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MTA Board Approves Six-year Short Range Transportation Plan to Improve Region's Mobility

Transportation Plan Highlights:

- Improve Quality of Local Bus Service
- Expand the Metro Rapid Program
- Expand the County's Light Rail System
- Introduce Metro Rapid Transitways
- Improve Metrolink Service
- Expand the Countywide Carpool Lane System
- Improve Traffic Flow Through System Management
- Encourage Alternatives to Driving Alone
- Plan and Implement a Comprehensive Freight Movement Program
- Implement Mechanisms to Link Growth with Transportation

The MTA Board of Directors today approved a six-year Short Range Transportation Plan that focuses on the phasing-in of transportation improvements in Los Angeles County through 2009 that will help put together the pieces of the region's mobility puzzle.

The plan relies on performance-based modeling to identify the best solution for each mobility challenge. In total, $19.3 billion is available to fund the plan's transportation priorities through 2009. These include the costs of operating the current transportation program and funding new transportation solutions.

"Our region can expect to grow by nearly a million residents in the next six years, and this plan offers some creative yet practical solutions for improving mobility within the limited resources we'll have at our disposal," said MTA Board Chairman Zev Yaroslavsky.

The Short Range Transportation Plan calls for an expansion of light rail into East Los Angeles, the completion of the San Fernando Valley Metro Rapidway project, implementation of 28 Metro Rapid bus lines, adding high-capacity buses into service, building 70 more miles of carpool lanes on area freeways as well as numerous highway projects and hundreds of local transportation and joint development projects.

"This Short Range Transportation Plan is a tool designed to bring the mobility and financial pieces of the puzzle together," said MTA CEO Roger Snoble. "The plan also emphasizes that our county must come together and speak with one voice about our transportation funding needs."

Highlights of the newly approved 2003 Short Range Transportation Plan include:

- **Improve Quality of Local Bus Service.** MTA will continue to restructure and improve Metro bus services, which are provided by five new service sectors. These were created to improve customer service by providing communities with more input into operations. Local bus providers and MTA will work together to provide efficient routing, service coordination, and to introduce new technology that will make travel more convenient, such as the implementation of the Universal Fare System and the use of smart cards that allow seamless transfers. MTA will also implement a "hub and spoke" bus system that will improve bus service to LA County's most popular destinations by serving major transportation centers throughout the region.

- **Expand the Metro Rapid Program.** A total of 28 new Metro Rapid bus lines will be in operation by FY2009 that will reduce travel times for bus riders by 25 percent. This will result in over 400 miles of Rapid, high capacity bus service that will serve 34 cities and 11 unincorporated LA County communities.

- **Expand the County's Light Rail System.** With the completion of the Los Angeles to Pasadena Metro Gold Line, MTA is poised to begin construction on the Eastside extension to be completed in 2009. These will form a single operating line extending from East Los Angeles into the San Gabriel Valley. Another rail line, the Exposition line toward Culver City, is under design with completion after 2009 (subject to funding availability). Finally, preliminary design is planned to begin on a Metro Gold Line extension eastward to Claremont.

- **Introduce Metro Rapid Transitways.** New, cutting-edge bus service using dedicated traffic lanes will be introduced in 2005. The centerpiece will be the 14-mile exclusive San Fernando Valley Rapidway, followed by a project along Wilshire Boulevard that proposes exclusive, peak hour access to buses, subject to approval by cities. Initial steps in beginning rapid bus service for the North/South Transitways in the San Fernando Valley and along Crenshaw Boulevard will also begin during this planning period.

- **Improve Metrolink Service.** Commuters will benefit from new trains that expand and improve service. To improve efficiency and reduce travel time, track work and signal upgrades will also be completed.

- **Expand the Countywide Carpool Lane System.** MTA plans to add 70 lane miles of carpool lanes by 2009, resulting in a 517-mile network throughout the county. Specific improvements include completing carpool lanes and/or connectors along I-5, I-10, SR-60 and I-405. In addition, carpool lanes on the SR-14 and the I-5 near Orange County would be the next priorities if additional funding is secured.

- **Improve Traffic Flow Through System Management.** Information and technology, such as real-time management of our roadway system, will play larger roles in getting the most out of our system. Other programs like the Freeway Service Patrol will expand to bring traffic incident relief to more freeways and support freeway construction projects.

- **Encourage Alternatives to Driving Alone.** Providing options to travelers is one way to reduce traffic congestion. Programs that encourage ridesharing, pedestrian travel, and move toward completion of a 406-mile Class I bicycle system will be developed and promoted. MTA will also implement parking policies for its Metro stations and explore a park-and-ride facility study.

- **Plan and Implement a Comprehensive Freight Movement Program.** MTA will work with its partners to develop analytical tools and a strategic plan for addressing future goods movement growth. These partnerships will help develop dedicated funding sources that will pay for comprehensive freight related projects without impacting other transportation funding sources.

- **Implement Mechanisms to Link Growth with Transportation.** The Mobility 21 Coalition for Los Angeles County will work to form public/private partnerships that can implement programs that provide meaningful incentives to better link land use and transportation planning.

MTA estimates that implementation of the Short Range Transportation Plan will create 95,000 jobs and generate over $10 billion for the region's economy over the next six years. In addition, the plan will help reduce up to 50 percent of air pollution emissions along our most congested freeways.

"By laying out a framework for the next six years that prioritizes our needs and allocates available resources, this Short Range Transportation Plan becomes a living document that provides direction in reducing congestion, tackling traffic hotspots, and improving our quality of life," said Snoble.

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