

MTA Readies for June 29 Start of New Metro Rapid Bus Lines on Van Nuys Boulevard, Florence Avenue

- **MTA on Target to Complete 27-Line Metro Rapid System by 2008**

(Los Angeles) - MTA's successful Metro Rapid bus program will reach another milestone Sunday, June 29, with the start of service on Van Nuys Boulevard and Florence Avenue.

"Metro Rapid continues to deliver on the promise its name boldly asserts," said Los Angeles County Supervisor and MTA Board Member Yvonne Brathwaite Burke. "The new lines on Van Nuys Boulevard and Florence Avenue will bring the same fast and reliable service that passengers on Wilshire Boulevard, Ventura Boulevard, Vermont Avenue and South Broadway now enjoy."

The 21.4-mile Van Nuys Metro Rapid (Line 761) will operate on Van Nuys Boulevard between Foothill and Ventura boulevards, then continue through the Sepulveda Pass via the 405 Freeway, Sepulveda Boulevard and Sunset Boulevard to Westwood, connecting to the Wilshire/Whittier Metro Rapid at Wilshire Boulevard. The 10.3-mile Florence Metro Rapid (Line 711) will operate on Florence Avenue from Garfield Avenue in the City of Bell Gardens to La Brea Avenue in Inglewood.

The new lines, including one on Crenshaw Boulevard that will begin operations in December 2003, are part of an expansion of the Metro Rapid system that will be completed by 2008 at which point a total of 27 Metro Rapid lines will crisscross Greater Los Angeles.

The Van Nuys Boulevard and Florence Avenue Metro Rapid lines will complement the 11.9-mile Vermont and the 10.5-mile South Broadway Metro Rapid lines that began service in December 2002 and the 26-mile Wilshire/Whittier and 16-mile Ventura Metro Rapid lines that began service in June 2000.

Since June 2000, total bus ridership on the Wilshire/Whittier and Ventura Boulevard corridors has increased by nearly 40 percent, with one third of the increase coming from passengers new to public transit.

The Wilshire/Whittier Metro Rapid Line 720 currently has average weekday boardings of 45,000. Average weekday boardings on the Ventura Metro Rapid Line 750 are 9,000.

"Metro Rapid has consistently proven its value to our passengers as a quick, reliable and safe means of travel to jobs, medical facilities and places of recreation," said MTA CEO Roger Snoble. "We think Metro Rapid makes sense and clearly our customers agree."

Several key attributes have contributed to Metro Rapid's success including a bus signal priority system. Developed by the Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT), the bus signal priority system reduces the amount of time a Metro Rapid bus is stopped at a traffic signal by extending the length of green traffic signals and reducing the length of red traffic signals. As a result, Metro Rapid has reduced travel times on the Wilshire/Whittier corridor by nearly 30 percent and on Ventura Boulevard by 23 percent.

MTA and LADOT anticipate that when Metro Rapid service begins on Florence Avenue it will result in a 20-25 percent improvement in travel time over current service on that

corridor. A similar travel time improvement is expected on Van Nuys Boulevard when the bus signal priority system becomes operational in September.

“Metro Rapid’s marriage of technology and common sense is producing travel times on congested streets in Los Angeles unheard of in bus systems in other major U.S. cities,” said LADOT General Manager Wayne Tanda. “LADOT is pleased to be a partner in a program that has transformed a vision into a fast and efficient means of travel for thousands of commuters.”

Other key contributors to Metro Rapid’s success include the use of low-floor buses to reduce passenger boarding and alighting times, easy-to-recognize buses and stations featuring “next trip” displays and information kiosks, and “rail-like” operating characteristics.

Similar to most light rail systems, Metro Rapid buses stop approximately every 0.8 miles at major cross streets as opposed to limited stop and local service buses in which buses stop approximately every 0.3 miles and 0.2 miles, respectively.

Van Nuys Boulevard, Florence Avenue, Vermont Avenue and South Broadway are among the corridors designated in a planned five-year, 24-line expansion of the Metro Rapid program approved by the MTA Board in 2002. The remaining corridors include Soto Street, Crenshaw-Rossmore, Pico Boulevard, Santa Monica Boulevard, Hawthorne Boulevard, Long Beach Boulevard, Hollywood-Fairfax-Pasadena, Western Avenue, Beverly Boulevard, Vernon-La Cienega, Atlantic Boulevard, Central Avenue, San Fernando-Lankershim, West Olympic Boulevard, Garvey-Chavez, Manchester Avenue, San Fernando Road (south), Sepulveda Boulevard (south), Torrance-Long Beach and Lincoln Boulevard.

Total one-time capital costs for implementing the expansion lines are estimated at \$101.8 million which will be used to construct 24 corridors with 356 miles of bus signal priority in 34 cities and 11 Los Angeles County unincorporated communities and to construct 779 Metro Rapid stations, all with “next trip” displays.

In addition, MTA has begun construction of the 14-mile San Fernando Valley Metro Rapidway that will include 14 stations, 3,000 parking spaces, a bike path and a pedestrian path. The Rapidway will cost \$329.5 million to construct. Unlike the expansion lines on which buses will operate in mixed-flow traffic, buses on the Rapidway will operate on an exclusive right-of-way.

The 24-line expansion will provide a net increase of 15,646 annual revenue hours over the pre-existing service levels in those corridors. All funds for the expansion have been reserved in the MTA’s adopted Long Range Transportation Plan.

The expansion plan was developed following a rigorous selection process to identify corridors where Metro Rapid service would best meet the needs of transit patrons. Corridors were evaluated on the basis of existing success, potential success and the need for transit.

The proposed span of Metro Rapid service was determined based on available revenue and anticipates that eight of the 24 Metro Rapid expansion corridors will operate seven days a week, three will operate weekdays and Saturdays, six will operate all day on weekdays only, and seven will operate during weekday peak periods only.

The Metro Rapid bus program was recently selected as a semifinalist in Harvard University’s 2002 Innovation in American Government Awards. Sponsored by the Ford Foundation, the awards recognize outstanding examples of creative problem solving in the public sector.

