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**‘Subway to Sea’ Takes Step Toward Reality with Congressional Action**

(July 20, 2006) Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa’s dream of a “subway to the sea” took a step toward becoming reality, Wednesday, with action by a congressional committee.

The House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure adopted H.R. 4653, a bill that would lift a federal ban on extending the Metro Red Line farther west on Wilshire Boulevard.

Authored by Congressman Henry Waxman (D-CA), the bill actually would repeal a provision in a 1986 law that prohibits the expenditure of federal funds for constructing rail tunnels that would pass through specific methane zones within the City of Los Angeles.

The bill still needs approval by the full House and the Senate, as well as a Presidential signature, before becoming law.

“I’d like to thank Congressman Waxman for his extraordinary efforts,” said CEO Roger Snoble. “Congressional action taken on this bill represents a genuine first step in addressing the current ban on the use of federal funds for tunneling on the Westside. Metro looks forward to having Congressman Waxman’s bill adopted into law.”

**Law followed explosion**

Waxman included the original language restricting federal funding in the 1986 Department of Transportation Appropriations Act following a devastating March 1985 explosion and fire in a Ross Dress for Less store on Third Street in the Wilshire-Fairfax District.

Investigators later found that methane gas seeping into an auxiliary room of the store had caused the explosion, which blew out windows and partially collapsed the building’s roof. At least 21 people were injured in the blast, two critically burned.

In 2005, Waxman worked with Villaraigosa to appoint a five-member panel of independent tunneling experts to review the subway tunneling proposal.

In November 2005, the panel reported that tunneling along Wilshire and operation of subway trains west of Western Avenue could be done safely using new tunneling technology.

With the report in hand, Waxman introduced H.R. 4653 in December 2005 to lift the federal tunneling prohibition.

