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Bus riders vent anger over proposed changes in San Fernando Valley service

By Brandon Lowrey
LA Daily News reporter

Threatened with broad cuts in bus service throughout the San Fernando Valley, riders Wednesday night bemoaned any reduction in service and the constant rerouting of the system every six months.

"Why is it that every six months, you change the routes?" asked Pat O'Connor, a Pacoima resident who said she'd have to walk nearly a mile if the Metropolitan Transportation Authority approves the proposed cuts.

"Why do you do that? Do you like making people miserable? Do you like making people lose their jobs?"

O'Connor was one of more than 60 riders who showed up at a Metro San Fernando Service Sector public meeting. Several of those who came said they were disabled or didn't own cars, and rely on buses to get to work.

About 20 routes in Los Angeles might be eliminated and about 30 more could be rerouted or see reduced service hours. In the San Fernando Valley, five routes may be canceled and eight might be changed.

Elizabeth Lyons spoke to Metro's San Fernando Service Sector council on behalf of the disabled riders she helps.

"We teach them to get to the bus, and then they change it," said Lyons. "A couple of them ... they can't get (anywhere)."

Some members of Metro's regional council spoke out against the cuts and suggested it was time to send a message "downtown."

"I find these latest cuts appalling," said Joan Leonard, a member

of the council. "If we continue this way every six months, I won't be on the bus."

Fellow council member Nury Martinez said that although she is not a bus rider herself, she found the cuts ridiculous.

"Why is it that every six months, you change the routes? Why do you do that? Do you like making people miserable? Do you like making people lose their jobs?"

-Pat O'Connor, Bus Riders Union member

"We have a right and an obligation to send a message to the (Metro) board," she said. "What message are we sending? We're telling kids at Mission College that there won't be a bus to let them get to school."

Metro routinely tweaks its routes in December and in June. But the cuts proposed for June are unusually heavy as the agency tries to rein in spending. Even after raising fares, Metro faces a \$100 million deficit for the upcoming fiscal year, said Metro spokesman Dave Sotero.

Metro is set to hold another public hearing on this and other changes throughout the county at 10 a.m. Saturday in the Metro Headquarters, One Gateway Plaza in Los Angeles.