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Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, pictured here with 2nd Vice-chair Pam O'Connor and CEO Roger Snoble, outlined his priorities for Metro during his first meeting as chairman of the Board of Directors. Photo: Bill Heard



Villaraigosa Outlines Transportation Priorities as Board Chairman

- Highlights transit security, bus system and new rail lines
- Calls for 'vision and a long-term plan'
- Go to> [Other Board business](#)

By BILL HEARD, Editor

(July 29, 2005) Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, taking up the Board of Directors gavel on Thursday, outlined transportation priorities for his term as chairman – emphasizing commitments to transit security, maintaining “a first-class bus system” and “investment in new rail lines.”

Villaraigosa noted that he already has been to Washington seeking “appropriate funds for transit security. We will continue to make that a priority of this agency. We must do everything we can to address homeland security issues within our transportation system.”

Declaring that Metro has “substantially improved bus service over the past decade,” the mayor said the agency “must maintain its commitment to a first-class bus system.”

He added that discussion of a fare increase would be “premature,” but said it is a matter for the entire Board to decide upon.

The mayor said a “multi-modal system” is required to provide alternatives to driving and to increase service to transit riders. “That means finishing current projects on-time and on-budget.”

‘Vision and long-term plan’

Villaraigosa called for “vision and a long-term plan” that includes investment in new rail lines using federal and state funding.

“This does not mean that we will open a subway to the sea in my term,” he said. “But, it means that we have to start planning for this and other sensible projects.”

The mayor said Metro must build the Exposition Line “all the way to Santa Monica, the Gold Line extension in the San Gabriel Valley and a connection to LAX. Service between the San Fernando Valley and the Westside must be improved.”

Villaraigosa said the carpool system should be completed. He requested reports in August on ridership benefits, costs and implementation timeframes of a downtown connector linking the Metro Blue Line, Gold Line and the Eastside Extension with the Exposition Line.

He also requested the cost implementation timeframe and next steps for a priority transit lane on Wilshire Boulevard.

In other business, the Board considered:

Item 22, Property for a Warehouse. The Board authorized purchase of a 1.39-acre property adjacent to the Regional Rebuild Center for construction of a central warehouse for the Facilities Maintenance and Materiel and Logistics departments.

The warehouse is needed to provide bulk storage of bus and rail materials, parts and supplies, and will provide shop space for Facilities Maintenance personnel moved in from South Park.

Currently owned by Sempra Energy Utilities, the site includes a building that will be demolished before Metro acquires the property for \$2.5 million. Sempra has developed a Remedial Action Workplan in cooperation with California Department of Toxic Substance Control to reduce the level of contaminants from a gas plant that once occupied the site.

Items 25 and 26, Hi-Rail Equipment. The Board approved contracts to buy two hi-rail utility trucks and one specially designed hi-rail emergency response vehicle for use on rail lines throughout the region.

The emergency hi-rail vehicle was developed by Metro staff to combine the features of a fire department search and rescue vehicle with those of a law enforcement tactical vehicle suitable for terrorist and hostage situations.

The \$405,135 cost will be funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. The armor-plated vehicle will have a five-ton crane, air compressor, generator and other equipment required to respond to rail emergencies.

The utility trucks, with a total purchase price of \$395,593, will be equipped with articulated booms and two-person buckets for use in

maintaining overhead catenary lines or in high-reach areas of the Metro Red Line. The new trucks will replace two 16-year-old vehicles.

Item 40, Governance Council Appointment. The Board approved Supervisor Michael Antonovich's appointment of Mel Wilson to serve as a member of the San Fernando Valley Sector Governance Council.

Wilson, 52, was appointed by former Mayor Richard Riordan to serve as a member of the LACMTA Board of Directors from July, 1993 to August, 1997. A realtor, Wilson also has served on the board of directors of the Valley Industry and Commerce Assn. (VICA) and as a vice president of the LA City Fire Department Commission.

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