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MTA Board to Consider Funding for More Bus Service Hours

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(June 22, 2004) A motion to authorize millions of dollars to fund an increase in bus revenue service hours is among a number of important issues before the MTA Board at its June meeting.

During the meeting, which begins at 9:30 a.m., Thursday, members also will consider motions to oppose certain bills – including one to rename the Metro Gold Line – before the State Assembly, expand the use of design-build construction, and develop a Sunday family day pass, among other items.

Funding Extra Consent Decree Hours, Item 36: The Board will consider a motion to use \$11.3 million from Metro's General Fund to finance 208,250 extra hours of bus revenue service required under the Consent Decree.

A ruling by the Special Master in January, 2004 required Metro to add a total of 290,000 annual in-service hours by December, 2004 to comply with the Consent Decree's load factors.

The agency will add 83,000 revenue service hours effective Sunday, June 27, and the remainder later this year. The June shakeup will include additional trips on 51 bus lines and the startup of five new Metro Bus routes.

Designating the \$11.3 million for Consent Decree hours is expected to impact future bus capital and bus procurements. The staff will review this as part of an overall review of the 10-year forecast to be completed in August.

Positions on State Legislation, Item 34: The Board will consider its position on three important bills now before the State Assembly. One would rename the Metro Gold Line, a second would create a new regional rail authority responsible for investing in myriad transportation projects and the third would allow hybrid vehicles on HOV lanes.

AB-712 (Liu) calls for renaming the Metro Gold Line – from Union Station to Claremont – as the Foothills Gold Line. The name of the rail line's seven-member construction authority also would change to reflect the new name.

Metro's Government Relations staff recommends opposing the measure unless amended to clarify MTA's responsibilities for setting project priorities, receiving and allocating funding. The bill would, in essence, create a separate construction and planning agency that would compete with MTA for federal funds.

The Government Relations staff also recommends that the Board oppose a draft bill creating a regional authority for investment in transportation (RAIT). The Southern California Association of Governments has proposed the language creating RAITs.

According to a report to the Board, the proposed language would give RAITs "very broad powers that directly conflict with the authority of the MTA. This new entity would have the authority to oversee the financing, planning, construction and operation of transportation projects in the Los Angeles region."

The third bill, AB-2628 (Pavley), would permit hybrid vehicles that achieve 45 miles per gallon or better to use freeway HOV lanes with only one occupant and have free passage on toll bridges. The bill would give hybrids the same privileges as other ultra low-emission and super low-emission vehicles.

The Government Relations staff recommends that the Board support the measure with amendments requiring Caltrans to work with regional transportation planning agencies in developing plans and implementing the new law.

Design-Build Contracting, Item 22: The Metro Construction staff is recommending expanding the use of the design-build method for renovation, repair and construction at Metro facilities. Such construction traditionally has used the design/bid/build system.

A report to the Board notes that, in the past few years, the agency has experienced success with the design-build approach. Among the projects cited were installation of four traction power substations on the Metro Gold Line, storage tracks for 10 light-rail vehicles and construction of four-quadrant gates on the Metro Blue Line.

The motion before the Board would authorize the CEO to solicit and award design-build contracts for renovation, repair and construction at Metro facilities.

Bridge and Tunnel Identification, Item 38: The Board will consider a motion directing the staff to report on the feasibility of using the Metro logo to identify railroad bridges and tunnels used by Metro and Metrolink trains in order to "heighten motorists' awareness" of local transportation options.

Sunday Family Day Pass, Item 39: The Board will consider a motion directing the Metro staff to study the feasibility of developing a Sunday Family Day Pass. The pass could sell for \$5 for two adults and two children, plus \$1 more for each additional child.

Bicycles on Trains, Item 40: The Board will consider a motion directing the staff to study the feasibility of "converting the end car on the Metro Red Line subway to allow bicycles without any restrictions."

The motion notes that, although passengers can bring bikes aboard trains for no extra charge, bicycles are not allowed aboard trains under

most conditions during peak hours. “This does not respond to the need of those who use a bicycle...” the motion says.

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