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**AD-HOC CONGESTION REDUCTION COMMITTEE
JUNE 18, 2014**

SUBJECT: EXPRESSLANES EQUITY PLAN OUTREACH UPDATE

ACTION: RECEIVE AND FILE

RECOMMENDATION

Receive and file this update on the Metro ExpressLanes Equity Plan outreach efforts.

ISSUE

At the February 2014 Ad Hoc Congestion Pricing Committee meeting, Director Dupont-Walker requested a report back on the Equity Plan outreach efforts. The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the Metro ExpressLanes Equity Plan Outreach.

BACKGROUND

Metro ExpressLanes created the country's first discount plan for low-income commuters, offering eligible Los Angeles County residents a one-time \$25 toll credit and an automatic waiver of the monthly account maintenance fee. As of February 28, 2014 there are 210,365 Metro ExpressLanes accounts, 2.1% of those accounts are enrolled in the Equity Plan, representing 4,408 Equity Plan holders.

Four focus groups were recently held on March 19, 2014 for current ExpressLanes Equity Plan holders to obtain feedback about the program. All of the attendees indicated they were pleased with the program and would recommend the Equity Plan to their family and friends but thought Metro needed to do a better job of advertising in their community, especially at locations they already frequent for other services. A number of them thought we should change the name of the program that is more targeted to the population for which it was established.

Suggestions from the Equity Plan focus groups that have been implemented to date are as follows:

- Continue the waiver of the monthly maintenance fee for Equity Plan accounts

- Increased outreach to social service locations and community organizations. Since February 2014, MEL has been to 5 events in LA County, including but not limited to, the City of Rosemead's Lunar New Year Family Festival, East Rancho Dominguez Service Center, Disney Studios Rideshare event, Harbor-UCLA Rideshare Fair and City of Temple City's Rosemead Blvd Grand Opening.
- Faith based outreach – Bible Enrichment Fellowship Church, Southern Missionary Baptist Church, Resurrection Church and Greater Zion Church Family
- Equity Plan brochures were provided to the Covina Assembly of God and were distributed at their Food Bank and Economic Relief Center. Brochures were also distributed at the Metro ExpressLanes Public Hearings (total of 7) during March and April.

As a result of these efforts, the number of Equity Plan holders through May 31, 2014 has increased to 4,800, an increase of 8.9% since the February 2014 Ad Hoc Congestion Pricing Committee meeting.

NEXT STEPS

A marketing and advertising plan specifically targeting populations likely to benefit from the Equity Plan will be developed along with a re-branding of the name to more closely signify the targeted audience of the program. This plan will be developed and implemented in the next 60 days now that the Board has approved the recommendation to make the ExpressLanes permanent.

ATTACHMENT

- A. Equity Plan Focus Group- Executive Summary

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Executive Summary

Equity Focus Group
March 2014

LA Equity Program commuters are quite pleased with the program with just over half using the ExpressLanes more than they did the HOV lanes. Everyone we talked to would refer the program to family and friends. Almost no one knew of the TAP rewards program. One respondent knew a lot and is part of the TAP rewards program. There was not a lot of expressed interest from others to learn more about the TAP tie-in. There is a perception that it will take too long to achieve toll credit via TAP Rewards.

Program users mostly expressed very favorable experiences with access and sign up. A few suggestions were made to make it better are to offer more locations to sign up and improve the online application process to make it more turnkey.

Users would like to see more and better program advertising in their community and especially where they frequent for services already. Examples include access at social services outlets, clinics, DMV and retailers like gas stations. Many suggestions were given for where to advertise or distribute information such as billboards, churches, children's schools, community newspapers.

A few suggested improvements to the existing program are as follows:

1. Equity users want communications to them to balance the benefit message between EXPRESSLANE benefits and the special accommodations that allow them to gain access.
2. The \$25 toll credit is the greatest benefit draw. Equity program users also like the cash option to managing their toll account. They also really like the waived maintenance fee.
3. Equity Program users want simple language laid out in easy steps.
4. The low income customer is always looking for ways to save money without having to sacrifice service delivery. This is a key reason they like the Equity Program and refer it.
5. Equity users want lots of ways to research the program components beyond having to go into a service center or by calling. They want to read about the program then talk to someone knowledgeable.
6. The items that matter most are avoiding fees, getting toll credits and avoiding recurring costs.

7. Equity users like not being locked into programs. They want flexible processes that give them choices.
8. Equity users appreciate being able to access programs through channels they routinely use. Examples are social service outlets and community service locations.
9. Several Equity Program users thought the EQUITY name does not fit the program. They want a name that shows them as the target and captures the spirit of their specific needs.