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Mayor Villaraigosa Announces Wilshire Subway Tunnel Panel

- Panel will convene Oct. 24-27; a report is due in November

(Oct. 14, 2005) Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa announced, Friday, that an independent peer review panel has been formed to investigate the feasibility of subway tunneling under Wilshire Boulevard west of Western Avenue.

"Wilshire Boulevard is the densest corridor and the most heavily traveled bus route in Los Angeles," said Villaraigosa. "Wilshire Boulevard is the most logical choice for mass transit investments and this panel will help to determine if further subway tunneling is a safe alternative."

Villaraigosa called for the panel in July and worked collaboratively with Congressman Henry Waxman, who represents constituents in the Wilshire corridor, to include independent experts.

The American Public Transportation Association (APTA) peer review panel will convene in Los Angeles from October 24-27.

The panel is expected to submit a written report of its findings and recommendations to the City of Los Angeles and Metro in November. The city and Metro are jointly funding the study.

Five-member panel

The panel will consist of five members – three panelists appointed by APTA and two independent experts recommended by the National Academy of Sciences and selected by Waxman.

The panel includes experts in the fields of tunneling, engineering, transit construction, rail operations, and underground safety. The APTA panelists are:

- Henry M. Nutbrown, assistant general manager, Engineering & Construction Division, Port Authority of Allegheny County of Pittsburgh.
- Raymond E. Sandiford, chief geotechnical engineer, Port Authority of New York & New Jersey
- Jeffery C. Hewitt, director of major construction projects, Richmond Airport Vancouver Rapid Transit Project

The independent experts are:

- Fred N. Kissel, Fred Kissel Mine Safety Consulting

- John T. Christian, consulting engineer, Prototype Engineering, Inc.

Villaraigosa thanked Councilman Tom LaBonge for his leadership on the issue. LaBonge had proposed working to remove the prohibition on using federal funds for subway tunneling in methane gas risk zones.

"I strongly support the work of this peer review panel as they evaluate the feasibility of tunneling so we can move forward with our transit planning," said LaBonge.