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FTA Rates Metro's DBE Program as a Model for Other Agencies

(March 21, 2006) The Federal Transit Administration has found Metro's Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) Program to be well-managed and a model for other transit agencies to follow.

The FTA rating was given at the completion of a recent three-day audit of Metro's Diversity & Economic Opportunity Department (DEOD).

Federal regulations require Metro to follow specific guidelines in order to receive federal funding for its contracts.

The guidelines are designed to ensure a level playing field for socially and economically disadvantaged business owners interested in obtaining contracts on FTA-funded projects.

During the audit, FTA representatives evaluated the Contract Compliance Unit, managed by Tashai Smith, and the Certification and Outreach Units, managed by Joe Hernandez.

Each unit received outstanding ratings for its procedures and documents used to capture critical monitoring data. FTA officials said they plan to use Metro's program as a model to train other agencies to carry out their DBE compliance programs.

The FTA audit included interviews with Metro Procurement Chief Lonnie Mitchell and DEOD Deputy Executive Officer Linda Wright, who also serves as Metro's DBE liaison officer.

During the audit, the FTA staff toured the Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension Project and interviewed four Transportation Business Advisory Council (TBAC) member organizations, as well as the Metro Executive Staff, and County Counsel.