The Many ‘Faces’ of Metro

Metro’s transportation programs come in many shapes and sizes.
A Note to Our Readers:

This issue of Metro Quarterly describes the “many faces of Metro” and transportation programs, in all shapes and sizes, that LA County residents support with their tax dollars – dollars the state may shift to other purposes.

At press time, the State Legislature was considering a budget that could take away up to $1.3 billion in gasoline sales tax revenues that should be used, statewide, to fund new highway and transit projects and services. Meanwhile, the California Transportation Commission postponed action in July on $690 million for transportation projects, statewide.

These actions by the Legislature and CTC could cost Los Angeles County $336 million.

(continued from front)

Loss of funding not only will jeopardize such projects as the Exposition Light-Rail Line, it will impact Metro’s ability to fund local transportation projects through the Countywide Call for Projects.

Because of the state budget uncertainty, the Metro Board of Directors approved the recommended projects and priorities in the 2007 Call for Projects at its July meeting, but deferred final funding action until it meets in September.

Roger Snoble
Chief Executive Officer
When I travel to other cities in the United States or abroad, I’m not surprised when the people I meet are amazed that Los Angeles has not only an extensive bus system, but also a rapidly growing rail system. After all, Southern California is famous for its “car culture.”

Here at home, Metro is recognized as the agency that operates the county’s largest bus system, the subway and three light rail lines. Most people, it seems, don’t know that Metro also is responsible for a wide array of transportation programs that touch on the lives of everyone who commutes, operates a business, hauls freight or makes any use of our streets, roads and freeways.

This responsibility includes transportation planning for the county, funding municipal transportation-related projects, coordinating road and freeway improvements with LA County and the state, and even helping facilitate goods movement from our ports to inland railheads.

Metro is heavily involved in programs aimed at easing traffic congestion and keeping vehicles moving. These include helping fund the Freeway Service Patrol for both cars and big rigs, promoting such commute services as carpooling and vanpooling, and funding bike paths that connect to transit.

In doing all these things – and lots more – Metro is carrying out voter mandates and putting to work in a cost-efficient manner the sales tax revenues entrusted to us by the residents of Los Angeles County.

I’m very proud of the work being done by the people of Metro. They have dedicated their lives to improving the everyday living conditions of LA County residents. This issue of Metro Quarterly will describe just some of the programs and projects they’re involved in. And, it just may surprise you.

Sincerely,
Roger Snoble
Chief Executive Officer

CONTENTS

4 MORE THAN BUSES AND TRAINS — METRO’S “TRANSPORTATION TOOLBOX”
There’s much more to Metro than its high-profile transit system.

6 FINDING WAYS TO IMPROVE REGIONAL MOBILITY
Metro’s Call For Projects program is back in business with some $450 million in funding over the next six years.

8 ANGELS WALK — A WALKING TRAIL THAT LINKS LA’S LANDMARKS WITH TRANSIT
There’s no better way to come to know and love LA than by walking its neighborhoods.

10 METRO: IMPROVING THE REGION’S MOBILITY AND ENVIRONMENT
‘Metro’s transportation investments are making a difference,’ says CEO Roger Snoble.

12 GETTING THERE: THERE’S MORE THAN ONE WAY TO GO METRO
Metro offers a range of services to benefit the region’s commuters.

14 A 100TH ANNIVERSARY AND A ‘REVOLUTION’ IN SCHEDULING
Metro takes a look back — and a look ahead — in this issue’s news pages.
"The voters of LA County have twice said that they were willing to tax themselves to be able to have a better transportation system, with an emphasis on mass transit," says CEO Roger Snoble. "Metro is trying to expand LA’s transportation system to accommodate growth – now and in the future. And that means we have to have a number of different tools in our transportation toolbox to move the people of this region."

The Right Tool for the Job

Many of these tools come from Metro's Call for Projects. Metro accepts Call for Projects applications in eight modal categories. These include regional bikeways and pedestrian improvements; regional surface transportation improvements; signal synchronization and bus speed improvements; transit capital; and transportation demand management. Local jurisdictions, transit operators, and other public agencies are encouraged to submit applications proposing projects for funding.

"Metro has many mandates through our mission to distribute local, state and federal money in different forms," notes Snoble. "And we have a lot of partners who help us achieve our mission."

Metro's partners are the 89 jurisdictions in LA County, each of which has its own public works department. "We organize a Call for Projects to help the individual cities receive the funding to make their own environments better," the CEO says.

Moving Freight and People

In this issue, in addition to the transportation improvements made through the Call for Projects, you'll learn how Metro is closely involved in overseeing and funding ventures to benefit Los Angeles.

These include the Alameda Corridor, a 20-mile-long rail cargo expressway linking the ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles to the transcontinental rail network near Downtown Los Angeles. Its series of bridges, underpasses, overpasses and street improvements separate freight trains from street traffic and passenger trains, facilitating a more efficient transportation network.

Designed to move buses in the same efficient way the Alameda Corridor moves trains are the county's three transway – the Harbor Transway on the 110 Freeway, the El Monte Busway on the 10 Freeway and the Metro Orange Line in the San Fernando Valley. Thousands of commuters benefit from these "transportation tools" each day.

Enhancing the Transportation Experience

In addition to planning and funding transportation projects that will benefit the region as a whole, Metro also is finding new ways to enhance the transportation experience for all residents, not just transit riders.

"We like to look at the pedestrian linkages in everything that the agency does," says Snoble. "Every trip begins and ends with walking." Programs such as Angels Walk combine history, business development and transit to create an enjoyable walk for participants.

Metro's popular bike-transit programs encourage people to get outdoors on scenic bike paths located throughout the region. Most Metro Rail stations have convenient bike racks and nearly all Metro buses are equipped to carry bicycles.

And as more and more people use wireless devices to instantly access whatever they need, Metro is debuting the area’s first 511 service. This new service will make transportation information available via Web-enabled cell phone or computer – any time, anywhere.

"We’re in a unique and enviable position in that we are a transportation authority and not just a transit operator," says Snoble. "The power of Metro is that we have a very global view and are able to plan and work to put the right tool in the right place to do the right job of improving mobility in LA County."
Past Projects Significantly Enhance Mobility

Cal State LA Busway Station and Transit Center
Metro has a long history in providing transportation services to the students and educators at Cal State University Los Angeles, as well as the surrounding communities.

In 1956, only one Metro bus line served the campus. This on-campus terminal remained in effect until the new El Monte Busway University Station opened in 1995. Over the years, Metro continued to extend lines to serve the new transit center and busway station. With funding from a previous Call for Projects, construction began on a new Transit Center, which was dedicated in April 2005.

"This provides critical funding for local agencies for needed transportation improvements that help implement the 25-year vision contained in Metro's Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) adopted by the Board," notes Heather Hills, Metro's director of Long Range Planning.

Funds Awarded in Eight Categories
Metro ranks eligible projects in eight transportation categories and presents preliminary scores to the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and the Metro Board of Directors for review. Upon approval, planners develop the county's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for distribution to the regional and state transportation planning agencies. The TIP then becomes part of the program of projects scheduled for implementation in the county.

The funds are awarded on a competitive basis to projects that successfully demonstrate significant mobility benefits. Traditionally, transportation projects that have received the Call funding have included transit centers, arterial widenings, signal synchronization, new bus and shuttle purchases, bikeways and pedestrian improvements.

Over the years, the existing multi-line bus stop had deteriorated and there were no facilities for bus operators to use during their layovers. The project, completed in 2001 by the Los Angeles Department of Transportation's Transit Bureau, was funded using a combination of Metro grant funds and the City's Proposition C local share.

"LADOT and Metro worked closely with the Bureau of Street Services and Council District 14 in designing the transit center, which also required redirecting the movements of some of the bus lines serving the center," says Richard Chu, LADOT transportation engineering associate.

Metro bus lines 45, 345, 78, 79, 378, 379, 252, 256 and 259 stop at the transit center. Today, the bus lines connect East Los Angeles and the San Gabriel Valley from as far east as Arcadia to Downtown Los Angeles with service extending as far south as Lynwood.

Additionally, the Cityside Via Marisol Connector, an LADOT fixed-route shuttle service for seniors and persons with disabilities, serves the transit center. “The project has substantially improved the transit center’s function, increased mobility and has improved the community overall,” notes Chu.

Past Projects

Enhance Mobility

El Sereno Transit Center
The El Sereno Transit Center, located at the intersection of Huntington Drive and Monterey Road in Los Angeles was originally known as the "Rose Hills Station" on the Pacific Electric line.

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These regional projects are often beyond the fiscal capability of local sponsors, such as municipal transit operators and other public agencies. The Countywide Call for Projects funds new capital projects and also provides funds to support additional projects to meet the county’s transportation needs. It is a year-long process and the projects are typically adopted by the Board in odd-numbered years.

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To expand the ways Metro can select the best solutions to help improve regional mobility, the agency has reinstated its biennial Countywide Call for Projects program after a six-year hiatus. For 2007, Metro has programmed 169 regionally significant projects in Los Angeles County worth $454.5 million over the next six years.

“The Countywide Call for Projects implements Metro’s multi-modal programming responsibilities for LA County,” says Heather Hills, Metro’s director of Long Range Planning. “This provides critical funding for local agencies for needed transportation improvements that help implement the 25-year vision contained in Metro’s Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) adopted by the Board.”

Finding Ways to Improve Regional Mobility
Angels Walk

A WALKING TRAIL THAT LINKS LA’S LANDMARKS WITH TRANSIT

Picture yourself surrounded by the sights, sounds and aromas of the country’s first modern American Chinatown. Planned from the ground up in 1890, it is still a bustling business center and attraction for both locals and tourists.

Only a short walk away is El Pueblo de Los Angeles, the oldest section of Los Angeles dating back to 1781. The 27 historic buildings clustered around a picturesque plaza and the Olvera Street Mexican marketplace, each have an exciting story to tell about the people who settled here.

Just across the street lies the famed 1939-era Union Station – the last of the great railway stations and an architectural icon. These are a few of the historic sites seasoned Los Angelenos and visitors alike can tour on one of six unique Angels Walks.

There’s no better way to come to know and love Los Angeles than by walking its streets and experiencing its neighborhoods first hand. Angels Walk links Los Angeles’ Metro Rail stations and Metro bus lines to areas that include such landmarks as Grand Central Market, the Bunker Hill District, Olvera Street, Chinatown, the Music Center, Union Station, the Los Angeles Convention Center, Hollywood and many other destinations.

These walks are as convenient as they are scenic: anyone can join an Angels Walk at any point along the route, a fact that encourages the exploration of places, events and people whose ambition, hopes and dreams shaped LA.

Improving the Pedestrian Environment

“We developed the first Angels Walk in 2001 for the historic Bunker Hill district and it arose out of the Call for Projects,” recalls Metro’s Robin Blair, Angels Walk principal planner. “If you look at downtown over the last decade, there’s been a series of pedestrian improvements – it’s no longer just a large white expanse of concrete and steel poles. There’s landscaping, texture, color and information.” The Angel’s Walk program was an effort to better define these interesting areas of LA and to improve the city’s pedestrian environment. Angels Walk makes the city’s connection to transit, reinforcing for visitors and residents that LA has a captivating history with interesting places to experience.

Walks on by:

Hollywood

There are few American urban landscapes as rich in history and fable as Hollywood. As you stroll the Hollywood Angels Walk, you’ll find a virtual treasure of places where the famous and infamous helped build a bustling entertainment industry. You’ll marvel at the Art Deco splendor of the Pantages theatre; make your way to Hollywood and Vine – perhaps the most famous intersection in the world; see where the first Academy Awards presentation was held in 1929 at the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel; and perhaps catch a movie at the only geodesic dome theatre in the world, the Cinerama Dome.

Walks on by:

Bunker Hill

In the Bunker Hill/Historic Core Angels Walk, you’ll experience LA in all of its glory – the city of today, the one that thrived almost a century ago, and the one that existed only in imagination. You’ll gain a Victorian’s view of what a futuristic building would look like in the year 2000, you’ll hear water fountains crash like ocean waves in a dramatic water garden covering more than an acre, and you’ll journey through the pages of Raymond Chandler and the scripts of Blade Runner, Speed and Chinatown. You can see them all just by stepping out onto Angels Walk.

Walks on by:

Union Station/El Pueblo/Little Tokyo/Civic Center

On this Angels Walk, you’ll start your journey in this modern city by walking into its past – close to the site of the Yang-na village, Patasouras Transit Plaza. Step into the romance and drama of Union Station, visit Los Angeles’ oldest-surviving building and take a look at the “million dollar jukebox” on the site of the old Bella Union Hotel. You’ll see the skyscraper that Superman used to fly over in the old television series, and visit the Frank Gehry-designed Walt Disney Concert Hall, as well as the biggest U.S. cathedral to be built in the last 100 years. Only on Angels Walk can you experience the transformation of a once-sleepy city into a vibrant international cultural center.

Walks on by:

Thanks in part to Angels Walk, the city’s bus and rail lines have become the transportation of choice, not the transportation of last resort. “While LA is often defined by the auto, your experiences are not defined by being in your car,” says Blair. “If you really want to experience the sights and sounds of the city, Angels Walk is the answer.”

Walks on by:
In addition to increasing mobility, Metro operates the largest fleet of compressed natural gas (CNG) buses in the nation. These clean-air vehicles have substantially less impact on the environment in terms of greenhouse gases and airborne pollutants emissions.

**Alameda Corridor Continues to Benefit LA**

Since its opening in 2002, the Alameda Corridor has improved the efficiency of moving freight from the Los Angeles and Long Beach ports to the rest of the nation. Nearly 20,000 trains used the Corridor in 2006, and approximately 14,000 ocean freight containers are now transported on the Alameda Corridor each day – almost one-third of the ports’ average daily volume.

While accommodating major increases in trade volumes, the Alameda Corridor has also produced significant air quality benefits for Southern California. According to the Alameda Corridor Transportation Authority (ACTA), consolidation of freight rail operations and the alleviation of traffic congestion at the Southland’s 200-plus rail crossings reduced emissions by more than 6,600 tons.

The air quality benefits will continue to increase as usage of the Corridor grows, because a typical train generates significantly less pollution than the nearly 280 trucks needed to move an equivalent volume of cargo.

**Solar Panels Save Money and Energy**

Finding new ways to save money – and energy – are top priorities at Metro. The Board of Directors recently approved $5 million for 1,600 solar panels to be installed at Bus Division 18 in Carson. That installation will generate 477 kilowatts of electricity, enough power to save Metro about $300,000 per year. The system is scheduled to be completed in December 2007.

Metro bus divisions in Sun Valley and Chatsworth also have been outfitted with a total of 1,648 solar panels that are supplying up to 20 percent of the facilities’ energy needs. The largest solar power installation of its kind in the transit industry, the panels have enough generating capacity to power more than 100 homes a year for 25 years. So far the solar panels have saved Metro at least $400,000 in electricity costs.

Due to the solar panel project’s energy and money-saving success, over the next three years Metro plans to install additional solar panels on every Metro bus and rail facility within its LA County service area. The additional solar projects will be completed using such innovative financing techniques as public/private partnerships and power purchase agreements.
Metro is always developing new ways to help customers reach their destinations quickly and efficiently and in the most pleasant ways possible. Whether its improving ridesharing and creating new vanpooling incentives, using technology to keep transit riders informed and up-to-date, or by enhancing bike/transit options, Metro offers a range of services to benefit the region’s commuters.

**Huell Howser Uncovers the Advantages of Ridesharing**

**Metro Commute Services** is a free, full-service resource that can help companies with relocation, parking problems, and getting their employees to work on time. They do this by offering the right combination of rideshare services such as transit pass benefits, incentives, pretax programs, guaranteed ride home, and others.

*To get the word out on the many advantages of ridesharing, you’ll soon be seeing Huell Howser, star of PBS’s “California Gold,” traveling across LA.*

**Bike Paths and Services Give Commuters Healthy Options**

Southern California’s warm sun and cool ocean breezes create the ideal climate for exploring LA’s many bicycle paths and routes. And this time of the year is perfect to commute to work – on two wheels. To help improve the region’s mobility through the use of bicycles, in June 2006, Metro adopted a comprehensive Bicycle Transportation Strategic Plan.

**“Since bicyclists are allowed the use of travel lanes, the goal is to make most streets friendly to bicycle use, says Lynne Goldsmith, Metro’s Bike Program manager. Another important emphasis of the Bicycle Transportation Strategic Plan is encouraging bikes and transit – how to access transit with bikes.”**

As part of the plan, Metro identified 167 bike-transit hubs in the county to help expand upon the Metro Connections plan to restructure the bus system. There are 331 miles of bike paths, 481 miles of bike lanes and 530 miles of bike routes in the county. Metro helps cities fund these facilities, which then become part of a city’s infrastructure.

**Save Up to $400 by Vanpooling**

Vanpooling has always been a smart way to share the ride and lower the cost of getting to work. The Metro Vanpool Program now makes it more affordable for commuters than ever before by saving each vanpool group up to $400 a month.

*BusinessWeek* recently listed vanpooling as #4 on its list of the top 10 employer best practices. "Being green is where it’s at, and companies that help underscore employees’ public transportation costs or provide vanpools are way ahead of the curve," reports the magazine.

**Additional benefits of vanpooling include saving money on gas and other commuting costs, as well as saving time by traveling in carpool lanes, reducing wear and tear on your car. It also helps reduce traffic and pollution, and lowers your commuting stress.**

**Metro Clean: Improving the Passenger Experience**

Metro is doing its part to ensure that customers have a pleasant experience. Since 1995, the agency’s Metro Clean team has been hard at work every day scouring buses, bus stops and areas surrounding Metro facilities to make them more inviting for transit riders.

**Metro Clean crew, which include adult and juvenile misdemeanor offenders referred by the LA County courts for community service, do the work. They help eliminate dirt, grime, trash and graffiti at bus stops, on Metro property and along Metro’s inactive rights-of-way, making them safer and keeping them clear of debris.**

In 2006, the Metro Clean team cleaned up 55.149 bus stops and 8,875 buses, pressure-washed 738 bus terminals, and removed 56,106 bags of trash from the streets of LA.

**“With Metro Clean, the agency demonstrates its commitment to bettering our communities and providing our customers with a more pleasant waiting experience,” says Pete Sardenis, Facilities Maintenance manager of the Stops & Zones/Metro Clean Division. “The crews have been constantly helping spruce up Metro facilities to make it nicer for everyone to take public transportation.”**

**Funding for 511 comes from the Los Angeles Service Authority for Freeway Emergencies (LA SAFE).**
Metro Bus Division 3 Celebrates 100th Anniversary

Metro Bus Division 3 celebrated its 100th anniversary on May 25 with fanfare befitting a centenarian. The Cypress Park bus yard has been in continuous service to Los Angeles transit riders since its opening day in 1907.

The division started service as a Yellow Car facility, part of the Los Angeles Railway system owned by Henry E. Huntington. At one time, Division 3 boasted one of the system’s largest brick streetcar houses. In 1958, the Los Angeles Metropolitan Transit Authority, a predecessor of Metro, acquired the streetcar system and along with it, Division 3.

Some 200 employees and well-wishers gathered at Division 3 to hear congratulatory remarks from CEO Roger Snoble and others.

San Gabriel Valley Sector General Manager Jack Gabig welcomed guests, noting that, “We’re here not only to celebrate the past, but also to take a peek at the future.” Gabig said the Division 3 transportation and maintenance buildings will be renovated over the next two to three years.

Metro Gold Line Eastside Rail Project Passes Halfway Mark

The $899-million Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension project passed the halfway point in May—on time and under budget—and is proceeding toward its late 2009 opening date. Construction began July 1, 2004.

The six-mile light rail line will feature eight stations and will run between Union Station and Atlantic and Pomona in East LA, with stops in the Little Tokyo/Arts District and Boyle Heights.

The safety record compiled by the project’s workers, including during the tunneling phase, has drawn the construction industry’s admiration. The project has achieved 2 million work hours without a lost-time accident.

“This is an incredible feat because there are very few construction projects that reach this milestone,” says Dennis Mori, Metro executive officer of project management. “It is more impressive because of the complexity and size of this six-mile-long project.”

100 More Articulated Buses to Join Metro Fleet

Metro will purchase up to 100 more 60-foot articulated, compressed natural gas (CNG) buses under a directive approved in May by the Board of Directors.

The new 57-seat “artics” can seat almost 50 percent more passengers than a 40-foot, low-floor bus and will be used to improve service on the most popular Metro bus lines.

Delivery of the new buses is to be completed by spring 2008. Metro now has a fleet of 2,500 buses, of which 90 percent are fueled by natural gas. By summer’s end, the agency will have some 295 articulated buses in operation.

Automatic Passenger Counter Leads Bus Scheduling ‘Revolution’

A simple optical device that counts customers getting on and off a bus—and the powerful computer that backs it up—are responsible for a revolution in Metro’s bus scheduling procedures.

Called Automatic Passenger Counting (APC), it feeds passenger data into a “smart bus” system that can track the movement of each bus. It also provides some 60 different types of data, including line and trip number, bus location, number of passengers boarding and exiting and average number of boardings at a bus stop.

“We have the capacity now to look at how bus service is running—by the day, by line, by trip, by hour of the day, by operator, division and sector,” says Jake Satin-Jacobs, manager of Operations Performance Analysis.

Since it went into operation a year ago, APC has compiled more than 130 million data records from Metro’s almost 200 routes and 18,500 bus stops.

“We have to find ways to schedule our buses more efficiently and we’ve used the APC data exclusively to do that,” says Mike Brewer, service development manager for the San Fernando Valley sector. “We’ve also relied on it heavily to avoid canceling lines and, as a result, we’ve been able to save quite a few lines being considered for cancellation.”

Metro Orange Line Ridership Hit All-Time High in May

The Metro Orange Line set a record in May with 23,826 average daily boardings—an objective it was not expected to reach until 2020.

“We exceeded the 2020 estimates in the first 18 months of operation, and it continues to build,” says San Fernando Valley General Manager Richard Hunt. “We added more service in January to address the heavy loads and that additional capacity is now being used.”

Hitting the 23,826 mark was a 9 percent increase in boardings compared to May 2006. Ridership estimates prior to opening the Orange Line were 17,000 weekday boardings by 2009 and 22,000 weekday boardings by 2020.
The Many Roles of Metro Employees

Each day, bus and rail operators, maintenance crews and security officers represent the very public face of Metro. But Metro also employs:

> Construction safety specialists
> Regional long-range transportation planners
> Environmental compliance officers
> Transit service development planners
> Vehicle technology engineers
> An emergency preparedness specialist
> Customer service and customer information agents
> An Americans with Disabilities Act compliance officer
> A staff of ethics officers
> And many more transit specialists

All together, a staff of 9,000-plus Metro employees is dedicated to building and operating a world-class transportation system for Los Angeles.