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LA Officials Make Progress in Quest for State Transportation Funds

- I-405 HOV lane and I-5 widening top funding requests

(Feb. 21, 2007) Reports out of Sacramento indicate that Los Angeles officials made significant progress, Tuesday, in their quest to persuade members of the California Transportation Commission (CTC) to increase funding for highway projects in the Southland.

At issue is the CTC staff's recommendation to deny Metro's request for a total of \$1.77 billion in funding for LA County transportation projects. The staff recommended allocating only \$327 million to the county – less than 20 percent of Metro's request.

Topping LA's concerns is the \$730 million requested to construct a carpool lane on the northbound I-405 and the \$387 million needed to widen the I-5 north of the Orange County line.

An LA delegation that included Board Chair Gloria Molina, Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, Congressman Brad Sherman (D-27), CEO Roger Snoble, LA city council members, the area's legislators and others held private meetings with CTC commissioners and testified at a commission hearing.

Gov. Schwarzenegger also sent a letter to the CTC chair, Tuesday, in which he "strongly" urged the commission to reconsider the "essential" projects on the list for funding, including the I-405 HOV lane.

"Our promise to the voters in seeking their support for this bond package is that their investment will relieve traffic congestion in key transportation arteries around the state," Schwarzenegger wrote.

In her testimony, Molina asked the commissioners to "commit to fairness today" and allot to LA County some \$1.3 billion "that would represent a fair allocation." She said failure to build the I-405 HOV lane "risks leaving the \$130 million federal dollars on the table, lost to LA County and this state."

Molina also called for full funding for the widening of I-5 from the Orange County line to the I-605 to "end that bottleneck that traps countless commuters in daily gridlock." Metro had requested \$387 million, but the CTC staff has recommended allocating only \$156 million. [Click here to read statement in full.](#)

Metro also is seeking funding for the I-5 carpool lane from Rt. 170 to Rt. 134 in Burbank, and for extending the El Monte Busway and carpool lane on I-10 from Puente to Citrus.

"I'm optimistic," Snoble said today. "It was a full-court press in Sacramento, yesterday, and it galvanized our elected officials. We're

going to be working with the CTC staff and Caltrans to correct the errors that were made initially and give the commissioners a more balanced funding program when they come back on Feb. 28 to actually vote on the funding allocations.”

Afterward, media reports quoted several commissioners as supporting the request to boost funding for the region’s transportation projects. And, at a news conference Tuesday, Assembly Speaker Fabian Nunez said the Assembly would not appropriate funding that did not meet the state’s transportation needs.