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Metro Board takes note at FY08 budget workshop June 13.



Photo by Gayle Anderson

FY 2008 Budget a 'Challenge', Snoble Says, But Will Lead to 'Financial Solvency'

- 'We do have a balanced budget,' says head of OMB

By BILL HEARD, Editor

(June 13, 2007) Metro's proposed FY 2008 budget "has some good things in it, but it's still a challenge," CEO Roger Snoble declared during Wednesday's Board budget workshop. "The budget does allow us to continue on a track that will lead us into financial solvency."

The \$3.121 billion budget will provide for an increase in transit service hours; implementation of more Metro Rapid lines. It includes the purchase of 95 more articulated buses; will add 17,000 hours to Metro Orange Line service; includes mid-life overhauls for 250 buses now at the mid-point in their service life; and implementation of elements of the TAP program.

Snoble said he expects some loss of ridership when fares increase in July, "However, I will tell you that since the last fare change two years ago, our ridership has increased 12 percent. We have a tremendous amount of momentum behind us in increasing ridership so, hopefully, any loss of ridership will be short-lived...."

The CEO noted that while the agency will continue improving service, efficiency and cost savings, "On the other side of the coin, this budget still relies on one-time revenues to balance it. It still is what I would refer to as a 'high-risk' budget...."

Metro Orange Line Sets New Record

(June 13, 2007) The Metro Orange Line set a new record in May with 23,800 average daily boardings, San Fernando Valley General Manager Richard Hunt reported Wednesday during the Board budget workshop.

The cross-Valley line will carry its 10 millionth passenger this month.

Weekend ridership on the Orange Line also is at an all-time high, Hunt said, with 13,000-plus boarding on Saturdays and more than 10,000 on Sundays.

Essentially, he said, the FY 2008 budget is a replay of the FY 2007 budget to which only "the most critical things" have been added. "Everything else has been deferred to another year, things we'd all like to do, but we just don't have the wherewithal."

In her presentation to the Board workshop, Executive Officer Michelle Caldwell of the Office of Management and Budget, said this year's \$3.121 billion budget is an increase of only \$85 million over the FY 2007 budget.

It includes increases in three primary areas – Transit Operations, subsidies for local municipal transit operators, and in rail construction. The good news, she said, is that "bus and rail operations increased overall only 2.7 percent, in spite of a 3.5 percent wage increase."

"We'll have enough revenues to balance the expenditures," Caldwell added. "We do have a balanced budget."