

EDITOR'S NOTE: (May 22, 2001) A story in the Los Angeles *Times*, Tuesday, claims that the MTA has asked the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals to "set aside a consent decree requiring them to improve bus service...." The *Times* story concerned a legal brief written by MTA attorneys. The brief was requested, April 27, by the Appeals Court, which asked the MTA and the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund – representing the Labor/Community Strategy Center (the Bus Riders Union) – for their legal views on a recent U.S. Supreme Court decision and on two other cases that could affect the October 1996 Consent Decree. The MTA released the following statement on Monday, May 21.

MTA CONSENT DECREE STATEMENT

May 21, 2001

In signing the Consent Decree in October 1996, the MTA agreed to significantly expand Metro bus service, reduce overcrowding, and introduce new types of bus service. MTA remains committed to achieving those objectives:

- MTA is completely revamping its bus fleet by ordering more than 2,000 buses. Already more than 1,200 new compressed natural gas buses have been delivered and about 20 new buses arrive weekly. By mid-2005 the entire fleet will be replaced.
- Since 1996, the number of buses in peak hour service has increased by 377 and MTA has added 1 million more annual hours of Metro Bus service. In addition, the agency has started new routes including the highly successful Metro Rapid Buses that utilize technology to extend green lights and speed travel time compared to local bus service.

Neither the MTA staff nor Board of Directors has wavered from this position. Indeed, the draft MTA budget for Fiscal year 2002 calls for funding a record amount of Metro Bus service with nearly half the agency budget committed to funding Metro Bus and contract service and subsidies for 16 municipal bus operators in Los Angeles County.

The Bus Riders Union recognizes the progress MTA has made but keeps demanding more and more. The MTA Board had no choice other than to ask for the courts to consider the issues.

A year ago MTA appealed a decision by U.S. District Court Judge Terry Hatter to order additional buses on top of the more than \$1 billion that MTA is spending on new buses and service. The MTA appealed to get legal clarification of what its obligations are.

The federal appeals court has the power to affirm Judge Hatter's ruling or ask that it be reconsidered, including determining whether or not the Consent Decree is still enforceable. MTA believes that the court should decide the matter.

However, no matter what the court decides to do, Metro passengers can rest assured that the MTA remains committed

to the basic principle of the Consent Decree to improve Metro Bus service.

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