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Metro Rail Ridership Grows Six Percent

Media Relations issued a news release this morning noting that Metro Rail ridership last month shot up six percent over May 2007, one of the highest one month spikes on record, as commuters and others parked their cars and trucks and took advantage of fares that are about one fourth the cost of a gallon of gas. The surge was led by gains in subway ridership and the Metro Gold Line, which saw more riders than ever traveling from downtown Los Angeles to Pasadena (23,141 average weekday boardings).

The release also notes that during May 2008, 7,625,541 passengers boarded our two subway lines and three light rail surface lines. That compares to 7,192,173 boardings in May 2007. That number will grow exponentially as the Metro Rail system, now spanning 73 miles of track, expands by six miles about a year from now with the opening of the Eastside extension of the Metro Gold Line to East Los Angeles, a region with a population that is heavily transit dependent, and with the opening of the Expo light rail line from downtown Los Angeles to Culver City, expected in 2010. The popular Metro Orange Line, a 14-mile busway that operates like a “train on rubber wheels” from North Hollywood to Woodland Hills in the San Fernando Valley, boosted ridership by 1.3 percent over last year, which was a strong ridership period.

Also noted in the news release is the fact that we are getting strong interest in our other rideshare programs, including subsidized vanpools and carpools. Moreover, our employer pass programs are taking off as more employers partner with us to buy annual transit passes for their workers and realize tax benefits for their companies.

As for bus ridership, more than 1.2 million passengers boarded Metro buses on an average weekday in May, slightly above April's levels; however, comparing ridership

for the full calendar month of May year over year, bus ridership is down 5.37 percent. Our schedulers explained that in May 2007, Metro bus ridership jumped dramatically as gas prices peaked before the summer driving season, and Metro bus ridership was impacted by the fare increase last July, though Metro Rail has consistently gained riders eager to avoid pain at the gas pump.

Media Inquiry on Canoga Transportation Corridor Locally Preferred Alternative

Media Relations distributed a news release this afternoon that announces the fact that today we released a Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) for the Canoga Transportation Corridor Project, a possible northern extension of the successful Metro Orange Line service. Staff will recommend to the Board that it select a busway alternative on a Metro-owned former railroad right-of-way (ROW) for the potential four-mile service extension from the current busway terminus in Canoga Park to Chatsworth.

The release notes that the LPA is the result of a one-year environmental review process that evaluated potential impacts for transit service along several possible corridors, including our own existing railroad ROW, Canoga Avenue, De Soto Avenue and Topanga Canyon Boulevard. The Canoga Busway alternative was chosen because of its cost-effectiveness compared to other on-street dedicated bus lane alternatives, minimal environmental impacts, improved safety and quicker transit travel times. Staff's recommended LPA includes a grade separation over Metrolink/Union Pacific tracks and Lassen Street that enables the busway to directly enter the Chatsworth Metrolink Station.

Both the Daily News and Los Angeles Times have made inquiries on this topic. Staff reported that the busway alternative proved less expensive to build than the widened Canoga Avenue alternative due to the need to move street utility infrastructure. The project, if approved, would take 30 months to build, with a revenue operation date scheduled for 2016, or sooner, should the board elect to make funds available earlier than anticipated. More than 60 businesses would have to be vacated from the alignment should the project move forward. Stories are expected to run tomorrow.

Park and Ride Lot Theft Suspects Arrested

On May 27th, Transit Service Bureau (TSB) deputies responded to the Metro Green Line Norwalk passenger station after a contract security guard reported two individuals tampering with vehicles in the park and ride lot. The security guard was able to obtain the license plate number of the suspects' vehicle prior to it leaving the parking lot. This information was relayed to TSB deputies who followed the vehicle on the freeway and later conducted a felony traffic stop. Inside the vehicle were three catalytic converters that had been stolen from the Norwalk and Long Beach

park and ride lots. Three individuals were arrested for Grand Theft and Conspiracy to Commit Grand Theft.

During the last few months, TSB has been working very closely with our security to monitor the park and ride lots due to the increase in ridership on our system.

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