



PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE
JANUARY 14, 2004

**SUBJECT: MTA COMMENTS ON THE SCAG DRAFT 2004 REGIONAL
TRANSPORTATION PLAN (RTP)**

**ACTION: APPROVE FOR RELEASE MTA COMMENT LETTER ON THE DRAFT
2004 RTP**

RECOMMENDATION

Approve for release MTA comments on the Southern California Association of Governments' (SCAG) Draft 2004 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP).

ISSUE

In October 2003, SCAG released the Draft 2004 RTP for public comment. The RTP identifies regional transportation priorities for the six-county region through 2030.

Because projects must be included in the RTP to be eligible for federal funds, MTA ensures that all Board-adopted priorities are included in SCAG's Plan. For example, staff will ensure that projects and costs identified in the 2001 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) and 2003 Short Range Transportation Plan (SRTP) are accurately reflected in the RTP.

Following review of the Draft RTP, staff has submitted preliminary staff comments to SCAG regarding policy and technical issues impacting Los Angeles County (Attachment A). Through all of the draft comments, staff has emphasized that the RTP must commit to fully funding all MTA priorities identified in the LRTP and SRTP before funding non-MTA priorities in Los Angeles County. To that end, staff has conducted a full reconciliation of differences between MTA priority projects and RTP projects (Attachment B) and highlighted specific discrepancies.

This report is intended to solicit formal Board discussion on these issues so that final MTA comments on the 2004 RTP can be transmitted to SCAG and incorporated into their Final Plan, which is slated for approval in Spring 2004.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

All MTA projects and priorities must be included in SCAG's RTP to be eligible for federal funds and approvals. Conversely, projects in Los Angeles County that are not supported by MTA must be implemented under federal law.

Ultimately, MTA and the region could lose transportation dollars if the RTP: (1) fails to include MTA priorities, (2) commits MTA to implementation schedules that it cannot meet, or (3) commits MTA to implementing projects that the agency has no intent on programming.

OPTIONS

The MTA Board can approve the release of the comment letter (with or without changes) or choose not to release a formal comment letter.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The RTP conservatively identifies \$76 billion in baseline revenues for Los Angeles County projects through 2030, with committed expenses for the county at \$79.4 billion of (constant 2002 dollars). The result is a reported deficit of \$3.4 billion for Los Angeles County projects. It should be noted that this conservative forecast is inconsistent with MTA's own forecast that clearly show our ability to fund our committed short- and long-range projects.

There could be future financial impacts if the RTP's commitments were not implemented, as the region would then fail to comply with federal air quality conformity requirements. Specifically, federal law requires that the RTP be implemented on schedule. Failure to do so results in non-conformity with regional air quality commitments, which places projects on hold and could jeopardize federal funding.

BACKGROUND

Over the past two years, MTA staff has worked with SCAG staff to develop an RTP that reflects the priorities of the MTA. The State budget crisis resulted in suspension of the Governor's Traffic Congestion Relief Program and has reduced funding available for critical transportation projects. MTA continues to work to have all of its priorities recognized as fully committed projects in the RTP, including those identified in the 2001 LRTP and 2003 SRTP.

The projects identified in the RTP are divided into three categories, based on level of funding commitment:

- (a) Baseline- includes programmed projects in the 2002 Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP) that had State and federal environmental clearance by December 2002.

- (b) Tier 2- the remaining committed projects in the 2002 RTIP that are not included in the Baseline.
- (c) Plan- represents the final layer of projects above and beyond Tier 2 that are the focus of new funds. Includes projects that are not fully committed.

The RTP recognizes that all Baseline and Tier 2 projects are fully committed and ensures that funding is available in the regional plan accordingly. However, MTA staff has identified instances where the RTP omits MTA projects, incorrectly identifies project costs or implementation schedules, or shifts committed projects to the “Plan” element of the RTP. Since projects in the “Plan” element are earmarked for funding by SCAG only as new revenue sources are identified, there remains some concern about ensuring that MTA’s committed projects are funded. These discrepancies are highlighted in Attachment A.

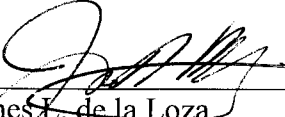
NEXT STEPS

Upon Board approval, staff will transmit the MTA’s final comments to SCAG for consideration and inclusion in the Final 2004 RTP.

ATTACHMENT

- A. Draft Comment Letter
- B. Status of MTA Priorities in Draft 2004 RTP

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