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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Metro Schedules Triple Bus Service Improvements for San Fernando Valley

Major new Metro Bus improvements in the San Fernando Valley were announced today by Los Angeles Mayor and Metro Board Chairman Antonio Villaraigosa, Los Angeles City Councilmember Wendy Greuel, Metro and other officials at a press conference.

Starting Sunday, June 25, the Valley will see new 60-foot articulated buses running on Van Nuys Boulevard on Metro Rapid Line 761 and 45-foot high capacity buses on Metro Rapid Line 750 on Ventura Boulevard. New weekday Metro Rapid service begins Monday, June 26, on Sepulveda Boulevard connecting Sherman Oaks and the Sylmar Metrolink Station.

These service improvements come in the wake of last fall's opening of the Metro Orange Line, a 14-mile transitway connecting North Hollywood and Warner Center. Ridership on the popular line already has matched projections for 22,000 weekday boardings in 2020.

"The San Fernando Valley is on a roll," said Mayor Villaraigosa. "Commuters and others now have even more incentives to beat the high price of gas by opting for public transit.

New Metro Rapid Line 734 will operate weekdays between 5 a.m. and 10 p.m. every 10 minutes during morning and afternoon rush hours and 20 minutes during the mid-day and evenings. It will connect with the Metro Orange Line at the Sepulveda Station near the 405 Freeway. It also connects with the Valley's other two Metro Rapid Lines 761 (Van Nuys Blvd. – Westwood/UCLA) and Line 750 (Ventura Boulevard) at the Sherman Oaks Galleria at Sepulveda and Ventura boulevards.

Metro Rapid buses are about 25 percent faster than local buses because they enjoy signal priority and stop every eight tenths of a mile compared to two tenths of a mile for local buses.

Line 734 is the 15th Metro Rapid line in Metro's system and there are plans to expand the popular service to a countywide network of 28 lines covering 450 miles by 2008.

Metro Rapid and the new Metro Orange Line are helping to draw more commuters weary of high gas prices. Metro Bus ridership in May soared 10 percent over a year earlier while Metro Rail ridership rose 18 percent.

Metro's online Trip Planner at www.metro.net provides point-to-point directions for getting around Los Angeles using Metro Bus and Rail and other municipally operated transit services. The Trip Planner now features a gasoline savings calculator that estimates how much money a commuter could save per trip by switching to public transit.

These initiatives are particularly important to attract first-time users who are unfamiliar with public transportation in the area.

After housing, transportation is the second highest cost for American families, outpacing both food and health care costs. Since January 2003, gas prices have increased by 100 percent.

By using public transportation on a regular basis, a person can save between \$300 and \$3,000 in fuel costs alone per year. Yearly commuting costs on the Metro System are just \$624. Besides just fuel costs, it costs several thousands of dollars more to travel daily by car when the true costs associated with fueling, operating and maintaining an automobile are included.

Besides public transit, Metro offers an array of other ridesharing programs that make it easy for drivers to find commute alternatives, including car and vanpools. Several incentives are available through the agency to

encourage ridesharing, including gift certificates, vanpool rebates and a guaranteed ride home program that provides the ridesharer a free taxi or rental car ride home in case of illness, emergency, or working overtime.

Motorists interested in forming or joining a carpool can visit www.commutmart.info for additional information and to receive a list of potential rideshare partners in their area.

A "Free Yourself" computer screen saver can be downloaded from Metro's web site at metro.net. Transportation information is also available by phone by calling 1-800-COMMUTE.

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