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Access Sacramento

Earlier this week, I attended the Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce Access Sacramento Lobby day. Approximately 100 Chamber members attended the event to advocate on behalf of the Chamber's legislative agenda, which includes AB 2321 (Feuer), our sales tax bill and AB 1836 (Feuer), a bill on Infrastructure Financing Districts.

Assembly Speaker Karen Bass (D-Los Angeles) and incoming Senate President Pro tem Darrell Steinberg (D-Sacramento), who served as keynote speakers at the event breakfast, both stated their commitment to work together to solve this year's budget crisis and to develop a plan to revamp the State's tax structure.

I also met separately with Senator Alan Lowenthal (D-Long Beach), Chair of the Senate Transportation & Housing Committee, Assemblymember Mike Eng (D-Monterey Park), incoming Chair of the Assembly Transportation Committee, Senator Gil Cedillo (D-Los Angeles) who serves on the Senate Transportation & Housing Committee and Assemblymember Ed Hernandez (D-Baldwin Park), Chair of the San Gabriel Legislative Caucus to discuss our congestion pricing proposal and AB 2321.

Dump The Pump Media Event

This morning we conducted a press conference to commemorate the Third Annual National Dump the Pump Day at Union Station. During the event, Chair O'Connor and I, along with executives from Metrolink and the American Automobile Association urged Los Angeles area commuters to end their relationship with their gas-guzzling cars and trucks in favor of public transit, carpools and vanpools, all of which cost a fraction of the typical cost to drive a single passenger vehicle.

As part of the event, we towed away a gas-guzzling SUV and brought in a Metro bus and vanpool vehicle to demonstrate how to "Dump Guzz for Us." Numerous media, including most major television and radio news outlets, covered the event, with stories running today and tomorrow.

Media Inquiry into Rail Ridership Growth

Today, the Los Angeles Times inquired about our Rail ridership statistics for the last year. Staff provided the numbers and noted that in July 2007, we implemented a fare change that drew away some riders. However, in recent months, ridership on Metro Rail has seen gains, and compared to a year ago, is up six percent. The LA Times plans to run a story tomorrow tracking ridership gains on public transit across the county, including Metrolink commuter rail.

Media Inquiry into Impacts of Rising Fuel Costs

This afternoon, the Daily News inquired about a feature story they are working on regarding the impacts transportation providers are facing with rising fuel costs. Staff explained that our budget for fuel in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2009 budget is 13% higher than the FY 2008 budget. This is due primarily to deploying more 60-foot articulated Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) buses during FY 2009, and not entirely due to rising fuel prices.

For calendar year 2008 we entered into a CNG fuel hedging agreement to provide certainty in the budget. As the price of fuel has risen so dramatically, our hedge agreement has been favorable for us since our increase would have been much greater than 13%. We are anticipating a more dramatic price increase starting in the FY 2010 budget. The story is expected to run this weekend.

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