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Board OKs Study Contract for 710 Tunnel, New Bus Engines

- Red Line information system upgrade and Orange Line extension work also receive approval

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(March 23, 2007) Among the 16 action items on its March agenda, the Board of Directors approved motions calling for studies of the proposed Rt. 710 tunnel, new engines for Metro buses, upgrading the Metro Red Line information system and preliminary work on the Metro Orange Line extension along Canoga Avenue.

Item 6, Preliminary Studies for Rt. 710 Tunnel. The Board authorized the CEO to commit \$5 million in 2006 State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) Augmentation funds for preliminary engineering and technical studies for the Rt. 710 Tunnel, contingent upon Caltrans providing \$5 million in the state's own funding for these studies.

In consultation with Metro, Caltrans is also in the process of retaining a community outreach firm to assist with forming one or more committees consisting of representatives from affected local jurisdictions and agencies to develop a framework for participation by all interested stakeholders.

Item 28, Purchase of 400 Natural Gas Engines. This consent calendar item, which was approved by the Board, authorizes the CEO to award a contract to Cummins Cal Pacific for 400 Cummins CNG engines.

The \$14.6 million contract allows replacement of 400 Detroit Diesel Series 50 engines which are no longer available nor supported by their manufacturer. The new CNG-fueled, heavy-duty engines are to be installed during FY 2008 in 40-foot Neoplan 6700 series buses and in New Flyer high-floor 5000 series and low-floor 5300 series buses.

Item 29, Establish Bus Midlife Overhaul Budget. The Board also approved a motion to establish a \$29.5 million budget for FY 2008 for a Bus Midlife Overhaul Program and add 20 full-time Central Maintenance employees and one Logistics employee to support the program.

The Bus Midlife Program targets a series of buses each year for

preventive, midlife maintenance. This maintenance includes engine and fuel cylinder replacements, suspension work, body repair, painting, and interior refurbishment (including graffiti abatement) and wheelchair lift maintenance.

Item 30, Fund Engine Replacement Program. The Board voted to authorize an \$11 million budget in FY 2008 for a Regional Rebuild Center (RRC) Engine Replacement Program. The budget includes funds for hiring 16 employees to work in Central Maintenance and two in Logistics.

In FY 2008, bus engines will begin failing at a rate considerably higher than Metro's current ability to replace them. A staff report notes that 1,249 buses were purchased between 1999 – 2001 and estimates that the bus engines, in addition to 69 other buses purchased before 1999 or after 2001, will begin to fail in the next three years.

Item 32, Upgrades for Red Line Electronic Signage. The Board authorized the CEO to award a \$2.2 million contract to replace the Metro Red Line's existing Transit Passenger Information System with high-resolution technology.

The approved motion also increases the budget for upgrading the Red Line Variable Message Sign (VMS) from \$1.25 million to \$2.45 million. The project calls for replacing the existing VMS, installed in 1995, with a new integrated public address/VMS passenger information system. The existing single-line VMS signs would be replaced with high resolution LCD displays.

Item 35, Metro Orange Line Extension. The Board voted to authorize the CEO to negotiate and execute a \$5.95 million contract for environmental clearance and preliminary engineering for the Metro Orange Line's Northern/Canoga extension.

The motion includes authorization for a \$337,152 contract with a firm to handle public outreach and community participation, and a \$628,749 contract to cover the cost of unforeseen issues that may arise during the environmental clearance and preliminary engineering phases.

Also included is authorization for the CEO to make \$250,000 available to the City of Los Angeles for an analysis of ways to increase bus speeds on Van Nuys Boulevard and other eastern San Fernando Valley streets identified in the North/South Transit Corridor Study. In addition, \$650,000 would be available for any preliminary engineering work resulting from the analysis.