

MTA OFFICIALS REPORT PROGRESS IN FEDERAL BUDGET TALKS

By MARC LITTMAN

(May 9) Mayor Richard J. Riordan and MTA CEO Julian Burke met with Congressional leaders in Washington D.C. May 9 regarding MTA's request for federal transportation funding in Fiscal Year 2001. They were pleased to learn that the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation has recommended the following budget marks:

- **\$50 million** to cover construction costs for the North Hollywood Metro Rail extension. This represents the full MTA request and is consistent with the agency's federal full funding grant agreement for the project as well as MTA's recovery plan.
- **\$9 million** for bus purchases and bus related facilities. This is three times what Congress awarded MTA in this category this year.
- **\$4 million** to proceed with environmental impact reports and preliminary engineering for various busway and light rail options in the Eastside and Mid-City transit corridors. In addition, Gov. Gray Davis has recommended that the state provide \$492 million in capital funding for these projects which are alternatives to building subway extensions in these corridors as originally planned.
- **\$3.5 million** for the Reverse Commute/Jobs Access Program to help poor and transit dependent Los Angeles County residents gain better access to jobs and become more self-sufficient.

No Discretionary Funding

"The House sub-committee did not allocate any discretionary funding for any new busway or rail project in the nation," Mayor Riordan reported. "However, I am confident that we can still move forward with environmental work and preliminary engineering for the proposed busway that will connect the West San Fernando Valley with the new North Hollywood Metro Rail station using local and state monies."

The Mayor noted that Gov. Davis and state legislative leaders are recommending \$245 million in new state monies for the San Fernando Valley busway project which is estimated to cost \$291 million to construct.

Support Indicates Renewed Confidence

The Mayor was pleased overall with the committee's recommendations, a view underscored by Burke. "We are gratified that the House continues to recognize and support Los Angeles' transportation funding needs," Burke said. "This also reflects renewed confidence of Congress in MTA's progress."

CEO Burke and MTA Board Chair and Los Angeles County Supervisor Yvonne Brathwaite Burke also were in Washington last week meeting with key Congressional leaders on behalf of the MTA.

Next Steps

The full House Appropriations Committee should consider the budget recommendations before the Memorial Day break. The transportation appropriations bill then goes to the full House. A similar process is

underway in the Senate although the Senate does not usually earmark funding for specific projects until the House and Senate meet in conference committee in the summer to iron out differences in the appropriations bill.

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