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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Metro Launches Campaign to Help Public Focus on Ways of Achieving Free-flowing Traffic Future

With the release of its draft Long Range Transportation Plan for public review last week, Metro today launched a major campaign to focus public attention on how individuals can work with Metro to achieve a free-flowing traffic future for Los Angeles County.

Billboards, bus and rail advertising, web and newspaper ads that started debuting today are steering the public to a new interactive Metro.net web page where the public can learn more about current and proposed highway and public transit projects and options for funding them.

The draft Long Range Transportation Plan is posted on the web site along with notices of seven public meetings that will be held through April to discuss the plan. Following public review, the Metro Board will consider plan adoption in June.

Metro's Long Range Transportation Plan prioritizes dozens of new highway, street and public transit projects in virtually every corner of Los Angeles County.

Freeway gap closures, construction of carpool lanes, interchange improvements and truck lanes, traffic signalization on major streets, bikeways and pedestrian improvements would complement new public transit projects including new busways, freeway express bus service, and new rail lines crisscrossing the county to handle the county's projected 2.4 million population growth by the year 2030.

The plan also looks at the cost of these projects combined with existing transit operations and projected funding.

The plan includes funding for many baseline projects that will make a difference in managing traffic such as State Route 138 widening, building the Expo light rail line to Santa Monica and a Crenshaw Corridor bus rapid transit or light rail project. However, even more could be done if the strategic portion of the plan, currently unfunded, is implemented.

This includes such projects as the Westside subway extension, extending the Metro Gold Line to Montclair and a regional connector that would link the Metro Gold, Blue and Expo lines in downtown Los Angeles and highway projects such as the SR-710 gap closure.

It is estimated that there is a shortfall of more than \$60 billion to fully fund the Long Range Transportation Plan.

If the Long Range Transportation Plan is fully implemented, coupled with changes in commuting behavior where more people opt for public transit, carpools and vanpools or take more trips during off peak hours, traffic congestion would be greatly reduced, according to Metro officials.

Imagine Campaign images

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A lot has been done in the past decade to ease traffic in the Los Angeles region. In fact, the Texas Transportation Institute (TTI) last Fall cited the multi-pronged approach Metro, Caltrans and their transportation partners have taken to relieve congestion.

While this region remains the nation's most congested, it also ranks number one in terms of operational improvements that squeeze more capacity out of local streets and highways and number three in savings as a result of our expanding public transportation system, according to TTI.

The Long Range Transportation Plan would further those gains but funding to fully implement it remains a challenge.

Since Washington and Sacramento are strapped for funds, there has been a grassroots movement among local business and community leaders and elected officials to explore creative ways of financing the dream of hassle-free mobility with local monies which would ensure local control.

Among options being considered are public-private partnerships, toll roads, developer mitigation fees, higher parking rates, levying carbon taxes on polluting vehicles, levying container fees on port cargo and other ideas including putting a new half cent sales tax measure for transportation on the November ballot.

Metro is facilitating public discussion of the mobility and funding challenges in unprecedented ways including offering a blog on metro.net/imagine.

Metro Board Chair Pam O'Connor also is scheduling a live one hour Internet chat at noon Wednesday, March 19, on metro.net and will host a one hour live call-in show on this issue between 8 p.m. and 9 p.m. Thursday, March 27, simulcast live on Santa Monica CityTV and LA Channel 36.

To learn more about Metro's draft Long Range Transportation Plan and efforts to make it a reality, go to metro.net/imagine or call the Long Range Transportation Plan hotline at (213) 922-2833 to request a copy of the draft plan or request more information.

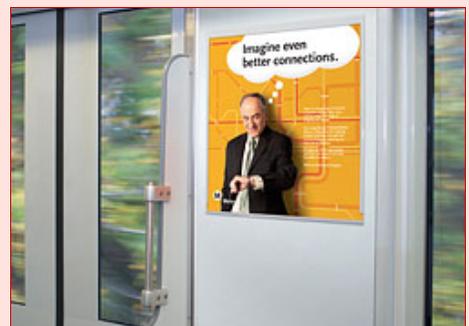
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Links

Check it out: www.metro.net/imagine/

Press Release: Metro Releases Draft 2008 Long Range Transportation Plan for 45-Day Public Review; Seven Community Meetings Planned in March and April

Download: Draft Long Range Transportation Plan and Information