completed on February 20. All of the public improvements are being coordinated with the Colorado Commons construction.

The Conditions, Covenants and Restrictions; and Parking Easement Agreement have been returned to the City for execution. Staff is processing the execution of the documents.

Rule 20A, Underground Utility District Mountain and Royal Oaks. Work is continuing with trenching and conduit installation on Mountain Avenue; then southerly crossing Huntington and ending. The trenching is just south of Royal Oaks and heading to Huntington Drive.

Public Works Inspections:

- Colorado Commons Street Improvements; curb, gutter, sidewalks, irrigation for street trees, street light locations, utility vault adjustments are continuing.
- Bus Shelter Construction, rain delayed, tile work and stucco being rescheduled.
- 911 Royal Oaks, Curb, Handicap Access ramp construction at Mountain and Royal Oaks completed
- California/Monrovista/Duarte, Building pads are formed, 2nd story framing 85% complete.
- 202 E. Foothill, Final punch list created, 4 of the 6 units have been finalized by Public Works.
- 208 Terrace View, Retaining wall construction, walls being grouted
- 1419 S. Myrtle, West and north concrete walls are standing. The east and south walls are being formed and poured on the slab. East and south walls to be erected after required concrete cure time has elapsed. Sewer lateral televised for potential re-use upon review of video tape inspection.

OPERATIONS – Environmental – Facilities – Parks:

Burrtec Waste Industries Tour. This week Staff visited Burrtec Waste Industries Materials Recovery Facility and Recycling Center, one of the City's permitted Commercial Solid Waste and Recycling Haulers, located in Fontana. The visit is part of ongoing research for the development of future solid waste management solutions in order to meet the Monrovia Environmental Accord Goal of diverting at least 75% of our waste away from landfills.

Old Town Lighting. The removal of 16 five-globe street lights from the Old Town area began on Monday, February 4 and will be installed at the Colorado Commons project area. Single-globe lamps will replace the five-globe lamps on Myrtle Avenue. In addition, 36 five-globe lamp posts are being removed on Myrtle Avenue and replaced with single-globes. The work requires the use of a large crane and the blocking of one lane of traffic. The work is scheduled on Mondays and Wednesdays through February 20.

New Employee. Public Works welcomed its newest staff member, Jim Burkhart, an electrician for the Facilities Section in Operations. Jim is a Monrovia resident, and he brings a great deal of experience, knowledge and enthusiasm. He will be working primarily on City Street Lights, Traffic Signals, City Facilities and Water Pumps.

Traffic Signals. On Monday afternoon various power surges occurred throughout the City due to SCE equipment failure. Intersections along Huntington and Duarte were temporarily without power. When power was restored, the traffic signals returned to normal operation.

Library Park. A California Live Oak Tree was removed from Library Park this week; it had been in declining health for years, and was reported dead in a recent arborist report. The current area construction presented an opportune time to properly remove the tree without inconvenience to the Public.

STREETS:

Traffic Signs:

- Graffiti was removed from 23 traffic signs.
- Replaced and/or installed traffic signs and devices:
- Gladys and Olive replaced no-parking sign
- Installed sign post with parking restriction signs at 445, 457 and 458 Monrovista also at the northeast corner of Monrovista and California.
- Repaired street name sign at Highland and Foothill
- Repaired sign bracket for street name sign at El Nido and Foothill
- Replaced stop sign at southeast corner of Ivy and Hillcrest
- Replaced damaged safe-hit delineators at Huntington Dr. and the westbound 210 freeway off-ramp.
- Replaced reflector device at 1409 Encino Dr.
- Traffic Painting-- "WATCH SPEED" on the street at 136, 146, 219, 260, 268 N. Primrose

Miscellaneous:

- The final phase of concrete was poured for the customer parking area at the Public Works Facility located at 600 S. Mountain Ave.
- The pothole in the right turn lane at Central and Myrtle was filled.

UTILITIES:

Customer Service

- 190 shut-off notices were distributed
- 75 utilities work orders were completed
- 2 service requests were completed
- 1 water meter was replaced
- 18 backflow notices were sent out
- 3 water services were reactivated

Water Production

Water consumption is 29.6 millions gallons, a decrease of approximately 11% compared to last week's reported water usage.

Department of Health Services Required Water Samples:

- 17 water system samplings
- 6 water treatment facility samplings

Utility Maintenance

- 10 - 1" new water services were installed
- 2-1" water services were repaired
- 23 Fire Hydrants were inspected and flushed
- 15 underground service alert's utility location requests were completed
- 6,545 feet of sewer mains were cleaned

Have a great weekend!

FOR YOUR CALENDARS:

Sat., Feb. 9, 11 a.m.	Pray for Peace Rally, Recreation Park, Shamrock and Lemon Avenues.
<i>MONDAY, FEBRUARY 18</i>	<i>PRESIDENT'S DAY, CITY HALL CLOSED</i>
Weds., Feb. 13, 5:30 p.m.	Library Construction Committee Meeting
Tues., Feb. 19, 7:30 p.m.	Regular Council Meeting
Tues., March 4, 7:30 p.m.	Regular Council Meeting
Thurs., March 6, 8:00 a.m.	Read Across Monrovia, Monrovia Schools
Tues., March 18, 7:30 p.m.	Regular Council Meeting

CMO ATTACHMENTS:

Missing the transit mark

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RECENTLY, the MTA proved once again how government does not work.

Instead of putting the 24-mile Gold Line Foothill Extension from east Pasadena to Montclair on its primary list of funded projects last week, it refused. Incredibly, the project was placed on the MTA's so-called secondary long-range plan list and below L.A.'s pipe dream "Subway to the Sea" which would extend the red line from mid-Wilshire to Santa Monica underground.

If government were to function by funding the most far-along projects, the most cost-effective, the most likely to succeed, the Gold Line extension to Montclair would win, hands down every time. The Authority has already finished the arduous California Environmental Quality Act process, meaning every Environmental Impact Report has been completed and approved. The rights-of-way are all purchased. Heck, San Gabriel Valley cities in December pledged \$11 million in cash (\$1 million each) to go toward a matching fund requirement with the federal government.

Local cities like Monrovia have working plans for transit-oriented development projects, which would help low and middle income residents move to the San Gabriel Valley and live near the trolley so they don't have to drive to work and contribute to smog and greenhouse gas emissions.

San Gabriel Valley voters - in an amazing show of support in November 2006 - said they were willing to pay more in taxes to build this and other rapid transit projects. They see the traffic on the 210, 10, 60 and 605 freeways every morning and afternoon. They can see how a more substantial light rail line - one that goes farther and helps more commuters - would lighten the load on these freeways and improve the air quality for homes, schools and businesses located around them.

The Gold Line Foothill Extension Construction Authority said if the feds would allow it to use money already spent on planning and design, and some leftover from the first phase (Los Angeles to Pasadena), it could have about \$30-\$40 million - about half - of the local matching funds required right now. That would mean MTA would only have to pay \$15 million a year for the first five years. For an agency with a \$3 billion a year budget, that's pocket change.

The Construction Authority could not have presented this project in a more positive light had it wrapped it up in a big red bow or topped it with whipped cream and a red cherry.

Yet, because of egos and L.A. politics, the MTA passed. They passed. This coming a day after Rep. Hilda Solis, D-El Monte, was in our newsrooms saying she was talking to her friend, L.A. Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, and he liked the idea of the Gold Line going east, even to Ontario International Airport. Because it would take the strain off LAX.

As the saying goes, with friends like those, the San Gabriel Valley does not need enemies.

Thanks to MTA board member and Duarte City Councilman John Fasana, there will be another shot come June at getting the project on the MTA priority funding list. Get this: It would require them to agree to spend some of the Proposition 1B money - money that comes from the pockets of millions of San Gabriel Valley residents - on the extension.

Right now, the MTA has earmarked that money for buses and "miscellaneous transit projects."