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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MTA Board Certifies Revised Final Environmental Report for Metro Orange Line Corridor; Approves Acceleration of Project Construction

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority Board of Directors has once again given its stamp of approval to the Metro Orange Line transitway project, certifying today a Revised Final Environmental Impact Report (Revised FEIR) for the San Fernando Valley East-West Transit Corridor. A draft version of the report released last month for a 30-day public review concluded that the Metro Orange Line, now under construction in the corridor, is superior to each of three Rapid Bus alternatives studied in the revised report.

The Board today also approved spending up to \$7.9 million to accelerate construction of the transitway to maintain a scheduled opening of the line in late August 2005.

"These actions are significant because they have brought the Metro Orange Line project closer to completion," said Board Chair Frank Roberts. "The acceleration of construction means that the opening of this vital east-west alternative to the 101 Freeway is just eight months away."

Metro released a Draft Revised FEIR October 22, 2004 for a 30-day public review and comment period. The draft report included findings of a court-ordered study of multiple-route Rapid Bus alternatives to the 14-mile Metro Orange Line transitway project, which has been under construction from North Hollywood to Warner Center since January 2003. The public's comments and Metro's responses were incorporated into the Revised FEIR certified today.

The Revised FEIR was prepared at the direction of the California Court of Appeal, which ruled July 19, 2004 that the east-west corridor's Final EIR, previously adopted by the Metro Board, should have included an evaluation of multiple-route Rapid Bus alternatives to the Metro Orange Line project.

The Final EIR evaluated three project alternatives: a No Build Alternative, a Transportation Systems Management (TSM) Alternative (enhancement of the existing bus system), and a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Alternative (three variations including the Metro Orange Line Full BRT).

As a result of the court's decision, Metro and a team of consultants studied three multiple-route Rapid Bus alternatives for inclusion in the Revised FEIR:

- Three East-West Rapid Bus Routes Alternative (Sherman Way, Vanowen Street and Victory Boulevard)
- Five East-West Rapid Bus Routes Alternative (Sherman Way, Victory Boulevard, Oxnard Street, Burbank Boulevard, and Chandler Boulevard)
- Rapid Bus Network Alternative (as submitted by Citizens Organized for Smart Transit, this network of nine Rapid Bus routes would consist of three east-west routes and six north-south routes)

The Revised FEIR examined the environmental impacts, costs and benefits of each Rapid Bus alternative and reached the following conclusions:

- The Metro Orange Line would attract substantially more new riders than any of the Rapid Bus alternatives.
- The Metro Orange Line would result in the greatest system-wide travel time savings.

- The Metro Orange Line would maintain the most consistent travel time, which would not be compromised over time as the result of increasing traffic congestion.
- The Rapid Bus alternatives would all have lower capital costs than the Metro Orange Line because of their minimal construction requirements. However, because the Rapid Bus alternatives would attract fewer new riders than the Metro Orange Line, the Rapid Bus alternatives exhibit poor cost-effectiveness measured on a per-new-rider basis.
- The exclusive transitway operation of the Metro Orange Line has distinct land use benefits that would encourage transit oriented development at/around stations and is consistent with adopted local planning documents.
- Operating costs for the Rapid Bus Network Alternative would be up to \$10 million more each year than the cost to operate the Metro Orange Line.

"The Metro Orange Line project is clearly superior to the other options we looked at," said Los Angeles County Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky, a member of the MTA Board. "This revised environmental study confirms the view that this project will provide the greatest transportation benefits to cross-Valley commuters."

"When the Metro Orange Line is completed next year, the San Fernando Valley will, for the first time in more than 50 years, be integrated into the regional public transportation network," Yaroslavsky added.

When the Metro Orange Line opens, new 60-foot articulated Metro Liner buses will whisk commuters from Warner Center to North Hollywood in approximately 40 minutes and provide a convenient connection to the Metro Rail System at the Metro Red Line's North Hollywood Station. Thirteen stations will dot the Metro Orange Line at approximately one-mile intervals and approximately 3,300 parking spaces will be available at key stations.

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