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Bus Operations, Transportation Projects, New Developments Among Board Actions

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(Dec. 20, 2006) Funding for bus operation and transportation projects, two new development projects and Metro Rapid Express Service on Wilshire Boulevard are among items approved this month by the Board of Directors.

At its meeting in early December, the Board acted on items reviewed during the November committee meetings. No Board meetings will be held in December. The next committee meetings are scheduled Jan. 17 and 18; the Board meeting will be held Thursday, Jan. 25.

The November items voted on in December were:

Items 6, 7 and 8, Transportation Funding. The Board approved three motions that provide a total of \$1.98 billion for a variety of transit funding subsidies and regional transportation programs.

Item 6 includes \$72.6 million for Metro and municipal bus operations. Item 7 provides a total of \$169 million for HOV lanes on the I-5 for the I-5/SR-14 HOV lane connector and soundwalls on I-5. Item 8 authorizes Metro, working with Caltrans, to request a total of \$1.768 billion of state infrastructure bond money for various projects on I-5, I-405, I-10 and Route 138.

Item 11, 1st and Boyle Development. The Board approved a motion authorizing the CEO to begin negotiations with a company that plans to build a mixed-use development with 100 housing units, retail and restaurant space and a food market at the Metro Gold Line Boyle Heights/Mariachi Plaza station.

Item 12, 1st and Soto Development. The Board approved a motion authorizing the CEO to begin negotiations with a developer who plans a community-oriented retail center with 41 apartments on two parcels at

the Metro Gold Line station at 1st and Soto in East LA.

Item 25, Fare Collection Study. The Board authorized the CEO to retain a fare collection expert to study implementing barrier gates and possibly station booths and ticket offices on the Metro Red Line and to study ways to reduce fare evasion on the light-rail system.

The Board also wants to explore distance-based fares on the bus and rail systems; study the use of UFS-compatible equipment for Metro parking lots; and investigate limited-use paper smart card technology.

Item 28, Wilshire Rapid Express Service. Metro's heaviest traveled bus corridor – Wilshire Boulevard – will see even faster bus service, under a plan approved by the Board of Directors.

The Wilshire Rapid Express Service, expected to begin operation in June, 2007 will pick up passengers at Wilshire/Vermont and Wilshire/Western Fairfax Avenue, Beverly Drive in Beverly Hills, Westwood Boulevard and 4th Street in Santa Monica.

The Wilshire Rapid Express would be in service in both directions from 6 to 10 a.m. and from 3 to 7 p.m. Planners expect a 20 percent savings in travel time over the existing Metro Rapid service.

The motion also directed the staff to evaluate implementing up to four additional Metro Rapid Express Service lines by June, 2007 on existing Metro Rapid corridors. A report is due to the Board in February.

Item 36, Bus Seat Upholstery. The Board voted to authorize the CEO to award a five-year, \$4.9 million contract to reupholster the seats on Metro's 2,200 buses.

In the first two years, Molina Gaskets would refurbish 195,760 seats. Over the next three years, the contract calls for reupholstering 97,880 seats per year. In all, the plan calls for refurbishing a total of 489,400 seats over the five-year period.

Item 47, Job Classifications, Reclassification Upgrades. The Board approved a motion that creates 24 new non-contract classifications and provides reclassification upgrades of 33 non-contract positions. .

Item 48, Position Authorization and Compensation Policy. The Board approved a motion to give the CEO more authority to approve non-contract position reclassifications and salaries under \$125,000. The Board will continue to approve all non-contract salaries of more than \$125,000.

Item 49, Air Quality. The Board directed the CEO to form a staff task force to ensure that Metro "maximizes its efforts to improve air quality."

The task force was directed to work with federal, regional and state agencies on air quality programs; to identify emission reductions on agency projects; and to obtain federal and state funding for various environmental projects, including Metro's solar generation project. The staff is required to provide a status report every quarter.