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CEO UpDate

Washington to Metro: Happy Valentine's Day!

By CEO ROGER SNOBLE



CEO Roger Snoble

I'm happy to report that Metro has received an early and very nice Valentine's Day gift from the Bush Administration – a \$100 million budget earmark in New Starts funding for the Eastside Extension construction project.

I was in Washington attending a budget briefing in U.S. Transportation Secretary Norm Mineta's office and got the good news first-hand.

Of course, Congress must now approve the President's FY 2007 budget. Budget deliberations, which will begin in the spring, will include \$39.8 billion in highway funding and \$2.2 billion in air quality improvement funds.

From these funds, we hope to receive \$10 million for bus purchases and \$5 million for intelligent transportation programs such as synchronized traffic lights to speed our Metro Rapid buses through intersections.

I was in the nation's capitol for the first of three trips I will make with other transportation officials in coming weeks. We were briefing our 18 members of Congress, along with members of House and Senate transportation and appropriations committees about local transportation projects and the money required for them.

Showing a solid front

We wanted to show a solid Southern California front in making our funding needs known to Congress. Supervisor Yvonne Burke, who is a member of our Board and who serves as vice-chair of SCAG, led the Los Angeles delegation on this trip. Also participating were officials of transportation commissions in Ventura, San Bernardino, Orange and Riverside counties.

Among those we met with were Congresswoman Juanita Millender-McDonald, a member of the House Transportation Committee, Congresswoman Lucille Roybal-Allard, who serves on the House Appropriations Committee, and Congressman David Dreier, chairman of the House Rules Committee.

We're reminding those in Washington about Metro's recent successes with the Orange Line, with the on-going construction of the Eastside

Extension and with the start-up of the new Exposition Line light rail project, as well as our growing network of Metro Rapid lines and our expanding transit ridership.

Indeed, we're demonstrating that we can put federal dollars to work and make them do good things for the people represented by our congressional delegation.

APTA, Mobility 21 briefings

In March, I'll participate in more congressional briefings with APTA officials, who will talk about transit funding nationwide. Later in the spring, I'll be a part of the Mobility 21 group that will give our local business community an opportunity to present their perspective on our transportation needs.

In case you might think this is all just high-level politicking, it's important to realize that about 10 percent of the funding Metro uses for construction projects and operations comes from the federal government.

If we didn't have that money, we wouldn't be able to serve our customers as we are, and we wouldn't have as many people on the Metro payroll to perform those services.

In closing, let me wish everyone a Happy Valentine's Day! Please do something special for the ones you love on February 14th.

February 10, 2006

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