

CEO Julian Burke's Remarks before the MTA Board Transit Alternatives Workshop held Friday, February 4, 2000

"It is critical for the MTA to accept the challenge" of providing alternative transit in three transportation corridors, CEO Julian Burke said during Board workshop. But, he said the agency can only "move ahead with projects when we know we have enough money to construct and operate them." The CEO will present a formal set of recommendations at the Feb. 24 Board meeting. Here are the CEO's full remarks presented Feb.4.

This afternoon we will be taking the first steps toward developing a new and realistic program to meet future transportation needs in Los Angeles County. When I say "new," what I mean is that the old vision of an extended rail network built on the spine of a subway is being replaced by a truly multi-modal plan which looks at rapid bus fixed guideways, and light rail as well as subway options. When I say realistic, I mean we will only move ahead with projects when we know we have enough money to construct and operate them.

The three consultant reports which will be discussed today were done within this new and realistic framework. These studies began about nine months ago when the board directed staff to study all of the options to meet transportation needs in the three corridors where subway projects were suspended - the Eastside, Mid-cities and San Fernando Valley. As you will hear today, the recommendations the consultants are presenting are based on extensive community input combined with in depth technical analysis.

As we discuss the next steps in this process, you will also understand that a great deal more work needs to be done to refine the consultants' recommendations so that broadly supported locally preferred alternatives can be adopted. For each corridor, the consultant is recommending that the board approve for further study several options. Today's workshop is an opportunity to listen, learn and question - I will present a formal set of recommendations at the regular board meeting on February 24. Months of further work will be required before a specific mode, alignment and construction plan is selected.

Our presentation today will include a discussion of the capital and operating costs of each of the projects which were studied and some very preliminary analysis of possible funding sources. One important

focus will be to preserve existing commitments -- the federal full funding grant agreement and the additional federal and state funds previously reserved for the eastside and mid-city fixed guideway projects. Additional capital may be available as a result of Governor Davis' plan to accelerate state transportation spending. So while we cannot be absolutely certain today what the financial capacity of the MTA is, we will be working with staff and the consultants over the next several months to determine how much money is available to build the adopted projects, and within what time frame.

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Even if we can fund the money to build these projects, we cannot move forward with them unless we can identify the money to operate them. As you will see, each of these projects require sizeable operating funds because they will attract many new passengers to our public transit system. The subsidy required to support any new project will be added to existing projected operating deficits for the next five years, and before we can begin to spend precious operating dollars on new transit projects we must recognize existing commitments to satisfy our consent decree obligations, our rapid bus pilot project, and our highway, pedestrian, soundwall and other programs.

Nevertheless, it is critical for the MTA to accept this challenge. We have a particular obligation to the residents of the three corridors who have waited so long for new public transportation options. Moreover, as the agency responsible for countywide transportation policy, planning and funding, we must continue this process of examining transit alternatives to deal with the growing needs of the county as a whole to improve mobility.

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