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Metro Board OKs Negotiations for Massive Complex in NoHo

- Call for Projects, bus speed improvement program also approved

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(Oct. 2, 2007) A huge new development in North Hollywood that will include residences, stores and high-rise office buildings got the nod, Thursday, from the Metro Board. The \$1.3 billion complex will dominate the area around the Metro Rail and Metro Orange Line stations at Lankershim and Chandler boulevards.

The Board also approved an almost half-billion dollar Call for Projects, along with motions concerning bus speed improvements and a bus accident investigation unit.

Item 10, North Hollywood Development. The Board authorized the CEO to negotiate an agreement with Lowe Enterprises to build a 1.72-million square foot, mixed-use development on 15.6 acres of Metro-owned property at the North Hollywood station.

The "No-Ho Art Wave" project, proposed by Lowe Enterprises, would include almost 1.2 million square feet of office, retail or entertainment and community space, 562 residential units and 6,200 parking stalls.

Metro will receive annual revenue of \$10.9 million from the minimum base rent, adjusted by the Consumer Price Index every five years.

Because 11 of the Board's 13 members were conflicted on the proposal, the Board Secretary conducted a lottery, as authorized by state law, to select five members who would be eligible to vote along with directors John Fasana and Richard Katz.

Selected during the lottery were directors Antonio Villaraigosa, Gloria Molina, Ara Najarian, Bonnie Lowenthal and David Fleming. The motion passed unanimously.

Item 49, 2007 Call for Projects. The Board approved a motion programming \$454.5 million for 169 projects included in the 2007 Countywide Call for Projects.

The Call for Projects includes funding for regional surface transportation improvements, signal synchronization and bus speed improvements, and bikeway and pedestrian improvements, among other programs.

Item 9, Bus Speed Improvements. The Board approved a staff recommendation to seek Federal Transit Administration funding for projects aimed at improving bus speeds in the Wilshire, Van Nuys and Sepulveda transit corridors.

The Wilshire Corridor Bus-Only Lane project would be a 9.6-mile peak period bus-only lane between downtown Los Angeles and Santa Monica, estimated at a cost of \$31.5 million. The proposed lane is expected to improve bus travel times by an average of 24 percent.

The Van Nuys project calls for construction of a half-mile bus-only lane and other roadway improvements estimated at \$8.5 million. The Sepulveda project would include construction of a seven-mile bus-only lane and other roadway improvements estimated at \$42.9 million.

Item 26, Bus Accident Investigation Unit. The Board approved a motion to establish a Bus Accident Investigative Unit with a staff of four certified accident investigators who would be supervised by the director of Corporate Safety.

Members of the unit will be the primary investigators of serious accidents that involve injuries, multiple vehicles and pedestrians, and those that result in fatalities.

The investigators also will evaluate the current bus operator training programs, recommend and develop program improvements, and institute new accident prevention programs.

Item 39, 260 New Buses. The Board approved the purchase of up to 260 new 45-foot composite buses over a two-year period.

Of the 260 buses, the staff recommended that 210 be powered by CNG, while the remaining 50 would have gasoline-hybrid propulsion systems.

Those 50 are expected to replace some of Metro's oldest diesel buses assigned to Venice Division 6. The division is not suitable for fueling CNG buses, but could accommodate the hybrid vehicles.

Item 40, 135 Sedans. The Board authorized the CEO to award a \$2.36 million contract to Victor Buick Pontiac GMC Truck, Inc., for 135 four-door sedans. The cars will replace older vehicles in the operator relief fleet.

Item 41, High-Rail Truck. The Board authorized the CEO to award a contract to a firm that can offer the best price and availability for a high-rail truck with an articulated crane to carry such heavy materials as rail ties and track segments along the rail lines, to help perform repairs and to remove debris from the tracks.