



Metro

May 19, 2008

Honorable Hilda Solis
U.S. House of Representatives
1414 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Solis:

Your constituents face the worst traffic in the nation.

The traffic crisis faced daily by your constituents poses enormous costs in time and money, directly threatens the health and well being of millions of individuals and places the Southern California economy at great risk. In addition to wasting over 70 hours in traffic every year, your constituents spend over \$700 annually to repair their vehicles because funds for road repairs are dwindling. On top of this, your constituents must also endure air quality levels that, due in part to historic traffic congestion levels, result in the premature death of over 1,000 Southern Californians annually, according to the California Air Resources Board. Maintaining the status quo is clearly unacceptable.

The time has come for our region to embark on a bold and innovative strategy in the war against traffic. It is for this reason that the Board of Directors of the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) unanimously voted on April 24, 2008 to launch a one year congestion reduction demonstration project in partnership with Caltrans. With the help of \$213.6 million in federal funds, the project will improve mobility and significantly expand transit options and services in the San Gabriel Valley.

Some people argue that taxpayers have already paid for freeways through gas taxes. But the fact is that the public is not getting what it paid for. The system is not working. That is because gas tax revenues are not enough to pay for the cost of operating and maintaining what we have. The congestion reduction initiative is designed to squeeze greater efficiency out of the system, improve mobility and generate additional revenue to pay for more transportation options. This will benefit your constituents.

Metro believes that our one year congestion reduction demonstration initiative is based on a proven formula. Congestion pricing has worked successfully in San Diego and Orange counties, Houston, Salt Lake City, Minneapolis and cities around the world. In nearby San Diego County on Interstate 15, where eight miles of carpool lanes were converted, commuters now save an average of 20 minutes using the new toll lanes. Express bus service in the lanes attracted an impressive 400,000 new passenger boardings annually. In Salt Lake City, the converted lanes are handling 46% more vehicles than before and still maintaining speeds of 45 mph or better. Higher and more stable speeds are the norm now in toll and regular lanes.

Metro anticipates that many drivers, as a result of our congestion reduction demonstration program, that don't need to jam the freeways during rush hours will take trips during off peak hours when the tolls are less. The combination of more commuters opting for ridesharing, transit options, or traveling at other times will squeeze a lot more capacity out of the existing freeways and benefit low and middle-income people and everyone else who has to endure 70 hours of traffic annually.

The initiative proposed by Metro and Caltrans would convert existing High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes to High Occupancy Toll (HOT) lanes on three area roadways. This program is designed

to improve the movement of all commuters in the designated corridors through the implementation of HOT lanes and investments in public transit services in these areas. The roadways are Interstate 10 from downtown Los Angeles to I-605, which represents a total of 28 miles, and Interstate 210 from State Route 134 to I-605, which represents a total of 24 miles. The conversion of HOV lanes to HOT lanes on I-110 from the Artesia Transit Center to Adams Boulevard (a total of 33 miles) would be contingent on the availability of additional financing. Revenues from the HOT lanes will be invested in public transit projects that parallel these corridors.

The agreement proposed by the U.S. Department of Transportation provides \$213.6 million in federal assistance to advance transit improvements and technological enhancements within the Interstate 10 and Interstate 210 corridors. This funding would be used in part to purchase high capacity and articulated buses and may also be used to finance improvements at park and ride locations in the San Gabriel Valley.

Metro is keenly aware of the challenges involved in changing the status quo of traffic in Los Angeles County. However, given the looming insolvency of the federal Highway Trust Fund, the diminishing buying power of the gas tax (which has not been adjusted for inflation since 1993) and the loss of hundreds of millions of dollars in state transportation dollars over the past several years, there are few attractive alternatives.

In the past few weeks, many questions have surfaced concerning the congestion reduction demonstration project. Towards that end, attached is a document that responds to frequently asked questions. It is our intention to be fully responsive to new or further questions that arise and as such, your continued input and comments via email to Helen Valenzuela of Metro's Government Relations Department (valenzuelah@metro.net) would be greatly welcomed. In addition, we would like to invite you to our headquarters on Thursday, May 29th at 11 a.m. to provide the most current information regarding our congestion reduction demonstration initiative. Metro will be contacting your office shortly with respect to this invitation.

Over the course of the next year, Metro will be engaged in the development of an operating plan for this program. Integral to that effort is an extensive community outreach program which will provide opportunities for the community to address concerns such as those raised by elected officials and other interested parties.

Thank you for the opportunity, through the enclosed document, to clarify many common misperceptions on the congestion reduction program. As this initiative moves forward, please contact me at (213) 922-6888 if you have questions or would like to discuss in more detail. We look forward to partnering with you in our efforts to move forward on innovative strategies that will provide congestion relief for your constituents.

Sincerely,



Roger Snoble
Chief Executive Officer

Enclosure