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Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa urges transportation advocates attending fourth annual Mobility 21 summit to "work together as a region to secure funding." Joining him at the speakers' podium are, from left, CEO Roger Snoble, Long Beach Councilwoman Bonnie Lowenthal, Los Angeles Area of Commerce Executive Vice President Ron Gastelum and Los Angeles City Councilwoman Wendy Greuel.



PHOTO: JUAN OCAMPO

Mobility 21 Plans to Expand Transportation Advocacy Role

- Regional coalition to include neighboring counties in 2006
- [Read>](#) Mobility 21 Proposes Broad Range of Recommendations

(Nov. 15, 2005) The Mobility 21 Coalition plans to take a broader role in 2006 by joining forces with transportation advocates in neighboring counties to seek state and federal funding for the region.

Several speakers mentioned the need for the Coalition to assume a wider role in Southern California during remarks, Monday, at the 4th annual Mobility 21 Transportation Summit in Long Beach.

The Coalition, which was successful this year in preventing Proposition 42 funds from being siphoned off to plug a state budget deficit, has lobbied extensively at the state and federal levels for additional funding for transportation projects.



In welcoming remarks, CEO Roger Snoble said Mobility 21 advocates helped preserve state funding for transportation.

"Sacramento and Washington have a vested interest in helping us improve our highways, rail lines, airports and public transportation, because mobility is the linchpin of the economy, and our economy powers California and the nation," said Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, "But, we also need to help ourselves by finding creative local financing (and) working together as a region to secure funding."

"We need to remain dedicated to keeping that money in the region."

"Mobility 21: LA County Moving Together" was sponsored by Metro and the Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce in partnership with the Automobile Club of Southern California.

Rusty Hammer, Chamber president and CEO – who will be leaving his post in the next several month due to health reasons – recommended bolstering the Mobility 21 organization by obtaining long-term funding and hiring full-time staff.

A regional role

Speaking via video, he said the organization plans to take on a more regional role in 2006 by partnering with transportation advocates in neighboring counties, noting that "our transportation problems do not stop and start at the LA County border."

Hammer's statement was echoed by Ron Gastelum, the Chamber's executive vice president and by Dan Beal, Auto Club director of public policy, who said, "We're very encouraged that Mobility 21 is going to take the direction of increasing regionally and increasing its resources to be even more effective...."



Ron Gastelum, executive vice president of the LA Area Chamber of Commerce was among those calling for Mobility 21 to take a regional role and include neighboring counties in transportation advocacy efforts.

Keynote speaker Leon Panetta, former California congressman and President Clinton's chief of staff, also called for a unified approach in Washington, "You absolutely have to unify. You can't just do it hit or miss."

PHOTO: JUAN OCAMPO

Keynote speaker Leon Panetta, former California congressman and President Clinton's chief of staff, also called for a unified approach in Washington.



Speakers noted that at the federal level, Mobility 21 was instrumental in helping secure an estimated \$4.5 billion in funding for highway and

transit programs and projects that include carpool lanes, traffic upgrades, rail line extensions, and other highway and street improvements.

However, there still remains a significant gap between what Los Angeles taxpayers contribute to the state and federal governments and what the county gets back in transportation funding resources.

"For every tax dollar we send to Washington, less than 92 cents comes back to us to invest in our transportation infrastructure. That just doesn't add up," said Hammer.

Despite the fact that the Mobility 21 lobbying coalition helped to preserve Proposition 42 transportation funds, it is anticipated that the legislature will consider using the funds again next year to balance the budget.

'Major challenges ahead'

"We know that major challenges are still ahead on the mobility front," said CEO Roger Snoble, "...we need to maintain a unified effort if we are to reach our goal of eliminating traffic congestion."

Even with the preservation of state transportation funds this year, the region is already facing new challenges, according to Beal of the Auto Club.

"The bad news is that skyrocketing construction costs are eroding much of the benefit from Proposition 42," he said. "We need to permanently protect Proposition 42 funds, and we will need creative solutions to ensure that vital transportation projects are not further delayed by these cost increases."

The focus of the summit included a panel discussion on creative financing options to improve congestion, as well as sessions on transportation and its role in the global economy, transportation and quality of life in Los Angeles, and homeland security.

Speakers included Long Beach Mayor Beverly O'Neill and U.S. Department of Transportation Deputy Secretary Maria Cino.