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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **Mayor Villaraigosa and Union Leaders Announce Tentative Agreement on Transit Labor Contracts**

- Union-Management Partnership Avoids Costly and Disruptive Strike

LOS ANGELES—City of Los Angeles Mayor and Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) Chair Antonio Villaraigosa, MTA Board members, transit union leaders and MTA executives today announced that a tentative agreement has been reached between the MTA and the three largest labor unions representing its operators, maintenance workers, and clerks.

"This is the first time in MTA's history that we have settled on new contracts before the current labor agreements expire," said Mayor Villaraigosa. "Over the past year, our labor unions and our management team have worked diligently and cooperatively to hammer out reasonable agreements that support both our workers and MTA bus and rail operations," Mayor Villaraigosa added.

The tentative agreements with the United Transportation Union (UTU) – representing 4,500 bus and rail operators – the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) – representing 2,000 mechanics and service attendants – and the Transportation Communications Union – representing 700 telephone information operators, clerks and other workers – will be formally presented to the MTA Board in a closed session Thursday morning.

Mayor Villaraigosa credited the "interest based negotiating" approach used for the first time by MTA and its unions. Under "interest based negotiating" both sides focused on first, understanding each others interests and then worked together to develop a mutually agreeable solution. This contrasts with traditional negotiations that are frequently characterized by both sides staking out hard line positions, then haggling over who will move how much to reach a compromise.

Mayor Villaraigosa credited the principals at the bargaining table for timely completion of negotiations. "James Williams, head of the UTU, Neil Silver, head of the ATU and the MTA's lead negotiator, John Catoe all deserve the praise and respect of the MTA Board, our employees and the public for their commitment to our passengers," said Mayor Villaraigosa. "Today marks the start of a better way to approach negotiations in the Los Angeles," Mayor Villaraigosa added.

Deputy Chief Executive Officer John Catoe took a leave of absence from his regular position as second in command, to lead to the MTA negotiating team in this current negotiation. Both MTA management and union leaders participated in "interest based negotiating" training before starting formal bargaining.

"By using the interest-based negotiating approach, the union leadership and MTA management were able to work through issues in a very professional manner and develop trust between the negotiating teams, between labor and management," said John Catoe. "This is the beginning of a new opportunity for the MTA, the UTU, and the ATU to come to agreement on how we will operate and maintain our transit system to make it as productive as possible," Catoe added.

"We certainly didn't want to repeat the mistakes of the past so we embarked on a new process to reach agreement in a positive way and avoid any disruption in service," said Metro CEO Roger Snoble. "I'm very proud of the union leadership and the Metro management team. These new agreements give us the ability to continue the momentum of the last six months during which Metro has gained substantial new ridership and continue to improve mobility for the region."

"We got a good package for our members. We are glad that this is over and done with and we will be presenting the agreement to our members for ratification," said UTU President, James Williams. "This is the first time since 1988 that we have reached agreement before the expiration of the contract," Williams added.

"The new negotiating process worked well and benefited from professional, credible, and creative individuals at the table," said ATU President, Neil Silver. "I personally didn't think this would work, but the mayor pushed this process and hired a facilitator who helped both sides work through the process," Silver added.

Happy about having just completed negotiation of her fifth labor contract with Metro, Olivia Nelson-Richard, division chair of TCU Local 1315, said she is "very relieved to have reached agreement so early. I'm pretty proud (of the agreement) and I think my members are going to be very pleased.

Mayor Villaraigosa also commented on the impact that early settlements will have on transit riders and the local economy. "Keeping MTA service running will help reduce congestion, improve air quality and provide vital service to the transit dependent," said Mayor Villaraigosa. "In addition, no strike means that our local economy can continue to hum," Mayor Villaraigosa added.

The UTU and ATU are expected to present the tentative agreements to their members for ratification shortly. If ratified, final approval by the MTA Board is expected at its next regular Board meeting on July 27, 2006.

From its inception in 1993, the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority had never reached agreement with its unions on new labor contracts prior to their expiration. The MTA experienced strikes in three of its last four negotiating cycles (1994, 2000 and 2003), disrupting service to transit riders. In 2003, the strike cost the local economy an estimated \$4 million per day, or \$140 million during the 35-day strike.

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