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Metro Board Chair's Fourth Live Chat Addresses Funding Issues

By JIMMY STROUP

(March 20, 2008) Metro Board Chair Pam O'Connor opened her latest live chat to commentary about the budget crisis Metro is facing in the face of dwindling state and federal funding.

She argued that traffic problems aren't going to solve themselves and that county residents need to come up with inventive ways to mitigate the problems – both individually and structurally.

"Even if all of us left our cars at home one day a week – something that might just happen if gas reaches \$4 a gallon, as projections suggest – we will still need more buses and trains and better highways to carry us where we want to go," O'Connor said.

Questions touched on a variety of subjects, but all addressed how to figure out how to use and build the system to its full potential.

One rider was concerned that the newly-approved fare gates (soon to be installed on the Red and Purple lines and on some Gold Line stations) would be a boondoggle. O'Connor assured the rider that the system was projected to pay for itself within five years by recouping some of the \$5.5 million lost annually due to fare evasion.

Environmental concerns

Another was interested in Metro's long-term plans to stay environmentally-friendly. O'Connor pointed to the recently opened LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) compliant building at San Gabriel Division 9 as a starting point.

She also discussed the installation of numerous solar panel arrays – something Metro plans to continue – and the fleet of clean burning CNG buses. O'Connor said the recent passage of the Global Warming Solutions Act in Sacramento has California agencies thinking green and that Metro won't be one to let the environment down.

At the end of the chat, a rider suggested Metro build a "regional connector" between the Gold Line Eastside Extension, the Expo Line and the Blue Line. He argued a light rail line west of downtown such as this would make going out of the way on the Red Line a thing of the past.

O'Connor agreed, but was only able to plead inadequate funding as the reason such a worthy project wasn't already in the works.

"Having a regional connector through downtown LA is a project that ranks high on Metro's Long Range Transportation Plan," she said.

"Planning studies on possible routes through downtown are underway, but right now there isn't money to build it! As a county we need to figure out ways to pay for this and other important projects."

The full text of the chat is available at the [Metro Interactive Chat](#) archives on metro.net. O'Connor's next chat will be in April.

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