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Senate Appropriations Committee Chair Outlines Details of Economic Stimulus Package

Senator Robert C. Byrd (D-VA), Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, unveiled details of a second economic stimulus package that will be considered this September. The package includes a total of $4.76 billion for transportation investments, including $3.5 billion for highway improvements and $892.5 million for transit agencies to address capital and operating needs. Highway funds will be apportioned to states by formula, whereas the distribution methodology for transit funds has not been disclosed. The proposal also makes available $100 million for Amtrak capital projects along its rail corridors and $200 million for airport improvement projects. Additionally, the legislation proposes to transfer cash to the Highway Trust Fund in order to ensure its continued solvency through Fiscal Year 2009.

The Appropriations Committee is expected to mark up the stimulus package in September, followed by Senate floor action shortly thereafter. The House also intends to take up its own stimulus measure sometime this fall. We will keep you informed as further details become available.

Bill to Honor the Late Rep. Juanita Millender-McDonald Approved by the House

Transportation and Infrastructure Committee

Today, the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee approved H.R. 4131, a bill introduced by Rep. Laura Richardson (37-CA) that designates a portion of California State Route 91 in Los Angeles as the "Juanita Millender-McDonald Highway." The daughter of a sharecropper, Rep. Juanita Millender-McDonald (1995-2007) rose to chair the House Administration Committee.

Her fellow lawmakers remembered her as a tireless advocate for her district's transportation issues, who never let on that she was fighting a terminal illness. Rep. Laura Richardson, her successor shared that, "She left us way too soon and I'll work as hard as I can to keep her name in a positive light."

2009 Call for Projects

Planning staff will hold a special meeting with the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) on August 6th to discuss the viability of conducting a limited 2009 Call for Projects. The 2008 Draft Long Range Transportation Plan financial model identified $273 million for the 2009 Call for Projects, covering a three-year period from FY14 through FY16. Based on our preliminary fund estimates, funding will only be available for the two-year period of FY14 and FY15. This is tied to the 2010 State Transportation Improvements Program (STIP) cycle. Overall, fewer funds will be available because the STIP has been impacted by the state budget. Staff anticipates bringing preliminary funding marks for the 2009 Call for Projects to the Board in February or March 2009.

Pasadena Rotary Club

Yesterday, I spoke at the Pasadena Rotary Club regarding transportation opportunities and challenges for Pasadena and the San Gabriel Valley. I provided information regarding the increase in ridership we are experiencing on the Metro Gold Line due to higher gas prices, the Freeway Service Patrol that we provide in Pasadena, the latest information on the 710 Technical Studies, the transit oriented developments that we have completed and are currently in construction around the area, and the San Gabriel Valley (SGV) Projects that are currently included in the Long Range Transportation Plan. I also emphasized the need for new funding streams including the current developments about the half-cent sales tax ballot measure, the SGV projects that would be funded if it passes, and the potential billions of much needed transportation dollars that this could generate for the county. An overview of some of our other new funding initiatives, such as congestion pricing and public-private partnerships, was also provided.

Metro Volunteers and Sheriffs in the Community

Metro Volunteers will promote the agency and its many transit services at two upcoming high-profile events. Staff will have a booth at the four-day Summer XGames scheduled from July 31st to August 3rd at the Carson Home Depot Center. Covered live by ESPN, XGames will feature a variety of skateboard and motor sports and will include a music festival and athlete autograph sessions. On Tuesday, August 5th, Metro Volunteers will partner with the LASD Transit Services Bureau to host nine information tables throughout the county during National Night Out. This evening is set aside nationally to promote law enforcement, crime awareness and various safety/security campaigns, and staff will encourage families to travel safely and securely on public transportation. We will participate in National Night Out at the following Metro locations: El Monte Station, Sierra Madre Gold Line Station, Norwalk Transit Center, Rosa Parks Blue/Green Line Station, Union Station, Warner Center Orange Line Station, North Hollywood Red/Orange Line Station, Wilshire/La Brea Customer Center and the Artesia Transit Center.

Media Tour of Gold Line Eastside Extension

Today, a photographer with the LA Times toured the Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension construction project for a photo essay to be published in the paper to show the progress of construction. The photographer visited Union Station, the bridge over the 101 Freeway, Mariachi Plaza Station, as well as the Indiana, Maravilla, East LA Civic Center and Atlantic stations. The photo essay is expected to run in the next few weeks.

KTLA Highlights Metro Bus Service

This morning, KTLA Morning News, as part of their “Commuter Week” programming, had their traffic reporter ride public transit to get to several locations that included Culver City and North Hollywood. Our Manager of Customer Relations, Alonzo Williams appeared in the studio to offer tips to the reporter using our Trip Planner on what Metro Buses to take to reach her destinations throughout the morning. It was part of an overall story on commuting habits and the fact that you can use public transit to get where you need to go.

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