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FTA Associate Administrator Susah Schruth and Metro Construction Chief Rick Thorpe opened the FTA conference, Monday, in Los Angeles.



Nation's Transit Construction Projects Facing 'Pressing Issues'

- 65 transit agency execs attend FTA conference in LA
- 'A very important time for transit,' FTA official says

By BILL HEARD, Editor

(May 18, 2007) Some 65 construction executives from 40 transit properties across the country gathered at a conference in Los Angeles earlier this week to discuss "pressing issues facing major transit construction projects," according to a federal official who keynoted the conference.

Transit agencies are concerned about increases in the cost of construction materials, such as concrete and steel, and are working harder to bring projects in on time and under budget, said the Federal Transit Administration's Susan Schruth, associate administrator for program management.

Metro Construction Chief Rick Thorpe, who also is CEO of the Exposition Metro Line Construction Authority, welcomed the group on behalf of Metro. He presented an update of Metro construction projects.

The conference gave the transit agency representatives an opportunity to bring their concerns to the FTA, Schruth said during the Monday morning session at the Wilshire Grand Hotel, "Major issues they're confronting to see if there's something we can do to help."

During an address to the group, Schruth said a major issue that will soon face the federal government is "how to fund the surface transportation program after 2010. The question is, what is the federal role in surface

transportation?"



Gathering for the FTA conference were, from left, Nadeem Tahir of the FTA's San Francisco office, FTA Regional Administrator Leslie Rogers, FTA Associate Administrator Susah Schruth and Metro Construction Project Manager Dennis Mori.

Congress holds hearings

She noted that Congress had held several hearings on the FTA's role in transportation funding and that there are competing bills on whether the FTA or the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) should administer some programs.

Currently, she said, the FTA is working under a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Department of Homeland Security on some programs.

"Clearly, this Congress is taking a look at our programs and they're very interested in your input on how the feds are implementing them," Schruth told the group. "It's a very important time in the next several years for transit."

FTA Deputy Administrator Sherry Little also addressed the conference on Tuesday. The following day, she toured the Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension project.

Other topics discussed during the two-day session included risk management, real estate, security design and performance-based service contracting.