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More Transportation Funding Needed for LA County, Officials Say

- Local officials react strongly to CTC staff-recommended cuts in funds for local highway projects
- LA County would receive less than 20 percent of funds requested

(Feb. 20, 2007) Reacting to news out of Sacramento, last week, that the region might receive only a fraction of requested transportation funding, Los Angeles County, LA City and Metro officials joined the county's legislative delegation in Sacramento, Tuesday, to ask the California Transportation Commission (CTC) to allocate more funding for the region.

Metro Board Chair and County Supervisor Gloria Molina, Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa and other Metro Board members, along with City Council President Eric Garcetti and other council members, CEO Roger Snoble, State Sen. Alan Lowenthal and Assemblymen Mike Feuer and Robert Huff were among those who were in the capitol to testify before the CTC about increasing funding over the sums recommended by the CTC staff.

Last week, the CTC staff released a list of recommended projects for approval at the commission's Feb. 28 meeting.

The recommendation includes \$2.78 billion from the \$4.5 Corridor Mobility Improvement Account for projects on the state highway system. Under the staff recommendation, Los Angeles County stands to receive less than 12 percent of the \$2.78 billion, while it has more than one third of the state's congestion (number of daily vehicle hours of delay).

Less than 55 percent

The program is focused on congestion relief on the state highway system and is subject to the north/south split, under which 60 percent of the statewide \$2.78 billion program – \$1.67 billion – must be programmed in 13 Southern California counties, including Los Angeles County. The CTC staff recommendation is only \$1.52 billion, or less than 55 percent for the south counties.

Metro submitted requests for \$1.77 billion in transportation project funding for Los Angeles County, but the CTC staff recommended providing only \$327 million – less than 20 percent of the requested amount.

Even after the required north-south split is applied, Los Angeles County stands to receive less than one-fifth of the south county amount, while it has almost half of the congestion.

In a statement last week, Molina called the CTC staff recommendations "an insult to the people of LA County. Twenty eight percent of the

California's residents live in LA County and we are burdened with one third of the state's congestion. Yet under the CTC's proposal, we will receive less than 12 percent of the funding currently available. This is unacceptable. We firmly believe that every single project Metro submitted met CTC requirements – and, clearly, every one of these projects warrants funding."

On Monday, Villaraigosa took to the streets of downtown Los Angeles to stress the need for additional transportation funding for the region. Stepping into traffic, he handed startled motorists flyers headlined "CALLING ALL LOS ANGELES COMMUTERS" and urging action on traffic funding.

Denied \$730 million request

The CTC staff recommended denying Metro's request for \$730 million in funds for the I-405 northbound carpool lane, a design-build project.

The staff's recommendation apparently is based on an erroneous assumption that construction won't start until December 2011.

In a note to the Board on Friday, Snoble said Caltrans District 7 Director Doug Failing, an ex-officio member of the Metro Board, "will clarify to the CTC staff that the design-build process will result in a much earlier construction start date (on the I-405 carpool lane) than the one inferred by CTC staff."

The Corridor Mobility Program was the first category of the infrastructure bonds authorized by California's voters on the November 7, 2006 ballot as part of Proposition 1B.

The following projects in Los Angeles County have been recommended for funding by the CTC staff:

- \$157.6 million for Interstate 5 Carpool and Mixed Flow Lanes from Interstate 605 to Orange County Line
- \$73 million for Interstate 5 Carpool Lane from Route 170 to Route 134 in Burbank
- \$97.3 million for Interstate 10 Extend El Monte Busway/Carpool Lane from Puente to Citrus.