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U.S. House of Representatives Adopts $8 Billion Fix for Ailing Highway Trust Fund

The U.S. House of Representatives overwhelmingly approved legislation (H.R. 6532) earlier today that would provide $8 billion from the U.S. Treasury to avert a cash crisis facing the federal Highway Trust Fund. The trust fund, which is financed through the 18.4 cents per-gallon federal gas tax, is expected to face a multi-billion shortfall later this year. The White House promptly issued a veto threat on H.R. 6532. “This bill is both a gimmick and a dangerous precedent that shifts costs from users to taxpayers at large,” read a White House statement released today. The looming insolvency of the trust fund is of concern to us because it would negatively impact projects and programs authorized under SAFETEA-LU. H.R. 6532 was adopted with a veto proof majority of 387 to 37.

CTC Finds Our Proposed Congestion Reduction Demonstration Initiative is Eligible Under its Guidelines

The California Transportation Commission (CTC), at its hearing today in Los Angeles, unanimously found that our application to implement a proposed Congestion Reduction Demonstration Initiative project is eligible under CTC guidelines. This necessary step clears the way for our requested implementing legislation, which must now be enacted by the California legislature not later than October 15, 2008.

These two actions will allow us to access the $210.3 million grant offered by the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) for our proposed Congestion Reduction Demonstration Initiative project. The project is initially envisioned as establishing variably priced High Occupancy Toll Lanes ("HOT lanes") on portions of the I-10 and I-110 corridors leading to downtown Los Angeles, and potentially on the I-210 freeway in the San Gabriel Valley if funding permits. The Board is scheduled to vote on acceptance of the revised Memorandum of Understanding with USDOT that will establish these corridors as priorities for the demonstration project.

Tour of Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension Project with Commissioner Kirk Lindsey, California Transportation Commission (CTC)

Today, I toured portions of the Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension Project with Commissioner Kirk Lindsey, which included going underground at 1st/Boyle to see the construction of the Boyle Heights/Mariachi Plaza Station and the installation of trackwork and systems in the subway tunnels. Accompanied by Dennis Mori (EO/Project Director) and others who provided insight into the teamwork within the agency and the coordination with the State, County and City that has led to the successful planning and construction of this important transportation infrastructure project. The Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension Project is over 83% complete, continues its safety record of over 3.2 million safe work-hours and is within budget and on-time to open in Mid-2009.

Media Inquiry Regarding Key Items for the Board Meeting

Today, KFWB and KCRW radio reporters interviewed Media Relations staff about key items on Thursday's Board agenda. The reporters inquired about the proposal to switch the Congestion Reduction Demonstration Initiative from the I-210 to the I-110 Freeway and about the half-cent sales tax ordinance. Stories are expected later today and tomorrow morning.

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