



NEWS

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CONGRESSIONAL PANEL HEARS MTA CHAIRMAN

MTA Chairman Larry Zarian testified today before a Congressional transportation panel in support of the reauthorization of the federal legislation known as the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA). Out of hundreds of transportation providers nationwide, only four -- Los Angeles, Chicago, Philadelphia, and New York -- were invited to testify.

Zarian testified on the urgent need to continue federal support for the transportation system in Los Angeles county.

"The average citizen may not know why we are here, but every day they see and depend upon the results of our efforts and ISTEA funding, as we build a public transportation system for the future," Zarian said. "Our bus system relies on ISTEA dollars to maintain important services for the transit dependent. Clearly, we can't let a program as critical as this just fade away."

ISTEA, a six-year, \$155 billion law passed by Congress in 1991, promotes cooperation among federal, state, county, and local agencies for intermodal transportation systems.

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Joe Drew, MTA's CEO commented: "Our federal partners encouraged us to visit and express our opinions because they realize that Los Angeles represents a vital piece of the national transportation matrix. The programs we are implementing are representative of the types of programs ISTEA was created to nurture and support."

Zarian also said in his testimony: "The goal of the MTA is to develop, over the next twenty years, an integrated Metro system that includes extensive bus and paratransit services, rail transit, commuter rail, carpool and bus lanes, and an improved street, highway, freeway, and High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) network, as well as state-of-the-art traffic management techniques and increased employer-based programs -- all to reduce commuter trips."

The economic impact of the transportation investments will help Southern California remain competitive on an international basis, Zarian told Congress. The development of the Metro Rail lines alone has provided immediate jobs in the community, and supported the establishment of new businesses, he added.

"Without improvements to our current transportation system, the projected increase in population and employment would reduce average countywide commuting speeds from a current level of approximately 35 miles per hour to 15 miles per hour, or, in some rapidly growing outlying areas, to less than 10 miles per hour," Zarian testified. "This is unacceptable. It contradicts national policies and goals for sustaining economic growth through mobility."

In addition to testifying before the Committee, Zarian and Drew are meeting with key members of Congress and their staff, briefing them on the status of the MTA's programs and projects and advocating their continued support for ISTEA.

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