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## Environmental Report: Metro's Going 'Green', But Needs Better Coordination of Effort

- Agency should lead a regional environmental effort, report says
- Board's new Sustainability Committee targets climate action

By BILL HEARD, Editor

(Oct. 5, 2007) Metro has made significant strides toward becoming a "green" transportation agency, but needs to better coordinate its environmental efforts and provide regional leadership in programs aimed at improving air quality and helping mitigate global warming.

That was the message given at the first meeting of the Board's new Ad Hoc Sustainability Committee, last week, during a presentation by Tim Lindholm, director of Capital Projects for Facilities Operations, and other Metro staff members.

Lindholm defined "sustainability" as methods of using resources in ways that don't deplete or permanently damage them. For Metro, he said, it means "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs."

And he said achieving sustainability at Metro "will take a coordinated effort from planning, operations, construction, procurement – from the Executive Office to the Board chair's office."

Board Chair Pam O'Connor heads the ad hoc committee, which she says is aimed at "comprehensive sustainable climate action." Directors Yvonne Burke and Bonnie Lowenthal also are committee members.

"We have an opportunity here at Metro to really be the leaders within the transportation community on the issue of sustainability. We have a headstart with our CNG fleet – the largest in the nation – and we can build on that success," said O'Connor. "The ad hoc committee will meet every month because we want to keep this issue high-profile and on the front burner. Our goal will be to pull together a set of recommendations to present to the full Board for action."

Metro's environmental efforts have ranged from agency recycling and solar projects, energy-efficient buildings, water- and energy-saving plantings along the Metro Orange Line to developing and operating high-tech alternative fuel buses.

### 'Getting cars off the road'

"Everything we do here is directed at getting cars off the road," Lindholm said. "And that's probably the single greatest thing you can do to improve air quality and ensure sustainability."

Lindholm and Chris Liban, environmental compliance and service manager, are project managers for the sustainability project. The project's executive sponsors are Metro Construction Chief Rick Thorpe

and Chief Operations Officer Carolyn Flowers, Deputy Chief Capital Management Officer K.N. Murthy and Metro Rail General Manager Mike Cannell.

Last June, the Board adopted an energy and sustainability policy. Among other things, it requires energy-efficient construction for all buildings over 10,000 square feet. It also requires sustainable practices on infrastructure and rail construction, as well as other appropriate projects.

In the report presented at the Sept. 26 meeting, the ad hoc committee was reminded that Metro currently has no coordinated sustainability efforts. The report said all agency departments should participate in a coordinated sustainability effort.

**'Leadership in sustainability'**

The agency has not yet set goals and has no system to measure the cost impacts and benefits of implementing sustainability and climate change strategies. The report said Metro "must provide leadership in sustainability within the region to complement our core mission of moving people efficiently and effectively."

To help Metro carry out a sustainability program and establish an "environmental ethic" in the agency, the report recommended formation of an Environmental Management System (EMS). Through an EMS, "Environmental stewardship becomes part of the daily organizational responsibility," the report said.

Metro recently applied for a Federal Transit Administration training and assistance grant as the first step toward establishing an EMS.

Among the proposed next steps the report recommended for Metro's sustainability program are:

- Developing strategies for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to climate change,
- Incorporating sustainability goals into the agency's Long Range Transportation Plan and related plans,
- Reducing Metro's "carbon footprint",
- Identifying public/private partnerships to fund sustainability programs,
- Partnering with other agencies to develop a regional climate change action plan,
- Revising design criteria for infrastructure projects to include sustainability design and construction principles, and
- Organizing training sessions for Metro departments that will play a role in implementing sustainability programs.