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Eastside LRT Constructors Project Director Mike Aparicio accepts commendation for reaching 3 million accident-free hours during construction of the Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension from CEO Roger Snoble, Director Gloria Molina and Director Richard Katz, far right, at May 22 Board meeting.

Board Approves Fiscal Year 2009 Budget, Extends CEO's Contract, Contributes \$58.9 Million to Metrolink

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By NED RACINE, Editor

(May 27, 2008) The Board approved the proposed Fiscal Year 2008-2009 budget at its regular meeting May 22, extended the contract of CEO Roger Snoble for up to one year, programmed funds for Metrolink and approved the annual inflationary increase for Union/Non-Contract and non-represented employees.

The \$3.4 billion budget begins July 1, 2008, which is 7.3 percent more than the Metro budget last fiscal year. The increase is largely for transportation subsidies for municipal bus operators, paratransit service, Metrolink, the County of Los Angeles and cities, preparation to start the new Metro Gold Line service to East Los Angeles later in 2009 and rehabilitation of older Metro Rail cars.

There will be no fare increase in the next fiscal year despite Metro's higher

operating costs and projections that local sales tax revenue will only increase one percent. Non-labor expenses will be reduced to stay at or below current levels.

The Board also approved the total budgeted salaries and benefits for each Union/Non-Contract group as required by the Position Authorization and Compensation Policy. In addition, the Board approved the non-represented Employee Salary Schedule adjusted for the annual inflationary increase.

By the end of FY 2009, the full rapid bus network – 25 lines operated by Metro and three by municipal bus operators crisscrossing the county – will be in place. The Board this spring voted to purchase 260 new 45-foot buses. Half of those high-capacity buses should be delivered in FY 2009 and the rest the following year.

The FY 2009 budget calls for spending \$1.5 billion or 45 percent of the total budget on bus operations and capital for Metro and the municipal bus operators in Los Angeles County and for paratransit programs for the disabled who cannot use regular service.

The budget earmarks \$781 million or 23.2 percent for countywide rail, including Metro Rail operating and capital costs and a \$58.9 million subsidy for Metrolink.

Amendments to the proposed budget added one full-time equivalent (FTE) to Construction and one FTE to Countrywide Planning for sustainability activities. One FTE was added to manage the I-405 Sepulveda Pass widening project and another was added to Communications for the Safety Education and Outreach Program.

Item 6, Contributing \$58.9 Million to Metrolink. The Board programmed \$58.9 million in Proposition C 10-percent local sales tax funds as Metro's share of the Southern California Regional Rail Authority Fiscal Year 2008-09 Preliminary Budget for Metrolink.

The \$58.9 million includes \$37 million for operations and \$15 million for rehabilitation and renovation. Metro's contribution also includes \$6 million for capital projects.

The \$58.9 million would consist of \$53 million from the Fiscal Year 2009 budget and almost \$6 million in prior year surplus subsidy.

Item 7, Revisions to Immediate Needs Transportation Program. The Board approved a Planning and Programming Committee recommendation to improve the effectiveness of the Immediate Needs Transportation Program (INTP).

Established in 1992, the INTP provides supplemental transportation assistance to meet the basic needs of Los Angeles County residents with limited resources by providing subsidized taxi service and/or transit subsidy.

The Board altered the ratio of bus tokens and taxi coupons dispersed to 50 percent bus tokens and 50 percent taxi coupons. Currently the ratio is 65 percent tokens and 35 percent coupons.

Item 8, I-5 Carmenita Road Interchange Reconstruction. The Board approved additional funds for the I-5 Carmenita Road Interchange Reconstruction, a \$105 million increase, raising project funding from \$283.3 million to \$388.8 million.

Caltrans requested additional Metro funding to cover design modifications, including revisions in structure and roadway elements, as well as escalating values for residential and commercial property. Also cited were mitigation of project impacts on the community and businesses and higher costs for construction material.

One of 12 overpasses that span the I-5, Carmenita Road is currently too narrow to construct the I-5 Widening and High Occupancy Vehicle Lane project currently in design.

Item 23, Five-Year Contract to Veolia Transportation. The Board authorized the CEO to award a five-year firm fixed price contract to Veolia Transportation for contract bus service.

The not-to-exceed contract cost would be \$53 million. The contract also includes \$11 million for fuel cost reimbursement during the contract length, bringing the contract total to \$64 million.

Item 30, Study on Potential of Further Congestion Pricing. The Board instructed the staff to present a study on the potential for congestion pricing for the remainder of the freeway corridors in Los Angeles County (for example, the I-405, US-101, SR-170). The Board asked for the research to be presented at its June 2008 meeting.

The study will include timeframes for the earliest implementation of congestion pricing on these corridors and the funding requirements needed to implement these corridor congestion pricing proposals.

-- Marc Littman contributed to this report

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