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MTA Board Approves Agreements to Exchange Land for New Transportation Center in West Los Angeles

Thursday September 25, 2003

New, larger facility will help meet growing demand for service in the area

The MTA Board of Directors today approved an agreement with RAD Jefferson, LLC on plans to exchange MTA's antiquated bus yard property in Venice for construction of a new transportation center in a more centralized, industrial area of West Los Angeles.

The land-swap agreement will enable MTA to better meet current and future public transit demand in the Westside/Central area of Los Angeles, which contains some of MTA's most heavily traveled bus lines.

The motion approved by the Board included an amendment by Los Angeles County Supervisor and MTA Board Member Yvonne Burke directing MTA and the developer to work closely with the community during the environmental review process and construction period. The amendment also requires full mitigation of increased traffic and noise in the neighborhood caused by buses and employees' cars.

Under the exchange agreement, MTA will swap its 3.13-acre facility, located in Venice, for a 4.66-acre site, now vacant, located on Jefferson Boulevard between Rodeo and National in West Los Angeles. Before the swap occurs, RAD Jefferson, LLC would build a state-of-the-art transportation center for MTA complete with new, clean-air compressed natural gas (CNG) fueling. With the Venice division valued at \$12.9 million, the agreement calls for MTA to contribute \$8 million to make up the difference in the cost of the newly built transportation center.

"MTA has long outgrown the Venice property," said John Catoe, Deputy CEO of MTA. "MTA and its predecessor agencies have used this facility for more than 100 years. It remains our smallest and oldest bus division. We now have the opportunity to relocate closer to our riders, which will improve our operational efficiency and allows us to put more buses on the road to accommodate growing service requirements on the Westside." MTA spends approximately \$5 million per year on the Venice facility to reduce drive time,

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which represents the distance in miles a transit bus must travel before entering into regular revenue service. The West Los Angeles area is now served by buses from three different locations: Venice, West Hollywood and Los Angeles, all of them already at or near capacity. The Venice bus division now accommodates only 77 buses and cannot handle CNG fueling. The new facility, when complete, will handle nearly double that number -- 150 buses. All of them will operate on clean-burning CNG that will be fueled on-site.

"It's been more than 20 years since MTA has built a new facility of this type," Catoe said. "Since that time, there have been major technological advancements that we can utilize to improve our bus operations and create an attractive facility that enhances the community. MTA must continually seek to improve its facilities throughout Los Angeles County if we are to keep pace with technology and public transit demand."

Community impacts will be fully explored prior to construction, though they are expected to be minimal at the new location. The transportation center is more than 750 feet away from the nearest homes, compared to 12 feet at the bus division in Venice.

Bus traffic on surrounding streets also would be minimal, as most buses would already be in service during morning and afternoon rush hours. Most buses would pull out of the facility before 6 a.m. and return after 8 p.m. Additionally, all vehicles would access the facility from Jefferson Boulevard, avoiding heavily congested La Cienega Boulevard.

The relocation is also anticipated to have positive affects for the local community. About 250-300 employees would work in shifts at the new location, and by patronizing local businesses, could provide an economic boost to the area.

In the next phase of the project, the developer will conduct a full environmental review of the project at the new site, including traffic and noise impacts, and will meet all mitigation requirements prior to beginning construction. MTA, meanwhile, will conduct extensive community outreach to gather public input on design and other issues. Construction is scheduled for completion in 2006.

For additional community information about the West Los Angeles Transportation Center, please contact Jody Feerst Litvak, Community Relations Manager, Metro Westside/Central Service Sector at (213) 922-1240.

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