

✘ [Ethan is surely right](#) when he notes that MetroRail ridership in the San Fernando Valley: 1) isn't as high as it should be; and 2) this results in part from a lack of leadership on land use. But I wouldn't write the Valley off just yet.

First, recall that there are only two Valley stations on the Red Line system: Universal City and North Hollywood. That makes it much more difficult to establish ridership; in order for Valley commuters to connect to the Red Line, they have to take the Orange Line commuter bus there, which is horribly run because ([as I pointed out](#) several months ago), the MTA has yet to develop any kind of realistic system for waiting for the bus. Development of this system could easily enhance ridership.

Second, [plans are in the works for more dense development](#) around the Universal City transit stop; current plans call for 2,900 new residential units “at a variety of price point” right on top of the Universal City Metro station. Indeed, its very massiveness is causing it problems with NIMBY politicians such as Zev Yaroslavsky and Tom LaBonge. Of course that's part of the game: the developer proposes something much more massive than it really wants, the politicians feign outrage, the project gets cut back, the politician claims victory, and we move on.

But that takes a long time, especially since the California Environmental Quality Act means that the project will have the Mother Of All Environmental Impact Reports. Moreover, Universal City is especially tricky, as both the County and the City have land use authority there, and it really does serve as a bottleneck from the Valley into the City.

I'm confident that something, and something good, will eventually wind up in Universal City, and even at North Hollywood. But the combination of regulatory requirements and ongoing NIMBYism will mean that it will take time. Foothill Boulevard in La Canada/Flintridge is one of the great development stories in southern California — but it took more than two decades to put together. Most “overnight success” stories do.