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Metro Board Adopts \$3.1 Billion Budget for FY 2008

- 45 percent of budget earmarked for bus programs, 24 percent for rail

By MARC LITTMAN

(June 29, 2007) The Board of Directors adopted a \$3.1 billion FY 2008 budget on Thursday that is just under 3 percent more than the current Metro budget.

The increase is largely due to additional transportation subsidies for the county and cities, higher operating costs for Metro bus and rail service, funding for municipal bus operators, paratransit service for the disabled and ongoing construction for the Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension and the first phase of the Expo light rail line to Culver City.

There also will be a slight increase in bus service hours spread throughout the county, including the Metro Orange Line, but the quality of service will improve as Metro launches eight new Metro Rapid lines in FY 2008 and purchases up to 100 new 60-foot articulated.

A fare change is scheduled July 1, however, the current \$1.25 cash fare will stay the same for the next two years.

Bus service top priority

Metro's plan calls for spending approximately 45 percent of the total budget on bus operating and capital spending for Metro and municipal bus operators and for paratransit programs for the disabled who cannot use regular service.

Metro will increase bus service slightly in FY 2008 for a total of 7.8 million revenue service hours. By June 2008, 500 Metro Rapid buses will serve 28 transit corridors. Metro also will receive and put into service up to 100 articulated buses. To bolster security, additional security cameras will be added at operating divisions and at Gateway.

Metro Rail to expand

The budget earmarks approximately 24 percent for countywide rail, including Metro Rail operating and capital costs and the \$58.5 million subsidy for Metrolink.

No significant changes to rail service hours (651,000) are budgeted in FY 2008, but the agency expects to receive 24 new rail cars and begin the procurement process for an additional 50 light rail cars.

Streets and highway projects

The budget allocates approximately 19 percent for highway and other

regional transportation programs such as construction of freeway carpool lanes and sound walls, street widening, better traffic signal coordination, grade separations at railroad crossings, bikeways and other projects. Funding also is included for the Metro Freeway Service Patrol.

Little change in debt service

Metro’s debt service next year will be \$308.5 million – 9.9 percent of the budget. It is up \$3 million from this year’s debt service on bonds issued for various transportation projects.

Rounding out the FY 2008 Metro budget are expenditures for other governmental programs such as transportation planning, legal and other expenses. These total approximately 3 percent of the budget.