LA Native
An ecofriendly future for light rail stations
www.lanative.org

Our goal is simple: get the MTA and Expo Authority to use native species for the station landscaping in phase two of the Expo light rail line.

The stations for phase two of the Expo Line present a perfect opportunity to create multiple pockets of native landscaping that will reduce water and fertilizer use; create vital islands of native habitat for birds, butterflies, and other species; and serve as public educational showcases of our native plant varieties, encouraging our citizenry to make better, sustainable choices for landscaping.

We were stunned to discover that essentially no native plants were used in phase one of the Expo Line construction. The Theodore Payne Foundation (an LA Native member), provides some startling facts: 1) California uses 20% of its energy consumption to move and treat water. 2) Up to 70% of residential water goes to watering landscaping in our county—landscaping we've filled with non-native tropicals and invasive species that consume on average seven times more than our native plants. 3) Unlike the indigenous plants that evolved in our nitrogen-poor soil, non-natives need fertilizers. The abundant use of such fertilizers has become a huge source of runoff pollution in Santa Monica Bay. 4) Landscaping with native plants does not cost more, and in some cases reduces maintenance costs. 5) We've lost 90% of our native songbird and butterfly populations in the last fifty years. This is no coincidence. A primary food source for most of these bird species is butterfly caterpillars. Nearly all the native butterfly populations can only eat the native plants. By filling the Los Angeles area with non-native ornamentals, we've created a cascade effect of damage.

This major problem faces two hurdles to resolution: education and inertia. Though there was some attention to "drought tolerant" landscaping in phase one of the Expo Line, the issue of native species was not on the radar. And even as we are now getting it on the radar, we face the politics of bureaucracy. Something like changing landscaping practices has to go through a number of independent agencies that often don't want outsiders (the "non-professionals") messing with how they do business. That's just the nature of a huge municipality or county. But when stakeholders come together, things can change.

LA Native began when Palms Neighborhood Council (PNC) transportation advocate
Charles Miller realized there was little overlap between groups of people who are advocating for more sustainable landscaping choices and people advocating for more sustainable transportation choices, even though the goals of the two groups are generally complementary. Palms Station is the first station in phase two of the Expo light rail line, which will travel from Palms to the coast in Santa Monica. As the PNC became heavily involved in plans for Palms Station (including landscaping discussions), the need for LA Native emerged. Miller and other advocates for urban sustainability began to connect. Since the PNC began this effort, the following groups have officially endorsed and joined our coalition:

- Palms Neighborhood Council
- Theodore Payne Foundation
- Westside Neighborhood Council
- Mar Vista Community Council
- California Native Plant Society
- Los Angeles Audubon Society
- LA CD-11 Transpo Advisory Council
- South Robertson Neighborhood Council
- Sustainable Works Los Angeles
- Expo Greenway Project

We’ve created a coalition of neighborhood councils, environmental organizations, transportation advocacy groups, and other concerned stakeholders. With many major transportation projects on the horizon in Los Angeles County, decisions made in the next few years will impact the urban environment for generations to come. A core reason for building public transportation is its drastic reduction in the damage caused by human activity. Using anything less than a landscape of native plants undermines that very principle. LA Native will continue to work with the Expo Authority, Los Angeles MTA, and all other interested parties in Los Angeles County to see that our transportation grid of the future is landscaped for the future as well, by utilizing native plants.

*It’s time to start making better choices for a sustainable urban environment.*

*Join us.*