

Mobility 21 Calls for Return of Sales Tax Funds for Transportation

By CLAUDIA KEITH

(Jan. 14, 2004) The Mobility 21 Coalition, meeting Tuesday at MTA Headquarters, adopted a resolution calling for restoration of sales tax funds for transportation in the state's proposed budget.

The coalition, made up of elected officials, transportation providers, business and labor leaders, academic and community representatives, singled out Proposition 42 revenues. California voters approved Prop. 42 in March 2002, directing the sales tax on gasoline purchases for transportation purposes.

Coalition members also voted to support the implementation in Los Angeles County of an additional half-cent local sales tax for transportation purposes.

Governor Schwarzenegger's 2003-04 mid-year reductions and 2004-05 proposed budget would reduce transportation funding by about \$2.1 billion. To date, \$2.5 billion in transportation funds already has been lent to the state General Fund.

'Need adequate funding'

"The latest proposal by the Department of Finance could jeopardize many vital transportation projects needed to help solve traffic congestion in this region," said CEO Roger Snoble. "We need adequate funding from the federal government and Sacramento if we expect to continue building a public transit system and making the transportation improvements that are critical for Los Angeles County's economic growth and mobility."

In addition to hampering MTA and municipal operators, the proposed funding reductions could affect the Exposition light-rail line; alternative fuel bus purchases; improvements to the 101/405 interchange; Alameda Corridor East grade separations; Metrolink systemwide improvements and many other local roadway and traffic signal improvements.

"While we realize that everybody is feeling the pain of the state budget crisis, lawmakers can't continue to rely on money that voters have said they want earmarked for transportation programs to help shore up the general fund," said Dan Beal, manager of public policy programs for the Automobile Club of Southern California.

Other policy initiatives

In other action, coalition members adopted policy initiatives addressing such issues as transit work stoppages, freight movement and public safety on county streets.

Mobility 21 Coalition state and federal legislative priorities for the year include:

Federal Legislation: Support the reauthorization of TEA-21, advocate an increase in the federal ethanol tax to match other fuels, support Los Angeles County transportation agencies' appropriation requests, support MTA's funding request for the Metro Gold Line Eastside extension and legislation to better coordinate state and federal environmental approvals.

State Legislation: Oppose additional transfers of transportation revenues, including state highway account, Prop. 42 revenues, federal transportation funds and the public transit account to non-transportation purposes; support a constitutional amendment to allow a 55 percent vote requirement for passage of local transportation sales taxes, and support legislation to allow transportation agencies to use innovative contracting and financing tools, without case-by-case legislative signoff.

[Back to MTA Report](#)