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Board Approves Critical Step in Placing Half-Cent Sales Tax on Ballot

- Board requests County Supervisors place the ordinance on Nov. 2008 ballot

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By NED RACINE, Editor

(July 29, 2008) In a historic vote on July 24, the Metro Board of Directors took a critical step in placing on the November ballot a new half-cent sales tax measure for Los Angeles County that would finance dozens of transportation projects.

The tax measure would also fix potholes, fund major highway construction, buy clean fueled buses and build new rail lines spread throughout the county in a concerted effort to keep pace with major population and job growth.

Metro directors approved an ordinance including an [expenditure plan](#) that details how the sales tax – estimated to generate \$40 billion over 30 years – would be spent. These monies also could be leveraged with state, federal and private sector funding.

The Board also passed a resolution formally requesting the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors to place the ordinance on the ballot for the Nov. 4, 2008 countywide general election. If the measure garners at least a two-thirds vote, it would become law in January.

The ballot measure also is contingent on passage of state legislation, AB 2321 (Feuer), which would give Los Angeles County authority to levy the tax if voters approve it.

Item 7, Expansion of Metro Rapid Signal Priority.

The Board voted to award a contract to expand the Metro Rapid Signal Priority system. The professional services contract would total almost \$8

million.

This second phase of the Countywide Signal Priority (CSP) rollout will use wireless technology to support Metro Rapid operations along the Manchester, Garvey-Chavez and Atlantic corridors, eliminating gaps in the signal priority system.

The firm fixed-price contract would include designing, procuring and implementing signal priority for these final three Metro Rapid corridors requiring CSP technology.

Item 11, Memo of Understanding Among Three County Agencies.

The Board approved a memorandum of understanding (MOU) among Metro and the County of Los Angeles and Los Angeles Unified School District.

The MOU seeks to limit litigation against each other and improve the agencies' defenses against third-party claims. Metro staff believes the MOU would reduce administrative expenses, including legal costs. The staff also believes greater cooperation among the three agencies may reduce the costs of settlements and jury verdicts.

Item 17, Position on Current State Legislation.

The Board took a "support" position on SB 1626 (Cedillo). The bill would authorize a public-private partnership to construct the 710 Gap Closure project. The bill would authorize the imposition of tolls and specify a design/build procurement process for the project.

The 710 Gap Closure project would close the gap between Interstate 710 and Interstate 210.

The legislation would specifically give Caltrans the responsibility for preparing reports and documents to be used in preparing proposals to complete design, construction and operation of a tunnel joining the two interstate highways.

In consultation with Caltrans, Metro would determine whether the tunnel project should be developed as a design-build project or developed as part of an agreement between Metro and a private entity.

Item 18, Private Security Services Contract.

The Board authorized a five-year, \$24.3-million contract for private security contractor services, effective Sept. 2008.

Contracted private security already contributes to the agency security force, working with Metro Security and the Sheriff's Department.

Private security personnel are deployed at property and facilities throughout Metro's service area, including employee parking facilities, Metro Rail and bus system parking lots and support facilities.

The base contract runs three years, with two one-year options, totaling a potential contract length of five years.

Item 21, Contract for Safety Gloves.

Addressing the agency's appetite for safety gloves, the Board awarded a 36-month, firm fixed-price contract for slightly more than \$1 million spread among three firms.

Material Management will store the gloves, which previously had been

purchased on an as-needed basis. Metro staff believes awarding the contract will result in lower costs and the manufacturers' commitment to availability and price stability.

The contract includes a variety of gloves, including those referred to as glass handling gloves, blacksmith gloves and welding gloves.

Item 22, Integrate Eastside Extension into SCADA.

The Board approved a \$1.7 million contract to upgrade the existing Supervisory Control And Data Acquisition (SCADA) System to integrate the Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension.

Integrating the new light rail line, scheduled to open in 2009, would require additional computer hardware, updates to existing databases, additional functions and updates to documentation and training.

SCADA allows rail operations to be remotely supervised and controlled from a central location, including train movement and fire and gas detection.

Item 23, Purchase of 223 Bus Re-Power Kits.

To support the on-going Re-Power campaign to rejuvenate Metro New Flyer 5300 series buses, the Board approved a \$2 million contract.

The fixed-price contract will purchase 223 Re-Power kits. Each kit includes a wiring harness, hydraulic line, tubing and insulation systems. The components of each kit have been designed to fit within the engine compartment of the New Flyer Low Floor 5300 series.

Item 24, On-Going and Expanded Big Rig Service Patrol.

Transitioning the Big Rig Service Patrol from a demonstration project, the Board approved the Big Rig Service Patrol as an on-going operation and expanded the service onto the SR-91 freeway.

The Big Rig Service Patrol's three-year demonstration project began in October 2005. The Board later authorized the demonstration until June 30, 2009. Metro staff sought Board action so an on-going project can be readied for a start date of July 1, 2009 or earlier.

Evaluation of the Big Rig Service Patrol finds a benefit-to-cost ratio comparable to the entire Metro Freeway Service Patrol program. As of April 2008, the Big Rig Service Patrol has logged 7,276 assists.

Item 26, Ultra-Low Sulfur Diesel Fuel Contract.

On the recommendation of the Operations Committee, the Board awarded a 36-month, adjustable rate contract for ultra-low sulfur diesel fuel.

Metro uses the fuel for operation of its fleet of 108 diesel buses and 90 non-revenue vehicles using diesel fuel.

Although Metro has been gradually retiring diesel buses since Fiscal Year 2007, some diesel buses will remain in service for the next few years. Metro staff anticipates the agency using approximately 2.0 million gallons of the fuel in Fiscal Year 2009 and approximately 1.0 million gallons in Fiscal Year 10.

Item 35, Amendment to Congestion Reduction Demonstration.

The Board authorized the CEO to amend the existing congestion reduction

demonstration memorandum of understanding with the U.S. Department of Transportation. The amended agreement would change the near-term focus of the high occupancy vehicle lanes to high occupancy toll lanes conversion and related transit improvements to interstates 10 and 110, rather than interstates 10 and 210.

--Rick Jager contributed to this report

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