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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Metro Joins Officials from Throughout Southern California to Rally Support for Transit Funding as Legislature Debates Governor's Proposed State Budget

Alarmed by the threat of losing up to \$1.3 billion statewide to fund new highways and transit projects, Metro Board Chair Pam O'Connor joined other elected officials, transportation, business and community leaders from throughout Southern California today to rally support of transportation funding and to protest the Governor's budget proposals, which would raid those funds.

"Los Angeles County, alone, could lose \$336 million this fiscal year, jeopardizing the Exposition Light Rail project, siphoning funds that could pay for bus operations and critical highway improvements such as the I-5 widening project at the Orange County Line," said Metro Board Chair Pam O'Connor. "Now is not the time to put the brakes on mobility projects that will ease traffic and improve air quality."

O'Connor noted, "As legislative leaders and the Governor debate the new state budget, the Governor has proposed shifting "spillover gas tax monies" from transportation to general fund purposes then pulling a "bait and switch" to backfill some of the monies with the state transportation bond monies voters approved last fall for a variety of highway, public transit and goods movement projects."

As a result of the pending budget cuts, the California Transportation Commission (CTC) is poised to postpone funding upcoming transportation projects throughout the State, including \$3.6 million for grade crossing for Metrolink, \$43 million for the Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension project and \$314 million for construction of the Expo Line from downtown Los Angeles to Culver City.

"Today we are calling upon Sacramento to do the right thing, restore vital transportation dollars for the region, and give L.A. its fare share that will continue to move these important transportation projects along," said Metro CEO Roger Snoble. "It is unfortunate that the Governor has proposed cutting up to \$1.3 billion from public transit agencies and even more unfortunate that the State Legislature still hasn't acted to restore those funds."

"The Governor's proposal to shift gas tax spillover funding from transit agencies to the general fund will negatively impact commuters, businesses and the economy by further reducing needed investments in transportation," said Gary Toebben, President & CEO, Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce. "The Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce urges our legislative leaders to maintain funding for transportation in our region and throughout the state."

For decades the state budget has contributed very little funding to public transit systems, allocating almost all state revenue from fuel-related taxes to roads and highways. This budget year, more money is at stake for public transit systems than usual because the law requires lawmakers to invest more money in public transit systems when gas prices skyrocket so that they are able to cover increased fuel costs and take on additional riders.

Orange County Transportation Authority Board Member Peter Buffa noted, "The Orange County transportation Authority appreciates the Governor and the Legislature proposing to fully fund Proposition 42 and to begin the repayment process as required by Proposition 1A. However, we also believe that the voters offered clear direction when they passed both of those initiatives – transportation funding should be dedicated to transportation purposes. OCTA believes this direction also applies to the funds currently being proposed to be diverted for other purposes."

"We can't afford to put the brakes on needed public transit projects. We have gridlock on our roads, ambitious global warming commitments to meet, and a growing population that will require more public transit," said David Wyman, Campaign Director with The California Public Interest Research Group (CALPIRG).

