

February 21, 2007

Contact

Roxanne Marquez

213.974.4111

www.metro.net/pressroom

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Statement: February 20, 2007

Metro Chair Gloria Molina Urges California Transportation Commission to Give L.A. County Its Fair Share of Prop 1B Corridor Mobility Improvement Account Funding

"Good afternoon, Senator Bergeson and Commission Members.

First, I want to thank Congressman Torres for his eight years of dedicated service on this Commission, following a remarkable career in Congress.

I know it is very satisfying for you to be witnessing the culmination of the Eastside Extension of the Gold Line Light Rail Project, in which you played a critical role, as did this Commission. We are grateful for your service.

We are not only sad to see you go, but concerned that with your departure LA County will have only one representative on this important body.

With 28 percent of the State's population, and over one-third of the State's traffic congestion, LA County can't afford to be left out in the cold.

And out in the cold is how we all felt last Friday when we learned of your staff's recommendation for the allocation of the Proposition 1B funds, or as you call them, the Corridor Mobility Improvement Account.

All of us here today are familiar with the difficulty of allocating scarce funds to overwhelming needs - so we are not here to argue that we are more needy, or more important than any other part of this great State.

But we are here to say emphatically that we are AS needy, and AS important as every other part of the state.

With \$ 4.5 BILLION dollars available for allocation in this round of funding, you can allot Los Angeles County the approximately \$1.3 Billion in funding that would represent a fair allocation.

We can work-out the details in the coming days - let's just commit to fairness today.

Let's not let the voters and taxpayers wait for the very congestion relief they were promised when they supported Prop 1B in overwhelming numbers.

Let's work out how to fund the 405 Northbound Carpool Lane, which serves over 300,000 frustrated commuters every day. A project that was omitted from a funding recommendation because CTC staff "inferred" a construction start date of December 2011, which is beyond the cut-off date for this round.

Under the design build legislation enacted specifically to speed up this project, and with the Governor's blessing, design and construction can and will start in the spring of 2009.

That is what Congressman Howard Berman promised Chairman Oberstar of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee.

Failure to do so risks leaving the \$130 Million Federal dollars on the table, lost to LA County and this State.

Let's commit to the fair full funding of Interstate 5 carpool and mixed flow Lanes from the Orange County line to Route 605 and end that bottleneck that traps countless commuter in daily gridlock.

You can't squeeze 10 lanes of traffic into six without massive congestion and unacceptable dangers.

Commission staff indicated funding was not requested for phases 4 and 5 of this project and has arbitrarily deducted "STIP" and earmarked funds from our request.

Phasing is not the intent of the MTA or Caltrans leadership and the deducted funds could have been used for other project uses like right-of-way had you told us the new rules in advance.

The current staff recommended allocation of \$156 million would leave us unable even to begin right-of-way acquisition, causing intolerable delay in a project that is already years overdue.

Accordingly, we ask that you approve the full \$387 million we requested because it is one project, not several, and our request is well below the 70% Corridor Mobility program construction cap first introduced by your staff last Friday.

And then there is the I-605/I-10 Connector and Route 138 projects that are essential not only to congestion relief - but to the safety of our residents.

The interchange was built in 1964 and designed to accommodate traffic growth up to 1984 levels. The interchange has been graded as an "E" by Caltrans.

Connector ramps accident rates are up to 4 times the State average.

What will we say to the next accident victim, if we had the ability to fix these traffic nightmares, and we did not?

The promise of these congestion reductions was made to voters throughout this state when Prop 1B was sold to us.

Voters throughout this state went to the polls believing in that promise.

That's why 65% of LA County voters supported that bond measure.

Let's make sure that every congested corridor gets its fair share, not sometime in the future, but now, and in the future.

Let's work together in the coming days to keep the promise.

Thank you."

Metro-028