

Wendy Greuel: Traffic is LA's #1 Issue

Valley Voices

By Richard Bort and Denny Schneider

Councilmember Wendy Greuel told a Valley VOTE audience recently that in her view traffic is the city's Number One problem. And that "lots of good things are happening" in that arena. The self-described "Pothole Queen" noted that for the first time since the Bradley administration the city is developing a strategic plan for transportation that will address both short and long term needs. This plan will be greatly enhanced by the funding that will be provided under recently passed Measure R.

Greuel also addressed the complex topics of ethics, government reform, and fiscal responsibility, all of which seem to be more in the gun sights of the Controller ... an office for which she is running ... than any of the Council Members.

She noted that the city has outstanding some \$500 million of uncollected "debts," ranging from unpaid police alarm permits, fines, ambulance charges, and the like, all of which need to be addressed to help balance the city's budget.

She is also working on legislation to limit "ex parte" (that is, private) contacts between commissioners and decision-makers, such as Council Members and city department heads, to reduce conflicts of interest.

Greuel told the Valley Vote gathering that she is working with Councilman Greig Smith, who is also a member of the Council's Budget and Finance Committee, to introduce a motion to increase the business tax reduction program by an additional 10 percent. She had spearheaded the last business tax reform plan - with help and support from Valley VOTE - that resulted in, among other things, reduction of the gross receipts tax on businesses by 15 percent, and she and Smith want to increase that tax reduction to 25 percent.

In the area of Land Use, Greuel supports the streamlining of the building permit process by reducing the number of departments needed to sign off on projects from 12 at present to two.

On the controversial Metro/Universal Project, which is nearby to, but not within, her district, Greuel is convinced that "there will be something above the MTA station," but she was noncommittal about what that "something" should be. She said that she has encouraged local groups and organizations to work to modify the project rather than to kill it altogether.

A question was asked about how the Council could have approved the Department of Water and Power's recent request for a multibillion dollar solar energy program that requires that only DWP's unionized workers may do all the installation work. Greuel explained that the Council voted only to take the initiative to the voters in March, not to approve the program. She went on to explain that Los Angeles has been well-served for decades by the fact that the city/DWP owns a substantial proportion of our own energy-producing assets. This has limited the amount of energy that DWP must purchase. Now that all utilities, including DWP, are mandated to increase the proportion of "green energy" in their portfolio to certain levels by certain dates in the future, the DWP has proposed a plan to install solar panels on roof tops throughout the city, including on residential, commercial, industrial, and government buildings. *(Wendy Greuel is Councilmember for the 2nd District in the Valley. She Chairs the Transportation Committee and is running for City Controller. More info on Valley Vote at:*

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CityWatch

Vol 6 Issue 95

Pub: Nov 25, 2008