

Headline: Beverly Hills Fights L.A. Subway Extension

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LOS ANGELES (CN) - Los Angeles County overlooked the dangers of building a 9-mile subway extension that crosses fault lines under Beverly Hills High School, the City of Beverly Hills claims in court. The city sued the L.A. County Metropolitan Transportation Authority in Superior Court, seeking an injunction against the Westside Subway Extension Project. Beverly Hills claims the project violates the California Environmental Quality Act, and wants the county to seek an alternate site. In the works for almost 30 years, the subway project would extend the Metro Purple Line from its terminus at the Wilshire-Western station to incorporate seven new stations. From Beverly Hills to Century City's Constellation Station, trains will travel northwest to Westwood, to a new endpoint close to West Los Angeles Veterans Administration Hospital. But the city claims the plan to tunnel beneath homes and the 80-year-old high school endangers students and residents. "The high school's environmental setting is unique in that its grounds contain more than a dozen actively producing oil wells, as well as a number of former oil well sites," the 10-page lawsuit states. After the extension was approved, "no fewer than eight" studies warned of the "seismic risks" of tunneling beneath the high school, the city says. It notes that one of the "eagerly" anticipated reports came from the California Geological Survey - "the state agency tasked with identifying active faults." Planners said a rejected alternative for the extension, along Santa Monica Boulevard, would cross fault lines, and contend that the Constellation Station site is safer. But Beverly Hills says the study shines a light on a need for a "full and complete investigation and disclosure of the basis for Metro's conclusions." Santa Monica Boulevard station is now a "feasible" alternative, the city says. "New information in the post-approval seismic studies undercuts a key foundation for Metro's decision, namely, that the presence of faulting along Santa Monica Boulevard and the absence of faulting near Constellation Station made the Constellation Station site and associated subway alignment the most desirable alternative," the complaint states. Under a voter-approved tax measure known as Measure R, the Metro decided in June to break ground on the project much sooner than first planned. Beverly Hills says the accelerated schedule will increase air pollution, traffic and noise. The city this year filed a federal complaint against the Federal Transit Administration and the U.S. Department of Transportation, for approving funding for the subway. Beverly Hills is represented by Robert Perlmutter with Shute, Mihaly & Weinberger of San Francisco. Metro did not immediately respond to a request for comment after business hours Monday.