



NEWS

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MTA BOARD APPROVES \$746.5 MILLION STATE TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM FOR 1998

Los Angeles County's \$746.5 state-funded transportation improvement program was approved Wednesday by the MTA Board of Directors with the adoption of the 1998 County Transportation Improvement Program (CTIP).

In adopting the plan, the Board directed MTA staff to study the feasibility of establishing a policy and/or formula that ensures a local return of state funds to agencies representing 89 cities and Los Angeles County and to report back to the board within 90 days with their recommendations. The allocation policy/and or formula would first take effect in the year 2000 CTIP.

The adoption also contained one other caveat. MTA CEO Julian Burke was asked to identify funds, other than state money if possible, to complete the extension of the Metro Red Line subway to North Hollywood, and report his findings at the Jan. 29th Board meeting.

The program consists of the following projects, categories and associated rounded dollar costs:

- \$489.4 million for 11 carpool lane projects and other transportation improvement projects committed under the 1997 Call for Projects.
- \$8.1 million to be spent on carpool lane sound walls and the widening of Santa Monica Boulevard.
- \$207.1 million for finishing Metro Red Line subway extension to North Hollywood.
- \$17.7 million, regional Rideshare
- \$24.2 million for Transportation Enhancement Activities reserve.

MORE...

Page 2 CTIP 1998

As noted, the plan funds \$489.4 million committed by the MTA to the 1997 Call for Projects, a program where the MTA works with and solicits innovative transportation, highway and street project proposals from 89 cities, Los Angeles County and state agencies every two years.

Perhaps the most significant component to this six-year state-funding plan is that the MTA, and not the state, now will decide which transportation improvement projects receive funds allocated by the state as a result of the deregulation of the funding decision process by Senate Bill 45, which went into effect January 1. SB 45 will speed up the pace in which multi-modal project benefiting the region as a whole are approved. In the past, the MTA was required to nominate projects to the California Transportation Commission for approval and final funding.

"Senate Bill 45 gives the MTA much more flexibility in deciding how to best use these state funds and significantly streamlines the process," said Los Angeles Mayor and MTA Board Chairman Richard J. Riordan.

"Since the MTA is very much in tune with the multi-modal transportation needs of the county, it makes much more sense for the county's transportation and planning agency to be given the final say," Riordan continued.

The shepherding of transportation improvement projects before SB 45 was a rather cumbersome process and somewhat vexing because of restrictions and uncertainties over the status of projects once they reached the state for review, added Riordan.

The new system of empowering the MTA eliminates a lot of frustration and will enhance the identification of projects that will improve mobility within the county and strengthen the bonds between the MTA and the communities it serves," Riordan concluded.

Making the process even more flexible will be the consolidation of nine

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