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Chief Planning Officer Carol Inge Looks 20 to 30 Years Ahead

- She's encouraged for mass transit and air quality, but says region's growth means continued congestion unless driving habits change

By BILL HEARD, Editor

(July 11, 2006) Metro Chief Planning Officer Carol Inge keeps her eyes focused on the future. And what she sees 20 to 30 years down the road for Los Angeles is both encouraging and maybe a little scary.

Encouraging for mass transit, because she sees completion of Metro Rail lines into East LA and to Culver City and Santa Monica, new busways in the San Fernando Valley, a busway or light-rail line along the Crenshaw corridor, extensions of other rail lines in the county, more Metro Rapid lines and extensions of the carpool lanes on major freeways.

Inge also believes that "through technology and other improvements" air quality in the region will be better.

But on the downside, she says, "I think we'll still be seeing congestion, because the region is growing. There will have to be more incentives, or even disincentives, to get people out of their cars and onto transit."

In that context, she mentions higher prices for gasoline and parking and more development near transit stations.

"I'm hopeful that we're going to have a larger rail and bus transit network, a more community-friendly atmosphere for biking and walking. I know that will happen," she says. "If we provide alternatives that move people faster and get people out of their cars, we'll have done a great job."

Oversees long-range planning

Inge, who has been a planner with Metro since 1987, was named interim head of Countywide Planning in August 2005 and was confirmed in the post last April. She is responsible for a 104-member staff that oversees long-range planning for the county and the programming of capital funds and grants for Metro projects and for local city transportation projects.

The staff also conducts transportation project feasibility and concept



Chief Planning Officer Carol Inge

studies, helps gain the required environmental clearances for the projects and works with the preliminary engineering teams to prepare projects for Board approval, before turning them over for construction.

Topping her priority list for Countywide Planning is working on planning the extension of the Exposition Line to Santa Monica and extending the bus-only lane on Wilshire Boulevard. Her priorities include updating the Long-Range Transportation Plan, conducting a Call for Projects and securing adequate funding for the region's transportation projects.

Her priorities also include the Crenshaw corridor and the San Fernando Valley north/south transit corridor.

Inge says the Board's approval in June of \$9.8 million for various studies and other transportation projects will accelerate the pace in Countywide Planning and will add up to 10 more employees.

The work will include a major investment study for extending the Metro Red Line to LA's Westside, along with studies for a light-rail regional connector in downtown LA and a study of the Harbor subdivision right-of-way from downtown to LAX and Wilmington.

Other planning work requested by the Board involves bus lanes, goods movement, extending the I-710 north to the I-210, ridership modeling for an extension of the Metro Gold Line, extending the Metro Gold Line Eastside Project, Diesel Mobile Units, bikeway planning and various carpool lanes.

'An incredible resource'

"We have an excellent staff," says Inge. "One of my emphases will be to have the Planning Department be seen as an incredible resource, a department where you can get information and professional analysis and good recommendations with a high degree of accuracy."

After graduating with a BA from Wellesley College and a master's in urban planning from UCLA, Carol Inge began her career as an associate planner with the City of Huntington Beach in 1979. From 1983 to 1987, she worked as a planner in Inglewood, eventually becoming a development specialist in the city's redevelopment agency.

Inge joined the SCRTD in 1987 as a specialist in joint development and was with the agency for three years before moving to the LACTC in 1990 as a transportation planning manager.

Over the past 16 years, she has moved up the planning ranks to director of the Westside Area Team to deputy executive officer, to interim chief planning officer.

A native of California who grew up in North Hollywood, Inge and her husband Jack Kurihara, a strategic planner for UCLA Medical Center, live in Culver City with their children, Alex, 14; and Emma, 11.