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## Mulholland Institute Exec Director Opposes Metro Rail Site

By [Carol Lawrence](#)

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Land use and planning expert Robert Scott, executive director of the Mulholland Institute in Calabasas, has joined the public outcry against a Van Nuys site proposed to become a light rail system storage yard.

Los Angeles Metropolitan Transit Authority has considered redeveloping a site into a railcar maintenance and storage facility to serve a new rail line that would run from Oxnard Street in Van Nuys to Sylmar.

The project, called the East San Fernando Valley Transit Corridor, and this particular site – one of a few proposed – is bounded by Kester Avenue, Oxnard Street, Calvert Street and just past Cedros Avenue. The 58 parcels hold industrial buildings occupied by 1,500 employees and 186 businesses, according to the Valley Economic Alliance – businesses such as manufacturers, general contractors, sound studios and stages and others.

Should Metro decide to move ahead with the rail system and redevelop the site into the storage yard, which it reportedly needs to operate the line, the businesses would be evicted.

Scott, in his public statement, said the city of Los Angeles' General Plan calls for providing sufficient land so that businesses and jobs can operate because they generate revenue for the city. He said the document also emphasizes that sustaining businesses is a critical element of a sound industrial land use and economic development policy – including keeping such land so businesses can stay and grow and new businesses will want to come to the area, Scott added.

"It would not be in the best interest of a local jobs-housing balance, or local industrial-zoned employers and businesses to locate Metro LRT (light rail transit) or BRT (bus rail transit) service and storage areas in place of any of the well-established Van Nuys industrial zone properties," Scott's statement read.

Scott, a former member of the city of L.A.'s Planning Commission who performs land use studies for cities and neighborhoods, said around 2009, the commission's intent was to preserve industrial properties because that's where the jobs would be created.

"Industry gives you the ability to have wealth generating jobs – the industry brings wealth to an area," as well as revenue into the local economy from the products sold, and indirectly from the suppliers and other businesses that support them, he explained in an interview with the Business Journal.

Industrial properties are disappearing locally – mostly by being rezoned for apartments or condominiums or shopping centers, Scott added, and new industrial property is not being created.

"There's no incentive to create more industrial property," he said.

The businesses who are opposing the site say moving would disrupt their long-established businesses and the tight business community they have formed there. Additionally, they say the Van Nuys and central Valley area has little industrial space for relocation, a fact which commercial real estate data confirms to be at or below 1 percent vacancy.

The businesses had proposed an alternative site, called "Option D" on Tyrone Avenue but the property owner, the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, informed the group this week that it plans to transform the vacant site into the Mid-Valley Water Facility Project, which it expects to break ground on in 2019.