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Letters to the Editor
Los Angeles Times
202 W. 1st Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Dear Editor:

Increasing the transparency of the Congressional earmarking process is a step in the right direction as the *Times* Sept. 23, 2007 editorial ("The Value of Congressional Pork") suggests. However, there is an important distinction to be made between narrowly-drawn, poorly-vetted earmarks pushed by a member of Congress versus legitimate projects that have undergone intense scrutiny and evaluation by the federal government through an established process. The Metro Gold Line Eastside Light Rail Project, which your editorial cited as an example of "pork", underwent rigorous review by several agencies and the U.S. Secretary of Transportation.

The President's proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2008 recommended \$80 million from the Federal Transit Administration's "New Starts" program as the fourth installment for construction of the \$898.8 million Eastside project.

Fixed guideway transit projects that are included in the Administration's budget are required by law to meet strict tests for cost-effectiveness, local financial capacity, environmental benefits, project readiness, technical capacity and many other criteria before being awarded a "Full Funding Grant Agreement", which is a commitment by the federal government to fund a specified portion of the project. This is exactly what the Eastside light rail project has undergone, and Metro is now on schedule to complete the project by late 2009.

The *Times* is right to call for greater disclosure of earmarks and funding decisions by our Congressional representatives. At the same time, however, let's be mindful of the fact that not all projects are alike. Some may be questionable in nature, but many have been thoroughly analyzed in an open manner and deserve to be seen in a more positive light.

Sincerely,

Roger Snoble
Chief Executive Officer