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Eastside Rail Extension Given Federal Funding Priority

(Feb. 4, 2004) The U.S. Department of Transportation has recommended to Congress more than \$1.5 billion in funding for 34 local transit programs, including the Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension in Los Angeles.

The \$898-million light-rail Eastside Extension, projected to open in 2009, is the MTA Board's highest priority construction project. Half the funding for the project will come from state and local funding already secured by MTA.

U.S. Transportation Secretary Norman Y. Mineta said the Federal Transit Administration will ask Congress for an immediate \$80 million in funds to get the Metro Gold Line Eastside project going, as well as a commitment to provide a total of \$490.7 million in "new starts" funding for the project.

The Eastside Extension will be a 5.9-mile, eight-station light-rail line that will serve the heavily transit-dependent area from Union Station eastward to a terminus at Atlantic Boulevard. The line is expected to reach 23,000 average weekday boardings in 2020.

Pleased with recognition

"We are pleased that Secretary Mineta recognized the importance of this project to the citizens, not only of the Eastside and Boyle Heights, but to the whole region," said CEO Roger Snoble.

Prior to the U.S. DOT announcement, community leaders in East Los Angeles mounted a letter-writing campaign urging federal officials to fund the Metro Gold Line extension.

"People should be pleased to know that the President is committed in his budget to support the Eastside project," said Diego Cardoso, director of Regional Transportation Planning for the Central Area Team. "That should help us with the Full Funding Grant Agreement. It's a very good sign for us."

In addition to the Los Angeles transit project, U.S. DOT's funding recommendations include a 3.4-mile, three-station extension of the Mid-Coast Corridor light-rail line in San Diego; an 8.5-mile light-rail system serving central Orange County between Santa Ana and Irvine, the second phase of the San Francisco Muni's Third Street Corridor light-rail line, and a new 20-mile, light-rail system in Phoenix.

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