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Board Approves Budget Amendments; Adjusts Employee Pay Ranges

- Bus recorders, Division 7 upgrade, Ramona High project approved

(July 5, 2006) The Board of Directors approved amendments to Metro's FY 2007 budget at its June meeting that will provide an additional \$9.8 million for various transportation studies and a countywide vanpool program.

The Board's actions include approval for up to 10 full-time Countywide Planning employees to work on the studies, along with two full-time employees and \$4.7 million in grant funding to implement the vanpool program.

The planning studies involve a possible subway extension to the Westside, the Harbor subdivision right-of-way from downtown LA to LAX, and a light-rail line connecting the 7th and Metro station and Union Station.

Other studies involve environmental issues and further design of the proposed extension of I-710 to the I-210, the Goods Movement Action Plan and the SAFETEA-LU federal highway legislation.

At its June 22 meeting, the Board also took the following actions:

Item 15, Employee Pay Ranges. The Board approved a motion to adjust pay ranges for non-contract employees by 10 percent to partially offset the effects of inflation. The motion by Director John Fasana was intended "to ensure equity of compensation."

Some 215 employees – 18 percent of non-represented employees – will be "at the end of their pay range due to the years in which increases were approved but no inflationary adjustment was made...."

The motion "adjusts the ranges only and will not result in employees receiving increases other than any annual increases...approved by the Board for other non-represented employees."

Item 27, Bus Video Recorders. The Board approved a motion to purchase 220 DriveCam Video Systems for use in monitoring the operation of buses.

The DriveCam is particularly effective in accident investigations because it captures the action inside and outside a bus 10 seconds before and 10 seconds after an accident or incident triggers the system or it is manually activated by the operator.

The sector staff wants to use the 220 DriveCam recorders for an extended evaluation of the program to demonstrate long-term safety improvements and cost savings before it would be considered for fleetwide implementation. The cost of the 220 video recorders, including spares, is set at \$281,000.

Item 28, Division 7 Renovation. The Board approved an amended motion that will allow for completion of renovations at West Hollywood Division 7, including construction of a sound wall between the division and residents of adjacent Huntley Drive. Metro had asked to increase the life of project budget by \$1.54 million to cover increased construction costs and to allow for design and construction of the sound wall.

The amendment by Director Bernard Parks directs that the additional funding will be used only to pay for construction of the sound wall. Work already completed includes building renovations, construction of a maintenance annex, installation of equipment and security improvements.

Item 44, Rebuilding Ramona Opportunity High School. The Board approved a staff recommendation to allow the CEO to finalize and execute a land exchange and funding agreement between Metro and LAUSD that will permit construction of a station at Indiana Street for the Metro Gold Line's Eastside Extension and the rebuilding of Ramona Opportunity High School on the adjacent site.

The land exchange and funding agreement is based on a plan the Board approved in May under which Metro and LAUSD will share the projected \$35 million project cost of the acquisition of new properties and the rebuilding of Ramona Opportunity High School. Metro's costs would be capped at \$26 million with LAUSD contributing the remaining funds. The Board's action allows time-critical construction-related activities to progress so that the total project costs can be better defined and further delays and escalation of costs can be avoided.

The Board's approval of the motion was contingent on LAUSD's approving the property exchange agreement by Aug. 3, 2006, and giving Metro control of a portion of the high school property by Nov. 1, 2006. LAUSD would be required to adhere to a master plan for construction of the new school buildings and must issue a notice to proceed with construction within four months after Metro has cleared the site.