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Board Calls for Study of Wi-Fi Internet Service for Riders

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(March 1, 2007) The Metro Board voted at its February meeting for a study of how to provide Wi-Fi Internet service to riders on Metro Rail and the Orange Line.

In other action, the Board approved more Metro Rapid Express lines, continued testing of the Orange Line paving, a Joint Development Agreement for a Vermont/Santa Monica Development, among other motions.

Item 21, Wi-Fi Service Study. The Board directed the Metro staff to conduct a "preliminary feasibility assessment" of Wi-Fi Internet service on all four Metro Rail lines and the Metro Orange Line. The staff was directed to work with cellular carriers and other wireless service providers to determine "if there is a no-cost alternative" to provide Wi-Fi Internet service with "open access" to customers, regardless of their Internet service provider.

A report with recommendations on how to proceed is due back to the Board in April.

Item 33, Metro Rapid Express. The Board approved three additional Metro Rapid Express routes, following its earlier approval of a Wilshire Metro Rapid Express.

The staff will now implement three additional Metro Rapid Express corridors: the Hawthorne Metro Rapid, the Van Nuys Metro Rapid and the Crenshaw Metro Rapid. The staff recommended implementing the Hawthorne and Wilshire Metro Rapid Express routes in June 2007 as a pilot program.

The Hawthorne Metro Rapid Express route would make only six stops between downtown LA and Redondo Beach. The Wilshire Metro Rapid Express would make only five stops between Wilshire/Vermont and 4th Street in Santa Monica.

Item 29, Pavement Engineering Services. Acting on committee

authority, the Construction Committee voted to authorize the CEO to extend a contract for pavement engineering services, in order to continue testing Metro Orange Line pavement construction.

Approval of the motion adds an amount not-to-exceed \$130,000 to a contract held by LaBelle-Marvin Inc., raising the total contract value from \$150,400 to \$280,400.

Item 11, Vermont/Santa Monica Development. The Board authorized the CEO to enter into a Joint Development Agreement with a developer interested in leasing approximately 1.1 acres of Metro property adjoining the Vermont/Santa Monica Red Line station.

The developer, who owns adjacent property to the Red Line station, hopes to develop a mixed-use residential and retail project. The parcel, located on the southwest corner of Vermont Avenue and Santa Monica Boulevard, serves as a plaza and portal to the Metro Red Line station.

Item 34, Design/Build Capital Projects. The Board authorized the CEO to solicit and award design/build contracts for renovation, repair and construction at Metro facilities.

Affected by the design/build contracts would be \$25 million in Capital Program projects previously approved by the Board. These include:

A Division 18 solar generation project, including the installation of photovoltaic panels at the division.

Yard security upgrades and closed circuit television installations at Metro bus operating facilities and passenger terminals.

Item 37, Rail Car Window Vandalism. The Board authorized the CEO to award a 24-month \$298,036 contract to Alvarez Graffiti Guards for rail car window vandal protection sheets.

The sheets protect the appearance of 225 Metro rail vehicles. They protect the 16 to 32 windows on each rail vehicle from graffiti and vandalism, avoiding permanent damage to the windows.

Item 7, Congestion Mitigation Fee Study. The Board approved an amended motion to provide guiding principles for the Countywide Congestion Mitigation Fee Study. Work is currently underway to explore the feasibility of a mitigation fee on new development and to provide recommendations to the Metro Board this fall. As amended by the Board, transit-oriented developments would be exempted.

If implemented, a mitigation fee program could generate revenue for cities to use in building local projects with regional benefit, and which would address the impact of new development. In addition, the program would help cities meet their local responsibilities under the state-mandated Congestion Management Program.