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Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa leads news conference Nov. 5 to celebrate an early, if unofficial, victory of the passage of Measure R by Los Angeles voters. The Los Angeles County Registrar has now confirmed that Measure R has been approved by a 67.93 percent majority. *Photo by Gayle Anderson*

Passage of Measure R Puts County Transportation Projects on Fast Track

- Metro committed to using funds to speed transportation improvements throughout L.A. County

By DAVE SOTERO

(Dec.2, 2008): The results are in. The Los Angeles County Registrar has announced that Measure R, the half-cent sales tax increase for comprehensive county transportation improvements, has officially passed with more than a two-thirds majority vote following the Registrar's final vote count.

Approved by more than 2 million votes, a 67.93 percent majority, Measure R is expected to bring in \$40 billion over 30 years to fund critically needed transit and highway projects and support transit operations throughout the Los Angeles County.

Metro officials today hailed the final vote as a major milestone that puts the region back on track to address many dire transportation problems the county faces and vowed to put funds to work quickly and help create construction jobs that will stimulate the local economy.

"This is a new day for the future of transportation in Los Angeles," said Los Angeles Mayor and Metro Board Chair Antonio Villaraigosa. "Measure R's victory is a victory for the commuters of all of Los Angeles County. It will enable us to put our vision for greater mobility on the fast track and make a major difference in reducing congestion on our roads and expanding the public transit system while creating jobs and reducing air pollution."

Measure R sales taxes will start being collected July 1, 2009. During the first full year, it is projected that over \$650 million will be collected and that revenue stream will grow as the economy expands. According to the Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation (LAEDC), Measure R will cost residents an average of \$25 per person each year.

Metro CEO Roger Snoble is planning to go before the Metro Board of Directors in January to present a comprehensive financial plan that will lay out a strategy for delivering projects. It is projected by the LAEDC that Measure R will create at least 210,000 new jobs and generate \$32 billion in new economic activity over a 30-year period..

"The public has given us a clear mandate to implement a comprehensive traffic relief plan for Los Angeles County that is controlled locally," said Snoble. He said that improvements in Metro's customer services from deploying new Metro Rapid buses and building the highly successful Metro Orange Line to launching a new vanpool program and staying on budget and ahead of schedule for next summer's opening of the Metro Gold Line extension to East Los Angeles plus new pass programs and other customer improvements helped pave the way for passage of Measure R, but the Metro CEO underscored that Metro must continue to push forward.

Some of the most immediate benefits from Measure R will be for cities. Metro's expenditure plan ensures that all 88 cities will receive a 15 percent local return of taxpayer funds based on yearly city population figures. In the first full year, local jurisdictions are expected to collectively receive over \$100 million for their transportation needs. Over the 30-year sales tax period, the local return is anticipated to be almost \$6 billion. These funds may be used by cities to directly fund their own projects such as pothole repairs, bikeways, major street resurfacing, left-turn signals, pedestrian improvements, streetscapes, traffic signal synchronization and local transit services.

The remaining 85 percent of funding will be divided among critical new transit and highway projects and for transit operations countywide. Many new transit projects will receive funding including the Metro Gold Line Foothill Extension in the San Gabriel Valley, Regional Light Rail Connector in Downtown LA, Metro Green Line extension to LAX and the South Bay, and the Westside subway extension. Projects already in development will be accelerated including Expo Light Rail Line Phase 2 from Culver City to Santa Monica, Metro Orange Line Chatsworth Extension, and the Crenshaw Transit Corridor, a transit project to improve public transit service and mobility in the Crenshaw Corridor.

Measure R also provides Metro with matching funds that can be leveraged to obtain federal funding for projects such as the Westside subway extension and the Regional Connector. "We're now able to show the federal government that we can construct and operate projects they would participate in on a cost-sharing basis," said Snoble. "Prior to Measure R, we certainly wouldn't have been able to do that, and this also puts us in a favorable position to secure federal funds when a new infrastructure stimulus bill is passed by Congress."

Measure R also will delay a general Metro fare increase for one year and will freeze fares at current levels for disabled persons, senior citizens, students and Medicare recipients for five years.

Metro soon will be updating the *metro.net* website to give the public steady updates on the progress in implementing Measure R.

